

The Academic Journey of Latinas Who Participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter
Program

by

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) and completed a bachelor's degree. The literature highlighted intersecting influencers that contributed to the Latinx academic journey. To account for this multidimensional nature, I utilized a conceptual framework with strengths in intersectionality and institutional impact: the psychosociocultural (PSC) approach and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). This framework set the foundation for a research design that accounted for potential nuances.

Using a modified version of Seidman's three-series and Atkinson's life story interviews, I designed three interviews per participant with interview scripts that created space to tailor questions to unique participant responses but still captured context, details, and reflections. The outcome of the data was produced in three modalities: profiles, themes within each research questions, and overall key findings. I utilize the literature review and conceptual framework where appropriate to interpret the overall key findings. I ended this dissertation by providing implications and recommendations for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Dissertation to my parents, Martha and Douglas Williams. I also want to thank my sisters, Tanya, Stephanie, and Stacy, and my niece, Destiny. I especially want to thank my mom for the many meals she provided during my writing sessions and my sisters, Stacy and Stephanie, for listening and supporting me during my dissertating journey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Latinx¹ academic journey is complex. Its complexity became more apparent to me when I became a research assistant. Under the direction of the principal investigator, I conducted interviews with Latina girls to explore how risky behaviors (e.g. drug use) informed their familial/romantic relationships. Many shared challenging stories but all aspired to pursue college. This experience inspired me to investigate success strategies for degree completion. I shared this passion with Dr. Brayboy, who introduced me to a colleague affiliated with ASU student success programs. Because of my interests and past research experience, this colleague introduced me to the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP).

The HMDP is a college readiness program that recruits first generation Latinas in 7th grade and their mothers to participate in program activities to build knowledge and confidence in college preparation. This context provided the opportunity to explore the college going journey towards bachelor degree completion. What were their academic journeys like to present? How did the HMDP contributed to their academic journeys? What other influencers contributed to their journey towards degree completion? To what

¹ The term “Latinx” is used to be inclusive of all identities. It “recognizes the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype” (Salinas & Lozano, 2019, p. 310). In this study, I will use Latinx to be inclusive of all identities within this community. I plan to use “Latinx” when I refer to the general public but Latino or Latina when I have to make a gender distinction.

degree were the impacts of these influencers? Responses to these questions can contribute to the literature and provide evidence-based data to inform programmatic decisions for the HMDP.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the HMDP and completed at least a bachelor's degree. The literature demonstrates that the Latinx academic journey is complex and composed of intersecting influencers that produce nuanced outcomes (Acevedo, 2020; Arana et al., 2011; Bonifacio et al., 2018; Ceja, 2006; Chlup et al., 2018; Crisp & Nora, 2010; González et al., 2003; Oseguera et al., 2009). A few strategies have been used to support the Latinx academic journey. One strategy is to provide college readiness programs. To make sense of how these various influencers with a college readiness program contribute to the Latinx academic journey, I incorporate a conceptual framework that accounts for intersecting influencers (i.e. intersectionality) and institutional impact.

In this chapter, I will present four main sections. The first section will provide background on the Latinx population for context. The second section will expand on educational data specifically on college enrollment and attainment for Latinx students. The third section will present the purpose and significance of the study. The fourth section will conclude with a general outline of the dissertation.

Background

The Latinx population is the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2020b). With an estimated population of 60 million, they comprise 18.5 percent of the total U.S. population. The age distribution of Latinx is also younger than non-Latinx (US Census Bureau, 2020b). In fact, 36 percent of Latinx are

under 21 years old. This is 12 percent higher than non-Latinx, whose distribution show almost 24 percent are under 21 years old. This means that a large group are in (or about to enter) the US work force.

There are currently 29 million Latinxs who make up 18 percent of the U.S. workforce (*Hispanics in the Labor Force: 5 Facts* | *U.S. Department of Labor Blog*, 2021). For them to experience possibilities for economic and social mobility they must access resources known to support those possibilities. Current research indicates that higher educational attainments are associated with higher economic and social mobility (Arizona Board of Regents, 2020, 2022; de Brey et al., 2019). For example, in 2016 full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34 who completed high school made a median earning of \$31,800 compared to bachelor's holders who made \$54,800. The median earnings differed by race/ethnicity within each degree attainment level (e.g. high school or Associate's degree). Nonetheless, data indicate an average ~\$5000 increase in earnings with each degree advancement. These data demonstrate that educational advancements are key to access higher pay ranges in the US workforce.

Unfortunately, Latinx have lower educational attainment than non-Latinxs (US Census Bureau, 2020c). In 2019, 18.8 percent of Latinx 25 years and older have at least a bachelor's degree. This is 20 percent lower than the non-Latinx of the same age group. When filtered by gender, female and male Latinxs 25 years and older still lagged 18.7-22.2 percent behind their female and male non-Latinxs counterparts, respectively. These current educational levels put the Latinx population at a disadvantage in the current workforce and wage scale.

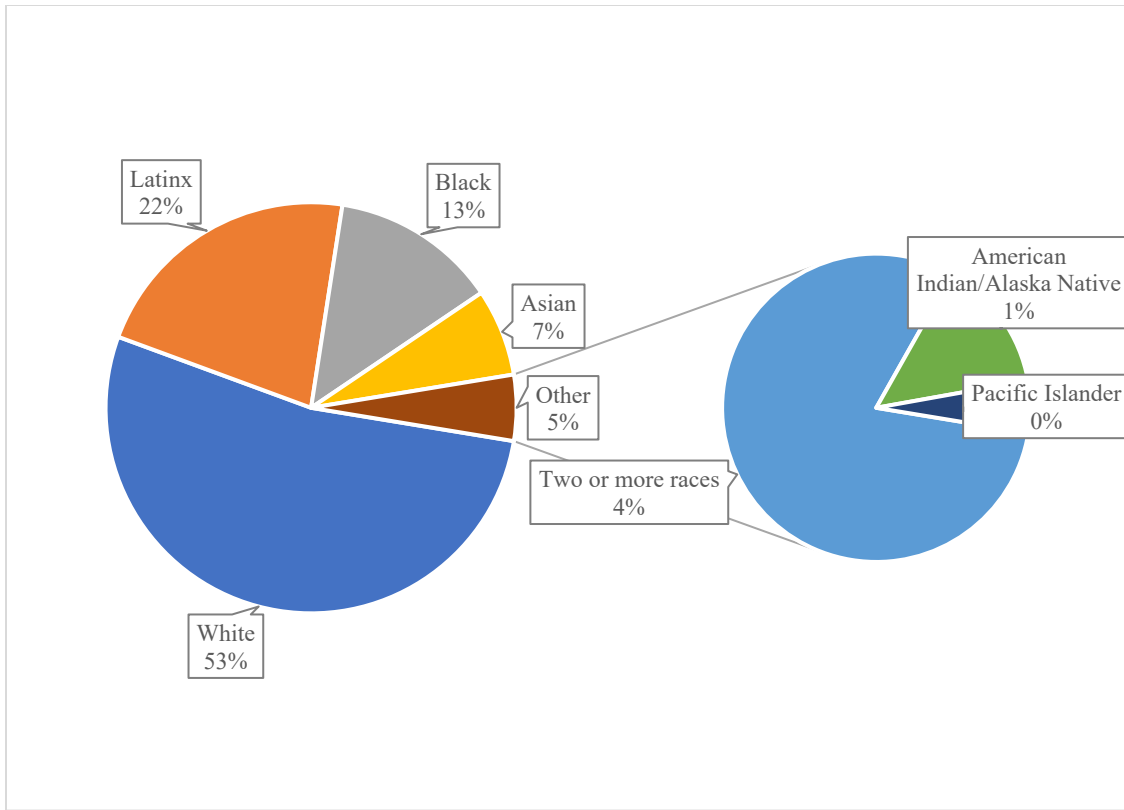
Overall, the Latinx population is the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the U.S. but lag behind in access to economic and social mobility. Because educational attainment is a main way to create this access, I spend the next two sections exploring the educational context of the Latinx population. Specifically, I expand on enrollment and educational attainment rates after high school. This context will contribute to the problem statement for this dissertation.

Enrollment Rates

U.S. enrollment rates in higher education institutions have seen large increases among Latinxs (de Brey et al., 2019; Fry, 2011; Fry & Taylor, 2013). In fact, in one single year the percentage of Latinx enrollment went up by 24 percent between 2009 and 2010 (Fry, 2011). A more recent report showed that college enrollment rates increased from 32 to 39 percent for Latinxs between 2010 and 2016 (de Brey et al., 2019). Enrollment rates were so high that Latinxs are now the largest racial/ethnic minority group for undergraduate enrollment (de Brey et al., 2019). By Fall 2019, 53 percent were White, 22 percent were Latinx, 13 percent were Black, seven percent were Asian, four percent were of Two or more races, and one percent were American Indian/Alaska Native students (see Figure 1; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b). Only Latinxs increased in enrollment (by 48 percent). All other racial/ethnic groups decreased 17-38 percent between 2009 and 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b).

Figure 1

Fall 2019 Enrollment Distribution by Race/Ethnicity



Adapted from *The Condition of Education 2021* by National Center for Education Statistics database, 2021 (<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha>). Copyright 2021 by National Center for Education Statistics.

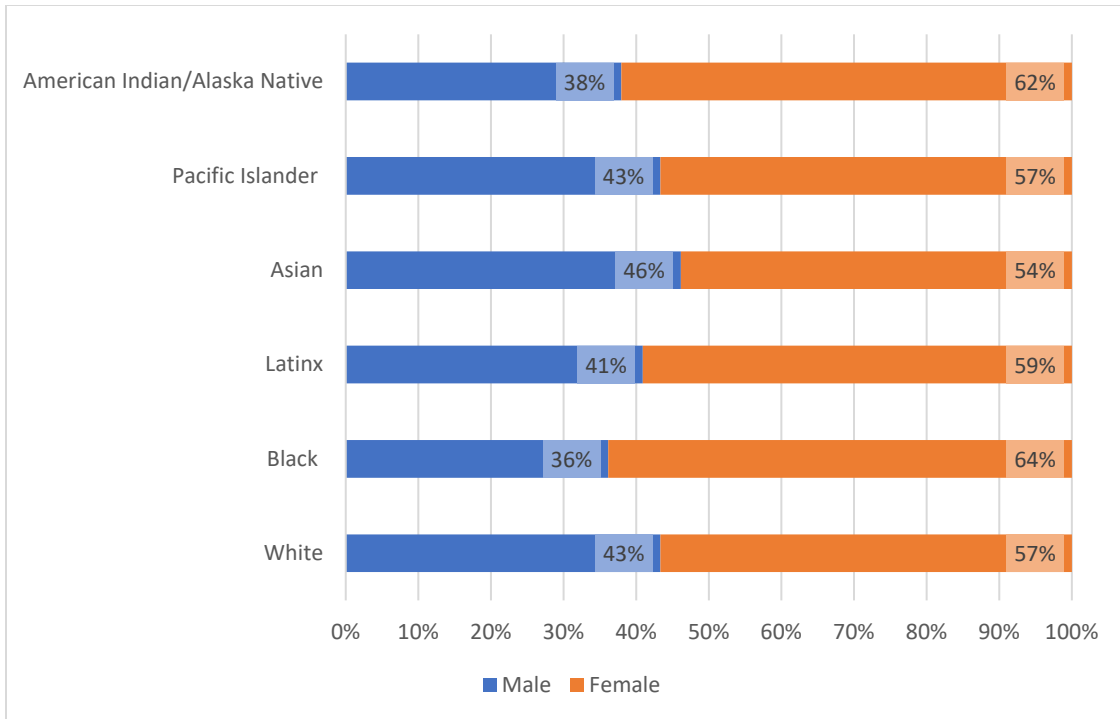
Interestingly, there was a difference in enrollment when broken down by 2-year versus 4-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a). Among 2-year institutions, Latinxs made up 27 percent of the student body in 2019. However, Latinxs only made up 16 percent of the student body in 4-year institutions. The 11-point difference can be explained by the distribution of enrollment between 2- and 4-year institution by race/ethnicity. Among White students, 75 percent enrolled in 4-year institutions and 25 percent enrolled in 2-year institutions. Among Black students, 68 percent enrolled in 4-year institutions and 32 percent enrolled in 2-year institutions.

However, among Latinx students, 59.5 percent enrolled in 4-year institutions and 40.5 percent enrolled in 2-year institutions. A larger proportion of the Latinx college going population pursue 2-year institutions compared to other racial/ethnic groups. The more even distribution between 2-year and 4-year institutions could be due to finance, location, flexibility, among others (Heller, 1999; P. A. Pérez & Ceja, 2010). Whatever the reason, there is potential that community college students who intend to transfer to a four-year institution will not transfer (Hurtado et al., 1999; P. A. Pérez & Ceja, 2010). This non-transfer can limit access to educational degree advancements known to assist with remaining competitive in the U.S. workforce (Arizona Board of Regents, 2020, 2022; de Brey et al., 2019).

Differences by gender was also evident among undergraduate Fall enrollment (de Brey et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021c). Overall, more female than male students enrolled in Fall 2019. Within each racial/ethnic group, the gap between women and men varied from eight to 28 percent (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Fall 2019 Enrollment Distribution by Race/Ethnicity and Sex



Adapted from *Digest of Education Statistics*, by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2021 (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_306.10.asp?current=yes). Copyright 2021 by National Center for Education Statistics.

Asian students had the least female to male differences (8%). Black students had the highest sex differences with Black female students comprising 64 percent of the Black student undergraduate body in Fall 2019. Latinx students were in the middle with an 18 percent difference. Though the gap is still wide, it is important to note that female-male gap for Latinxs was four percent points greater than Whites, but 10 percent points less than Black students. The rate of change for the Latinx female-male gap is slowly stabilizing. Between 1980 and 1990, the gap increased by eight percent. Between 1990 and 2000, the rate of difference was less by only a four-point increase. By 2010, the rate of difference only increased by only one percent from 2000. Despite the stabilization, it

is still important to recognize the gap in discourse on academic and career outcomes.

These differences are also evident in the ways that students persist in higher education. I now turn my attention to explore these rates.

Educational Attainment Rates

A similar upsurge in enrollment rates was not evident for educational attainment among Latinx students (Cerna et al., 2009; de Brey et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021a; Perna, 2000; US Census Bureau, 2020c). In the below, I explore college retention/persistence and degree completion rates among Latinx students.

Recent retention and persistence² data indicate that Asian and White students have higher rates than Latinx and Black students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021a). The National Clearinghouse and National Center for Education Statistics³ (NCES) offer data on these

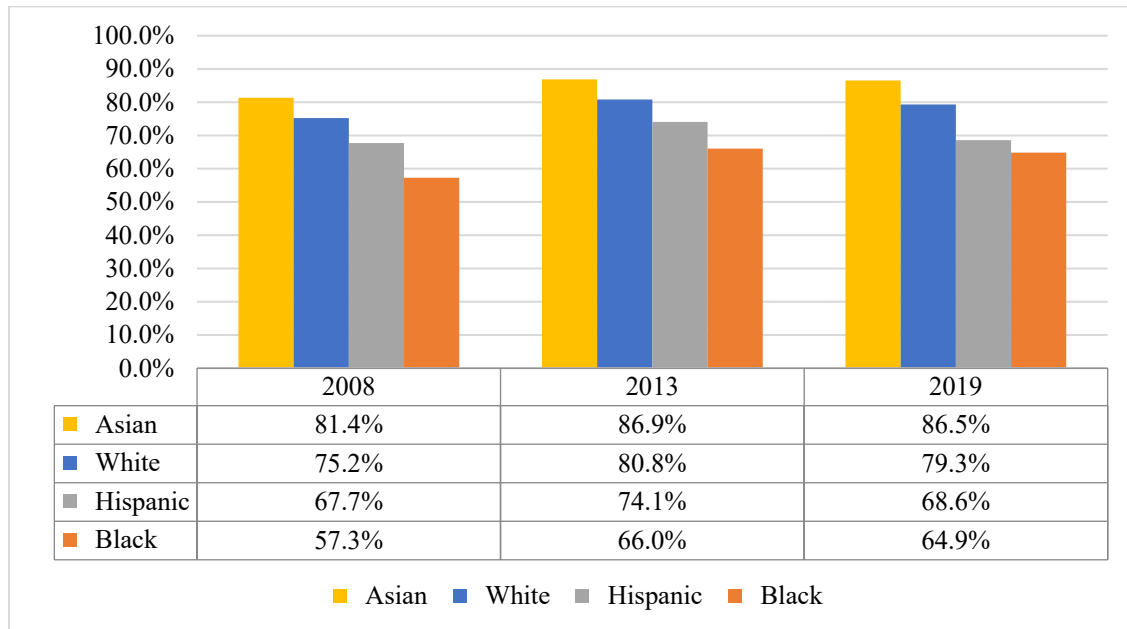
² “Persistence rate is measured by the percentage of students who return to college at *any* institution for their second year, while retention rate represents the percentage of students who return to *the same* institution” (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021a, p. 1).

³ In this particular data set, the National Center for Education Statistics captured persistence/retention/degree completion data of two cohorts over a 6-year period. Thus, persistence was tracked beyond “return[ing] to college at *any* institution their second year” (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021a, p. 1).

rates for the 2008, 2013, 2019 cohorts. Please refer to Figure 3 and Figure 4 as I explore persistence and retention rates.

Figure 3

Persistence Rates by Race/Ethnicity for 2008, 2013, & 2019 Cohorts



The data for 2008 and 2019 are adapted from *Digest of Education Statistics*, by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2020

(https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_326.15.asp?current=yes). Copyright

2020 by National Center for Education Statistics. The data for 2013 are adapted from

Persistence and Retention: Fall 2019 Beginning Cohort by National Center for Education

Statistics database, 2021 (<https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/>). Copyright

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In the 2008 cohort, Latinx persistence rates were 67.7% compared to Asian (81.4%), White (75.2%), and Black (57.3%) students (see Figure 3; National Center for

Education Statistics, 2020). Black (12.4%) students were more likely to transfer out to a different institution (i.e. retention) compared to White (9.5%), Hispanic (9.3%), and Asian (6.7%) students⁴ (see Figure 4). In the 2013 cohort, Latinx persistence rates were 74.1% compared to Asian (86.9%), White (80.8%), and Black (66%) students (see Figure 3). Black (18.6%) students were more like to transfer out to a different institution (i.e. retention) compared to White (12.2%), Hispanic (12.6%), and Asian (8.3%) students (see Figure 4). In the 2019 cohort, Latinx persistence rates were 68.6% compared to Asian (86.5%), White (79.3%), and Black (64.9%) students (see Figure 3). White and Blacks students are more likely to transfer out than return to their starting institution (i.e. retention) (see Figure 4; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021a). Overall, Asian and White students had higher persistence and retention rates to their Latinx and Black student counterparts. However, gap differences between racial/ethnic groups in all three cohorts revealed that the gaps grew wider between Latinx and Asian and White students, but narrower with Black students by 2019⁵. Furthermore, there is potential for widening gaps as the longitudinal data for the 2019 cohort covers only one year while there is a six-year range for the 2008 and 2013 cohorts. This may explain why

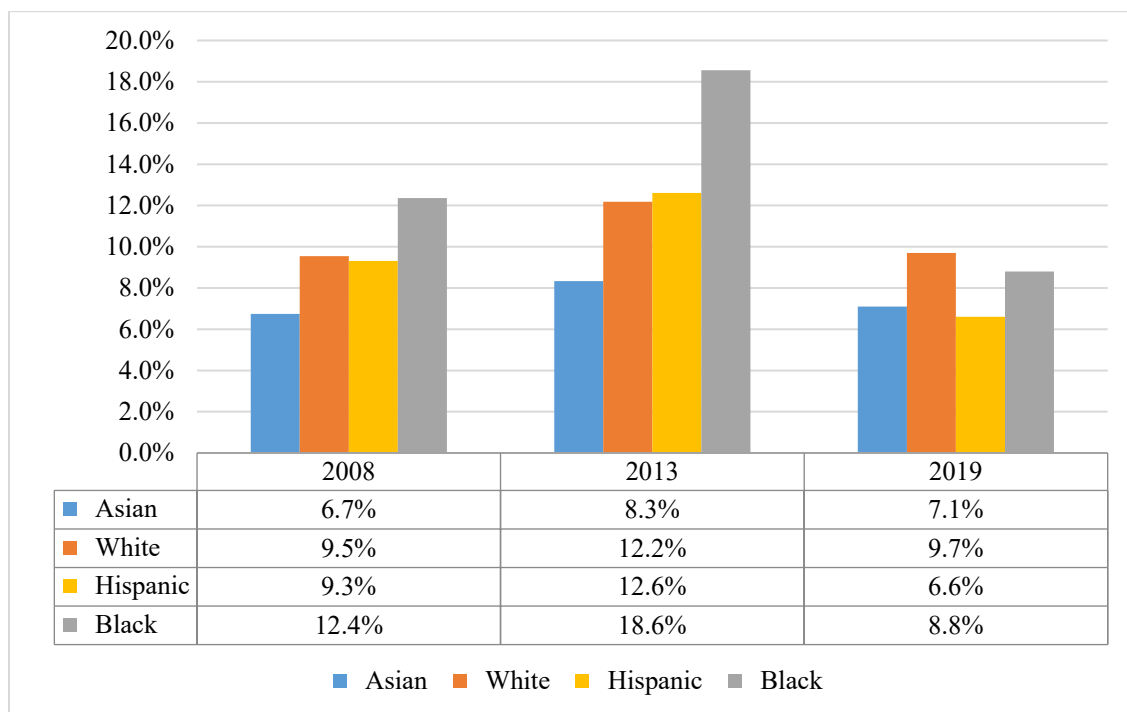
⁴ See (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021a) for persistence and retention rates of other racial/ethnic groups.

⁵ Though transfer students did not make up a large portion of the college student body, this group was affected by COVID-19 (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021b).

the National Clearinghouse highlighted that 2019 Latinx students experienced the sharpest decline compared to the previous year, despite their high rates of persistence and retention.

Figure 4

Transfer Rates of Students Who Return to Another Institution by Race/Ethnicity for 2008, 2013, & 2019 Cohorts



The data for 2008 and 2019 are adapted from *Digest of Education Statistics*, by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2020

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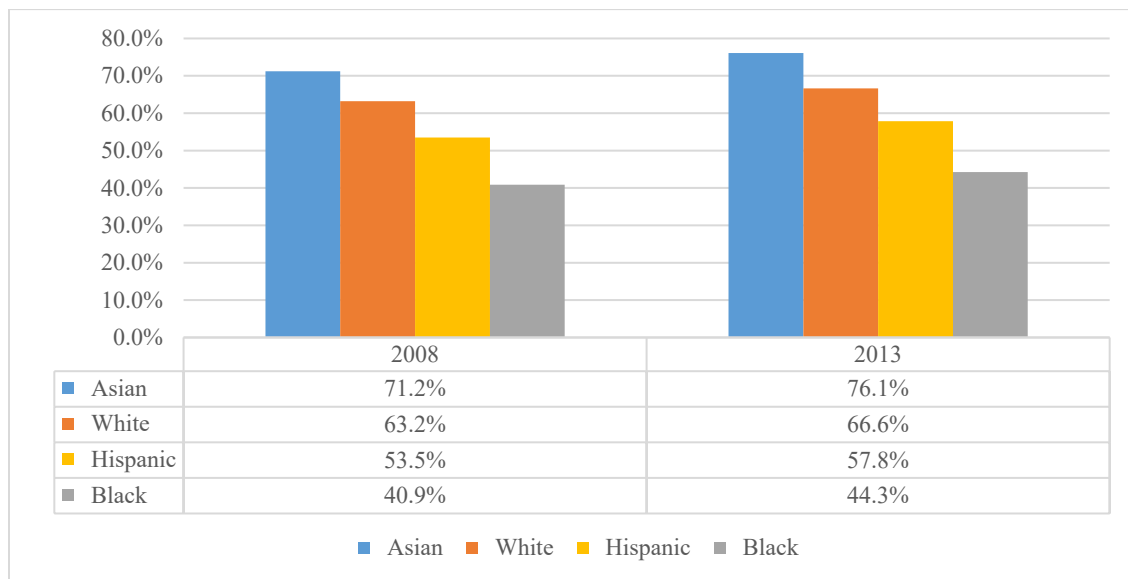
Persistence and Retention: Fall 2019 Beginning Cohort by National Center for Education

Statistics database, 2021 (<https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/>). Copyright 2021 by National Center for Education Statistics.

Degree completion rates for the 2008 and 2013 cohorts followed a similar trend (see Figure 5; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Asian (2008 cohort=71.2%; 2013 cohort=76.1%) and White (2008 cohort=63.2%; 2013 cohort=66.6%) students have higher bachelor’s degree completion rates compared to Latinx (2008 cohort=53.5%; 2013 cohort=57.8%) and Black (2008 cohort=40.9%; 2013 cohort=44.3%) students.

Figure 5

Bachelor Degree Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity for 2008 & 2013 Cohorts



Adapted from *Digest of Education Statistics* by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2020

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_326.15.asp?current=yes).

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When broken down by gender, there were larger percentages of bachelor degree holders among female than male students in both the 2008 and 2013 cohorts (see Table 1). The largest gap in the 2008 cohort is found among Black students where 35.3 percent of male Black students obtained a bachelor's degree while 44.7 percent of female Black students obtained a bachelor's degree among first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students. The next largest gaps were Latinx (8.1%), Asian (6.1%), White (5.7%), American Indian/Alaska Native (4.2%), and then Pacific Islander (0.1%), and students. The largest gap in the 2013 cohort was also found among Black students where 38 percent of male Black students obtained a bachelor's degree while 48.9 percent of female Black students obtained a bachelor's degree among first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students. The next largest gaps were Latinx (7.9%), Pacific Islander (7%), White (6%), Asian (5.9%), and then American Indian/Alaska Native (5.2%) students. The rate of change for the male to female gap between the 2008 & 2013 ranged from -0.1 to 7 percent. Interestingly, the 7 percent increase (for Pacific Islander students) was an outlier as the other student racial/ethnic had gap rate changes of 1.5 percent and lower. In both cohorts, White and Asian students (by sex) had higher and Latinx and Black students had lower degree completion rates than the average.

Table 1

Degree Completion Rates by Sex and Race/Ethnicity

Sex and race/ethnicity	2008	2013	Rate of Change (2008-2013)	Female-Male Gap (2018)	Female-Male Gap (2013)	Rate of Change (Female-Male Gap)
Sex						
Male	56.5%	59.9%	3.4%	-	-	-
Female	62.3%	66.3%	4.0%	-5.7%	-	-
Male						
Asian	68.0%	72.9%	4.9%	-	-	-
White	60.1%	63.4%	3.3%	-	-	-
Latinx	48.9%	53.3%	4.4%	-	-	-
Black	35.3%	38.0%	2.6%	-	-	-
Pacific Islander American	49.9%	49.4%	-0.5%	-	-	-
Indian/Alaska Native	38.6%	37.9%	-0.7%	-	-	-
Female						
Asian	74.1%	78.9%	4.8%	6.1%	5.9%	-0.1%
White	65.9%	69.4%	3.5%	5.7%	6.0%	0.3%
Latinx	57.0%	61.2%	4.3%	8.1%	7.9%	-0.2%
Black	44.7%	48.9%	4.1%	9.4%	10.9%	1.5%
Pacific Islander American	50.0%	56.5%	6.5%	0.1%	7.0%	7.0%
Indian/Alaska Native	42.8%	43.1%	0.3%	4.2%	5.2%	1.0%

Adapted from *Digest of Education Statistics* by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2020

(https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_326.15.asp?current=yes).

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Overall, there has been a large increase in college enrollment among Latinx students. Despite high college enrollment rates, Latinx still lag behind in educational attainment. Asian and White students consistently scored higher than, and Black students

consistently lagged behind Latinx students. Within group differences for each racial/ethnic group did not change from this pattern. Female students in each racial/ethnic group attained bachelor's degrees at higher rates than their male counterparts. However, the rates of bachelor degree completions were higher for White and Asian female students than Latinx and Black female students.

Purpose of Study & Significance

With the growing Latinx population and their overall educational lag, fostering success gives Latinx a competitive edge in a workforce that heavily relies on skilled labor and values college-level degrees (Amaro-Jiménez & Hungerford-Kresser, 2013; Arizona Board of Regents, 2020, 2022; Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). As it stands, only 18.8 percent of Latinx 25 years and older have at least a bachelor's degree. This is 17 percent below the national average and 20 percent below their non-Latinx counterparts (US Census Bureau, 2020c). If this trend continues, a large body of the American population will be ill-equipped to successfully navigate and/or progress in this skilled-based economy.

One way to augment academic success is to implement college readiness programs. They vary in strategies of support but aim at one goal: academic and career readiness/success. The Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) is a college readiness program offered through Arizona State University (ASU). The program recruits Latina students and their mothers to participate in college readiness activities/events from 8th to 12th grade. The intent is to build knowledge and confidence in the college selection and preparation process. However, the student journey is complex. Besides academic-related needs, there are other influencers (e.g. family) that

impact academic outcomes. This means that: 1) we must understand the whole academic journey to support academic success and 2) the academic journey will include nuances derived from intersecting influencers.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) and completed at least a bachelor's degree. Specifically, I will explore how the HMDP contributed to their academic journey; the overall process of selecting, enrolling, and persisting towards bachelor's degree completion; and other contributing influencers in their academic journey. The intent is to capture the impact of the HMDP but acknowledge the complex nature of the academic journey toward degree completion. No academic study to date has explored the impact of the HMDP on the Latina academic journey towards bachelor degree completion. In fact, there is a lack of research and information on college readiness program outcomes, overall (Cates & Schaeffe, 2011)⁶.

The significance of this study is two-fold. Academically, it adds, in two ways, to the literature on the complex academic journey of Latinx students. First, the added layer of familial impact (particularly mothers) provides a unique lens on how parental participation in a college readiness program affect college readiness. Second, most

⁶ It is important to recognize that Latino students also lag behind their male counterparts in other racial/ethnic groups (US Census Bureau, 2020c). Though this study will only focus on Latina students and will capture nuances unique to this sub-population, it may highlight important elements that support academic success among Latino students.

studies do not produce comprehensive stories because they specialize in one or a few influencers to examine impact on the Latinx academic journey. This study aims for a comprehensive story by being open to other nuances valued by participants and accounting for the four main influencers identified in the literature: Individual, Family, Finance, and Institutional Impact. In the practical field, this study provides insight on participant experiences and programmatic impact. Such evidence-based data can potentially inform future programmatic decision making.

Research Questions

The research questions used to guide this study are:

1. How and in what ways do program participants believe the HMDP prepared them to be college ready?
2. What factors do participants believe influenced their college selection, enrollment, and persistence?
3. What factors do participants believe influenced their academic success?
4. What do participants perceive are the short-term and long-term consequences of their participation in the HMDP?

Organization of the Dissertation

In the below, I provide an outline for the dissertation. In Chapter one, I introduced the research topic. I then provided background on the Latinx population for context and expanded on educational data to depict enrollment, retention/persistence, and degree completion rates. This information set the foundation for the problem statement and purpose. I ended the chapter by introducing the research questions.

In chapter two, I will present a literature review on the Latinx academic journey and the conceptual framework. First, I will examine the literature on what influences the academic journey of Latinx students. Second, I will discuss one strategy for academic support: college readiness. Lastly, I will present two concepts/theories that will frame this study: the psychosociocultural (PSC) approach by Gloria & Rodriguez (2000) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit).

In chapter three, I will outline the research design and methods. I will present general information on the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP), introduce two methods (i.e. Seidman's (2019) Three-Series and Atkinson's (1998) Life Story Interviews), outline the research design based on the two methods, and then end with profiles for each participant.

In chapter four to seven, I will present participant responses to each research question. Each research question will have its own chapter. Within each chapter, participant responses will be presented in themes (or themes within milestones for chapter five).

In chapter eight, I will conclude the dissertation. I will first present overall findings for each research question. Second, I will highlight four key findings across all participants and will utilize the literature review, LatCrit, and the PSC approach, as appropriate, to make sense of these findings. I will then spend the rest of the chapter providing implications and recommendations to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners before I end with concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study explores the academic journey of Latinas who participated in a college readiness program. This chapter will examine existing literature on what influences their academic journey and present two concepts/theories that will frame this study. The literature review consists of two parts. The first part will explore what impacts the Latinx academic journey post-high school. The second part will expand on the concept of college readiness and explore the structure/impact of long-standing college readiness programs. After the literature review, I will present two concepts/theories as the conceptual framework: the psychosociocultural (PSC) approach and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit).

What influences the Latinx academic journey in higher education?

Four major factors were identified in the literature that influence the Latinx college selection, enrollment, and persistence in higher education. These are: Individual, Family, Finance, and Institution. There are, of course, other nuances specific to sub-groups that are not fully captured in this literature review. Nonetheless, it lays the groundwork for understanding common trends in the Latinx population and for guiding the research design. I also recognize that cultural elements are evident throughout the identified influencers. This is certainly evident in the “Family” and “Individual” sections. Because of the embeddedness of culture in multiple aspects of the Latinx journey, culture did not have its own category. Rather, culture is recognized when appropriate in the four identified influencers. I take each of the four influencers in turn.

Individual

Factors at the individual level are known to affect the Latina academic journey. These are academic performance and personal/psychological variables. Overall academic performance generally has a positive relationship with educational outcomes (Cardoza, 1991; Gonzalez, 2012; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006; Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Taggart & Crisp, 2011; Trusty, 2000; Trusty et al., 2003; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). However, there is inconsistency in the degree of this effect between Latinos and Latinas. For instance, Trusty et al., (2003) found that the relationship between high school achievement and educational expectations among Mexican Americans were positively significant, when parental influence was excluded from the model. Interestingly, their proposed statistical model did not differ between males and females. In fact, the researchers combined both male and female samples because they were not statistically significantly different from each other. In this case, their membership in a racial/ethnic group had a stronger effect than their gender. For college enrollment and persistence, pre-college academic achievement was a strong predictor of college enrollment and persistence for Latinos but an inconsistent predictor for Latinas (Crisp et al., 2015; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). College academic performance did not highlight a gender difference in the link between higher grades or GPAs and greater likelihood of remaining in college and earning a college degree (Crisp et al., 2015; Crisp & Nora, 2010).

These discrepancies could be for a number of reasons. First, it could be because the degree of impact from academic performance differ depending on the timepoint on the academic journey (e.g. college selection vs. college enrollment). It could also be a result of how 'academic performance' is measured as some of these studies utilized a database with pre-determined variables prior to the research design. Third, it could be a

result of how ‘academic performance’ interacts with other variables in statistical models. Despite this, research shows an overall link between academic performance and college selection, enrollment, and persistence even when studies highlight variability in the Latinx population.

Personal/Psychological variables also impact the Latinx academic journey (Arana et al., 2011; Bonifacio et al., 2018; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Cavazos et al., 2010; Crisp et al., 2015; Flores & O’Brien, 2002; Gloria et al., 2005; Latino et al., 2021; Lopez, 2014; Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2018; McWhirter et al., 1998; Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017; Trusty et al., 2003; Zaragoza-Petty & Zarate, 2014; Zell, 2010). These variables include concepts of self-beliefs (e.g. self-efficacy or self-concepts), motivation, and ethnic identity/acclimation. Though self-beliefs play some role in motivation, the source of motivation can also derive from other forces.

Overall, self-beliefs are associated with academic outcomes. The degree and direction of self-beliefs on academic outcomes is inconsistent in the literature (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2018; Zaragoza-Petty & Zarate, 2014). For example, Latino et al. (2021) showed that self-efficacy (i.e. belief in oneself to complete a task or behavior) was related to (quicker) degree attainment. However, Zaragoza-Petty & Zarate (2014) shared that Latina students with similar perception of math abilities had divergent academic outcomes. Manzano-Sanchez et al. (2018) argued that the inconsistency could be due to the degree of measured outcomes. Studies on “global domains” that measure self-efficacy across multiple academic areas can produce different outcomes than those that focus on specific academic variables (e.g. Zaragoza-Petty & Zarate’s [2014] focus on perceptions of math abilities). Inconsistency could also be explained by demographics

(e.g. Latina versus Latino; Lopez, 2014) or research design (Trusty et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, these inconsistencies reinforce the importance of nuanced investigations.

Even when studies research similar topics, the intersection of different influential elements (e.g. research design or target population) can produce varying results.

Motivation (in)directly influences academic outcomes (Arana et al., 2011; Cavazos et al., 2010; Crisp et al., 2015; Zell, 2010). More often, motivation can act as an intermediary between a force/experience (e.g. goals/aspirations, generation status, social networks, etc.) and an outcome. For example, Arana et al. (2011) found that motivation from family and friends is very important to college persistence. In their study, students motivated to persist had supportive family and friends, while those who decided not to persist were overwhelmed by family crises and responsibilities. Interestingly, there was a layer of intrinsic motivation as some non-persisters had feelings of listlessness and confusion towards their goals. Other studies found college experiences impact motivation (Arana et al., 2011; Cavazos et al., 2010; Gloria et al., 2005; Zell, 2010). For instance, Zell (2010) found that Latinas felt marginalized by teachers/students and believed they did not have the characteristics to become college students. However, they broke away from this marginalized mindset through a process of “self-discovery” (Zell, 2010, p. 171). The students realized they wanted and deserved more than what they currently had. Similarly, Cavazos, Johnson, and Sparrow (2010) indicated that Latinas persevered through their college experience by accepting, believing, and acting to overcome their challenges; staying focused on their goals; proving Latinx stereotypes wrong; and finding support. Because self-beliefs are associated with perceptions of one’s

abilities, it is not surprising if these “self-discovery” moments transform perceptions of self-beliefs.

The last personal/psychological variable is ethnic identity/acclulturation. Ethnic identity is how a person identifies with their ethnic group and how salient/important that ethnic group is to the person (E. M. Castillo, 2002). It has (in)direct impacts on academic and career outcomes (Bonifacio et al., 2018; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Vela et al., 2019). For example, higher levels of ethnic identity were associated with greater negative expectations (e.g. discrimination) and higher career decision self-efficacy (Bonifacio et al., 2018). This means that Latina cultural identity is important to their career decision journey, despite the potential negative outcomes. In this same study, an indirect effect was also present as ethnic identity affected outcome expectation (i.e., expectations of career success) through its direct effect on career decision self-efficacy.

Acculturation is the negotiation between a different (mainstream) culture and the self. Similar to ethnic identity, it has (in)direct effects on educational and career outcomes (Cano & Castillo, 2010; Flores & O’Brien, 2002; McWhirter et al., 1998; Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). Mejia-Smith & Gushue (2017) found that higher acculturation level (i.e. “adopting behaviors of the Anglo culture”) was positively associated with career decision self-efficacy. Furthermore, this same variable had a mediating (i.e. indirect) effect on perceptions of barriers through career decision self-

efficacy⁷. The process of acculturation can also produce bicultural adaptation to meet academic and life expectations. This adjustment between worlds does come with challenges, especially when both settings are very distinct (Cano & Castillo, 2010). The outcome is feelings of isolation in the academic world and lack of understanding in the family world (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). This is why Gloria & Rodriguez (2000) emphasize the need to help balance students' "psychic energy" that assist with navigating in each context.

Family

Family, particularly parents, play a pivotal role in the Latina academic journey (L. G. Castillo et al., 2004; Ceja, 2004, 2006; Chlup et al., 2018; Marrun, 2020; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Sánchez et al., 2010; Vela et al., 2019). Studies of varying research designs consistently show that family provides a range of impact on academic and career outcomes. Quantitative studies largely show that parent variables ranging from parents' educational levels to parental support/involvement demonstrate significant impact on this journey (L. G. Castillo et al., 2004; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Vela et al., 2019).

⁷ Interestingly, Flores & O'Brien (2002) found that Mexican American girls with greater association with the dominant culture more likely pursued less prestigious and more traditional careers. This contradicts other research that found the opposite (McWhirter et al., 1998; Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). The researchers suggest that this contradiction could be because Mexican American women may recognize the nature of male-dominated contexts and choose to avoid those careers.

Qualitative studies provided more nuanced understanding of this impact (Chlup et al., 2018; Covarrubias et al., 2019; Marrun, 2020; Sánchez et al., 2010). Family was a source of motivation and persistence but also a force of complication. For instance, Latinas were willing to delay enrollment in college for family while others pressed forward with enrollment because of the long-term effect a higher education could have on the family and the impact they may have as role models to younger family members (Sánchez et al., 2010). Parents were supportive of their children's education but did not possess the capital needed by their children to navigate the college selection and enrollment process (Chlup et al., 2018). Despite this, parents used indirect forms of support by: 1) sharing family struggles and hardship (i.e. *historia familiares*); 2) providing words of wisdom (i.e. *dichos*) and 3) giving advice-based narratives (i.e. *consejos*) (Ceja, 2004; Marrun, 2020). The outcome was increased confidence to tackle academic challenges (i.e. self-efficacy). For some Latinx students, they found alternative forms of college information through their older siblings. Because of their prior college experience, older siblings paved the way for their younger siblings to navigate the college world (Ceja, 2006).

Familial impact remained nuanced when Latinx students persisted in higher education (Arana et al., 2011; Covarrubias et al., 2019; González et al., 2004). Some parents struggle with their children leaving home because of close family ties, even if they support college aspirations. However, many find comfort in school systems that provide support to their children (González et al., 2004). This is why some encourage deeper familial involvement in the educational journey (Cook et al., 2021; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). On one end, understanding the college context helps to bridge any

potential gaps between parental perception and student experiences. On the other end, family may impact Latinx students in the roles they play within their families while in college (Covarrubias et al., 2019). Latinx students potentially fulfill the following roles within the family: emotional support systems, familial advocates, language/financial brokers, financial supporters, sibling caregivers, among others. Interestingly, their roles as financial supports do create an intersection of impacts between finances and family. This is because employment holds a double purpose of financing their college education and contributing to family bills (Arana et al., 2011; Covarrubias et al., 2019). Sometimes parts of these financial obligations suffer.

Finances

Finances are a major contributor to the academic journey. They can define decision making from college selection to degree completion (Bozick et al., 2016; Cano & Castillo, 2010; Heller, 1999). Its source can originate from the individual level (e.g. personal income) to the institutional/structural level (e.g. financial policy). In any of these spaces, it plays an important role in the educational journey of Latinx students.

College tuition cost and financial aid are significant in the college journey. Together, they can affect enrollment as higher college tuition can dissuade students with less financial resources from pursuing higher education (Heller, 1999). As it stands, people of color 18 years and younger make up 72 percent of those below the poverty line, with Latinx accounting for 52 percent of that number (US Census Bureau, 2019). This means that a large proportion of potential students with low financial resources are students of color. The extra layer of immigration status can also complicate enrollment decision as some state policies deny in-state tuition rates to U.S. non-citizens. In a 2016

study that examined state policies on immigration status and tuition cost, Bozick et al. (2016) found states that extended in-state tuition rates to non-citizens did not affect enrollment rates. However, states with restrictive policy that denied in-state rates to non-citizens resulted in a 12.1 percent decrease in enrollment. Even though extension of in-state rates to non-citizens did not lead to higher enrollment, restrictive state policies did reduce enrollment. Interestingly, this study found differences in enrollment rates among states who officially included a restrictive policy versus those who did not build this language into their policy but still denied in-state tuition rates. This indicates that official postings of in-state tuition cost based on immigration status matters in enrollment decision.

Tuition cost and financial aid also impact attrition towards degree completion (Gross, 2011). Interestingly, tuition costs had more consistent effects on attrition than financial aid. Gross (2011) asserts that this may be due to “sticker shock” from tuition cost that is not offset by financial aid. However, there could be a few more reasons for this. First, it could be immigration status. Fourteen percent of Latinx with some college education are not U.S. citizens compared to their White (1 percent) counterparts (US Census Bureau, 2020a). This implies Latinx are uniquely impacted by financial aid policies that restrict access to only U.S. citizens and permanent residents (*Eligibility Requirements | Federal Student Aid*, n.d.). In fact, Zell (2010) reported that most of her participants who experienced stress and emotional tension from finances did not qualify for financial aid or scholarships; their main form of aid were loans or out of pocket payments. Another reason could be economic capital and family wealth. In 2015, 18 percent of Latinx 18 to 64 years were below the poverty line (US Census Bureau, 2016).

This is five percent higher than the nation and nine percent higher than their White counterparts. There was no difference in poverty level between Latinx and Non-Hispanic, Non-Whites between 18 and 64 years old. However, White and Black students in that 2015-2016 year received more overall federal and nonfederal aid than Latinx students (*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2018). For Latinx students, their financial needs—via federal financial aid—are not met to offset tuition costs. Even when they do qualify for financial aid, it may not be enough to cover tuition (Crisp & Nora, 2010). The outcome is reliance on employment and/or loans to offset the cost. Though there is merit in working on campus, more hours at work means less hours towards degree completion. Crisp & Nora (2010) speculate this reason for why financial aid was not significant by year three among their sample of college students.

Still, promoting financial aid opportunities is important to bridge the gap between needs and access. Gross (2011) shared that different financial aid opportunities at different points in the college persistence journey have varying effect. To support retention and overall student success, it may be beneficial to stakeholders to identify which forms of aid are important at different points in time and outreach to students accordingly. Another potential solution is policy modifications that expand financial support to those in need, despite immigration status. This may contribute to how Latinx navigate the educational world towards degree completion.

Institution

Institutional impact plays an important role in the Latina academic journey. I focus on three main forms: social networks, educational context/climate, and institutional policy. Major influencers within social networks that impact all stages of the academic

journey include teachers, counselors and peers (Acevedo, 2020; Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020; Cook et al., 2021; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; González et al., 2003; C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Llamas et al., 2018; Lundberg et al., 2018; Marciano, 2017; McWhirter et al., 1998; Moschetti et al., 2018; Oseguera et al., 2009; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). High school teachers and staff are major influencers in the college/career aspirations and college enrollment process. In fact, faculty interaction can contribute at the: 1) psychological level (i.e. academic self-concept) by impacting students' confidence in academic content (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020), 2) academic level by the degree of investment in student learning (Lundberg et al., 2018), 3) knowledge level by providing advice/insight on how to pursue and persist in the educational journey (Acevedo, 2020; Martinez et al., 2019), and/or 4) aspirational level by encouraging students to dream for/pursue a (academic) future (McWhirter et al., 1998). For example, Alcantar and Hernandez (2020) found that faculty who validated their Latinx students contributed to student academic self-concept and transferring to four-year universities. Lundberg et al. (2018) similarly shared the positive impact faculty-student interactions have on Latinx student learning. Faculty who are accessible, have high expectations, provide prompt feedback, host frequent discussions produce positive results (i.e. gains in general education, career preparation, and personal development) for Latinx students.

Staff in high school and college settings can also affect academic trajectory. Latinx students may not always credit high school counselors for college readiness but when they do, it is often for assistance in college applications, preparing for college exams, researching scholarships (Acevedo, 2020; Cook et al., 2021; Zarate & Gallimore,

2005). In fact, Latinas enrolled in college were more likely to acknowledge their counselors (including visiting specialized college guidance counselors) as part of the college selection process, than those (57 percent) who did not enroll in college (Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). Still, staff-student interactions showcase deficit approaches to Latinx student academic success. Cook et al. (2021) identified two in their study: 1) the lack of counselor-parent-teacher collaboration that could potentially expand greater opportunities/access, and 2) the need for greater support and advocacy to circumvent “environment stressors, racism, and discrimination” (p. 1655). Acevedo (2020) identified similar experiences at the college level. In tracking the cooling out effect on four-year college aspirations for Latinx students from high school to (community) college and forward, Acevedo (2020) found that: 1) high school counselors and staff typically presented community colleges as the more accessible option for GPA & financial reasons and 2) college counselors and staff tend to gravitate towards vocational pathways than transferring to a four-year university.

Race and cultural awareness of faculty and staff can explain these college experiences. This is why diversity among faculty and staff is so important to college persistence. They are “proven to have a positive effect on student retention” because they represent inclusion, are role models, and can serve as cultural liaisons between students and the campus climate (Oseguera et al., 2009, p. 37). Unfortunately, the ratio of diverse faculty to the student body leads to challenging access. Nonetheless, many supplement this support network with peers to aid with coping strategies in college (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Peers are a source of *consejos* that guide college selection/enrollment decisions (Marciano, 2017; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006). Access to

this kind of peer dynamic is especially important when Latinx students do not have the same quality of access to teachers or counselors as their counterparts (González et al., 2003). Peers are also a source of college adjustment and overall well-being as a college student (C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Llamas et al., 2018). Peer support is negatively linked to loneliness (C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020) and is a mediating factor between intragroup marginalization and psychological distress (Llamas et al., 2018). In fact, peer mentorship programs and research on their effectiveness highlights the value of peers on the Latinx academic journey (Moschetti et al., 2018; Rios-Ellis et al., 2015).

The campus climate also played an important role in Latinx persistence in higher education (Cano & Castillo, 2010; Cavazos et al., 2010; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Lewis et al., 2000; Quintana et al., 1991; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). Quite often students of color experience disruptions and microaggressions as they negotiate the higher education world (Kiyama, 2018; Lewis et al., 2000). Lewis et al. (2000) conducted a qualitative study on “colorblind” ideologies and provided insightful results. They shared that students of color (including Latinxs) were expected to be less competent (and sometimes, explicitly told they would not be successful); are expected to assimilate to the dominant culture but also expected to be a representative of their racial/ethnic group; experience awkward interactions with their counterparts who are not culturally aware; experience forms of exclusion and marginalization through deliberate or non-deliberate actions; and are judged for receiving admission under special treatment. The outcome: 1) exacerbates the already stressful experience of negotiating between the academic and personal worlds (i.e. bicultural adaptation; see Cano & Castillo, 2010 or Bonifacio et al., 2018) and 2) are

decisions antithetical to educational aspirations (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Taggart & Crisp, 2011).

Lastly, institutional-/structural-level policies are associated with unequal outcomes for Latinx students (Davila & de Bradley, 2010; J. C. Pérez et al., 2021). These policies affect all parts of the educational journey and have immediate effects that can translate to long-term outcomes. For instance, English language learner policies that assess English proficiency can mis-appropriately track students into special education classrooms, retain students another year, or provide inadequate access to gifted education or differentiated support. Overall, students are placed in settings that do not match their needs or potential. In fact, Davila and de Bradley (2010) claim that “language can be seen as a tool for oppression [because of English language assessment policies]. If you do not possess knowledge in the dominant/preferred language (English) then one essentially is viewed as ‘less than.’” (pp. 48-49). Unfortunately, these decisions have lasting effects on future educational outcomes and social mobility (Villalpando, 2004). Mis-appropriately tracked to ineffective pathways can contribute to “cooling off” before they acquire a bachelor’s degree. Even if Latinx students experience racially- and culturally-sensitive support pre-college, they can still experience challenges in higher education, like admissions criteria that may value alumni legacy status over racial/cultural consideration.

College Readiness Programs

Different strategies have been used to support Latinx in their academic journey. One strategy is to foster college readiness (Amaro-Jiménez & Hungerford-Kresser, 2013; Conley, 2014; Gruber, 2011). Though there is no universal definition of college

readiness (St. John, 2014), one highly used definition states that students who are college ready can:

qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate degree, a certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental course work. They can complete such entry-level, credit-bearing courses at a level that enables them to continue in the major or program of study they have chosen. (Conley, 2014, p. 51)

This means college ready students do not need to participate in remediation as they have mastered four key aspects of college readiness (i.e. key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills).

However, principles like Conley's (2014) are criticized for maintaining the status quo (Majors, 2019). Historical (educational) policies reinforce institutions/systems that benefit the majority (e.g. White students over students of color) and contribute to current inequalities in education. This is because current college readiness standards are based on past successes of students who are predominately White, affluent, and come from schools with abundant resources. Unfortunately, access to similar resources are not historically made available to students of color. The outcome puts students of color at a disadvantage as they strive to meet standards with unequal support. This is why some argue that marginalized group needs should be included in educational discourse to truly create successful policies/strategies for college readiness (Amaro-Jiménez & Hungerford-Kresser, 2013; Majors, 2019). In addition to access and (un)fairness, campus cultural congruency is overlooked as a certain level of campus assimilation is expected. For some students, the culture is not too distinct from their own that the change is minimal.

However, what if the expectations of change are so great that it creates strain/stress and affects academic success? Rather than expect change, could culture be intersected with college readiness dialogue to bring value to the culture and reduce stress/strain in the transition?

There are programs that currently support student college readiness. Their support draw from private non-profit to government-sponsored sectors (Gándara, 2001). Many offer counseling, academic enrichment, parental involvement, personal enrichment/social integration, mentoring, and/or scholarships as part of their services. In their variation, the goal is the same: academic (and career) readiness/success. Though many college readiness programs exist, a few stand out for their long history and impact (Gándara, 2001). I plan to expand on three: Upward Bound, AVID, and the Puente Project.

Upward Bound

Part of the TRIO programs, Upward Bound “provides opportunities for participants to succeed in pre-college performance and ultimately in higher education pursuits” (*50th Anniversary of the Federal TRIO Programs*, 2014, p. 7). Its target population is high school students from low-income families and/or with parents who do not hold a four-year degree. Programs under Upward Bound (UP) offer: instruction and academic tutoring; assistance in secondary and postsecondary course selection; support in college readiness (e.g. college entrance exams and admission); and financial aid literacy and assistance.

A more recent US Department of Education report conducted a comparison between a treatment (i.e. those who participated in Upward Bound services) and a control

(i.e. those randomly assigned to not participate in Upward Bound services but had access to supplemental services) group on college outcomes (Seftor et al., 2009)⁸. They found the following: 1) There were no overall difference in postsecondary enrollment and types of postsecondary institutions; 2) Upward Bound participants had higher rates of postsecondary certificates and license from vocational schools but were no different than the control group in earned bachelor's and associate degrees; 3) College enrollment and degree completions rates increased for certain subpopulations (i.e. those with lower educational expectations) in Upward Bound; and 4) Longer participation time in Upward Bound programs led to higher postsecondary enrollment and completion. This study included all forms of postsecondary institutions. Interestingly, the report recognized that their population scored higher in motivation, college enrollment rates, and degree completion rates than the national average and may explain why there were little differences between the treatment and control group. This highlights the importance of (fostering) motivation and educational outcomes.

AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination)

Another long running program is AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). This program started in 1980 at Clairemont High School in San Diego by a teacher frustrated by the current tracking system (Gándara, 2001). It has now expanded to 8,000 schools across 49 states in the U.S. (*Data / Graduation Success Rates at AVID Districts/Schools*, n.d.). Their primary purpose is to support college and career

⁸ This 2009 report is the most recent US Department of Education report on Upward Bound resources and college outcomes. It is possible that the impact is different

readiness/success by closing the “opportunity gap” (*What AVID Is / College & Career Readiness - Explore AVID Students by Grade Level*, n.d.).

Their strategy for success is longitudinal and involves multiple players. AVID implements their program at the Elementary and Secondary levels. The intent at the Elementary level is to develop academic habits for success in higher grade levels and to create a college-going culture that encourages college and career aspirations. By the Secondary level, schools implement AVID elective courses that provide “academic, social, and emotional support that will help them succeed in their school’s most rigorous courses” (*What AVID Is / College & Career Readiness - Explore AVID Students by Grade Level*, n.d.). English language learners will also get additional support for language and literacy needs in these elective courses. Besides student support, AVID provides professional development for educators who implement the AVID program. Their professional development is three-part: 1) training in culturally relevant teaching, academic language and literacy, and digital teaching and learning; 2) access to tools/resources for implementation in the classroom and for additional training; 3) opportunities for feedback from AVID personnel and for assessment tools that measure success and identify room for improvement.

Current data from AVID indicate positive impact on student’s educational journey (*Data / Graduation Success Rates at AVID Districts/Schools*, n.d.). Among 2021 AVID seniors, 87 percent planned to go to a postsecondary institution, 77 percent enrolled in at least one rigorous course, and 94 percent completed a four-year college exam. Among AVID alumni, 42 percent of first generation, low-income college students graduated with a four-year degree in six years. This is four times more than the national average.

The Puente Project

Though the above two programs do not target a particular racial/ethnic group, a large majority of participants are low-income minority students. One program that does have long history with a population similar to this study is the Puente program. In 1981, a college counselor and professor founded the Puente (meaning *bridge* in Spanish) Project to address low retention and academic achievements among Latinx students in California (Puente, 2019; Sidhu, 2020). They reviewed transcripts from 2000 college students and identified three themes that guided their strategies: 1) students avoided academic counseling; 2) students did not enroll in college-level writing courses; and 3) students were the first in their families to attend college. Based on these themes, they piloted the Puente Project that has now grown to seven middle schools, 36 high schools, 65 community colleges (Puente History, 2019; *The Puente Project Budget and Funding Proposal*, 2020). This project also expanded its membership to **all** students.

Similar to AVID, their strategy for success is longitudinal and involves multiple players. Puente has a high school and community college program to assist in the journey from high school to college to four-year institutions. Both settings align with three major components: 1) Rigorous English courses for one to two years; 2) Counseling to support academic, college/career, and personal goals, and 3) Leadership and mentoring to build social and cultural networks in the community. A trained Puente personnel is assigned to each component. Interestingly, Puente incorporates culture and family in their program to aid in college and career readiness/success efforts. This means that Puente-trained English teachers structure their courses like *familias* and incorporate Latinx and other multicultural text into their curriculum. Puente-trained counselors

incorporate parents to encourage support in their students' educational journey. Lastly, Latinx mentors serve as role models who understand the Latinx student and family experience.

Overall, data from the Puente Project suggest that students who go through this program fair better than those who did not (*The Puente Project Budget and Funding Proposal*, 2020). Retention rates among Puente students in the California Community Colleges (CCC) is 30 percent higher in 2017-2018 than their counterparts who did not participate in the program. Transfer rates from community colleges to a 4-year institution are also higher among Puente students. In 2016, 73 percent of Puente students who transferred to a UC school were admitted and 82 percent of those admitted enrolled. Conversely, only 62 percent of underrepresented non-Puente students were admitted, with only 72 percent of them enrolled. Lastly, 91 percent of Puente transfer to UC and 76 percent of Puente transfers to CSU graduated in four years compared to their Asian (88% and 73%) and White (89% and 77%) counterparts.

The literature review demonstrates that support programs for Latinx students lead to better outcomes in college attendance, retention, and graduation. I now turn to the conceptual framework that guides this dissertation.

Conceptual Framework

The psychosociocultural (PSC) approach and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) form the conceptual framework of this study. The PSC approach calls for university service providers to examine Latina college experiences in psychological, social, and cultural dimensions to provide a more comprehensive and tailored support (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). The second framework that complements the PSC approach

is LatCrit Theory. Founded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), LatCrit incorporates structures and multidimensionality (i.e. intersectionality) to explain the Latinx (academic) experience (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006; Hernandez-Truyol, 1997).

Both were chosen for their alignment with the study's purpose/design and their theoretical strengths to capture a comprehensive story of the Latina academic journey. There are three main alignments between them. First, both target the Latinx population. This meant their analytical parameters would inherently align with the Latinx experience. Second, (higher) education is central to both concept/theory, which parallels the context of this study (i.e. educational journey of Latinas). Lastly, non-essentialism and intersectionality is emphasized to capture a comprehensive story. The outcome of this approach will result in identifying contributors in a variety of spaces (e.g. family, finances, etc.) and levels (e.g. individual or structural levels) in the academic journey. Additionally, its multidimensional analytical nature justifies my decision to narrow the target population in this study: Latina female college students who completed at least their bachelor's degree. Narrowing the population creates room to thoroughly analyze nuances that might be dismissed or unique to a given population. I do not imply that this study is 'truly' comprehensive but it increases the chances of thoroughness by accounting for a variety of intersecting influencers in a sub-population.

In addition to their commonalities, they also complement each other. The PSC approach was chosen for its comprehensive, meta-analysis of the Latinx college experience and for its practical counseling guide. However, its strengths lie at the individual level. It focuses on individual experiences with individualist resolutions. Though LatCrit may not offer such a practical guide, it provides tools to analyze

injustices across all dimensions and levels, with an emphasis on structural injustices. This means it accounts for a variety of influencers at the individual level (as evident by their emphasis in counterstories) as well as institutional and structural levels. The inclusive analytical frame of LatCrit is helpful for this study, which should consider institutional and structural influencers when examining the Latina academic journey. Below, I explore the PSC approach, as proposed by Gloria & Rodriguez (2000), and LatCrit theory. I end with concluding remarks and a re-assertion of the research questions.

The PSC (Psychological, Social, and Cultural) Approach

The PSC approach was proposed by Gloria & Rodriguez (2000) to inform counseling strategies for Latinx students in higher education. Though generally geared towards university counseling centers, it has expanded to other university service providers who work with Latinx college students. The goal behind this approach is to explore more comprehensive ways of understanding the Latinx experiences in higher education and to develop practical strategies on how best to support Latinx students be successful in higher education.

This approach looks at three dimensions to understand Latinx student experiences: 1) psychological (e.g. self-beliefs or motivation), 2) social support (e.g. faculty, peers, and family), and 3) cultural factors (e.g. cultural congruence; Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Each dimension captures unique experiences (though it can also capture the unique experiences of other racial/ethnic minority groups) and contributes to a comprehensive picture of Latinx students in higher education. The outcome are student-tailored strategies that encourage degree completion. In this

approach, university service providers target the academic journey to support degree completion. In fact, Castellanos & Gloria (2007) find this journey important as educational success is a balance between the educational process and academic outcome.

The psychosociocultural approach has been implemented with different Latinx populations (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Latino et al., 2021) as well as other racial/ethnic minority groups (Gloria & Ho, 2003; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 2001). These studies expanded the literature framed around the psychosociocultural approach but also provided insights on how to utilize gained knowledge towards best practices for successful results. Below, I explore each dimension and end with practical approaches service providers can implement with the Latinx population in higher education.

Psychological

The psychological dimension focuses on self-beliefs (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Its initial conception concentrated on ethnic identity and acculturation as the main lens through which to understand a person's self-belief (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Ethnic identity is "knowing about one's ethnic group and about oneself as a member of that group," while acculturation is the negotiation between the individual and the host/mainstream culture (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000, pp. 148–149). Both concepts make up the core in the self, and contribute to behavioral/reactionary outcomes in different contexts. Within higher education, it is not surprising that Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) focused on ethnic identity and acculturation. Students of color generally experience a gap between themselves and the campus climate if their (ethnic) identity is different from the campus culture. The outcome can be harmful to their academic success.

The psychological dimension includes other concepts of self-beliefs. Castillo (2002) provided a great summary of two self-beliefs. The first is academic self-concept. This is the belief in one's, "own academic abilities and about the environmental responsiveness to one's abilities" (E. M. Castillo, 2002, p. 38). Essentially, it is how one perceives their role and abilities as a student. The second self-belief is self-efficacy. This is the belief in "one's ability to successfully perform a given task or behavior" (E. M. Castillo, 2002, p. 40). Self-efficacy gives insights on the nature of coping behaviors in challenging circumstances. Just like ethnic identity and acculturation, both play a role in academic aspirations and pursuits. In fact, there is ample literature on education and the three concepts in the psychological dimension (Bonifacio et al., 2018; Crisp et al., 2015; Latino et al., 2021; Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2018; Vela et al., 2019).

Social

The social dimension centers on social support and relationships (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Estepp et al., 2017; Gloria, 1997; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Social support means "helpfulness of social relationships, the manner of human attachments, and the resources exchanged among members of the support systems" (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000, pp. 149–150). Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) concentrate on two types of social support within the college experience because of their impact on academic success and college persistence: 1) Family and 2) Role models and mentors.

Family. A large body of research exist on family and the Latinx academic journey (Arana et al., 2011; Ceja, 2004; Chlup et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2021; Covarrubias et al., 2019; González et al., 2004; Marrun, 2020; Sánchez et al., 2010). Its

inclusion in the PSC approach signals the central role *familismo* play in providing social support for Latinx students. *Familismo* is

manifested by (a) providing material and emotional support to other family members, (b) relying primarily on family members for help and support, (c) using family members as referents for attitudes and behavior, and (d) placing the needs of the family or family members before individual needs (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000, p. 150).

This type of social relationship conflicts with the current culture of individualism, which emphasizes independence of the self (from the family). Latinx students who value family can experience challenges if the campus climate fosters an individualistic environment.

These challenges can be offset by developing practical strategies that align with the concept *familismo*. For example, counselors can encourage students to creatively maintain connection with their families (e.g. care packages), rather than advise students to disconnect from family and re-direct focus towards peer relationships. In fact, Gloria & Rodriguez (2000) argued that lack of familial recognition could potentially shut down attempts at counseling.

Role-models and Mentors. Role models and mentors give Latinx students access to: a) social support, b) information “not otherwise attained”, and c) support for college success/persistence (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000, p. 150). Research indicates that they play an important role in college selection, enrollment, persistence, and success (Acevedo, 2020; Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020; González et al., 2003; Llamas et al., 2018; Lundberg et al., 2018; Marciano, 2017; Oseguera et al., 2009; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005).

Common players include faculty/teachers, staff, and peers. Each provide different support types in the college experience.

Representatives within the institution play a unique and important role in the Latinx academic journey (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Relationships with these role-models and mentors can produce advice/strategies on navigating a challenging world. They can also cross in the psychological dimension by affecting academic self-concept (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020). For first generation students, role models and mentors from educational institutions are the main source of knowledge as they do not have this level of access from family members⁹. The connection can also deepen if the role models and mentors are racial/ethnic minorities who can empathize with their student experiences. Despite this potential support, there is a small number of racial/ethnic minority faculty and staff. This makes access to mentors challenging as the body of Latinx college students continues to grow.

Latinx students have found access to mentoring through other family members or friends (as an alternative/supplement). For example, Latinx students may turn to their older siblings with college experience for guidance, or they may create a network of peer support and journey through college together (Ceja, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Familial and peer role models/mentors help Latinx students access some form of social

⁹ It should be noted that support from family is not categorically less than support from higher education personnel. Rather, both groups provide different types of support that are both valuable in supporting academic success.

capital, even if they may not have access to the unique support inherent among college personnel.

Cultural

The cultural dimension generally pertains to cultural congruence with the university climate (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Gloria, 1997; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). In other words, it is a negotiation between the home and university culture that produces bicultural strategies to adjust in both contexts. The result of this negotiation can vary and potentially be stressful as students may experience a sense of alienation in the academic setting and disloyalty to the demands of the family (Cano & Castillo, 2010; L. G. Castillo et al., 2004; Gloria et al., 2005; Quintana et al., 1991).

In addition to the negotiation process, Latinx can experience an unwelcoming university environment based on stereotypes and discrimination (Cavazos et al., 2010; Kiyama, 2018; Lewis et al., 2000). This can range from expectations of how Latinx should academically perform to contradictory expectations of assimilating to the dominant academic culture but maintaining some form of authenticity to their home culture. The result can negatively impact student success and progression as they question their fit in the academic context.

In both cases, Gloria & Rodriguez (2000) highlights the importance of engaging in conversations that value the students' home culture, examining the experiences at home and school, and developing strategies that aid in success and degree completion. The goal is to bridge both worlds and narrow the gap that has stretched students in two almost separate camps. Gloria & Rodriguez (2000) proposed simple strategies to bridge

these worlds. These include students: 1) engaging in conversations with the family about academic experiences, 2) bringing parents to the campus, 3) connecting with campus organizations tailored to racial/ethnic minority students, and 4) processing experiences with a “filter” that externalize negative experiences.

3x3 Dimension

D. W. Sue et al. (1992) developed a 3x3 (dimensions by characteristics) matrix to provide a practical tool for multicultural, culturally-sensitive counseling. The three dimensions (i.e. attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills) intersect with three characteristics (i.e. (a) counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases, (b) counselor awareness of client’s worldview, and (c) culturally appropriate intervention strategies). To implement this type of service, counselors must self-examine (including their beliefs, knowledge, and skill sets about their own and the clients’ background) based on the matrix and determine the most appropriate counseling strategy. An extensive explanation of the self-examination process based on this 3x3 dimension can be found in Sue et al. (1992).

Arredondo et al. (1996) tailored the 3x3 matrix on multicultural, culturally-sensitive counseling to align with the three elements of the PSC approach. In the table below, the dimensions (i.e. attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills) remained the same but each cell was a result of the combined influence of the characteristics with each PSC dimension (i.e. psychological, social, and cultural). The result is recognition of counselor biases and appropriate counseling strategies for Latinx students.

Figure 6.

Guide to Multicultural, Culturally-sensitive Counseling

Attitudes and Beliefs, Knowledge, and Skills When Providing Psychosociocultural Counseling to Latino University Students

Item	University Environment	Ethnic Identity	Acculturation	Social Support
Attitudes and beliefs	Awareness of campus attitudes about racism Beliefs about educational opportunities for Latinos	Awareness of own ethnic identity and attitudes Ongoing exploration of own ethnic identity and attitudes	Awareness of own acculturation and attitudes Ongoing exploration of own acculturation and attitudes	Value mentoring Latino students Advocate for Latino clients and students Value hiring and retaining Latino faculty and staff
Knowledge	Environmental features Educational myths Assessments Native/school balance Latino or subgroup context	Ethnic identity Assessments Within-group and between-group heterogeneity Latino or subgroup context	Acculturation Assessments Within-group and between-group heterogeneity Latino or subgroup context	Assessments Latino or subgroup context Importance and role of Latino family Identified mentors and student organizations
Skills	Assess environmental perceptions Discuss educational myths Assess native/school balance Develop environmental coping strategies Develop Latino referrals on campus Participate in Latino activities and groups Consult with Latino campus communities	Provide accurate and sensitive assessment Discuss similarities and differences in the counseling dyad Be persistent and patient with client Appropriately and gently challenge value systems Consult about impact of ethnic identity on counseling	Provide accurate and sensitive assessment Discuss similarities and differences in the counseling dyad Attend to gender differences Implement efficacy experiences (decrease acculturative stress) Appropriately and gently challenge value systems Consult about impact of acculturation on counseling	Refer students to Latino groups and mentors Implement efficacy experiences (verbal encouragement and modeling) Develop relationships with Latino faculty, staff, and students Incorporate family into counseling process when appropriate Consult with Latino campus communities

From “Counseling Latino University Students: Psychosociocultural Issues for Consideration,” by A.M. Gloria and E. R. Rodriguez, 2000, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78, 2, (<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02572.x>). Copyright 2000.

Critical Race Theory/LatCrit Theory and Education

Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) derive from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006). It offers a lens to analyze institutional/structural influencers and supplements the PSC approach on racial/ethnicity and intersectionality. Below, I introduce LatCrit and explore its analytical power in the Educational field.

LatCrit Theory

LatCrit is rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006). Major CRT constructs include:

- *Interest Convergence* – Progress is made when the interest of those in power converge with those not in power (Bell, 1980).
- *Whiteness as Property* – The strong association between whiteness and property rights creates advantages for those who possess Caucasian skin tone and disadvantages for those without ownership of this whiteness (Harris, 1995).
- *Counterstories* – Stories from the bottom up holds the potential to unveil acts of racial subordination that would otherwise not be noticed (Delgado, 2000; Matsuda, 1995).
- *Liberalism/Colorblindness* - Accepting this notion renders current racialized acts invisible and invalid.
- *Racial Realism* – There is no biological or scientific basis for racial categories. However, this basis should not negate the fact that racist experiences are real (Haney Lopez, 2000; Smedley & Smedley, 2005).
- *Social Change* – Social change should follow after identifying/analyzing racial experiences (Crenshaw, 1988; Su, 1998; Williams Jr., 1997).

Building on CRT, LatCrit expanded on five major concepts unique to the Latinx community (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006). First, Latinx emphasizes the importance of intragroup diversity (See also Hernandez-Truyol, 1997). The intersection of identities beyond race, like ethnicity, religion, language, immigration, and other variables provide a comprehensive and nuanced glimpse on the multidimensional nature of Latinx (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). This intersecting lens of investigation also avoids

generalizing groups of individuals who share similarities but also hold differences. In other words, it accounts for and respects the diversity that exists within the Latinx population. Second, LatCrit encourages within- and between-group analyses to identify patterns. Similar to the nonessentialist argument in point one, inter- and intra-group understandings map connections among these contexts and produce a better image of how interlocking systems, together and separately, explain injustices and inequalities. Third is the extension of LatCrit to international spaces. This generates deeper understanding of how race, ethnicity, and other categories are tailored by certain contexts and locations. The outcome of context-specific analyses can bridge gaps of knowledge and produce group comparisons. Fourth is the push for greater interdisciplinary or counter-disciplinary projects (though they may conflict) to bolster understanding of identity unique to different spaces. Lastly, LatCrit claims that class and identity are not in opposition to each other. Rather, class is an axis in a multidimensional analysis of power in law and society. Together, they mutually constitute and reinforce to each other.

CRT & LatCrit in Education

Eventually, CRT and LatCrit expanded to the education field. Education scholars recognized its ability to highlight racial subordination/marginalization and used it as an analytical tool to understand the current education system (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso et al., 2004). Critical Race Theory laid the foundation for a race-based analysis in education, while LatCrit tailored this analysis to parameters unique to their population/literature. The outcome was examination of the educational field through a multidimensional, non-essentialist lens.

Below, I will outline initial works of CRT on the educational field and interject elements of LatCrit that contributes to the examination process. In a seminal piece, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) applied CRT as an analytical tool on education. They employed three basic premises to justify use CRT in education:

1) Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States, 2) U.S. society is based on property rights, 3) The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity. (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 48)

Race and racism are endemic in society. Despite the generally agreed notion that race holds no biological ground, it is deeply embedded in society that we continue to use it in ways that we may or may not notice. At the individual level, this can be in the form of overt or covert racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) or unconscious racism (Lawrence, 1995). At higher levels, racist outcomes are the product of societal institutions and structures. Long-standing policies that consistently privilege Whites over people of color establish institutions and structures that maintain this status quo. This is why Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) argue that the cause of poverty together with the current educational context is *institutional and structural racism*. LatCrit augments this premise of race-based examinations by arguing for analyses that intersect multiple identities: race, class, gender, language, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, and other similar factors (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). This multidimensional analysis allows for a more comprehensive understanding of discriminatory experiences among Latinx. It also accounts for the Black-White binary concerns that overlook other shades of experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Similar to race, property rights have been central to U.S. society since the colonial period (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). The prevalence of property rights and race inherently intersect to produce racialized outcomes. The first notable outcome is the conflated association of whiteness and property. Old long-standing policies that Blacks were property and Whites were property owners eventually solidified a union between white-ness as a property with access to privileges. In the educational setting, this whiteness as property is “alienable” or transferrable to students. Those who assimilate to “white norms” are rewarded the privileges of whiteness while those practicing their own culture are penalized. Conversely, being marked as nonwhite are associated with defamed or diminished reputations.

Financial impact from the intersection of property and race are also apparent. Areas with wealthy homes provide larger per student funding compared to less wealthy communities. Well-funded schools offer diverse course offerings, ample classroom equipment, updated technology, qualified/prepared teachers, and so forth. Lower-funded school cannot access similar resources. This varying financial access exacerbates the racial divide as those in wealthy communities are less inclined to fund low-income schools with historically larger non-white and poor students. Even in ‘diverse’ schools with adequate resources, racialized access and division can still occur through tracking, honors programs, advanced classes, etc.

Lastly, Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) challenge the notion of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy. In alignment with CRT and LatCrit, reality is socially constructed and context-specific. To make transcendent statements is to discount experiences that are real but different from the status quo. This is why stories

are so important in CRT and LatCrit. They publicize *real* experiences for members of marginalized groups. Furthermore, stories can be a vehicle for healing among storytellers and for change/self-examination among oppressors. This is why Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) argue for the importance of stories in the field of education. To hear experiences of people of color contributes to the whole story of education.

Concluding Remarks

Latinxs is the largest racial/ethnic minority population in the United States. With a large upsurge in their population growth, a similar growth was found in enrollment rates in higher education institution. However, the same could not be said for degree completion. Degree attainment rates among Latinxs were much lower, indicating a gap between enrollment rates and completion rates in higher education institutions. Within group differences in enrollment and completion rates also highlight the variability that exists in the Latinx population.

A review of the literature highlights four main influencers that explain the Latinx academic journey: Individual, Family, Finance, and Institution. The degree and manner of their impact depends on where a student is along their academic journey. For example, tuition cost and financial aid can affect college enrollment decisions but the addition of financial obligations to the family might impact the college-going experience. This variability in degree and manner can produce unique experiences and outcomes. Despite this, current strategies attempt to support academic success. One strategy is college readiness programs, which overall provide a positive impact on the academic journey.

The PSC approach and LatCrit Theory form the conceptual framework of this study. They were chosen because they: 1) highlight experiences or influences that may be dismissed or hidden, 2) capture a story that is comprehensive yet tailored/unique to the student, 3) focus on the Latinx population, and 4) have a history in the educational field. Their framework creates the foundation to pursue this study: exploring the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) and completed at least a bachelor's degree. It should be noted that older versions of the HMDP did not include Latino male participants. Thus, the opportunity to get male and female perspectives were not available. Nonetheless, narrowing the target population to Latina females create possibilities to capture nuances unique to a sub-population.

Research Questions

As a reminder, this study seeks to capture the Latina academic journey. The research questions used to guide this study are:

1. How and in what ways do program participants believe HMDP prepared them to be college ready?
2. What factors do participants believe influenced their college selection, enrollment, and persistence?
3. What factors do participants believe influenced their academic success?
4. What do participants perceive are the short-term and long-term consequences of their participation in HMDP?

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study explores the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP). In the review of the literature, I demonstrated that influencers of the academic journey exist in multiple layers and spaces. The psychosociocultural (PSC) approach and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) became the theoretical foundation for this reason: their lens for intersectional and multidimensional examination fostered the space to create a research design that accounted for nuances. The two methodological tools used to capture these nuances are: Seidman's (2019) Three-Series and Atkinson's (1998) Life Story Interviews. Seidman (2019) provided the structure to capture the academic journey and Atkinson (1998) offered the flexibility to adjust/probe as necessary to answer the research questions.

The following chapter is divided into 7 sections: 1) Setting, 2) Methods 3) Research Design, 4) Ethical Concerns, 5) Challenges and Limitations, 6) Reflexivity, & 7) Participant Profiles. The setting provides the context for the HMDP program. The methods outline the foundation for the research design. The research design presents the strategies to collect and analyze the data. The ethical concerns, challenges and limitations, and reflexivity provide lens to consider in the data collection and analysis process. Lastly, the participant profiles provide a longitudinal take for each academic journey.

Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP)

The Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) was first implemented at Arizona State University in 1984 by Jo Anne O'Donnell (Lopez de Lacarra, 1988). The

goal of the Program was to increase college enrollment among first-generation Latina students by providing resources for college preparation over a 5-year period.

Recognizing the importance of culture and family in the Latinx community, the HMDP included parents and their daughters as program participants in its college readiness strategies. The inclusion of parents fostered familiarity of college selection and admission among parents and potentially increased parental support towards their daughters' selection, enrollment, and persistence in higher education.

Recruitment began when the young women were in 7th grade. Eligibility for the Program has evolved over time, with the recent criteria being: “1) Neither parent has received a bachelor’s degree or above; 2) Be currently enrolled in the 7th grade at a participating school district; 3) Be at 7th grade level in English & Math (must be proficient in the English language); 4) Have a 2.75 GPA or above in the core classes (English/Language Arts, Math, Science or Social Studies); 5) Have aspirations of attending college or university” (*Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program Application | Arizona State University, n.d.*). In more recent changes, neither gender nor ethnicity affiliation were criteria for qualified applicants (*Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program | Arizona State University, n.d.*).

If applicants met the criteria above, they were interviewed to make final decisions about admission into the HMDP. Upon acceptance, participants began the program in 8th grade through the end of 12th grade. The HMDP members in this study participated in educational seminars, workshops, campus visits, student-HMDP advisor campus check-ins, and lectures. In most cases, mothers and daughters participated in these events together, unless otherwise specified. Since then, the program has evolved while

maintaining its purpose to increase college enrollment. The Program has expanded its reach to other school districts, and provided transportation for most of its participants. The districts they now serve are: Alhambra Elementary School District, Cartwright Elementary School District, Creighton Elementary School District, Isaac School District, Murphy Elementary School District, Phoenix Elementary School District, Phoenix Union High School District, Roosevelt School District, Wilson School District, Chandler Unified School District, Gilbert Public Schools, and Mesa Public Schools (*Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program* | *Arizona State University*, n.d.).

Participation in the HMDP has resulted in unintended consequences beyond its target population: Latina girls. Mothers have also been influenced by the resources provided to the mother-daughter teams (Auffret, 1996; Khoury, 1998; Yara, 2004). Like their daughters, mothers also began to pursue a postsecondary education. They felt inspired to pursue their own higher education path and/or be an example for their daughters. In fact, some mother-daughter teams graduated together at Arizona State University (Auffret, 1996).

Three-Series Interviews & Life Story Interviews

This study explores the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) and completed a bachelor's degree. Specifically, this study addresses the following four research questions:

1. How and in what ways do program participants believe HMDP prepared them to be college ready?
2. What factors do participants believe influenced their college selection, enrollment, and persistence?

3. What factors do participants believe influenced their academic success?
4. What do participants perceive are the short-term and long-term consequences of their participation in HMDP?

Before I expound upon the two methods that guided this research, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between methodology and methods. Methodology is “the theoretical and philosophical consideration of how to engage in the process of doing research” (Brayboy et al., 2011, p. 427). It shapes our assumptions about how and why we do research (e.g. Truth) and defines our methods of choice. Methods are the tools or techniques to collect the data. In this study, the methods of choice were: Seidman’s (2019) Three-Series Interviews and Atkinson’s (1998) Life Story Interviews. Their strengths lie in being comprehensive and capturing nuances of individuals’ stories. Because nuances can create a never-ending line of tangents, both methods were combined to establish parameters in the research design. Seidman’s (2019) Three-Series Interviews provided the structure and direction on how to capture the data. Atkinson’s (1998) Life Story Interviews created flexibility within the structure to adjust as necessary. I present Atkinson’s (1998) method first and end with Seidman’s (2019) Three-Series Interviews.

Life Story Interview

Storytelling is a main form of human communication. The act of storytelling allows the narrator to make sense of their lived experiences. The meaning making from this experience contributes to the larger discourse for others to make sense of their lived experiences and the greater mysteries of this world. Due to the foundational nature of storytelling and its potential degree of influence, it is not surprising that storytelling

serves an important function in society. In fact, Atkinson (1998) lists four important storytelling functions:

1. Psychological: Stories can help make sense of lived experiences and guide the self through life stages
2. Social: Stories can validate experiences juxtaposed to others
3. Mystical-religious: Stories can inspire and bring meaning to the mysteries of the world
4. Cosmological-Philosophical: stories can help make sense of the natural order of the universe at a given time.

Research contributes to these functions. One form is through life stories. A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8). This approach gives participants lead in sharing their story. The role of the researcher in this context is to elicit a story and to guide the conversation. This means that the researcher intentionally refrains from dominating the conversation, avoids yes-no questions and re-directs the conversation to remain on point. The outcome is a combination of information sharing but also meaning making. Interestingly, the meaning making process is two-fold. The interviewer guides the participant in reflective questions to elicit their meanings behind the story. However, the interviewer also engages in their own meaning making from the interview. They make connection/patterns or identify implied meanings within the story (with the input of the interviewee). The final product is a narrative in the words of the storyteller with

(potentially) commentary from the researcher to contribute further context or clarity of the story and its meaning.

Three-Series Interview

Storytelling is a meaning making process. The three-series interview provides a structure that captures the story, builds a context around that story, and asks for meaning(s) behind that story. The three-series interview are founded on four main phenomenological themes:

1. The human experience is temporal and transitional in nature. What 'will be' becomes 'is' and then 'was' in an instant.
2. The point of view is subjective. The goal is to come close to understanding experiences from the participant's subjective point of view.
3. Lived experiences are composed of elements that flow in a stream of action. We pay little attention to its elements since life is transitional and the 'is' instantly becomes the 'was.' When we step outside the stream to reconstruct those elements, they become a phenomenon. Reflecting on the phenomenon yields the meaning making process. The goal of the researcher is two-fold: a) guide participants to reconstruct those lived experiences and bring the "was" as close as possible to the "is"; and b) ask participants to reflect and create meaning from their phenomena.
4. Phenomenology emphasizes the importance of meaning making. The act of meaning making does not happen during lived experiences (see theme three). It happens when we bring attention of that lived experience to an intentionally gaze and reflect on what that lived experience means. The context matters in the

meaning making process as it provides understanding for the action in that lived experience.

These phenomenological themes laid the foundation for Seidman's (2019) three-series interviews. Three separate interviews are needed to capture context, reconstruct the details, and reflect on the meaning behind the lived experiences. The purpose for each interview is as follows:

1. **Interview One** captures the context of the lived experience. This can include all intersecting forces and people that contribute to that present lived experience.
2. **Interview Two** reconstructs the details of the lived experience in the context captured from the first interview. This includes reconstructing thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions.
3. **Interview Three** asks participants to reflect on what their lived experiences means to them. Interview one and two engage in meaning making through the act of constructing a story. However, the last interview directs full attention to the meaning making process by reflecting on what they shared from the first two interviews. The degree of connection between the first two and the last interview requires that the research pay attention to details in the prior interviews. That way they can highlight these details for reflection and clarification.

The outcome of the above structure is presented as participant profiles of their lived experiences and thematic accounts connecting patterns between and within participants and categories.

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) and completed at least a bachelor's degree. The literature review and conceptual framework highlight the multidimensional nature of the Latinx experience. It was important to create a research design that accounted for multiple dimensions when exploring the Latina academic journey. I drew on the strengths of Life Story and Three-Series Interviews to produce a design that captured stories that were comprehensive and nuanced, yet focused on the academic journey. Below I expand on the research design. I will address this study's purpose by answering the following research questions:

1. How and in what ways do program participants believe HMDP prepared them to be college ready?
2. What factors do participants believe influenced their college selection, enrollment, and persistence?
3. What factors do participants believe influenced their academic success?
4. What do participants perceive are the short-term and long-term consequences of their participation in HMDP?

Access & Recruitment

Gaining access to Program participants and documents was a process. I initially connected with the HMDP team through an associate. The connection granted access to attend and volunteer at the HMDP meetings/events. Additionally, my associate suggested that the Program's data analyst become a part of the conversation. Over time, the data analyst became the person with whom I discussed the study and data collection procedures. The outcome of these conversations was their agreement to support this

study. Once the IRB approved the study, the data analyst acted as a liaison between the HMDP team and me. In return for their support, the narratives from the data will be shared to the HMDP team.

Recruitment was handled by the HMDP team. I drafted the recruitment script and sent it to the data analyst (see Appendix A). Acting as the liaison, she shared the recruitment script with the HMDP team. The team then sent the recruitment script on behalf of the researcher through the department’s email address to the HMDP alumni who completed the program in 2012-2016. Potential participants were asked to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. Additionally, I asked the HMDP team to forward potential participant outreaches to me if they contacted the HMDP instead of the researcher. If potential participants met the search criteria, they were emailed consent forms.

Participants

Nine HMDP alumni expressed interest but eight were interviewed. Participants must have completed the HMDP and at least a bachelor’s degree to qualify for this study (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	HMDP Cohort	High School Grad Term	Bachelor's Grad Term	Master's Grad Term	Bachelor's Institution	Financial Aid Package
Victoria	25	2008-2009	2013	2018	In progress	ASU	Full coverage
Stacy	26	2007-2008	2012	2017	N/A	ASU	Full coverage

Olivia	25	2008-2009	2013	2019	In progress	ASU	Full coverage
Angela	25	2008-2009	2013	2017	2019	ASU	Full coverage
Bailey	26	2007-2008	2012	2016	2019	non-ASU	Full coverage
Abbey	25	2008-2009	2013	2016	In progress	ASU	Almost full coverage
Belinda	22	2011-2012	2016	2020	N/A	ASU	Full coverage
Natasha	22	2011-2012	2016	2020	N/A	ASU	Full coverage

Two were part of the 2007-2008 HMDP cohort, four were part of the 2008-2009 HMDP cohort, and two were part of the 2011-2012 HMDP cohort. The 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2011-2012 HMDP cohorts graduated high school in 2012, 2013 & 2016, respectively. All but one participant attended Arizona State University (ASU). The one student who did not attend ASU attended a private university. All participants received a financial aid package, with seven receiving full coverage and one receiving partial coverage. Bachelor's degree completion timelines were variable, with years to complete a bachelor's degree ranging from 3.5 to 6 years. Five—of the eight—are currently in the process of or have completed a Master's degree by 2020.

It is worth noting that I only asked participants information about their academic timeline. Outside of that, participants had liberties in how they shared their stories. From this organic approach, there was inconsistency in asking about other demographic information. Since some shared about their financial context, immigration status, language, and educational knowledge, I will reveal what I know here. All participants had financial hardships growing up. Examples of their hardships included moving residence every six months or living in a motel for a few years until they could move to an apartment. Additionally, many of their parents worked in labor intensive jobs, like

janitorial positions, house cleaning, and construction. Two participants mentioned emigrating to the United States, where Spanish was their first language, but even more lived in households where Spanish was a common language in the home. Lastly, all mentioned having parents with little to no knowledge on college readiness and relied on outside sources for support. This lack of knowledge was tied to the fact that their family members had little to no experience in the U.S. college education system.

Data Collection

Eight (n=8) HMDP alumni from the 2007-2008, 2008-2009, & 2011-2012 cohorts were interviewed. The HMDP recruited on behalf of the researcher, but potential participants were asked to contact the researcher to show interest. The HMDP also forwarded potential participants, should they contact the team rather than the researcher. For those who met the participant criteria (i.e. HMDP Alumni & completed a bachelor's degree), they were each emailed a consent form (see Appendix B). Once a completed consent form was returned to the researcher, they were contacted to schedule interview times.

I followed a modified version of Seidman's (2019) three-series and Atkinson's (1998) life story interviews. This study required a design that captured a comprehensive story and accounted for the multidimensional nature of the Latina experience. Seidman (2019) provided that structure with their guidelines on how to capture a story, while Atkinson (1998) fostered the flexibility to ask questions in any order and to diverge into topics relevant to the research. The final product was three interviews per participant with interview scripts that reflected a merge between the three-series and life story interview. Each interview had a purpose. The first interview provided the context, the

second interview probed for details, and the third captured a reflection of the life story. All interviews were semi-structured with open-ended (and probing) questions. There were a total number of twenty-three¹⁰ interviews.

In Interview one, participants were asked to provide an overview of their academic journey up to the present. The purpose was to capture what led to the point of joining the HMDP and what happened after that experience. Participants were granted flexibility to describe this journey. However, probing questions were asked to enhance richness in the context and to provide consistency across participants. A sample probing questions is: “Who was part of your academic journey? Teachers? Parents/Family? Friends? Thinking at a large scale, how would you define their parts/roles in your academic journey?” (See Appendix C for questions from the Interview Script).

In Interview two, participants were asked to provide details of the major milestones relevant to this study: membership in HMDP, selecting a college, enrolling in classes, and persisting through college. The purpose was to expand and provide additional quality to the context provided in Interview one. Participants had less flexibility as the researcher honed in on specific academic life experiences and asked probing questions to expand on those milestones. Sample probing questions for a

¹⁰ After multiple attempts, I could not secure the third interview for one participant. This is why there is one less than the expected 24 interview moments. The data from the participant with only two interview moments were still included in this study because the first two captured the context and details of her academic journey story and meaning making still happened during those interview moments (Seidman, 2019).

milestone include: “Selecting a college: What was that like? What/who was a part of selecting a college? Family? Location? Scholarships? Faculty? Student? Staff? Community? Friends? Program of study?” (See Appendix C for questions from the Interview Script).

In Interview #3, participants were asked to consider what was discussed in Interview #1 & #2 and to share what their academic journey meant to them. The purpose of this interview was to capture participant reflections of their overall academic journey and of each milestone from Interview #2. The intent was to expand on creating meanings of their lived experiences. Sample questions include: “What did participating in HMDP mean to you?; What were/are your thoughts about your mom participating in the program with you?”

This approach produced saturation¹¹ in the data and provided depth in answering the research questions (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Because each consecutive interview was a follow-up from the previous conversation, I ensured that time gaps between each interview per person was minimal. Days between interviews ranged from two to seven days. This allowed the previous story to remain ‘fresh’ in preparation for the next interview. The only exception to this was one participant who lived out of the country and had to delay her third interview one month after the second interview. This participant was able to resume as usual in her third interview, despite the wide time gap.

¹¹ Saturation is “when you reach the point where you are hearing the same information over again...” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 20).

All interviews were conducted through Zoom. This program was capable of recording and transcribing. Consequently, it was the most cost-effective way to acquire transcriptions of all interviews. In conjunction with Zoom, a handheld recorder was used as a backup should Zoom not work or the sound not be audible. After each interview, I wrote a memo to summarize the interview, captured any preliminary thoughts, and drafted any follow-up questions based on the previous interview for the upcoming interview. These follow-up questions were incorporated into the following interview guide in the interview series. Sample questions include: “You mentioned extracurricular activities in college. Can you delve a little more into that?; What were some academic-/college-related programs you were part of besides the HMDP?” All transcripts, audio recordings, and memos were kept in a secure file.

Data Analysis

There were three forms of data: audio files, transcripts, and memos. Each had a purpose for the data analysis. The audio files were used to clean up and clarify information on the transcripts and memos. The transcripts provided the raw data, textual representation of the verbal interviews, and examples for the Results chapters. The memos were coded to identify themes for the study. Transcripts are generally the data source to code for themes. Coding the memos (over the transcripts) made for a simpler analytical process. This is because the memos were succinct versions of the transcripts; analyzing the memos were similar to analyzing shorter versions of the transcripts. It is important to note that I referenced the transcripts and audio files should I need to expand or provide clarifying information in the memos. The intent was to ensure accurate

representation of the transcripts and audio files on the memos. Below, I expand on the analytical process.

Memo data analysis. Meaning making and data analysis started from data collection (Atkinson, 1998; Seidman, 2019). This is because follow up interviews required review of the previous interviews to identify clarifying questions for the upcoming interviews. However, the bulk of the data analysis happened once all memos were written. This is in alignment to Seidman's (2019) suggestion to conduct in-depth analysis after all interviews are complete, even if salient points are identified in the early phases of the interview process.

All memos were uploaded to Dedoose. This is a user and budget friendly software to conduct qualitative and mixed methods analyses (*Dedoose Version 9.0.17, Web Application for Managing, Analyzing, and Presenting Qualitative and Mixed Method Research Data*, 2021). I utilized this tool to store and code the memos. Data analysis occurred in two phases. Both analytical phases were conducted through Dedoose.

Phase 1. I read each memo line by line. Code names were assigned to discrete parts to reference words, phrases, or sentences¹² (LaRossa, 2005; Miles & Huberman,

¹² If the memo needed more detail to expand or bring clarity to the code, I went back to the transcripts to gather this information and place it in the memo. Every time a memo changed, I timestamped the date of the change to indicate when I coded the excerpt. This became beneficial for phase 2. Since coding is an evolutionary process,

1994). Dedoose added these codes to a preliminary code list. It was expected that this code list would evolve as I progressed through each memo to accommodate code creation(s) and/or modification(s). This means that with each progression through the memos similar data to the previous memo(s) were given the same code name. Conversely, dissimilar or new data from the previous memo(s) were given new code names. It is expected that codes will “decay” or “bulk,” requiring a further breakdown to sub-codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This comparative and additive process continued until all memos were analyzed (see Appendix D).

Phase 2. Once all the memos were coded, I combined each code into broader themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Four principles guided this process: 1) the methodological design to present data as participant profiles and/or themes (Seidman, 2019); 2) the literature review that identified major influencers of the Latinx academic journey; 3) the conceptual lens that acknowledge the multidimensional nature of the Latinx lived experience; and 4) the study’s purpose to answer each research question. Consequently, I intentionally organized the codes to thematically answer each research question. Within each thematic answer, I accounted for any nuances shared by participants. This meant occasionally re-coding all sub-codes within a larger theme to capture these nuances and/or comparing its current code name with other codes/themes to determine its relevancy. The final code list reflected this structure (see Appendix D). This iterative process took nine months to complete.

analysis at the initial stage will be different at the later stages. If the timestamp was old, I re-read the data for the code to determine its relevancy and re-coded accordingly.

Ethical Concerns

There were a few ethical concerns to consider when implementing this study. These were access to contact information and identifying information in the data. I took several steps to address these concerns. First, I created a level of separation between the HMDP alumni and I. This was accomplished by asking the HMDP to send out the recruitment script on behalf of the researcher. Contact with the researcher only happened when HMDP alumni expressed interest in the study. It was only then that participant information was shared. This strategy helped reduce access to personal information for only eight participants. Second, I stored consent forms, participant information, and data in separate encrypted folders. Only the Principal Investigator and I had access to these research items. Third, each participant was assigned a randomly generated number that was used to name all data types (i.e. audio files, transcripts, memos). Fourth, I used pseudonyms in the interview transcriptions and memos to conceal names, places, and other items that could be linked to participants. The random number and pseudonyms became the reference point (rather than the real names) during the data analysis. Lastly, I did not discuss the data during the data collection and analysis stage with individuals outside my dissertation committee. These strategies helped keep data confidential and anonymous.

Challenges & Limitations

There are a few challenges and limitations in this study. Originally, the intent was to recruit just one HMDP cohort. This would account for any variability between cohorts. However, with the time gap between now and bachelor degree completion, it was difficult to recruit a sizeable number of participants. Thus, it was decided that I

recruit from three cohorts (i.e. the 2008, 2009, & 2012 cohorts) but recognize that program experiences may not be exactly the same.

Second, there were a total of 23 interview moments. Transcribing and analyzing all those interview moments were daunting without support. I utilized two software resources for assistance: Zoom and Dedoose. Zoom is capable of recording and transcribing. Particularly important, was its ability to transcribe a recording within minutes of a completed interview. Its limitation was the level of its accuracy. However, this was not concerning. Because I coded the memos instead of the transcripts, I only cleaned parts of the transcripts needed as examples for the Results chapters. Dedoose was the software used to analyze the data. There was a small learning curve because I had no prior history with this software. However, I adjusted quickly to the interface.

Third, storytelling and its interpretations are highly subjective (Atkinson, 1998). This is because storytelling is from the perspective of the teller and the same experience could be told differently by another teller. The subjective nature is further layered as not all researcher will interpret the same story similarly. The outcome is the recognition that storytelling is less about historical truths and more about the storyteller's perspective. Thus, standards for research in this field is less about validity and reliability and more about consistency. Atkinson (1998) shared that storytelling has a sense of sequence and direction that contributes to this internal consistency. By enforcing follow-up questions for each interview, I identified questions that can aid in clarifying the story for internal consistency.

Reflexivity

Because stories (and their interpretations) are subjective, it is important that I share my background and interactions with the participants (Hunting, 2014; Schutt, 2011). I am an international woman of color in my thirties. I spent eleven years of my childhood in a Caribbean country. Because of its geographical location, this country was home to a diverse array of races and cultures. This proved useful when I move to the United States as my experiences in my home country and the culture my family brought when we emigrated equipped me to relate to the experiences of people of color, particularly those from the Latinx culture. I was aware of this personal knowledge when I performed the literature review. However, I intentionally maintained an opened mind in searching the literature to account for contributing factors missed by my personal knowledge. The outcome was re-affirmation of my assumptions and/or insight into the nuances behind factors that contribute to the academic journey. This informed what was included in the interview scripts.

During the interview process, I recognized that my physical features aligned more with East Indian ancestry. Thus, I tried to build rapport by spending a few minutes before and after each interview to engage in general informal conversations. The inherent three-series interview structure also contributed towards building rapport as each participant saw me more than once. Interviews were not conducted face to face. Because the interviews occurred at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoom was the alternative medium. I kept the video off during recording to avoid anonymity and confidentiality concerns. Though there is merit in keeping the video off since the interviews could be viewed as audio journals, they could have still been impacted by missed non-verbal cue.

Still, many were very open to sharing their stories, which may be due to the informal conversations and the follow up interviews.

Participant Profiles

In this section, I present profiles for each participant. The profiles provided a longitudinal approach for each academic journey. The intent was to establish which (chain of) experiences belonged to a participant. This was to honor their stories as a whole before their stories were coded across participants based on themes within each research question. Participants chose the names below as their pseudonyms.

Abbey

Abbey is 25 years old and lives with her family. She has two older half-sisters from her dad's previous relationship and one younger sister from her dad's current relationship. She started Kindergarten in 2000, graduated high school in 2013, obtained her bachelor's in 2016, and is currently enrolled in graduate school. Abbey changed schools five times during her entire academic journey (i.e. four times in K-12th grade and once post-high school), but only moved residence twice.

Abbey always wanted to go to college. In fact, her family encouraged it so much that college became a "natural" next step after high school. Her dad was her number one influencer. Her father used his life as an example of what life would be like without an education. He did not want a similar life for Abbey. Additionally, a layer of pressure was placed on her as her dad's older daughters did not follow the path he wanted (e.g. pregnant at 15 years old) and he did not want Abbey to do the same. Abbey's parents had the same expectations for her younger sister but the outcome was not successful. Still, Abbey became a source of support for her sister to prepare and complete college.

Initially, her mother was not actively present because she worked the night shift.

However, she changed her work schedule to be more present for Abbey after a traumatic experience. As she participated in HMDP, she learned how to support her daughter.

Abbey was an active participant in school and academic activities. These included: AVID, IB courses, HOPE, student council, national honors society, and HMDP. She found support in their content and staff. Abbey did not feel the “smartest” but found support from her first AVID teacher. By her second year in AVID, she did not feel close to her second AVID teacher, which propelled her to reach out to her two IB English teachers. The first IB teacher provided support and created a space for her to feel comfortable. The second IB teacher was more direct but helped to prepare for college (e.g. FAFSA).

Abbey found out about HMDP through her guidance counselor, who requested that she attend an informational meeting on the HMDP. She was then interviewed in 7th grade, accepted into the program, and started participating in 8th grade. The main structure of the program was college readiness in the form of workshops/events from 8th-12th grade. Common topics included: importance of GPAs, peer pressure, bullying, applying for college, FAFSA, selecting a college, and college (life) expectations. The HMDP was intentional on who were guest speakers as they wanted to “expose” participants to various career pathways taken by members of the Latinx community.

Two impactful relationships came out of her experience in HMDP. The first is the initial bond between Abbey and her HMDP representative. The HMDP representative often visited her to check in on her grades and discuss anything else during the first two years in the program. However, the visits became less in high school and the

bond eventually disappeared. The second relationship was with her mother. Though her mother became more present, she did not show support until participating in the HMDP. Her mother become more supportive, understanding, helpful, and aware of how to be ready for and successful in college. This change strengthened her relationship with her mother and created an overall value of education for Latinas.

When asked the role of the HMDP and AVID on her academic journey, she felt both were important to support her journey. One without the other would have affected her academic journey as not participating in HMDP meant no relationship with her mother and ultimately no educational support, while not participating in AVID meant no immediate access to academic support systems. However, she would still rank her preparation based on the HMDP at 8.5 (on a scale of 10). This is because it didn't prepare her for the culture of college. She felt she was knowledge-ready and was familiar with the campus but she was not ready for how "big" ASU would really be. This was one of the reasons why she didn't feel that she fit in as a college student. The other reason was that she didn't see students like her in the classroom.

By college selection and enrollment, she felt the process was easy and smooth because of AVID and HMDP. Her college selection was based on the following reasons: finances, location, and parental need to keep her close. She said her parents' opinion weighed heavily in choosing ASU. Enrollment for each semester thereafter was fairly easy. While persisting towards degree completion, she worked many hours, enrolled in fulltime credits, tried to maintain her scholarship, had a romantic partner, and maintained some form of friendship with her peers. Abbey worked because her scholarship did not cover all tuition and fees and because her mother was laid off. She lost her scholarship

during this time. Abbey experienced a mixture of challenges: breakup with romantic partner, self-doubt in educational pursuit (because she struggled with the content), and transportation concerns. She shared these experiences with the scholarship coordinator, who was understanding of her situation. However, this coordinator was replaced by a newer individual who did not know her situation and ended her scholarship based on her grades. Abbey had less time for her peers. Work and school demands (especially with the loss of her scholarship) took a majority of her time that she could only re-connect with them if there were cancellations in her work and/or school settings. If she were to think of who were her core reason for continuing in the program, it was her parents. Despite having challenges along the way and questioning if college was “worth it,” Abbey continued because she did not want to disappoint her parents and she wanted to say that she “did something.” After college she worked fulltime. After approximately three years, her family shared that she didn’t need to work full-time while going through graduate school. However, her father was diagnosed with cancer earlier this year so she remained full-time, to help with the bills.

Angela

Angela is 25 years old and is the oldest of her siblings. She has one younger sister and one younger brother. She started Kindergarten in 2000, and graduated with her high school degree in 2013, bachelor’s degree in 2017, and Master’s degree in 2019. Angela changed schools eight times during her entire academic journey (i.e. seven times in K-12th grade and once post-high school), with one of those changes caused by a temporary separation between her parents.

She considered herself intrinsically motivated to learn from a young age. She mimicked teaching with her siblings or read books as part of her play time. Her family did not participate nor shared the same love for learning (through reading books and doing homework). This was evident in their attempts to pull her away from learning moments while at home. Nonetheless, they still played a role in her academic journey. Her dad had high academic expectations and provided content support upon her request. Her mom provided emotional support to supplement these high expectations and to maintain her well-being. Her dad's best friend (aka uncle) provided academic support on math-related content.

Angela was surrounded by teachers who were passionate about education. They instilled a passion for learning by presenting the content in a way that made her want to learn more. They also taught her leadership skills that were useful during her employment in college. In addition to teacher impact, she experienced programmatic impact from the HMDP. This program provided the information she needed to prepare for college. These included learning about options for college, how to financially plan for college, and how to manage oneself while in college. Help from the HMDP provided a lasting impact as she became a source of information for her younger siblings. For her brother, she outreached to him (upon the request of his mother) to provide guidance for next steps, particularly for college. The younger sister contacted Angela to process next steps based on her ultimate career goal. Despite the long-standing impact the HMDP content provided, she did not have meaningful relationships with the HMDP staff.

The college selection process was simple as she had already decided to pursue ASU before the HMDP. She had exposure to different environments and realized that

she wanted to stay in Arizona and specifically, ASU. Enrollment was smooth. She knew ASU admission requirements and prepared for them. Additionally, enrollment for each semester was simple as an outline of program course requirements was readily available and her program progression was tracked on her student profile page. She did make sure to connect with her academic advisor to confirm she was on track for graduation and to gain additional insights on courses.

Angela's undergraduate financial package covered tuition and fees. It was not enough to cover living expenses so she remained at home during her undergraduate years. Her mother initially drove her to school, but Angela eventually secured her own car and became the main commuter for her siblings. While an undergraduate, Angela only found meaningful relationships with her coworkers. They were present during the romantic breakup and were instrumental in her ultimate career and educational choices. However, Angela came to realize the importance of friendships by graduate school. These relationships contributed to her mental health as it helped her practiced work-life balance. Similar to friendships, meaningful relationships with college faculty did not happen until Graduate school. There were two who made a significant impact on her educational and career goals during her Master's program. The first faculty helped her to become a better teacher and the other offered flexibility to accommodate her needs after experiencing a major car accident.

Angela had two romantic partners after high school. The first had different life goals that created a divide in the relationship. They broke up after five years together. During that time, she failed one course. However, she still found that moment successful because she **only** failed one class. Additionally, her family and coworkers played a large

role in supporting her during this time. The second relationship offered an atmosphere of support, particularly during her recovery from the car accident. His support helped her to complete her last semester in the Master's program.

Bailey

Bailey is the youngest of two daughters. She emigrated from a South American country with her family when she was 12 months old. Both parents acquired janitorial positions when they first moved to the United States, but eventually obtained teaching positions in the K-12th grade setting. Both her parents obtained Master's degrees in their home country. Bailey started Kindergarten in 2000, and graduated with her high school degree in 2012, bachelor's degree in 2016, and Master's degree in 2019. Bailey moved residence four times and schools six times (i.e. four times in K-12th grade and twice post-high school). Each residential move was a promotional move, so she saw the change as positive. By college, she lived in the dorms for four years before moving to a different country, where she currently resides.

Her parents valued education but did not understand the steps towards obtaining a college education. In their first attempt, they struggled to support their older daughter because they did not understand the U.S. college education system. By the time they turned to Bailey, they shifted their approach and pursued opportunities that could provide knowledge and guidance.

Bailey cited a few people who contributed to her academic journey in grade school. Her French teacher played an instrumental role in cultivating her love for the French language and culture. She presented the curriculum in a way that made her experience the language and culture without being there. Bailey credited this experience

for her continued study in French. She also appreciated her school peers because they connected her to college-based information and fostered a culture of ambition. In fact, they helped her realize that she didn't need to stay in Arizona for college. She relied less on high school counselors. She believed they saw so many students that they created biases that pigeon holed students' capabilities.

Bailey found out about the HMDP through a school counselor who met with Bailey and her mom. Bailey's mom was interested and agreed to participate. They participated in workshops and events to support college readiness. One workshop that stood out to her was how to apply to college. It was led by a college student who was an HMDP alumni. She felt it was informative to talk to someone who went through what she would eventually go through. Another monumental moment in her experience was the 8th grade retreat. She spent the whole weekend having in-depth learning experiences with her mother. Interestingly, Bailey connected more with the speakers than she did with her HMDP peers. She attributed this disconnect to the fact that there were no historical links with her HMDP peers and that she could relate more to the girls from a certain region.

Bailey offered one feedback for the HMDP: it was too "ASU-centric." Though it made sense that an ASU program would create a pipeline to ASU, she would have liked for it to be general enough to support students interested in going to schools out of Arizona. She supplemented the resources from this program with others to support the college selection process: guidance from a private college counselor/mentor and interviews with alumni from the university of interest. Lastly, Bailey cited immediate and long-term effects of the program. In the immediate space, she found the program

helpful in setting a schedule with her mother for the workshops and planning for college. In the long-term, she found the program significant as it is important to have a program that supports a group with “labels.”

In terms of college selection, Bailey already had parameters of the types of colleges she was looking for. This included location and the course structure. The pro bono help from the private college counselor/mentor helped to narrow down the college based on those parameters. She does regret not having enough time to really explore her options. The support system she received from the mentor were so late that it didn't grant her time to apply to other colleges. Enrollment was smooth as her parents participated in a week-long Welcome event to assist with her transition. After that, the first two years were a culture shock. Though she was given tools and told what to expect from the HMDP, she was blinded by her emotions when she arrived in college. A large majority of her college peers were wealthy and came from a tradition/legacy of alumni. They saw college as the next stage in life that led to finding a husband. Their background and expectations were the opposite of Bailey's. In fact, she felt her beliefs were so different that she found refuge in like-minded immigrant peers and professors who could relate to her marginalized space. She also realized that the university expectations were different. There was such a small teacher-student ratio that she had to create a new game plan on how to prepare for classes. She figured out this requirement shortly after starting the University. Lastly, she had to learn how to budget and plan for expenses every year. Though she received a financial package that covered tuition, room and board, she still needed extra money for living expenses. She supplemented this need by having a work-study job while school was in session and summer jobs while in Arizona to save for the

upcoming year. By the last two years, she was motivated to graduate for her parents and her career. She even participated in a study abroad experience, which became the stepping stone for her next stage in life.

Bailey recently completed a Master's degree in the country she currently resides. She identified a few differences from her undergraduate experience. She found the Master's program less rigorous as the culture was to achieve a passing grade. However, the lower rigor was made up by the language barrier but she relied on her partner to proof read her papers. Additionally, there was a cultural expectation that undergraduate students transitioned directly into a Master's degree. This meant that her pathway was different from her fellow peers as she waited before pursuing a Master's degree. Lastly, there was no campus life for her Master's program. Her peers had friends outside of school and attended school just to learn.

Belinda

Belinda is 22 years old. She lives with her mother and brother, who has muscular dystrophy. She has a sister 12 year her senior who recently moved back in with her mother. Belinda started Kindergarten in 2003, and graduated with her high school degree in 2016 and bachelor's degree in 2020. She moved residence two times and schools four times (i.e. three times in K-12th grade and once post-high school). Her family lived below the financial threshold.

Her parents divorced when she was 5 years old. After that, her father was absent, until her mother needed support taking care of their son. When he came back into their lives, he visited every two weeks to chat with the mother and provide financial support. During these visits, his conversations with her were minimal. His visits became less

frequent after her brother's passing but he still provided financial support. Belinda did not have a close relationship with her older sister until she moved back in with her mother. Since then, their relationship grew as they began to talk about the future and her graduation. On the other hand, Belinda was close to her brother. She was his companion and care-taker. He also inspired her. Belinda dreamed of a career that contributed to treating those with conditions similar to her brother. In fact, her brother played such an important role in her life that she lost motivation to continue her aspirations when she lost him during her junior year in college.

Belinda cited a few people who contributed to her academic journey during grade school. Her mother didn't understand her scholastic experiences but she was still supportive. One important way was through her participation in the HMDP. Belinda also had two teachers who played important roles in her academic journey. Her 8th grade teacher introduced her to different opportunities and helped her apply to her first high school. When she moved to a different high school, the engineering teacher in the new school contributed to her decision to stay in STEM and checked in on her overall well-being.

Belinda had a few confirming moments that solidified her field of choice. The first of these was her participation in a program that supported high achievements in math and science. The second was her enrollment in high school engineering classes. Both these experiences solidified her desire to stay in biomedical engineering. However, one experience helped her identify an area to avoid in this field. Between her sophomore and junior year (in high school), she participated in a biomedical engineering internship that

created medical devices. Her experience in this internship helped her realize that she was not interested in device making.

Belinda started the HMDP in 8th grade. This program provided a number of benefits that supported her academic journey. First, they helped her become familiar with the college preparation process. Second, she learned about ASU and its many resources for academic success. This insight was an added bonus during the college selection process. Third, the HMDP fostered motivation. Belinda was inspired by “Hispanics” speakers who accomplished their own milestones. Lastly, she appreciated her mother’s participation in the program. It allowed her to be on the same page as her mother for understanding college readiness and it strengthened the mother-daughter bond.

Belinda chose her college based on these factors: location, finances, program, and boyfriend. When it came time to decide, she spoke to her high school peers and teacher. She managed the process by keeping an excel sheet to track the pros and cons of each college. In the end, she chose ASU. Belinda found enrollment easy. There was a transition but she credits her high school peers, who pursued ASU with her, for helping in the transition. Belinda experienced other challenges as she persisted. She did not feel prepared for her courses and found the course expectations unfamiliar. She was used to the grade school structure of attending courses all day and completing homework in the evenings. In college, there was less classroom time. She decided to take a different approach to tackle this new structure. Two times per week she studied at the tutoring center for three hours. That way, she could access support should she need it. As the

years went by, she went to the tutoring center less and participated more in study groups and instructor office hours.

Belinda also attributed her persistence to her mentor in the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers. She struggled her first year and processed these challenges with the mentor, who inspired her to take steps towards growing as a student. One main outcome of this encouragement was the decision to run as a board member for a college student organization. She kept this role for two years. Lastly, her boyfriend played an important role during her college years. They met during her senior year in high school and are still in a relationship. He had been supportive of her journey and keeps her grounded if she “stresses” too much.

By the end of her bachelor’s degree, Belinda participated in two internships that solidified her career goals. She volunteered in a research lab at her school and participated in a competitive internship in S.D. These experiences inspired her to take more Biology classes to supplement her research and career interests. She plans to pursue graduate school but will first build her experience in a lab. As she looked over her college experience, Belinda is proud of her accomplishments.

Natasha

Natasha is 22 years old and originally from Mexico. She has one older sister and currently lives with her mother. In the middle of her Kindergarten year, her parents divorced and her mother emigrated to Arizona with Natasha and her sister. The mother chose this location because she had family there and needed a fresh start. There were financial struggles when they started their new life in Arizona. They lived in a motel for four years and used public transportation (or carpooled with family) for two years. By

second grade, her mother got a car. Her mother's employment also changed. She initially cleaned houses but eventually became a dental assistant to support her family. This allowed them to move out of the motel and into an apartment. They changed residence one more time after the apartment. Natasha started Kindergarten in 2003, and graduated with her high school degree in 2016 and bachelor's degree in 2020.

Her mother was not familiar with the educational system but encouraged her daughters to pursue college. She wanted them to pick a career they liked but could financially sustain them. Her father did not want to be a part of their lives for most of her childhood until she was offered a study abroad scholarship during high school. This granted her the opportunity to live in India for seven weeks, but required approval from both mother and father. Her father gave approval for the trip and remained in their lives since. Their conversations about school are about updates and timelines. Natasha is the first participant who had a sister with a similar academic path. Her older sister (who is two years her senior) paved a way for her to follow. Natasha participated in the same programs/opportunities, interacted with the same teachers/staff, and worked at the same location as her older sister during grade school. Because her older sister established positive relationships, it was easy for Natasha to tap into those resources when her time came.

Natasha listed a few grade school teachers and one staff who uniquely contributed to her growth. Her 5th grade teacher, who previously taught her older sister and knew their story, provided guidance and remained in their lives to this day. Her 10th-11th grade English teacher helped build her confidence in writing and increased her reading horizons. Her second English teacher was extremely hard but helped her to synthesize

readings and write papers quickly. Her high school Math teacher influenced her to join the Math Guild club and eventually wrote a letter of recommendation. Her Spanish wrote a letter of recommendation for the study abroad scholarship opportunity. Lastly, the high school counselor wrote letters of recommendation for scholarships and college applications.

Natasha had many experiences that were part of her academic journey. She was involved in after school extracurricular activities to fill in time while she waited for her mother. These included student council, Spanish honors society, the Math guild, and sports. She did these while participating in the HMDP and ACE—this program allows students to take college-level courses while in high school. Her church also played an important role. They fostered a climate of motivation by encouraging academic pursuits and hosting educational events.

Natasha learned about the HMDP through her sister. It was an outreach program from 8th-12th grade that involved the family. It was a pipeline program to ASU, though they encouraged college going, overall. They offered workshops on financial aid, college selection, and self-growth. The content changed from big ideas to more practical information on college readiness as they got closer to high school graduation. Natasha connected with her HMDP advisor twice per semester to go over her schedule, grades and goals. This HMDP advisor eventually became a committee member for her Honors Thesis at ASU.

HMDP was impactful. The program allowed her to spend more time with her mother, allowed her to mold and learned who she was as a person, made her want to share her academic journey with her mother, motivated her to learn how to do her own

research on opportunities (which she shared with those around her), and helped her feel prepared for college. The program helped her to be as ready as she could be. Her participation in the program also had immediate and long-term effects. She knew how to apply for college. She also translated this knowledge to others who needed help applying to ASU or completing the FAFSA.

The college selection process was hard and included multiple layers. Originally, she wanted to go out of state and went as far as receiving admission to an out of state university but the financial aid package was not big enough to cover the out of state cost. Eventually, she settled on ASU because: 1) ASU provided the biggest financial aid package that covered tuition, fees, meals, and room & board; 2) no one would be there to translate for her mother if she left while her sister was away, and 3) her grandmother's health was declining.

Enrolling was challenging. This was because she was in India on the study abroad opportunity the summer before starting ASU. When she returned she only had one week to prepare for her start. She struggled that first semester and realized that her usual process in high school would not work in college. Though she took dual enrollment courses and felt ready, "it wasn't the same as being in college." The shift in realities created anxiety that she sought professional support. She eventually learned how to balance the demands of college. Between semesters, she made sure to practice wellness by relaxing, focusing on hobbies, reconnecting with friends, and slowly preparing for her upcoming semester (i.e. clean out backpack, books, redo schedule).

During her time as a college student, she had more financial restrictions as she did not have a job and relied on her financial aid. By the time she obtained a job her

sophomore year, she was able to occasionally treat herself to eating out. Socially, she felt lonely as her friendships were confined to the classroom space. Outside of that, she did not have deep connections, until she received roommates her sophomore and junior year. Academically, she felt like an imposter. In her ASU's Honors program she consistently found people who she believed were smarter than her. This confirming feeling only grew when she participated in the program's Socratic-based courses. Her pre-med advisors also contributed to her imposter feelings. She believes these advisors wanted to "weed out" first- and second-year students so she stayed away until her junior/senior year. The last experience was the Study Abroad program. She felt she didn't belong in their courses, but she shadowed those feelings with the mindset that she would be in a beautiful place.

Still, Natasha identified people who were influential to her college experience. Her academic advisor, who she met during her Freshman year, was like a cheerleader. She showed Natasha how to check DARS, talked about next steps, and exposed her to the TA program. Another important person was her church's instructor who was supportive of her academic journey. In fact, this instructor wrote her letter of recommendation for medical school. Lastly, she had two roommates who were deeply involved in supporting each other's academic journey. They enrolled in classes together, did homework together, helped each other study, and updated each other. This level of accountability lasted two years.

Natasha participated in two main opportunities in college that supported her academic journey. To align with her current undergraduate degree (i.e. psychology), she pursued a volunteer position as the Director of Public Relations for the Psychology

club. To support her career goals (i.e. doctor), she pursued an out of state medical program after her junior year. This program was 6-7 weeks long and geared for underrepresented people interested in the medical field. They were paired with mentors who could relate to those in marginalized spaces. During the program, they did research with the mentors, participated in courses, visited other medical school, and shadowed ERs and clinics. Natasha compared this experience with the HMDP. Similarly, she could identify impactful relationships within this program. The only difference was the relationships in the out of state opportunity continued beyond the six- to seven-week program. These were for two reasons. They established a group messaging system that members continue to use to this day. The second was the mentor remains in her capacity even after the program. They continued the research they started in the six- to seven-week program and even re-connected recently to discussed medical school preparations.

Overall, Natasha experienced many learning moments in college. She learned to not have tunnel vision on the small things or she would question her ultimate goal of being a doctor. If she was rejected, she allowed herself to mourn the loss and then moved on. Lastly, Natasha listed the following as contributors to her persistence: her mom, the HMDP advisor on her Honor thesis committee, scholarship advisor, Psychology academic advisor, family, friends, and her career goals. She likened her journey to a hike. There were rough patches, but in the end, it was good.

Olivia

Olivia is 25 years old. She lives with her single mother and has no siblings. She started Kindergarten in 2000, and graduated with her high school degree in 2013 and bachelor's degree in Summer 2019. She initially pursued a Masters in Psychology in

Spring 2020, but discontinued that degree because the content was challenging. She just started a Master's in Business Administration Summer 2020. Olivia changed residence three times (i.e. two times in K-12th grade and one time towards the end of high school). She is currently purchasing a house with her mother.

Olivia's parents instilled high academic expectations for her from a young age. Looking back, she realized that other parents seemed more relaxed, while her childhood revolved around school. Her mother was a constant presence in her life. However, her father only returned long enough to build rapport with her so that she could support him in gaining citizenship. This ulterior motive negatively affected Olivia's emotional and mental health. The last family member who was part of Olivia's academic journey was her aunt. Though they didn't talk about the details of school (e.g. content), her aunt was an encouraging force for her academics. In fact, her aunt and mother fostered a space where she could take a "breather" from school.

She also realized her disadvantages. Her parents were not together, she lived with a single mom, she was the daughter of an immigrant, she lived in poverty, and she experienced discrimination. She first became aware of these disadvantages when she visited the wealthy homes her mother cleaned. With the wealth gap she noticed a gap in access. Her conversations with the children of the wealthy home owners revealed that they had access to tutors and other academic support that she didn't. Her degree of poverty was further solidified when she learned in college that the food she ate as a child was considered the most economic option (i.e. rice and beans).

Olivia credited a few people during her grade school who impacted her academic journey. She built long lasting relationships with her high school vocational teacher and

her ASU STEM Program coordinator. They played influential roles from her college selection process and forward. She also had lasting relationships with peers in the HMDP and the ASU STEM program. They were an encouraging force in her walk.

Olivia found out about the HMDP through her seventh-grade teacher. They provided workshops on how to be prepare for college. This ranged from learning study tips, to building resume/personal statement, to increasing financial literacy for college. They also performed checkups to ensure that she was successfully progressing through each grade level. The HMDP got her foot in the door. The Program created a domino effect on her academic journey as her participation in the program connected her to an ASU-based event that introduced her the ASU STEM Summer program. Both programs were equally valuable, but served different purposes. The ASU STEM program provided academic rigor and the HMDP provided personal development. What she especially appreciated from the HMDP was the “intersectional feminist” spaces it explored with participants. They shared that women could achieve greatness. They also brought into conversations topics that were taboo but still pertinent to identity (e.g. LGBTQ session). Other parents were uncomfortable with these taboo topics but she appreciated it because of her identity. Overall, she felt the program challenged the norm of ASU as it created a pathway for non-traditional students to pursue college. This was why she was disappointed when ASU ruled the program discriminatory and had to open up their content to all. This was a program that aimed at a demographic that did not have the knowledge nor the resources to pursue college.

After the HMDP, she found the college selection and enrollment process fairly easy. Olivia credited her vocational teacher, the ASU STEM summer coordinator, her

mom, and her high school counselor (who provided scholarship resources) as instrumental in the selection process. Interestingly, her vocational teacher and the ASU STEM program coordinator encouraged her to pursue an out of state school. However, she selected ASU because her experiences in the HMDP and the ASU STEM program made the ASU campus feel like “home.” When it was time to apply to ASU, she received help from an ASU representative who visited her school and walked them through the application.

Olivia received two scholarships that covered her tuition and fees, and was given enough funds to cover room and meals for one year. Enrollment for each semester was fairly simple as her degree program progressed students through courses as a cohort. Through this structure she met her two close friends. Olivia started her college career with much energy, but eventually lost her motivation when personal circumstances and institutional microaggressions impacted her academic journey. After realizing her father’s deceit and his lack of sympathy for her living needs, she began to see a therapist. She also underwent testing due to health concerns. Coupled with these events was the realization that she was out of place in the STEM field. The HMDP program did not prepare her for this. In the program, she was surrounded by women like her but she was an anomaly in her math courses. Her experiences only worsened by the subtle judgements of her peers. In her department, they questioned her capabilities when they found out where she lived. In an out of state program, she felt isolated by the peers in that program. The overwhelming nature of all these events led her to take a break for a semester but she returned to complete the rest of program. However, Olivia did highlight two ASU personnel who provided positive experiences: her academic advisor and an

ASU Professor. The academic advisor inquired about her academics and well-being. These outreaches were important to Olivia. The ASU Professor transformed a challenging content to something “cool.” This professor’s efforts gave her motivation to see who else in the department would do the same. When asked who influenced her to stay, her immediate response was her mother. Even though her mom had varying degrees of support during her academic journey, her mother was the “core” for her journey.

Olivia hopes to use her educational attainment to empower others, particularly Latina women. During her undergraduate, she tried to pursue a non-profit minor in order to create those pathways of empowerment. However, life experiences prohibited this. She is now returning to complete an MBA in hopes of using this knowledge to create a business or non-profit that supports women empowerment.

Stacy

Stacy is 26 years old. She has one older brother and currently lives with her family. Stacy started Kindergarten in 2000, and graduated with her high school degree in 2012 and bachelor’s degree in 2017. She moved residence almost every six months during her childhood because her family could not afford the rent. By fourth grade they found a landlord who exchanged rent for their labor. This allowed them to stay in one location for five years. Stacy joined her family in any projects requested by the landlord.

Her family played a big role in her motivation for college. She witnessed her dad being turned down, receiving mal-treatment, or being lied to because he did not understand English. She also saw the degree of her family’s financial hardships and wanted a college degree to create more financial stability for them. During this time, her father was a constant motivator, who encouraged her educational pursuits. Her brother

was not part of her academic journey but was eventually encouraged by her journey to pursue his career goals.

There were influential people and academic experiences during grade school that contributed to her academic journey. Stacy credited one faculty members and two administrators who made a difference. Her 7th grade math teacher encouraged her to speak up as she was a very reserved student. Her high school principal and community representative provided support to her family. Her peer relationships were less deep. Even when the peer relationships improved in high school, none knew the extent of her family situation. Stacy participated in the following opportunities to support her college aspirations: student government, national honors society, the key club, the ACE Program (which allowed students take college-level courses in high school), and a one- to two-week summer political science program.

Stacy learned about the HMDP through her school. She applied to and interviewed for the HMDP in 7th grade. Upon admission, she attended workshops/events from 8th-12th grade. The purpose of HMDP was college readiness. The workshops were approximately once per month and eventually reduced as the years progressed. The earlier workshops focused on what to expect and how to participate in high school in preparation for college. This allowed her to plan for exams, volunteer opportunities, college admission and finances. Some workshops separated parents from students to tailor the information, respectively. Lastly, they invited motivational speakers and provided opportunities to explore different careers paths. During her time, Stacy did not build meaningful relationships with HMDP peers and staff.

The HMDP was impactful in various ways. First, Stacy recognized that her participation in the HMDP made her more informed than her school peers. She made sure to share the program content with her school peers so they could also be prepared for college. Second, the program provided information that helped make her college aspirations a reality. Third, the program motivated her to do academically well in high school because her performance impacted access to (financial) college opportunities. Fourth, the five-year commitment strengthened the mother-daughter bond. Fifth, the HMDP motivated her mother to learn English and to pursue her career goals. Lastly, the inclusion of her mother placed both of them on the same page for college readiness. This was especially important because they did not know how to pursue college and had pre-conceived notations about college life. The HMDP helped provide content on college readiness and de-mystified concerns about finances and living in the dorms. Overall, it made conversations about college easier.

Three factors influence the college selection process. The first was family. This factor played the biggest role as Stacy's dad was opposed to her moving out of state. The other item was money. She wanted to find a college that would provide the highest financial aid package. The third was the quality of the program that offered her aspired major. She also highlighted additional support from HMDP, her high school counselor, high school principal and certain teachers. Some of these people recommended (e.g. high school principal and faculty/staff) that she went out of state. She regretted not following their advice but realized choosing ASU worked out because her family eventually needed her.

The enrollment process was smooth and positive. Overall, she didn't feel she had to do it on her own. The HMDP helped with the application process, her advisor helped with course selection and her ASU community assistant (and others) helped with the move-in process. The course selection was also easy, but it became more challenging when she had to re-take a few courses. Her first advisor stood out the most during the enrollment process because of her positive energy. She felt she could talk to her. However, they moved to a more team-based model and she didn't feel she had that personal experience.

In the beginning, Stacy enjoyed her college experience. She received a financial aid package that covered tuition, room and board; experienced a smooth transition into college life; and acquired two close friends. However, she eventually began to experience challenges. Towards the end of her high school graduation, her parents were in a severe car accident and were unable to work. Consequently, she worked many hours to support their livelihood. Initially, this was manageable until she realized her family was falling into debt. Stacy tried to resolve this situation by requesting a raise from her employer. They granted her request but the delicate balance of student-family life was already shifting. Her work commitments eventually affected her grades, which resulted in losing one of her scholarships by the end of her freshman year. This now meant financially supporting her family and part of her school charges. She confided in her residence hall person, who suggested loans. The financial situation of her family worsened as the family house suffered roof damage. This forced her to account for mortgage on a house in which they could not reside and rent for an apartment in which they stayed until the house was livable. It was hard to keep up with both payments so she

found another job (which is the one she currently holds) in education. This meant more hours at work and less time for school. Eventually, she lost all her scholarship at the end of her sophomore year and almost declared bankruptcy. By senior year, her time was monopolized by work and repairing the house. The outcome was failing grades and depleting emotional health. Coupled with this, her academic advisor shared that she needed a 4.0 GPA her last semester or she would be dismissed from the program. She was advised to choose between school and work. Because she needed both, Stacy compromised by reducing her work hours and dropping her minor and certificate. This strategy was enough for her to graduate in December 2017. She now teaches in an elementary setting.

During this difficult time, Stacy's biggest support came from her employers. They allowed her to move her schedule around or extend breaks to do homework. When Stacy began losing her scholarships and received a registration hold because she could not afford her ASU charges, one of her managers accompanied her to ASU to discuss a resolution. The manager offered to cover the entire cost. At Stacy's refusal, they compromised with a general fundraiser. The manager's willingness to cover her charges made a huge impact on her. Besides her employers, Stacy credited her two college friends who created a space of support and encouragement during her journey. Her family was not aware of the degree of her experiences during this time. However, they still encouraged her progression towards degree completion. Interestingly, she regrets not communicating with instructors. Because she was too embarrassed, she did not share with them that missed assignments were because she could not afford the textbooks. She also did not discuss her grades because she did not want people to assume that they were

the outcome of intelligence. She now realizes that she should have communicated. She now shares this knowledge with her elementary students.

Victoria (completed two of three interviews)

Victoria is 25 years old. She is the oldest of 11 children. She started Kindergarten in 2000, graduated high school in 2013, obtained her bachelor's in 2018, and is currently enrolled in graduate nursing school. Victoria changed residence four times during her entire academic journey (i.e. one time in K-12th grade and three times post-high school), but only moved schools three times. She lived below the poverty line during grade school. However, it was a way of life as she did not realize the poverty level of her family until she started going to college. Victoria has struggled with depression, which led to two suicide attempts.

Education was very important for her parents so they pursued/supported many academic opportunities. Victoria was a part of eight different opportunities during grade school. These ranged in academic and cultural content. Her parents had high educational expectations. In fact, her mom regularly reached out to her teachers for a grade update and would "sit down" with Victoria whenever she did not meet their grade expectations. This happened five times between 5th-8th grade. Because of high parental expectations, Victoria relied on her aunt for support. Interestingly, her mother practices this same level of academic commitment to all children. All her children participated in academically-driven experiences.

She had a long list of individuals who supported her success. The support started early with her Vice Principal (Mr. B), who was her 2nd grade teacher at the time. She developed a close relationship with Mr. B, Mr. B's wife and the wife's mother. All three

found many programs that she could pursue. When she got into a prestigious catholic high school, the principal helped her to find a sponsor who covered her entire schooling. This was because her mother and the principal shared the same the friend, who advocated on Victoria's behalf. In high school, she did not fit in. Many had access to resources that she did not have. She did not have access to tutors nor a home computer with internet connection. For peers who could relate to her financial constraints, she kept her relationship superficial. She remained acquaintances to have company while in high school but maintain some distance because of their competitive nature. She was taught to be happy for others and did not like their attitude.

College became a clear next step in 5th grade when she was introduced to the QUEST program. After that, she participated in the HMDP to actualize her college aspirations. This program prepared students for college but also linked them to scholarship opportunities. In fact, she received a scholarship through them. However, she felt the HMDP program was unique compared to other programs because it included mothers. The program was pivotal in supporting her relationship with her mom. In fact, she was not happy when they reduced the frequency of their workshops.

As she moved to the phase of selecting a college, she chose a location that was familiar and economical. ASU met those needs as they provided a full ride scholarship (that covered tuition and room & board) and she was familiar with the campus. By the time of enrollment, she received support from her Honors program and the HMDP director. This made the transition smooth. As she went through her degree, the first two years were rigorous. She intended to pursue Nursing but was not accepted into the program. This was a monumental event but she found her second wind when she changed her major.

There was a faculty in this new major that helped her fall in love with research. She originally volunteered on their projects and was eventually hired. During this time, she had a romantic partner. However, he was not on the same page as her with life so they broke up a little after college graduation. Lastly, Victoria highlighted the importance of her church during her college experience. She feels that her spiritual connection is what helped her persist toward degree completion. Now, she is completing her Master's in Nursing. Her peers are competitive but her current study group creates a buffer of support.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS: HOW AND IN WHAT WAYS DO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BELIEVE HMDP PREPARED THEM TO BE COLLEGE READY?

There is no universal definition for college readiness. Thus, I did not define parameters when participants explained how prepared they felt for college. The outcome of these conversations highlighted more practical, transitional strategies for college readiness rather than academics. Only two participants (i.e., Natasha & Bailey) mentioned that academics were part of their learning curve when transitioning to college life. It is important to note that the HMDP pre-selected high achieving Latina students, which may explain why participant conversations explored more non-academic realms (and why academics played a lesser role in the HMDP strategies¹³).

In their college readiness journey, all participants shared that the HMDP helped them feel ready for college. The degree of the program's impact ranged from being the sole support system for readiness to being supplemented by other programs or mentors/peers. For instance, on one hand, Angela attributed her college readiness to the HMDP as it provided more information than what she would have received if she did not participate. On the other hand, participants like Olivia received additional support outside of the HMDP. Below, I outline four main college readiness strategies by the HMDP that participants found valuable. It is important to note that these are participant

¹³ The only academic-related strategy that arose in participant interviews was the regular check-ins between the HMDP staff and participants to ensure students were on track to graduate high school and qualify for college admissions.

perceptions and not a comprehensive list of all HMDP college readiness strategies. I end with participants' perception of how ready they felt for college.

College Readiness Strategy

Participants identified four main HMDP strategies that helped them feel college ready: 1) program content, 2) periodic checkups, 3) motivating culture, and 4) parental inclusion. It should be noted that the HMDP strategies contributed towards feelings of college readiness **and** motivation. Though their strategies produced two outcomes, it was important to still include “motivating culture” as a strategy because participants' stories of built-in mechanisms for motivation contributed towards their ultimate goal: college readiness.

Program Content

A large part of the HMDP content was sharing knowledge on college readiness. The main tool that distributed this information were workshops. The frequency of these workshops deferred by time in the program. During middle school, participants attended workshops every month but eventually tapered their frequency (~ once per semester) by high school. The workshops functioned as spaces to discuss various topics and to hold working session on college readiness. In particular, participants found workshops on finances, college application tips, and academic skill sets extremely valuable. Angela shared:

[the] Hispanic mother daughter program, of course, they helped with that process as well...kind of giving me information about things that I didn't know about, like the difference between grants and scholarships, applying for FAFSA. They really

helped in that part as well since my parents...I'm their first child so they didn't really remember any of that stuff from when they were in college.

Participants commonly shared that the HMDP provided information on how to apply for college. This made the college application process effortless. Interestingly, all shared that they received information on the college application process but only two (i.e. Stacy and Angel) mentioned participating in HMDP working session where they completed college applications. Stacy shared, "I didn't have to set time aside. It was set aside for us. We sat down and we applied for that." It is not surprising that only a few mentioned dedicated college application sessions. They completed the HMDP four to eight years before these interviews and may not have remembered this programmatic detail. Another reason could be a change in program delivery. The HMDP conducts regular program review and may have only included working sessions on college applications for some cohorts. A change like this could explain why only some mentioned these working sessions.

Other media for content delivery were retreats and events. Retreats provided in-depth information over a few days. Bailey said:

I do remember I ended up going to one retreat, an HMDP retreat. It was like in eighth grade where we went up to Flagstaff, I think, with my mom and all the other members of the program. That, I think that's probably one of the highlights of my time in the program because I found that it went so much more in depth than just having like those nightly workshops where we would just talk about like a certain topic on college or a topic on how to get involved. So I found that retreats in itself were a way to kind of reach out and communicate a little bit more

effectively and kind of being [in] a context where all you are doing is focusing on like building community. I really like that aspect.

Events connected students with other college resources. For example, the HMDP hosted an event that introduced Olivia to an ASU Summer STEM program. Her experience in this program produced a lasting impact in her academic journey: “If...this [Hispanic] Mother Daughter Program wasn't a thing, or I didn't participate in it, I feel like, potentially, I would have missed out on a huge resource [the ASU STEM Program] that really did propel me in my studies...” Olivia also established a relationship with the STEM Program coordinator and a connection with the ASU campus, both of which contributed to her decision to choose ASU in her college selection process. Similar to working sessions, participants rarely mentioned retreats and events. Reasons for occasional references to events could be because: 1) Participants found those experiences less valuable to their journey, 2) The HMDP did not offer retreats and events when participants were members of the HMDP, or 3) The participants did not remember them as part of their HMDP experience.

While the remembrances of these events were relatively low, the power of them is evident in the two examples I provide. They served as guideposts and resources for Olivia and Bailey. The HMDP might consider the potential impact retreats and events can play on contributing to the academic journey.

Periodic Checkups

Checkups also played an essential role but to a lesser degree. Olivia, Natasha, and Abbey shared that the HMDP held regular checkups to track their grade school progress and ensure they were on track to pursue college. Olivia shared, “[The HMDP]

had very rigorous checkups on your grades...If you are kind of failing, then they were like, 'What's your game plan? This is not up to par. You need to figure this out or then you can't be a participant.'" Abbey shared her experience in more detail:

I don't even know if it's like every month or every other month or three times every quarter. I can't remember but I know that she [the HMDP representative] visited me at my middle school. They would take me out of class and I was able to meet with her...She would basically check over my grades. She would look at my progress report. She would see how I was doing. And if I had like a [letter grade of] B or C, she would ask them me like, what's going on, and we would talk about it.

The representative also occasionally spoke to Abbey's parents if they had any questions. This was important to Abbey: "[There was] much more relief knowing that I could like tell her [the HMDP representative] ...what my mom was struggling with, and then have her call my mom or talk to my mom...at the workshops." However, the checkups were less frequent towards the end of their term in the HMDP.

Natasha, on the other hand, did not express value in the regular checkups but only mentioned it as part of her HMDP experience. Still, she found enough value in her HMDP advisor to ask that she become a thesis committee member during her undergraduate experience:

My counselor from HMDP, she ended up accepting another job within ASU so she moved after I graduated high school, but I actually ended up connecting with her for my honors thesis creative project. She was actually the second committee member on my committee, which is awesome.

Overall, few expressed value in or acknowledged checkups as part of the HMDP college readiness strategy. The reduction in HMDP checkups may explain why participants did not identify this strategy as important as the workshop. A more consistent contact could shift how participants rank its importance. Checkups may also hold the potential to foster/augment motivation and college readiness, as exemplified by Abbey. She identified a short-lived bond with the HMDP staff when checkups were frequent. Even if participants did not express strong value in checkups, there may be long-last impact on the academic journey as in the case of Natasha, who felt she could return to her past relationship for support in her current educational needs.

Motivating Culture

The third common strategy among participants was the program's ability to foster motivation.¹⁴ Participants cited the following strategies as helpful in fostering their motivation to finish grade school and enroll in college: 1) Having inspirational speakers, 2) Explaining the importance of college and college readiness, 3) Locating workshops/events on an ASU campus, and 4) Tracking grade school progress. Some of these strategies similarly contributed to their feelings of college readiness.

Belinda and Olivia appreciated that the program brought speakers like them who accomplished their dreams. Belinda shared the following about HMDP: "...participating in the program was a way to become...inspired by other, like Hispanics, who had also

¹⁴ It is important to note that HMDP pre-selected students with college aspirations. This recruitment process can create a strong foundation for motivating HMDP participants.

attended college. I guess, envisioning myself also being one of those people.” Stacy was motivated because she was constantly *on* the ASU main campus: “it helped that the sessions were held in the actual campus because that also was like a motivation...I wanted to graduate and I wanted to walk on a campus like ASU or even ASU itself.” Furthermore, Stacy learned that success in grade school impacted the types of opportunities she would access in college. She told me:

...from high school to college...it was a good motivation to continue to do well in school. I was already self-motivated as I was growing up, but it kind of continue with that inspiration, because sometimes you lose...your focus and so it was that focus that I needed, that reminder that I needed, “Okay. Like, this is my goal.” As I mentioned the meetings [the workshops,]...was that constant reminder of...this is my goal. This is what I want to do. And, it motivated me to do well in high school, because I knew that doing well in high school would help me get...financial aid and scholarships and grants, and I learned all that through [HMDP].

Parental Inclusion

Parental participation helped make the college readiness process easier for participants. It created buy-in, fostered an understanding of the college readiness/going process, and/or made conversations about college readiness easier between parents and participants. For example, parental participation for Stacy helped her mother become familiar with the college-going journey, who then shared this information with her spouse:

I'm a first-generation college student. I didn't know what to do [to prepare for college] and my family didn't know what to do. I don't know if people can relate, but as a Hispanic family, I feel like there's hesitations from the parents. They are like, "is it a good thing? Is it a bad thing? Is this the right choice?" What the [Hispanic Mother-Daughter] program did was that it informed my mom. And then, we were able to discuss what the next steps would be in order to go to college. [For example], my dad was very strict growing up. And so, one thing that we learned through the program is the importance of participating in school right...And so my mom explained to my dad, "It's important that she does this and like she's in extracurricular activities." And so that kind of allowed my dad to kind of open his mind a little bit in regards to participating and doing more than just academics, because with him, it was like, "no, you have to go to school. It's all about school," but the program also helped my family understand that it's not just about school. It was also about giving back to the community. It's also about building leadership. So, it was a nice guidance and it taught my parents a lot, as well as myself.

In this instance, Stacy's mother advocated for Stacy and herself, while also helping her spouse understand the process. This advocacy produced positive outcomes for the college-going process, but also connected Stacy to community work and benefits. In this way, the HMDP appears to have had positive influences not only in attending and completing college, but also in seeing ways that college readiness intersects with the benefits of the local community.

Besides putting parents and students on the same page, participation in the HMDP also made mother-daughter conversations about college effortless and clarified concerns about finances and living on campus. Stacy continued:

I think it was very important that she [Stacy's mother] was there...besides the fact that we formed a stronger bond, [it] was also good because the information didn't come from a student...My parents trusted the information more because it wasn't just me telling them. It was someone that was knowledgeable about college and the process of it...one of the things that kept coming up in the past was like, "How are we going to pay for this because we have no money? We could barely, you know, pay rent, if any"...But because we had that information because, as I mentioned, it was coming from an adult to another adult, and then it came to the family, it made that decision, "Okay, we're not going to let that be the stopping point for me to be able to go to college."...I think that I would not have been able to stay at a residence hall, if it weren't for like the information that they got from the [Hispanic Mother-Daughter] program. And because, you know, we were at the campus, too, so they got to see the campus as well. So I think that definitely like influence their decision of, like, "okay, it's a safe place and it's okay for her to stay here and experience that."...they never saw anyone in their family go to college so everything that they knew they heard from other people. I mean like news wise, like the danger of staying on campus about, you know, people breaking into residence halls, or people getting hurt when they were studying in college, away from home."

The power of information is evident in Stacy's experiences. She—and her parents—were exposed to the financial realities and resources, allowing them to see the possibilities in being able to afford the totality of the college experience. Importantly, being 'on the ground' to see the facilities and the campus opened her family's sense of what her experience might be. An understated part of the HMDP is its on-the-ground experiences for both the young women and their families.

Similarly, Bailey shared that parental inclusion helped with college planning and it made conversations about college easier since they were both informed about the preparation process:

We were able to communicate more easily on like what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go and that's important for me because I think maybe perhaps before HMDP I was probably a little bit hesitant or didn't really have to confront the situation of college because I knew it was still something that it was so far away when I was in junior high. But I guess being present in that program just allowed me and my mom to kind of both recognize that it's something that you have to start planning for now and we're here to support you on how to get there. So, I think it was nice in that way...that me and my mom were able to have a road map together and to go through it together.

Interestingly, the family also could discontinue membership, according to Stacy. She shared that a large number of HMDP participants did not remain in the program.

However, she did not associate this trend with being the fault of the program. Instead, the attrition highlighted the world of Latina students:

...it was also eye opening to see how many people dropped too, though. So even though it was such a great program and we started with so many in my class, slowly the numbers started to go down. As you got closer to graduating high school, there was less and less and less participants. I don't think that's necessarily the program's fault. I think that's kind of...it kind of shows like the life that minority students tend to live. Sometimes maybe either a) you lose interest or b) you are surrounded by not the best ideal group or c) life happens and you kind of start to drop the ball on certain things and you pick what you want to focus on and sometimes it's not our education. I think part of it too is like...coming from, like, I guess a Hispanic family...and I don't know if all families are like that...but although my parents always push college, they were also kind of hesitant about the idea of college. They're like, "Okay, well, what's the point like? You can go to college, but like you have to stay at home." There's a lot of hesitation within that scene of, like, "Okay, is it going to be good for you? Is it going to be dangerous? Are you going to go crazy?"

The Program helped make the realities of the challenges and opportunities visible. And, while the larger set of challenges to some Latinas remained, there were options presented to attend college.

Perceptions Versus Reality

Interestingly, perceptions of readiness was different from the *reality* of readiness. Four participants specifically highlighted this difference. They felt ready but recognized the disconnect between feeling ready and being ready. Abbey rated her readiness at 8.5 out of 10 because the program helped her feel knowledge-ready. However, it did not

prepare her for the ASU campus culture, which is why she did not feel that she fit in as a college student:

Interviewer: How ready did you feel for college having gone through the program?

Abbey: I would say I felt pretty ready. Like if I was on a scale from one to 10, I feel like I was at a 8.5.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewer: And why an 8.5, if you mind me asking?

Abbey: Um, I wouldn't say I was at a nine or 10 just because I feel like I wasn't prepared to deal with or accept the kind of culture college is...so the enormous class sizes, the fact that...just the kind of like, the environment and the setting, physically, of what colleges was like. I don't think I was like prepared for that. Of course, I would have like field trips and I would see the campus but actually being a student in the campus was something that I just never kind of visualized or I didn't expect it to be as big. Of course, I would like see movies of like college classroom sizes, but it never really clicked until I was actually physically a student and in such a big class. But, 8.5 is more of because I feel like I was prepared...like I had scholarships, I knew like how to gather main points out of certain concepts, like during lectures, but I think it was just more of like I wasn't expecting for that type of environment.

Extending Abbey's concerns about environmental challenges, Natasha believed HMDP helped her be as ready as possible but experienced a learning curve in academic demands.

This created high levels of anxiety that she proactively addressed by re-structuring her lifestyle and taking medication:

Interviewer: ...you mentioned a comment that actually intrigued me. You said that you enrolled in college-type courses in high school, but it didn't prepare you for college. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Natasha: I feel like obviously they [HMDP] tried to do their best of like, "Here's like a dual enrollment class...it's like kind of the same difficulty level that it's supposed to be at like college." But, I felt like because I was only taking a couple at a time, it wasn't the same as like being at college. So, I think it was just hard for when I got to college, I think, just because that's when my like anxiety disorder hit me the most, but then also I was like taking all these classes and then like the realness of it hit me that I was like, "oh my goodness, like I have to do well." Because I would start going to the pre-med workshops and I think that probably stressed me out too so like I have to do well now, because it counts in the future and all that stuff.

...

Interviewer: Okay, so it sounds like when you moved to ASU, and then having to deal with the realization that you had to prep for medical school was what kind of increased the anxiety?...You just felt like there was still a big jump between...

Natasha: Yeah

Interviewer: high school and college, even if you took dual enrollment classes? Do you think that there would have been something different that could have been done to help narrow that gap so they didn't feel so stressful?

Natasha: Um, I feel like they [HMDP] tried a lot obviously with like having those workshops and like having us take college classes but I don't know... I feel like it was just kind of something you have to experience, but maybe if they had let us know that it would be okay if that happens.

Interestingly, Natasha emphasized that normalizing a learning curve in the college transition process is important in college readiness rhetoric, even if there may not be a solution to addressing the learning curve. In essence, Natasha offered feedback that suggests HMDP could have been more effective if it had helped her understand that the challenges would and could be managed.

Similarly, Bailey believed the program gave essential tools for readiness, but her college experiences were so challenging that her “emotions” blinded the logical strategies acquired from the HMDP:

...before going in university, I felt like I was prepared because I had the tools and the guidance and I mean obviously I had all the knowledge going in and saying, “okay, it's probably going to be difficult. You're probably going to be homesick. You're probably going to experience culture shock. You'll probably experienced this, and this.” But, I don't think anything really, really...I mean, it gives you some sort of resiliency tools, but I guess when you get to college, that's when you start experiencing and you say, “I mean, yeah, I have some tools to get through situations, but nothing ever fully prepares you for what's to come.”...I thought, methodically and realistically, I was like, “Oh, I know how to get myself out of a certain situation, but I think when you're actually there, sometimes your logic just gets blinded by your emotional side. Sometimes I felt like I didn't really know

how to navigate certain things and that took me a while and it just took experience.

Consequently, Bailey found comfort in like-minded peers and faculty. In so doing, she found individuals who could assist her in navigating the difficulties, serving as a sounding board, and traveling the challenges with her.

Finally, Olivia disclosed that the HMDP shared information on college readiness strategies, but it did not prepare her for the core courses in her STEM major. In the HMDP program, she found comfort that other women in her circle looked like her, but she was an anomaly in her core math courses. She felt so out of place that she almost did not complete her degree:

Olivia: It was a huge wakeup call when I started taking higher level math and really focusing in on my actual core classes. Like I mentioned before, previous to me actually being a student, like full time student at ASU, the times I had been at ASU, I had been surrounded, or I was in these huge ballrooms with other Latina women and for some reason like, when I started taking classes with just people that were in math, I felt so out of place just because I was so used to seeing other Latina women. It just kind of...It was a strange out of place kind of...To go from feeling so at home with this organization and then being thrown into like, “okay this is actually school. I gotta hone down and focus”...It was strange.

...

Interviewer: ...it sounds like you had these experiences in the [Hispanic Mother-Daughter] program and it set the groundwork for what you were hoping to expect

while a college student, but then when you got closer to those core classes you started feeling that there was a disconnect?

Olivia: Yes.

In response to the first research question (i.e. How and in what ways do program participants believe HMDP prepared them to be college ready?), there is evidence that the use of workshops, checkups, and parental participation were impactful. Having information to make decisions, as noted in the cases of Stacy and Bailey proved to help family members see the promises of college. It is also true that the realities of the challenges were best dealt with by living and doing them. How participants engage in these challenges is as individual as each of them. In the end, they devised tailored strategies for success to navigate their college experience.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS: WHAT FACTORS DO PARTICIPANTS BELIEVE INFLUENCED THEIR COLLEGE SELECTION, ENROLLMENT, AND PERSISTENCE?

The purpose of this study is to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in a college readiness program. The previous chapter delved deeper into participant experiences in the HMDP. This chapter focuses on the academic journey post-HMDP. Below, I outline influencers participants identified as important for each milestone in their post-HMDP academic journey: college selection, college enrollment, and college persistence. To account for nuances within each milestone, I will present this chapter in sections by the above milestones. It is important to note that influencers like family, finances, and institutional space were common in more than one milestone. I will make sure to indicate how these influencers manifested (differently) in each milestone.

College Selection

Participants shared four main factors contributing to their college selection process: 1) Individual, 2) Family, 3) Finances, and 4) Institutions. Their decision-making involved weighing each factor and confiding in members of their core group. The outcome was that seven participants selected ASU, and one chose an out-of-state school.

Individual Influencers

Three participants identified individual influencers in their college selection process. These were Bailey, Angela, and Victoria. Bailey described why she picked University C:

Bailey: But for me it's just like, it's somewhere new. It's somewhere where I will to be completely different and be able to just kind of make my own person. And

for that I was happy, even if it wasn't...[in] a major city. I was close enough to a major city that I knew I was just like, "well, it's going to be a time for me to kind of develop..."

Interviewer: Okay, so for you the importance of growth was what you were looking forward too?

Bailey: Yeah.

Angela selected ASU because this was where she wanted to go:

Angela: There's not really any other place I would go. I wanted to be close to home. [I] didn't want to go too far. It [ASU] was right there by my house as well.

Interviewer: Okay, so it sounds like it was internal for you. Like you made this decision based on what was happening inside? Were there outside factors that maybe kind of helped with your [college selection] decision?

Angela: Not really because I don't remember when I found out about my dad going there [ASU] so that definitely...wasn't part of my decision...And then no one really went to college in my family so it was all just my decision. That's where I wanted to go.

Victoria was struggling with depression during the college selection phase, which led to a different kind of decisions making. She noted:

Like I mentioned, I was not feeling [it] junior and senior year [in high school] and I kind of wanted to pass classes and that's it. College, obviously, my mom is asking where I'm going to go and stuff. Everyone's asking. My mentor is asking. Everyone's asking like, you know, what Ivy League school am I going to shoot for kind of type of thing...I had no motivation whatsoever academically, like I

just wanted to major in whatever the heck I wanted and then just kind of get married and have a whole bunch of kids. Honestly, [it's] what I was thinking. In these instances, Bailey, Angela and Victoria point to the range and variation in how familiarity and proximity inform college going choices. For Bailey, she wanted to be away from the familiar in order to “just kind of make my own person.” By this, it appears that she wanted a chance to start anew, away from family and familiarity. For Angela, she always wanted to go to ASU and close proximity to home was an added bonus. Victoria, because of emotional and motivational issues, was less intent on starting anew. Her interests appear to have been in finding ways to continue on her current pathway and “have a whole bunch of babies.” While different, each decision is rooted in motivation by their attitudes and goals. Victoria’s experience was further deepened by her concerns over finances. She noted that ASU was both the most familiar and had the best fiscal response to her application:

Interviewer: So you didn't want to go out of state because of the money piece?

Victoria: Yes.

Later, I asked:

Interviewer: Why did you pick ASU?

Victoria: I think I was just the most comfortable with [ASU] because of probably the Hispanic Mother Daughter Program where we were there all the time. I kind of knew all the places kind of too. Not everything, because I did learn a lot once you're there, but...I was just comfortable and I was all about comfort and security.

Comfort and security were important goals that motivated Victoria’s decision making. I now turn to the ways that family influence how students made decisions.

Family

Family had varying weights of importance in the decision-making process. Olivia, Angela, Belinda and Victoria did not rank family high as they had almost complete autonomy in selecting a college. For the remaining four participants, their parents were prominent influencers in the college selection process. Abbey and Stacy's parents had opinions about location. Abbey's parents did not want her to move out of the house:

Interviewer: Tell me about the selection process. What was it like? What process did you go through to get to a point of making a decision on which college you were going to go to? What was going through your mind? What were you kind of weighing?

Abbey: ...I think it had to do with finances...I think it was mainly finances, I would say. I know, of course, it was depending on what I wanted to study. I was an exploratory student and because at the time that I graduated high school I still did not know truly know what I wanted to do [so]...it came down to like finances too because ASU was obviously cheaper because it was in state and I was a resident.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Abbey: And then also, because my parents really wanted me to live at home still, while I was in college because they didn't feel comfortable with me living on campus. Like I think it was like personal reasons they had. They just wanted to keep a close eye on me while I was in college, especially because I was an adult now. I was like 18 and I think it was like a sense of control too that they wanted

to have. Because...and I'm sure you know this...that like as a freshman, I think you're automatically or I think, back then, you are automatically like taking that path of living on campus. And [you] had to write a letter explaining why you're not going to go on campus and my parents did that right away. My mom wrote a letter explaining why I couldn't stay on campus and in that letter she just explained it has to do with finances.

Interviewer: Okay.

Abbey: I think there was more to that too. That's why I chose ASU. It was cheaper and it was closer that I could still live at home and go to school.

Abbey's parents had strong feelings about where she would live and how much the cost of attendance was for her. They took the extra step in writing a letter to appeal on-campus living. She too notes that "it was like a sense of control too that they wanted to have." Although I did not probe deeper here, she seems to say that parental control was exhibited through finances. Control is exerted in multiple ways; this is one instance of how parents, in managing the financial process, help students determine where they will go to college.

Stacy's parents did not want her to move out of state:

The [college selection] process...like the influence of making a decision on what college I wanted to go to was...my family played a big role. As I mentioned, like I don't know if all families can relate, but like my dad was very strict and he was opposed to the idea of me moving to college, out of state. So, that was one thing. Stacy regretted not going out of state but realized that selecting ASU worked out as her family's financial situation worsened during college. For the first two years at ASU,

Stacy's only concern was working to support her family as her scholarships were enough to cover college expenses. If she went out of state, she believes she would have dropped out of college trying to juggle her family's financial needs and paying out of state tuition.

For Natasha, she could move out of state but did not get a large enough financial package. Coupled with that was the recognition that her mother would not have a translator and her grandmother's health was in question:

I definitely was like, "get me out of Arizona." So I applied to...I obviously applied to Arizona colleges and then I applied to like a bunch of places that were out of state...The one I was thinking of going to [location removed]....So I was like, "Oh, I'll do psychology there," whatever. And I can do sports that I love but it was like \$60,000 a year. I was like, "I can't afford that." And they barely gave me any scholarships, so I was like, "Oh!" And so I think that, and then just plus, I think around that time my grandma was like going through some health issues and my sister was gone...I can't remember if she was at university or on her mission yet...And so I was like, "well, I'm the only translator here for our family." And I was like, "Eh, ASU is giving me a full ride and they're a pretty good research college and like I can just stay at home and do what I need to." My sister was like, "well, if you're going to go to ASU, apply to [the honors program]." I ended up getting into [the honors program] and so, I was like, "Yeah, we'll do ASU. Sounds good."

Natasha's concerns extend from family and finances to her role as a translator for her family, whose primary language is Spanish. In making her decision, her sister helped her

understand that the honors college was a value add in staying in-state and at ASU. She was, ultimately, able to earn her degree and support her family.

When she began having doubts about moving out of state, Bailey's mother was a critical piece in convincing her to adhere to her original desire to move out of state:

I almost backed out because I was so hesitant to leave Arizona at the last minute.

I didn't want to sign. I was like, "oh, what if we just stay here. Like, at least, I have my normality. Like, I don't have to start somewhere new." And my mom, I think, was the for me [who] was, she was like, "You're going because you want to go and because you know that if you stay like you're going to regret your decision of not having to go." I think that was, that was a really big push back.

Consider the range and variation the role of family played in this section. Some students were tied to place because of finances; others because of familial responsibilities. In Bailey's case, it was her mother that pressed her to support and engage her dreams of moving away. Regardless, family was an important part of how students made college-going choices. As noted above, finances overlapped with family concerns. It is to finances that I now turn.

Finance

Finances were a significant influencer in selecting a college. Only two participants placed lesser importance on finances: Olivia and Angela. Interestingly, Angela shared that her priority was college choice and location as she could figure out the financial aspects afterward:

Interviewer: ...you talked about location...we can check that off now as one of the things that you considered. Were there financial reasons as well for choosing ASU?

Angela: Um, no, not really. It was just more of I wanted to stay in [location removed] area. I didn't want to go anywhere else...

Interviewer: Okay...and do you mind me asking why finances wasn't an issue when it came to deciding [a college]?

Angela: Um, I guess it was more I wanted to pick where I wanted to go and then if there was a financial problem, after that, then I would try and figure it out, like apply for more scholarships [or] maybe get a loan. So I didn't really consider the finances piece until after I applied.

The above point to Angela's level of commitment to and confidence in leveraging resources to fund her academic journey. Angela credited the HMDP for "gaining more access to information and access to opportunity." In particular, she learned about her "options for college" and how to pay for college "if our families can't pay for it." The degree to which Angela acknowledged the HMDP in learning about college readiness suggests that the Program contributed in part to this level of commitment and confidence.

The remaining participants shared how finances influenced their decision-making. They needed a financial package that covered most of their college cost. Finances became a deciding factor for Natasha, Victoria, and Bailey. All three were accepted by out-of-state schools. However, Natasha and Victoria chose ASU when they compared the financial aid package to the college costs. Victoria was in "airplane mode" right

before her senior year after a second suicide attempt. However, she experienced temporary excitement after receiving acceptance to two out of state schools:

I always wanted to do the best. I kind of did want to go career driven, you know? I just didn't have the motivation at the time. I know when I got accepted to University A, I was super excited...Oh, and the University B. Those are the two ones I was excited and I actually did try to figure things out, like research them and see about scholarships and stuff like that but I just didn't want to deal with the hardship, financially. I guess that was also a big key for me. I didn't want to get any loans.

Unfortunately, the financial aid opportunities were not enough to justify pursuing an out of state college for Victoria. There is a common theme among many of the women in this study who did not want to acquire or accept loans. Their decision to avoid loans worked to their benefit as current data indicate that student loan debt has become a gendered issue, with women experiencing more negative outcomes from taking out loans (Miller, 2017; Min & Taylor, 2018). Women generally take out more loans than their male counterparts, and take longer to pay them back (especially for Black and Latina women) in part because of the gender pay gap (Miller, 2017).

Interestingly, Bailey was admitted to a private out-of-state school with a large financial aid package to support the college costs:

University C, since it's so small, I think part of their like admission strategy is to kind of give really, really nice financial packages. I guess that's the reason why they've been holding on for so long because I think in our day and age, I think when college students look at women's liberal arts colleges and Catholic, they're

kind of like, “this doesn't look very attractive.” So, they did give a really good financial package. So, it [financial aid] was full ride in the sense that I didn't have to take out any private loans. I didn't have to take out any money on of my own...so half of it was through FAFSA and then the other half were grants from very wealthy donors from the school and from the school itself.

She shared that schools like hers are ideal for international or undocumented students with large college costs: “Most of my girlfriends were undocumented. And the reason they ended up at my college is because it was Catholic and also it was a liberal arts college so there wasn't state tuition...it was more like it was private.” It is important to note that Bailey pursued this college with the help of a self-employed college admissions advisor who offered her services pro bono.

Abbey was the only participant who chose an institution that provided a smaller financial package. Her parents prioritized location over finances “because they didn't feel comfortable with me living on campus,” and the school with the larger package required her to move out. She now regrets this decision:

I actually applied for all three universities in the state, being: NAU, ASU, and U of A...I actually got a bigger scholarship for U of A. I would have been, let's say better off at U of A than at ASU so, Mr. Z [my teacher] was really pushing me to go to U of A because of that reason...I think it's one of those things that I did regret. Not that I was like, extremely financially struggling being at ASU, but I made that decision, because I was like a child and I didn't know any better.

It is worth noting that these women are now in their mid-20's, but were making many of these decisions when they were 17 and 18. The echoes of Abbey saying “I was like a

child and didn't know any better" is a point to consider. With family playing such a critical role in their lives, it is not surprising that their influence override other competing factors in the college selection process. However, Abbey's comment does open a larger conversation on decision making among first generation teenagers. How do first generation, teenagers make consequential decisions regarding college, especially without guidance and support in the process? The literature shows that family plays an important role in encouragement and motivation (Ceja, 2004; Marrun, 2020; Zalaquett et al., 2007), but teenagers likely rely on external support to make informed decisions. This is why it is especially important that information and support on college readiness is accessible. College readiness programs should consider that they might be a main source of information in students' college selection process. However, decision making can be a lonely process with sole reliance on college preparation information. With the HMDP strategy to include parents, it gives first generation teenagers the information needed to make college decisions with an informed parent.

Institutional Spaces

Institutions and their various nuances played an essential role in the college selection process. Specifically, participants highlighted faculty, staff, peers, campus climate, location, pre-college involvement, and university programs as instrumental to their process. Below, I break down how each contribute to participants' decision. However, it is important to note that each highlighted point are not siloed contributors. Rather, they intersected with each other to influence participant decision-making.

Faculty. All participants mentioned people within institutions who impacted their selection process. Those who mentioned faculty members shared they were

confidantes who helped make sense of the moving parts in their decision-making process. Most faculty encouraged participants to go out of state. None of the participants who confided in their faculty went out of state. Olivia shared, “Mr. A had a similar attitude. He really kind of encouraged [me] to seek out out-of-state schools and, you know, pursue the highest kind of highest thing I could.” However, Olivia already likened ASU as “home” and chose ASU based on that association. Stacy similarly shared:

Yeah, so I was very close to like my English teacher for sophomore year, and my student government teacher, as well as my AP government teacher. Like all the teachers that I was very close with, they had also expressed the idea of me going out of state and just like doing it. But eventually, as I mentioned, like those three factors [family, finances, and program offer] kind of pushed me to be like, “okay, I know it's a great opportunity but I think I'm just going to stick this way.”

Though Stacy valued her teachers’ input, she placed greater emphasis on her family’s location preferences, the amount of financial aid awarded, and the type of program offerings. She initially regretted choosing ASU but recognized that it worked out due to her family’s increasing financial needs. Getting a full ride scholarship from ASU initially allowed her to only focus on supporting her family. If she had taken her teachers’ advice and moved out of state, she would have needed to create a financial plan from the beginning of her college experience to support her family and college expenses.

Neither Victoria, Bailey, Natasha, nor Angela highlighted faculty in the college selection process. For example, Angela shared:

Interviewer: ...so you had no teachers or staff members from your high school [who influenced your college selection process]?

Angela: No, not really...not that influenced me to choose ASU.

Staff. Staff were less as confidantes and more as resources in the college readiness process. The most common form of support was assistance with college applications or financial aid/scholarship pursuits. In Angela's case, she received guidance on college entrance exams, scholarships, and the ASU application from her guidance counselor:

And once I got to high school, I would talk to my guidance counselor a lot. She helped me get ready for the ACT test because I wasn't sure if I wanted to take the SAT or the ACT. I really used her to help me with some of the application process as well for ASU [and] for scholarships, as well.

Knowing which test to take and how to prepare for it is an important component of the college-going process. The fact that Angela engaged her guidance counselor "a lot" speaks to the counselor's influence on the process on multiple levels.

Interestingly, Victoria shared that her high school advisor had a required college transition strategy, starting at the end of the junior year until high school graduation. This structure involved meeting at the end of junior year to develop action items for the summer and attending bi-weekly sessions during her senior year to reach the goal of applying to 10 colleges:

B High School makes [you] meet up with your counselor bi-weekly, so every two weeks [during] senior year to make sure you're doing applications for college. You need to do at least 10. I remember we started the last month of junior year to set it up so she can tell me what you do in the summer and then senior year it was

like that. I remember I dreaded those meetings and I always wanted to just make an excuse but I did apply for 10 schools.

Victoria experienced a second suicide attempt towards the end of her high school junior year and was in “airplane mode” afterwards. Thus, her energy was shared between pursuing a career but wanting comfort and security. Thus, she chose ASU from the beginning but reluctantly completed the other nine applications to align with her counselor’s expectations.

Only Olivia referenced an ASU staff as a confidante. This staff member hosted summer STEM programs on the ASU campus. Her impact was long-standing that included participation in Olivia’s college selection process. Even though this ASU Staff encouraged her to be open to all admission options, Olivia chose ASU because the campus felt like home:

[The ASU Staff member’s] role was very much so like, “If you can go elsewhere, I would go elsewhere, but ASU...this is kind of what's offered at ASU.” She'd been a previous ASU student herself, and she really gave me kind of her insight on being a student, being a math student, which was the field I was looking into. But she was very encouraging of...despite being like an ASU staff member or faculty member...It wasn't like she was kind of pushing ASU at all. She encouraged to go elsewhere, if possible.

Insight into what may appear to be small issues (e.g. insight into being a student, specifically a math student) is not insignificant in the college selection process. Olivia’s story demonstrates that even in the encouragement to “go elsewhere, if possible,” it may not overshadow the power of being a resource.

It is important to note that only Bailey included a self-employed college admissions advisor as part of her selection process. This individual, who offered pro bono services, introduced the private college that provided an out-of-state option with a full-ride scholarship:

Bailey: ...it was thanks to my mom, who was working – she's doesn't work at this school anymore – but she was working at the time as a teaching assistant for a teacher. And it just happened to be that the teacher's mom used to like actively work in public schools. But then eventually she turned her public school knowledge into becoming a...kind of like a college counselor. So she did her own business. My mom had just like casually ask, "like, hey, my daughter, like she really wants to go out of state. She doesn't really know how to. I don't know how to help her. Is there any way that your mom could help her?" And she's like, "Yeah, well, my mom has her business where she's starting to get up and going on how to basically help students get into college and help them on their college admissions paperwork and stuff." And because she knew my mom and she knew that we didn't really necessarily have the financial means to pay a private college counselor she ended up doing it for free. So she was like, "I'll give your daughter a chance. We will get coffee. We'll just kind of discuss on where she's at right now."

...

Bailey: Yeah. Um, so I remember meeting her during my junior year, right before college admissions. And so, we met the first time, so she could kind of get a glimpse of where I was at. I showed her my transcript, like where my grades

were right now, what I predicted my grades were going to be by the by the end of my first semester of my junior year and she sat me down and she was very honest. She was like, “look like you're trying to go out of state but you came to me a little bit late in the game. Like if you really wanted to go to like an Ivy or a top, top, top college like you would have needed to start this process a lot earlier like your freshman year or your sophomore year.” ...And so eventually I kind of told her. I was like, “Look, I'm really looking for an environment where I'm not one out of 500 freshmen in an introductory class. I really want someone to kind of...I want to be involved. I like having dialogue. I want to be in part of a community.”

When I told her that I was really passionate about going to the [location removed]. I just wanted the entire opposite of Arizona...She helped me kind of in the selection process. She also recommended to me University C...She was like, “I think University C would be a really great fit for you because it's in the [location removed], but it has an [location removed] feel and it's liberal arts. The only downside is it's Catholic, it's small and it's a women's college.” And I remember I applied there because I also applied to University F. And so yeah. She kind of directed me in that direction.

...

Interviewer: Was she the main influence for University C or were there other people or other things involved that got you to selecting University C?

Bailey: So aside from her positive feedback on University C and the environment with University of D she really sold it to me.

It is worth noting here that Bailey's experiences, choices, and decisions were deeply influenced by a private advisor, working pro bono. The advisor not only helped her see what was possible, but also helped her find ways to fully support her attendance at an out-of-state private liberal arts college. As important as staff and faculty are in the decision-making process, there is power in having individual attention for specific students to create different opportunities.

Peer. Peer impact was diverse. Olivia, Belinda, Natasha, and Bailey mentioned peers as having roles in their selection process. Olivia's peers held each other accountable to complete action items for college admissions:

...we wrote our personal statements together. A lot of like my friends that would sit with me, like at our little table in high school, we all did our applications and kind of updated each other on our progress, whether through our personal statements or kind of resumes.

Belinda's peer support was less hands-on. Instead, her two friends were confidantes to process the college selection process: "I had two friends in high school, who I was very close with and would talk about the application process as well as like how things are."

Both support types are not surprising as the literature similarly shows the degree to which peers will support each other (González et al., 2003; Rivera, 2014). In Olivia's case, she notes that her peers helped her complete her statement and multiple applications. Having this level of support is especially helpful in situations where other forms of social support (e.g. teachers, counselors, college preparation programs) do not exist (González et al., 2003). Luckily for Olivia, she had additional support from teachers and academic programs. Even in situations where peers do not provide this

degree of practical support, being an emotional support might be enough to encourage completion of college applications (Rivera, 2014). In Belinda's case, discourse with her peers on her college selection journey helped her process the experience and make a decision for next steps.

Peers are not just friends, however. Natasha connected with her sister's peer to inquire about her pathway to medical school:

...my sister had a friend from high school who was pre-med and she actually ended up graduating like her junior year. She went straight into medical school so I knew of her and she also did [the honors program]. I was like, "oh, she'd be like a great person to be able to like ask questions about." So, I did. And I asked her about how she liked [it] and everything. And she thought it was great and everything.

The insight gained from others' experiences (even when it is an extended peer group) is critical to the process of college choice. Natasha's experience in this instance is a good example of these benefits.

There are moments, however, when friends were not open resources. This was the case for Bailey. She credits her friends as resources but did not solely rely on them because of their competitive nature:

It was very much like, "oh, I don't want you applying to the same school as me." So, there was obviously not 100% transparency with them. I think they were like hesitant to give me information if that meant I would have to go to the same college of them...it was competitive, I think in general in high school, so I tried not to rely so much on that. It was more just to get an idea of what was out there.

Little is known about the ways that peers' competitiveness may positively or negatively impact college choice. Throughout this dissertation, it became evident that all seven women utilized the resources available to them.

Campus Climate and Pre-College Programs. Campus climate and pre-college involvement played essential roles in college selection. Campus climate in higher education is “the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. iii). More often than not, campus climate as a deciding factor was the outcome of participating in pre-college programs that acquainted them to a college campus (i.e., mainly HMDP). This was the case for Stacy, Belinda, Olivia, Victoria and Abbey. Stacy shared:

I really was interested in going to ASU because I've seen the campus. I actually also saw U of A because I was part of this program called [X program], which was a summer program for girls that were interested in political science, and government and stuff like that. I was able to be part of that for a week or two...I got to explore U of A a little bit, and I was like, “yeah, this is not like my kind of thing. I kind of like ASU a little bit better. I feel more at home over there.”

Exposure to the campus climate built comfortability with ASU, which became a significant reason for choosing ASU.

Bailey was the only participant who chose an out-of-state school. Still, Bailey made sure to research the campus climate before she pursued her out-of-state college:

What ended up happening is, I ended up talking to a couple alum [from University C]...who had graduated from there and that were in Arizona...I did talk [to] a couple of women who had gone to University C and they had

absolutely loved it. They said, “It's great. You really get the attention you need. I mean, obviously it's Catholic and obviously [it's] a women's college but you'll find that you'll really grow in that kind of environment.”

Though Bailey did not visit University C to get the same degree of campus climate exposure like her fellow HMDP participants who chose ASU, conversations with the alumni built a context of what to expect. Bailey learned that campus climate includes “get[ting] the attention you need...” at a campus where “that kind of environment” creates growth opportunities. In the case of college choice, being able to search for climate before enrolling was an important part of the choice process.

Location and Program Offerings. Location and program offerings played a lesser role in choice for the study's participants. As evidenced in the participant responses above, both intersected with family, finances, campus climate, or self-interest in the decision-making process. For instance, family intersected with location to explain why Abbey and Stacy chose closer schools. Abbey's parents did not want her to move out of the house and Stacy's parents did not want her to move out of Arizona. In terms of finances, it intersected with location to explain why Natasha and Bailey chose ASU and a non-ASU school, respectively. Natasha wanted to move out of Arizona but selected ASU because that option provided the most financial support. Bailey wanted an out of state college and was only able to do so because the out of state school provide a financial package big enough to cover college expenses. Lastly, location intersected with self-interest to explain why Angela and Victoria chose ASU. Angela always wanted to go to ASU and its proximity to her home solidified her choice.

Only two participants included program offerings as part of their decision-making process. Belinda liked ASU's engineering program and the campus resources, and Bailey liked her University C's liberal arts program. Belinda shared:

Interview one:

Yes, I think for me I mostly looked at things like how well the engineering program was...

Interview three:

Well, since [the HMDP] took place at ASU, it definitely got me more familiar with the campus and like the different resources there. I think that made me realize kind of how supportive the school was like towards their students. I think that's one of the things that I really liked about ASU when I was like picking what schools I wanted to apply to or what school I wanted to move forward with.

It is worth noting that Belinda highlights the importance of being on the ASU campus. It created a domino effect to learn about the program offering and the campus resources, which helped solidify her decision to select ASU.

Angela and Stacy were less attracted to the program. They still recognized that ASU's programs were good, but location (and finances) was more important. Stacy shared, "there were other colleges that had a great program for political science. I'm sure there were other colleges that [had] a stronger program, but ASU had a pretty decent program. And again, finances were like, "okay, I can go here." Though program offering was important, having a financial package to cover college expenses took higher priority as it made college a possibility.

College Enrollment

In this study, I defined enrollment in two parts: 1) transition from high school to college, and 2) re-enrollment in college courses every semester. Many participants felt the enrollment process was smooth or easy. However, there were three who experienced challenges in their enrollment. Natasha found her transition to college stressful because she was in another country during the summer until one week before starting ASU. The short window to prepare for her first semester snowballed into a difficult semester. For Bailey, the enrollment and persistence journey merged into one challenging experience because of the layered effect of moving into the dorms, budgeting her living expenses, and meeting her academic demands. However, she did admit that the re-enrollment process was easy. Stacy had many long-running extenuating life experiences that affected her performance in ASU courses. Thus, her re-enrollment between semesters was not straightforward towards the end of her program as she re-took some courses to meet graduation requirements.

Participants shared the following action items that were part of their enrollment process: completing college entrance exams early, purchasing books, setting up dorms, meeting roommates, creating schedules, enrolling in courses, and relaxing between semesters to gear up for the upcoming semester. In addition to these practical steps, participants highlighted contributors from two other spaces: family and institution. A large majority of what participants identified came from the institutional space. Thus, I will present familial impact and then spend the remaining section on institutional impact. It is important to note that institutional impact can affect familial participation, which will produce overlap between both spaces. These overlaps will be highlighted.

Family

Like in the college selection process, family was important for college enrollment. Four participants acknowledged familial impact during their enrollment experiences. For Natasha, she struggled with the academic demands the first semester that she intentionally created wellness strategies to reboot for upcoming semesters. Part of this strategy was spending time with family to process her college experience from previous semesters:

Interviewer:...you talked about the different breaks and how sometimes you would relax and you pretty much were regrouping, essentially. I was just curious if there were people a part of that regrouping process.

...

Natasha: ...family was more of like a space to process it [what happened the previous semester].

Having outlets to process experiences is a critical part of the Natasha's college journey.

For Bailey, Stacy, and Abbey, family affected the transitioned process from high school to college. Bailey's parents participated in a week-long integration process. Her parents helped with the move-in process and gained insights into the campus climate.:

When I first got to University C, I went with my parents. My parents actually dropped me off. Before they dropped me off completely, they were there with me for a week and a half. [They got to] see the campus and just to see that this is where they were leaving their daughter.

The process of including family upon enrollment is consistent with some of the principles guiding HMDP, where family inclusion is facilitated by sharing information (see Chapter 4 for more detail on parental inclusion).

For the others, parental concern impacted whether dorm residence would be part of the enrollment process. Stacy's parents initially had reservations about dorm life as their only source of information was from the media. The HMDP shared a different side of what role dorms play in the college-going process. Stacy's participation in HMDP helped de-mystify their concern and they supported her living in the dorms. Abbey's parents, however, still maintained their concern and restricted dorm life from her enrollment process. Information alone is not always enough to change perceptions.

Institution

All participants referenced some sort of institutional support as they transitioned to college and re-enrolled each semester. Common institutional support included: transitional strategies, resources, peer support, and staff support. Some of the above support possessed greater weight in one part of the enrollment process than the other.

Transitional Strategies. Participants' universities implemented some form of onboarding event to transition incoming students to college. Those who went to ASU attended an Orientation. At this event, they learned about university expectations and created their first schedule with the help of their advisor. Depending on their major, they either received guidance on building their schedule or were given a pre-approved schedule. Belinda shared:

I remember during orientation we got separated into sessions where we could sign up for classes, depending on what we were majoring in, and I think that was pretty helpful because we actually met with our advisors and they helped us out through that.

Belinda's experiences essentially gave her a "head start" on the enrollment process and connected her to courses and advisors. This is a critical aspect of the enrollment process.

Olivia was the only participant who directly mentioned receiving a pre-approved schedule. The program formed groups of approximately 20 people to take the same classes together (minus electives) in a block model. The outcome of this strategy was long-standing study groups that sustained even after members no longer enrolled in the same classes and close friendships to journey together towards degree completion:

It was I would say, like, a group of 20 people? We were all enrolled in the same schedule, aside from like one to two electives sprinkled throughout our day. I think it really helps with building like study groups because a lot of those people, or at least like a handful of those people like I just kind of followed through my studies, even after like we didn't have necessarily the same classes but as far as that like enrollment process that one was, it was pretty much handed to me. I didn't really have a say in it.

Olivia essentially had a cohort experience that allowed her to have a built-in support network of her peers.

Bailey did not attend ASU and participated a different transitional experience. Her institution hosted a week-long integration process that included her parents. She appreciated this experience because it gave her parents insights into the context in which they would leave their daughter, and it created alone time which she could spend with her parents or meet students:

...they did do like a whole week of integration...so with parents, without parents and I thought it was really lovely, organized where they just organized it enough

that you had enough time to be alone and kind of meet and greet with other students but also have a time with your parents... the enrollment process is really nice in the aspect that like I got my books, I set up my dorm, I had a roommate... This process allowed Bailey to essentially be ready and adjusted before classes started. The added benefit of building connections between parents and the institution was a bonus.

Resources. Besides participating in transitional strategies, three participants highlighted additional resources from institutional spaces they found helpful in their college enrollment. These included transitional strategies from the HMDP, access to ASU's course tracking system, and participation in a peer mentoring student organization.

Bailey credited the HMDP for sharing strategies to transition to college. However, she preferred the HMDP not to be so ASU-centric and provide more general enrollment information for those pursuing other colleges/universities:

On how the program was led, I think it would have been for me...it was beneficial to get there and to get that exposure, but I felt like it was very ASU-centric and I get it because it's sponsored in part by ASU...I try to seek help elsewhere because I knew that in my plans...I didn't know if I wanted to stay. So, I would have liked it to be a little more general about like how competitive it actually is...Instead of just like, "Oh, like when you get to college, like when you get to this campus" [and] more of like, "okay, I would love to know how I can better my personal essays, how I can be a stronger candidate." Seeing that guidance sometimes isn't really necessarily given at your own school so...

In this way, Bailey is suggesting additional ways for the HMDP to support students. In fairness, it is a program rooted in and at ASU, which means that there will be some necessary connections to the institution.

The second resource is ASU's course tracking system. After the first semester of college, Angela appreciated the tracking tools provided by ASU to re-enroll every semester. It outlined the program course map and tracked her progress towards degree completion. She told me:

...the MyASU page, they have...kind of like a map of all the classes you should be taking?

...

I would always like check that constantly making sure that I was on track and then...I mean it has on there if you're on track or not. I would always look at that.

I would make sure I would talk with my advisor.

The presence of a guide took away any guessing about whether or not Angela was on the correct pathway toward graduation.

The third experience is participation in a peer mentoring student organization. I included this type of peer support under this section because it is a formal university organization that build peer connections; it is not as informal as other peer relationships described so far. Belinda identified a mentor-peer that supported her re-enrollment process. The mentor from the student organization in which she was a member provided guidance and insights on courses in her field. She made sure to check in with this mentor before finalizing her schedule each semester:

If you remember, like I was a mentee freshman year in like the [student organization]. The mentor that I have there, at the time he was two grades older than me. I, actually throughout my whole like four years, once it was time to kind of enroll in classes again, I would always reach out to him to kind of ask him about what things I should know about the classes that I was signing up for or just how his experiences were with those classes.

The usefulness of a peer mentoring program in re-enrollment is not surprising as there is value in peer mentoring programs on the Latinx academic journey (Moschetti et al., 2018).

Peer Support. In the college selection process, peers held each other accountable, were confidantes, and offered experiential advice. During the college enrollment process, their support manifested differently. Instead, peer experienced the college transition together (rather than held each other accountable), but still offered advice should they be in a position to give it. Only Belinda and Abbey described their peers in this capacity.

Belinda completed the transition process together with her high school peers. This meant they went to Orientation, set up their meal plan, and moved in together. In fact, one of her peers was a roommate while the others lived in the same building:

...going from high school to college, I remember that a lot of the enrollment process things I did with a lot of like my high school friends. A lot of them who were also like in the engineering class in high school...a lot of them also went to ASU and a lot of them were also majoring in engineering at ASU. I remember we would go to like orientation together or we also kind of were trying to figure out

housing together and meal plans...I would say probably about five of those friends also ended up being at ASU...actually, one of them was another one of my roommates [during] freshman year...And then the other four were staying like in the same dorm as we were but yeah, like in a different room.

Lee et al. (2020) and Llamas et al. (2018) note that peers are linked to college adjustment. Belinda's experiences highlight this.

For Abbey, her peers assisted in the re-enrollment process. She connected with her peer to inquire about courses before enrollment. Unfortunately, this pattern did not last because they declared different majors and could no longer provide advice before course enrollment:

...I did have a friend that started ASU at the same time that I did. We were both exploratory students, but after the first year we were separated because she chose a different major than I did. But in regards to signing up for courses, she was somebody that I could go to and ask her, like, "hey, what did you do here, or which one should I choose which course." So, she was helpful for that first year...

Abbey lost her source for advice in future course enrollment. However, she did not solely rely on this peer. She also connected to other people in the institution, like Staff. I now turn to how staff support the college enrollment process.

Staff Support. Staff played a significant role in the transition to college and the re-enrollment each semester. A large majority of participants acknowledged their academic advisor as the staff member who contributed most to their enrollment process. This was certainly the case for Angela, Stacy, Abbey, Belinda, and Olivia. After

Orientation, they maintained contact with their advisors to ensure that their re-enrollment process was smooth and on track. For example, Abbey shared:

My interaction with my academic advisor at that point was, she was really accessible because my Social Work classes were in the same building as the academic advisor. It was just a matter of like taking the elevator [and] going to the floor. I did have to meet with her every semester because I had to make sure that I got cleared or that we were making an academic plan as to when I should, because I had a lot of the incoming credits as a freshman from high school because of IB and extra credits that carried over that counted. The reason why I had to meet with my academic advisor was just to make sure that I was like taking the right courses at the right times because I did graduate a semester early because of those additional credits that I had coming in.

Interestingly, some participants extended the advisor's value beyond just schedule development. Stacy, for instance, praised her advisor for creating a space in which she felt confident and comfortable talking to her. Olivia engaged in conversations about life with her advisor because of its potential impact on academics. Consequently, the advisor made sure to check in on her well-being:

Olivia: Choosing classes in general I pretty much went with my academic advisor. And I always pretty much requested R [a pseudonym for the advisor] at ASU. We would just kind of have this chat and then he would kind of go through the list of classes that were my options. ...

Interviewer:...if you were to reflect on your interactions with this advisor and then your progression in the program...how would you describe that impact of the advisor on your persistence in school?

Olivia: Well, R would always make an effort to ask me how I was doing, not only in my classes, but just as a person, in general. I think like when I was 19 and 20, I shared that I had like this condition that I need to go the hospital every Friday so I definitely could not have a Friday class. I think that just kind of made him inquire a bit more and check up a lot more...so he would always kind of asked me how I was doing in class. And then, how [I was] doing as a person like mentally and at times there were like...I did feel comfortable enough to, like, say, “you know, I'm feeling very stressed or anxious,” ...

Interviewer: mmmm...So did you think that R played an important role, then, in your academic journey?

Olivia: I would say so. Yes, I feel kind of bad because I haven't mentioned him very much.

It is common to find literature on deficit approaches to academic advising (e.g. Acevedo, 2020) that seeing these experiences showcase the positive such staff members can have on the academic journey. In Abbey and Olivia's cases, their academic advisors fostered a space of care, comfortability, and confidence.

The only exception to the strength of the academic advising was Victoria, who acknowledged her Honors Program and HMDP director instead of her academic advisors. The HMDP Director helped with dorm setup and course enrollment. In fact, she met with this director three times (one with her parents) to accept FAFSA, enroll in courses,

and accept housing. The Honors Program director helped by connecting Victoria with her dorm Residential Assistant and scheduling a personal tour:

Victoria: ...the Hispanic Mother-Daughter program [director] helped me with registering...because we went and set up a meeting with my parents. She set up a meeting with us. There, we finish accepting all my FAFSA stuff...I didn't even know how to accept that...how to register for classes and accept housing. It was like three times. So the first time [meeting] I was with me and my parents. And then the second time, I did it on my own.

...

Victoria: [With] the [Honors Program Director], I just told her, "Yeah, I am going at ASU. That's what I'm going to do." I told her, "I'm like all set up. I'm ready to go. I'm just going to chill this summer." And then she was like, "oh, what dorm are you staying?" And she put me with this girl...She [the Director] knew her and she's like, "Oh, I know this girl. I'm going to tell her to contact you and then you know whatever questions you [have, ask her.]

...

Interviewer: Okay, so that's how the [Honors Program] director helped you. And then so it sounds like you had two directors helping you: HMDP and Honors Program?

Victoria: Yes.

Although they were not academic advisors, these two individual staff members at ASU were a critical part of Victoria's experience. There is a range and variation in the staff who supported students in the HMDP.

College Persistence

Several factors impacted college persistence: 1) Psychological Influencers, 2) Family, 3) Finances, 4) Finances and Family, 5) Romantic Partners, and 6) Institutions. Each had different weights of impact but together contributed to unique stories towards degree completion. It is worth noting that some of the listed factors above were present in previous milestones. However, they will be mentioned again to show how they are manifested during college persistence experiences.

Psychological Influencers

Participants highlighted motivations and beliefs/perceptions of their academic selves as part of their persistence story. The most common motivation was career goals. This was the case for Natasha, Abbey, Olivia, and Bailey. Abbey was motivated to pursue social work because of her past experience:

I went through the sexual abuse...I feel like that kind of changed me or molded me to be the person I am today...to the point of like, "How could I use that what I went through?...How could I use those experiences to make a difference in the lives of other people that might have experienced it or how can I prevent that from happening?" And so, I think that was always in the back of my mind. I don't ever want somebody to go through what I went through so what do I need to do? And it was: I need to go to college. I need to make sure that I get good grades to get into college. And I think that's why I chose social work [as my major] too because of that experience that I went through.

Olivia was motivated to empower those in marginalized spaces. This motivation was why she added a non-profit minor while an undergraduate student. Unfortunately,

she had to drop this minor due to extenuating life experiences. She returned to this passion after graduation and is currently in an MBA program to create a business or non-profit that supports this empowerment: “I really want to kind of take some of the skills in this MBA and apply it to potentially like a business or nonprofit organization, if possible, to empower women or empower people in my community, in general.” Stacy wanted to prove wrong the statistic that she could not work and go to school, and wanted to model academic success for her students. She was able to meet both goals by making it to degree completion. These three cases point to the range and variation in how students were driven by psychological factors. They run the gamut from personal challenges to wanting to create opportunities for others.

Besides motivation, participants shared beliefs or perceptions of their academic selves. A large majority of participants acknowledged a learning curve in their initial college journey. They questioned their college readiness when they recognized a distinction between academic/college expectations versus reality. This was the case for Natasha, Bailey, and Belinda (see chapter 4 for more detail). Despite these learning curves, many evaluated their transitioning experiences and created coping mechanisms to progress successfully. For instance, Belinda decided to challenge herself by running as a board member for a STEM student organization: “I think at that point is also when I decided to get involved in like the [student organization] and run for the officer board just because I wanted to challenge myself and...grow as a person.” Others implemented more practical/wellness approaches to prepare and succeed in each semester. For example, Natasha: 1) prepared in advance before each semester, 2) changed her study skills, 3) paid attention to course expectations, 4) prioritized course demands, 5)

prevented herself from regressing to her first semester, 6) balanced out courses to make her semesters manageable, and 7) practiced wellness between each semester, amongst others. Eventually, she had greater self-awareness of what they could handle in conjunction with her academic demands:

I think that first semester, just like made me like take a step back and realize like, I can't just like keep doing everything like I was doing in high school, or whatever, like this would be different...that I needed to change up like my study skills or like how I was going to address each class that I was taking. I think that first semester was kind of like the cornerstone, or like a building block for my future semesters where I realized like, I need to be able to actually look at each class separately and make sure I'm doing all the work that I need to do separately. If not, prioritize one over the other, where I just like forget about one. That helped me for like the future semesters that I did for every other semester. Like, I took that break after every semester like I was saying to regroup. Then for every other semester, I made sure that I balanced my classes well, that I wasn't taking too many credits. I made sure I was good to be able to take that many credits if I did more than what's recommended or whatever and just making sure I didn't like regress back into that first semester, like how I was dealing with my classes.

Challenges were prevalent for these students. Importantly, each of them found ways to manage and address the challenges in different ways.

Family

As in the previous milestones, family played an important role in college persistence. Rather than actively and directly participating in the college experience, as

previously evident in the college selection and enrollment milestones, family were more spaces of strength, support, and motivation towards degree completion.

The most commonly highlighted family member among participants were parents, with mothers being the most significant contributor for why they completed their degrees.

Olivia shared:

Interviewer: So who and what influenced your decision to stay and finish out your program?

Olivia: My mom.

Interviewer: Your mom?

Olivia: Yeah.

...

Interviewer: ...how so?

Olivia: ... I feel like with the narrative of an immigrant parent moving to a foreign country to provide a better life for their children...I think that was a driving force...I did have the opportunity to go to where she was raised and see where our family is from...for her to make such a huge sacrifice and go to this foreign country that she has nothing, no knowledge of, only through what is shown through the media, I think it pushed me to get this degree...I think the frequent visits to our hometown, getting to know people at ASU, and seeing what others can achieve with this degree, it was a huge...It propelled me despite those feelings of inad[equacies]...despite those feelings of not feeling completely like, "Like I shouldn't be there."...Does that makes sense?

Interviewer: It does.

Olivia: I think all the people that I mentioned were huge motivators, but at the core...at times when I felt like I couldn't finish it [my degree], I thought about all the sacrifices that my mom made...For me not to finish it, it just seemed kind of outrageous at times.

It is fitting that the participants addressed the role of their mother as a source of strength and guidance.

Participants also shared their family was a source of motivation and/or a space in which they could debrief, be encouraged, or experience a positive distraction. This was the case for Natasha who found comfort in discussing her college experiences with her family. For others, they were more so a space that motivated degree completion:

Angela: ...No one else in my family went to college so I wanted to go. A lot of my family also had kids at a really young age. I kind of wanted to stop that cycle.
...

Interviewer: ...who and what influenced your decision to stay in college as an undergraduate, and then also as a graduate student?

Angela: [after a long pause] I would say myself because I'm pretty determined and stubborn. The fact that I didn't want to fail is kind of what kept me going? Even with classes, like I had failed one of my classes...I kind of just learned from my mistakes and then I was also going through a breakup at the time...After that [I] focus[ed] more on me and how I was going to improve myself and how I was going to get myself to that goal of graduating and being the first to graduate in my family.

Though family members did not actively participate in the college experience towards degree completion (like in the college selection and enrollment milestones), they provided support in more indirect ways. Still, participants valued these forms of support, indicated by their acknowledgement that the family was their main source of persistence.

Finances

College financial costs played a significant role in persisting towards degree completion. In the beginning of participants' college journey, financial impact manifested in the form of weighing financial aid packages to college costs. These comparisons made up a large part of participants' college selection process. After college admission, finances were less about securing the most financially viable package and more about maintaining it. Coupled with this maintenance was the layered need to supplement their financial aid packages with employment to meet living needs. For example, Bailey was a student worker at University C in Fall/Spring semesters and worked in the Summer to save money for future expenses in the academic year:

Everything was either financed by a grant, be it from wealthy donors, or a portion of it was covered through FAFSA, through subsidized and unsubsidized loans—I was fortunate in that—and then work study [in the school year]. During the summers when I would go back to Arizona, I would work a summer job.

Similarly, Natasha had financial restrictions and relied on her aid to cover college and living expenses. By the time she obtained a job her sophomore year, she could occasionally treat herself to eating out:

...ASU gave me financial aid based on like financial need, and then merit-based and then I ended up getting a scholarship...With all of that, it was able to cover

my tuition and all the extra fees that come with everything else, like athletic fees or whatever, like technology fees and then also my on-campus residence and then a meal plan. It was like a small meal plan...financially, I definitely felt like I couldn't buy as many things as everybody else when I was in college in my freshman year because I didn't have a job. I was just like living off my meal plan and whatever food my mom gave me to bring...So then we go into my sophomore year, I had a job, which is nice. I could like eat out if I wanted to, maybe like once or twice a month or something.

In both Bailey's and Natasha's cases, having financial aid, supplemented by work, allowed them a bit more freedom in how they could spend money. It is clear that resources were not abundant; the two women worked to ensure that they were sufficient for their needs.

Unfortunately, some participants (i.e., Abbey and Stacy) lost their scholarships due to low GPAs. They experienced extenuating situations that affected their GPAs and, ultimately, their standings with their respective scholarships. Abbey, for instance, experienced a breakup with her partner, questioned if college was for her, struggled with the content, and had transportation challenges:

I was going through a breakup. I was figuring out how to manage my emotions and I was having a hard time not letting that affect my education. Like just kind of waking up and feeling like I didn't have the motivation, because my thoughts were on what was going on, personally. I wasn't able to focus on...if I was in class, my mind would wander. Also, because my first year of college, I was an exploratory student so I was just getting all of my general classes out of the way

during that first year, because I was still figuring out what I wanted to do. I [was] just in a place where I wasn't sure if college was for me or what I was doing, because I just didn't know. And I think it was just a mixture of everything that was going on and it was just, I didn't have a car at that moment so it was like stressful to get to school.

...

[The scholarship coordinator] knew my story and she knew my struggles. That's why she was so flexible and she worked with me. When she moved on to another position, I was still struggling in one of my classes. I believe it was like at a "C", and that "C" affected my GPA. When this new person came into her position, she, of course, reviewed my grades and because I was doing poorly I wasn't granted the scholarship again.

The lack of scholarship shifted her school-work-life balance as Abbey had to work more hours to support her college costs. If financial aid policies were accommodating to extenuating reasons, how would Abbey's academic experiences have shifted? Luckily for Abbey, support/encouragement in other spaces (e.g. family) helped to the finish line.

Importantly, two of the participants found support from unexpected places. Though their jobs were to support living costs, Stacy and Angela found strong support systems in the workplace. Stacy's employers were accommodating to homework demands, familial needs, and college costs. For Angela, her workplace helped her through a breakup and in determining her career in teaching: "...I was also not happy in that relationship so I was thinking of ending it...I think that helps and then, I had friends at work that I could talk with. They really helped me get through that time."

Finances x Family

Interestingly, the worlds of finances and family merged when there was a need in the family. This was especially the case for Angela, Victoria, Abbey, and Stacy. Angela saved up money to purchase a car and then became responsible for transporting her siblings to school:

Before I had gotten my car, we only had about three cars: my uncle's car, my mom's car, and my dad's car. My mom would take all of us to school. She would drive and take my brother and my sister to their schools, and then she would drop me off at ASU, and then she would go to work. We all kind of had to work together to make sure that we were all ready so that all of us were on time. And once I got my car, it kind of put more of a role in my part in my family. Instead of my mom taking all of us to school, I would then take my brother and sister to school before I would...go to ASU.

Angela's new-found freedom to transport herself also presented an opportunity to assist her family.

There were significant challenges as well. Abbey worked long hours when her mother lost her job to pay the remaining college charges and any additional bills for her family. Stacy, unfortunately, had many life-altering moments in her family. Her parents experienced severe injuries in a car accident before her senior year in high school. Her father could not work anymore by her high school graduation, so Stacy worked long hours during her first year at ASU to support her family. Stacy used her paychecks only to cover family expenses as she received a full-ride scholarship to cover tuition/fees and room & board:

I was getting as many hours as possible because at that time none of my parents had a job. Basically, I was the one that was putting food on the table. I still had my full ride scholarship at that time. I didn't really have to worry about paying for housing, paying for books, paying for anything that I needed because I had everything that I needed at that time.

Initially, this was manageable until the demand of her job affected her grades, and she lost one of her scholarships at the end of her freshman year. This loss meant financially supporting her family and part of her schooling out of pocket:

I was trying to keep up as much as possible. I talked to my boss at that time. I told her. I was like, "Listen. I can't do this. I think I'm gonna find another job. I need a job that can pay me more." And that's when my bond started with them because that person told me, "I can get you a raise."...They already knew my work ethic and they offer[ed] me to give me a raise and more hours in order for me to kind of keep up, but that also meant less hours for school.

...

By the end of my freshman year, as I mentioned, I had a full ride scholarship and I lost one of my scholarships because I couldn't maintain the GPA requirement. So, I'm talking to my residence hall person who I was very close to and I told her, I was like, "I can't. How am I going to pay for the next year? Like, I had a...not guarantee...but I had money paid. I didn't have to worry about school and now I have to worry about paying for school and paying for home."

Her family's financial situation became worse when their house suffered roof damage during her sophomore/junior year in college. Thus, she paid rent/mortgage for the house

they could not reside in and the apartment in which they moved. It was hard to keep up with her family's expanding financial needs, so she found another job (which she currently holds) in education:

My sophomore year, as I mentioned, we got into a lot of debt. I think sophomore year was 2014...So we had bought our house and that's when it got destroyed, in 2014. Around that time, if I recall correctly, it was around that freshman [or] sophomore year. So then, we couldn't live in our house. We have to live in an apartment, but we were still paying mortgage at those two [places] and it was over \$1500 worth of rent. Just rent.

...

And so we were paying [for] a place that we didn't live in and we were paying for rent [at] an apartment that they were living in. It became really hard to keep up, and so I ended up finding another job, which is the school that I work with now.

The outcome of this arrangement meant more hours at work and less for school. The balance of school and work was difficult to manage, that she lost all her scholarships at the end of her sophomore year and almost declared bankruptcy. Academically, a financial hold eventually appeared on her account that prevented her from enrolling in future semesters. Through the help of her manager at work, she was able to secure enough money to pay her charges and enroll in future courses:

So then, again, that meant more hours and less hours for school. I kind of had to pick, "Okay I can only dedicate this much for school. I'm gonna try my best." As I mentioned, my jobs are very accommodating in the sense of, they're like, "Okay. Go study." I would study in the break room...Well, I wasn't able to

manage and I ended up losing my big, big scholarship, which was over \$6,000. At that point...I lost all my scholarships by the end of my sophomore year. And so I was like, “well, I'm going to have to take out a loan,” because I was determined to get a degree...but at the same time we were losing our house. I almost declared bankruptcy because my credit was so bad...at that point...I was a full-time student. I was working three jobs [and] doing an internship. I didn't have a transportation so I was going from like bus...I burned out...And as you can imagine, academics again, I dropped. I couldn't afford to pay for school because I was paying for my house [mortgage] and my apartment rent. We're paying for other things...food, electricity...all those bills so I couldn't afford to pay at ASU...[ASU] put like a hold on your account once you reach a certain limit. I reached that limit. I had gotten this letter like, “you need to pay or else you're not gonna be able to register for the next semester.” And I was like, “oh gosh, like what am I gonna do?” All in the midst of that I had heard about this internship in DC, where you get to intern [at] Congress...My manager encouraged me. She said, “Just do it. Just go for it. It's a great opportunity. I know you're struggling, but you cannot let it go...”And I was like, “oh gosh, I have a hold”...And I only had like a week [to decide]. I was talking to my manager about it because they became like family...I was like, “Yeah, I don't think I can do it.” I was like, “I can't pay ASU right now. I'm trying to fix the house. I'm trying to figure all this stuff out. And then I have a hold on my account. I can't register for next semester, which means I can't go because I need to be registered for the internship...” That's when she jumped in and she took me to ASU. As I

mentioned before, she offered to pay all of my debt...I didn't get accepted to do more loans. I asked banks for loans, but because of my house, I wasn't paying on time [and] my credit was going down. And then the bank said, "we can't lend you money." There were a lot of doors that were closing so she figured that was her only option of offering to pay for that amount. We talked about it...She's like, "just tell them [the internship] you're going." She ended up creating the fundraiser and we ended up raising over \$5,700 which was enough to lift my hold. I was able to register. I was able to go to DC.

She eventually made it to the graduation, but it was a journey of many intersecting obstacles, with deep support from her workplace. These challenges are often invisible to institutions that function on numbers and metrics that hide personal difficulties like Stacy's.

Romantic Partners

Angela, Belinda, Victoria, Abbey, and Bailey referenced romantic partners as part of their academic journey. The degree to which they affected participant journeys ranged from negative to highly supportive. For instance, Abbey, Bailey, Angela, and Victoria similarly shared that their partners did not align with their visions of life and academic aspirations. Bailey noted:

...my first partner, kind of, I guess it was in high school up until like sophomore year of college. This partner was someone who also came from an immigrant background. And so, he knew that education was important, but I guess our vision of education and where we wanted to be afterwards was very different...I wanted to go out of Arizona. That was the goal for me. It was like, "I want to see

what else is out there because I know that there's a lot to see and I would love to be able to explore that.” And then in his case, it was very much like “I'm going to do the bare minimum, and like, in order to just kind of like stay afloat, get a degree and then just call it a day.” And so we didn't really coincide in that. Eventually, they separated and she found a new partner at the end of her bachelor's degree who was supportive of her educational pursuits. Bailey continued:

What ended up happening is we parted ways. In terms of education, he was supportive, but also at the same time, when I ended up leaving to study out of state, became less supportive because I just was not there anymore and so things fell apart on that aspect...My second partner though...the one that I met while I was studying abroad my senior year, [he was] someone who was about a year or two older. He was just finishing up his master's actually...He was like, “hey, like if you want to come back to [location], like I'm more than happy to have you. We can figure it out.” [He] was very supportive in the aspect that he was just like supportive of me going there, obviously, but then...he's someone who's very academically motivated...he's always pushed me at every single point of my life when I was here in [location]. He was like, Bailey, you can do more. There's this opportunity. Here are these internships. I no longer feel like I was having to be the pusher. It was someone else who was pushing me and it felt really nice for a change.

Bailey's experiences point to the ways that partners can either hinder or enable positive, constructive experiences.

Belinda was the only participant who described a supportive partner. They both attended different colleges but scheduled time to complete homework together. Belinda claims her boyfriend was supportive of her academic journey and was her source to remain “grounded” if she felt too stressed by academic demands:

Belinda: My boyfriend was a big part of kind of going through college. He was the main support system that I had...sometimes I would like stress myself out a lot and he would just kind of be the person who I could tell him why I was stressed. He also sometimes would see that I'd be placing a lot of stress on myself, so [he would] tell me that I needed to take a step back and just give myself time to relax and to, yeah, just like not stress.

Interviewer: Okay, so he kind of like helped you stay grounded?

Belinda: Yeah.

Natasha and Stacy did not have romantic partners during college.

Institutions

The institution in which they completed their degree is another contributing factor in explaining participants' persistence story. Institution is a massive space with many elements: peers, faculty, staff, campus climate, and educational opportunities. I expand on each element below.

Peers. Among human relationships in institutional settings, peers stood out consistently. In the college selection process, peers were accountability buddies, confidantes, and advice givers. By college enrollment, peers experienced the transition to college life together and begun to establish systems of support for each other. By the time of college persistence, these early stages of peer support manifested into more

established bonds that encouraged degree progression and completion. However, the degree of these bonds was variable. Some did not share the depth of their circumstances with their peers (e.g., Stacy) but appreciated them as sources to de-stress and distract from life. Stacy shared:

Socially...I felt like I was very reserved because of everything that I was dealing with. Although I had my two best friends and I had other people that I talked to and I had organizations that I was part of, I also, as I mentioned, and I've done this all the time where I try to pretend like everything is okay, because, you know, when you're around people you want to like have fun. You don't want to be the one person that's like, "oh my gosh guys like, I'm struggling." And my two best friends were always there. I knew I could talk to them, but in regards to other people and other organizations I knew I had to keep this facade of like, "I'm doing good..." because they would talk about how everything is good...like everything that was going on, like, "I'm doing good. Everything is great! I have this opportunity!" I'm just like sitting there like, "Oh my gosh, I could be doing better. I could be doing more." ...more of my communication happened outside of school, which, as I mentioned, would be like my manager. They were my go-to people. I knew I could trust them. They were adults, like they were actual older people.

Stacy did not share the degree of her personal challenges but still appreciated her peers for the positive distraction they can offer from her current situation.

Bailey likened her peers as a support system who helped her adjust to the campus climate; she found refuge in them because they were like-minded. The most common

form of support was pursuing degree completion together. Checking in with each other about their progress or studying together created a force of motivation to reach the finish line. Similarly, Natasha shared:

I think most of the time when we had to like register for classes we would all wake up early and do it together. Then we would talk about like what classes we're taking and what exams we need to do. Or, like the education major [roommate], she's like, "I have to get this lesson plan in." I was like, "oh, I have to get this project in." We'll just talk about that and help each other. I would have—my friend was education major—always read over my essays, because she's awesome at that or we would help each other if we needed to study, like flash cards and stuff. We would like help each other with that. And then like when we all take a break we would be like, "Okay, we're going to get dinner, or we're going to make dinner and then we'd watched like a movie together and then like back to homework." ...just making sure we were all staying on top of things...making sure we're doing well in our classes, but also mentally well.

A supportive peer network allowed Natasha and Bailey to have structures that supported their schooling experiences. But, it was not always positive for Bailey.

Interestingly, two participants shared college peers who did not provide positive experiences. Bailey experienced culture shock and a significant disconnect in career goals with her peers during her first years:

...this is probably like a huge generalization, but I think a lot of the girls who were there because they were legacy students and because they were following a tradition, like a long-held tradition of women going to University of C and men

going to the University of D. That they were so much so that they were like, either kind of like, “I’m only doing my studies because eventually I’m going to find a husband who goes to the other school right next door to me.”...So I felt that there were girls like that...And that bothered me a lot because I was just like, “Hey, like I’m grateful to be here. Like, every single moment that I’m here, it costs FAFSA money and it costs grant money, but I’m here like trying to make every penny worth like my worthwhile, to gain all that knowledge.” So sometimes it was hard that some people were indifferent or just kind of careless. Bailey’s engagement with class differences is evident in her statement above. She is seeing both a financial component of this and a class-based one rooted in college legacies.

Olivia felt her peers judged her capabilities when they found out where she lived. This othering feeling amplified further while participating in a STEM program at a different university. Though she learned important information, she felt ostracized by her peers. This experience foreshadowed what she knew she would experience being a woman of color in the field of Math:

ASU is a really great place. I loved being there, but I’m not sure if it was specifically the program that I chose. I chose the math program. It’s highly predominantly white male and anytime I was in a more focused kind of math class, there was a lot of misogyny, or because I was a woman, I was...even kind of my classmates getting to know me and trying to study with them, when making small talk, I’d get asked, “well, where are you from?” And I’d be like, “I’m from the west side. I’m from West Phoenix.” [They would respond,] like, “Oh! You’re

from that side of town. Oh okay.” Then it kind of clicked ...They've already kind of come up with this preconceived notion of my education level, my background, my financial status and that, in itself, was just very discouraging going through my studies. And, it wasn't just specific to ASU...I'm not sure if it was kind of the demographic of students that were in that particular type of programs because even in outside events, like I got the amazing chance to study at University of P for summer school. [It] was the summer of 2015. I got accepted into their very second summer school of like analysis. So very, very complicated high math.

...

From the get [go], it was a very strange experience. I was the only female. There was about 50 participants. I was the youngest and I was the only female there. They made it very, very obvious that, the students at least, did not want to talk to me. In lecture, I would get there early [to] try to brush up on the notes and just all the other participants, all the men, would just sit on the other side of the lecture hall...It gave me a very good kind of foreshadow view of how life would be if I continue being a pure mathematics person.

The misogyny and class-based challenges Olivia faced are not surprising (Kim & Meister, 2022; M. J. Lee et al., 2020). Such experiences can have lasting impacts on those who do not fit the white, male, cis-gender mold. Similar to the literature, these microaggressions affected her retention in the STEM field—she almost dropped out—and dissuaded her from remaining in the field after graduation.

Faculty. Faculty impact was less present. However, for those who referenced faculty, their influence was also profound. Belinda's volunteer position with a faculty member resulted in her obtaining a research position after graduation and a letter of recommendation for graduate school:

I think that I built a good relationship with a couple of faculty members...one of them was just like the PI [Principal Investigator] whose lab I worked in for the last two years. I didn't necessarily have any classes with him as the professor, but he knew how I was as like a researcher. And then the other person I would say was...if you remember that I was a teaching assistant? For the three classes that I TAed for, it was for the same professor. She really got to know how I interacted with students; how I interacted with her. And I think that she was also another good person who really knew me, both as a student, because I had her in multiple classes as well as like as a professional...they both wrote letters of recommendation [for graduate school].

Similarly, Victoria's enrollment in a faculty member's course led her to change her major and pursue a similar path as her faculty. Bailey found refuge in her faculty, who had ties to her Latina culture:

When I started out as a major in [major A], I felt like maybe it's just the fact that it's STEM and it's very, it's like, "Oh, you just need to get through it. You just need to have better study habits." It wasn't the mentorship that I was looking for. But when I ended up transferring to [Department B], I found that those professors were a little bit more open to the fact that we needed support. And I'm especially thankful for one professor that I'll never forget...He is someone who's very

passionate about Latin American politics and was...eventually my advisor for my Capstone. He is someone that I really appreciate, him and his wife, at least, because every time that I couldn't go home for Thanksgiving, he would like invite us into his home and so it was really nice to build community with people who are not only passionate about their job, but also passionate about understanding students and just inviting them into their home. I thought that was really nice.

In this instance, faculty serve as both an academic resource and a cultural/community one. There are multiple ways that institutions can be open, welcoming places.

Natasha was the only participant who included a negative element. She had “imposter syndrome” because her enrollment in the honor’s program courses consistently used a methodology that made her feel less competent than her peers:

...obviously there's always gonna be someone smarter than you...[but] I felt like everybody was smarter than me, like, especially when we did like Socratic seminars. I was like, “I don't know what these people are talking about!” In my classes I just felt like sure, I was getting good grades, but I was like, all these people are smarter than me. How am I supposed to like actually achieve anything? And it was like, “Am I actually supposed to be here?”

The pedagogical structure by Natasha’s instructor contributed to her insecurity in academic competence. Since she referenced honor’s courses, the pedagogical structure may have less to with instructor choice and more to do with the honor’s program expectations.

Staff. Staff impact was even less present. The most common staff mentioned was academic advisors, though their role aligned more with enrollment processes. Only a

few (i.e., Stacy, Olivia, and Natasha) described their academic advisors in such a way that there was a potential impact on their persistence. For instance, Stacy's advising experience shifted when her department implemented advising teams. The outcome was a new advisor, who told her she needed to obtain all A's to graduate and that she had to choose between work or her academics. Stacy did not accept that ultimatum and chose to do both:

Interview three:

...with like my first advisor, I felt very confident and I felt like I could talk to her and the second ones were kind of like I just, I really didn't know them and I kind of told them what was going on, but I still, I don't know, I felt like it wasn't...I don't want to say wasn't helpful because they were helpful, but like it wasn't as helpful as the first one.

...

Interview two:

And then the semester before I graduated, they had told me that, because my grades were so low, I was going to get kicked out of the program if I scored anything lower than a 4.0 [GPA] in my last semester. And at that point I was like, "Oh my gosh. That's impossible." I haven't scored a 4.0 since I started. It's sad to hear that because I went from this straight A student in elementary and high school to this student who wasn't performing well and I was like, "Gosh! This is not what I was planning for. I was planning to do well. I can do it. I just never set the time. I was focusing on personal things. I was trying to help my family stay afloat. I was trying to make myself stay afloat. And so, they had told me.

She said, “You're gonna have to pick.” I was like, “what do you mean?” She was like, “well, you can't do both.” At this time my advisor, the one that I started with, was no longer an advisor. She got promoted. It was a different person. I was like, “No, but you don't understand, like, I've been going through all this.” And she's like, “Exactly. You have to pick. You have to pick. Either you want to graduate or you're going to have to work.” And at that time, my job...the only reason why I was able to move [to a] full time [position] was because I was in the process of getting a degree and I only was one semester away [from graduating]...I knew that if I didn't get my degree I automatically lost my job...it was hard because it's like, “Okay. I worked so hard. I'm about a semester way from getting my degree. After all, like the late nights and trying to stay afloat, you're telling me that I have to score a certain point average for me to get it or else I'm kicked out of the program for a year?...I couldn't lose my degree because I would lose my job and there goes my income...so I decided to take the risk and do both.

There is a clear need here for academic advisors to find ways to understand the challenges their students face, to find ways for students to work through what can be an unforgiving system and to see the possibilities for students like Stacy to work their way through university.

After academic advisors, participants highlighted other staff members like HMDP advisor, a New York Program mentor, Community Assistants (CAs), a CSA (College Success Arizona) advisor, an EOS (Early Outreach Scholarship) coordinator, and staff employers of their student work position. For example, Natasha's HMDP contact, while

in HMDP, became a committee member on her Honors Thesis. She credits this person as one of the reasons for degree completion:

Natasha:...my [HMDP] advisor...I kept in contact with her mostly through email once I asked her to be on my committee for my thesis.

Interviewer: ...who and what influenced your decision to stay in your program and complete it?

Natasha: Well, so I feel like if it was classified in rings, my first ring would be like my mom and my sister just because I knew already my sister was going there....And then I feel like definitely the influence I have from HMDP cuz I knew more about ASU and how much they had to offer in a lot of the resources that had, um, and I knew I could drive there. And then so definitely like my advisor from HMDP.

Systems of support are crucial to help students like Natasha navigate the educational and life challenges of being a student.

Educational Opportunities. Besides relationships within the higher education institution, participants also attributed educational opportunities as part of their persistence story. These opportunities ranged from accessing the tutoring centers, volunteering/interning in educational opportunities, participating in academic organizations or programs, attending conferences, or traveling to locations to immerse in the context. For instance, Belinda's participation in a Hispanic STEM mentoring program encouraged her to stay in her field and challenged her to run for a board member in her department's student organization:

I remember freshman year, it was definitely difficult in the sense that like no one in my family has been through college before so I didn't really have anyone who I could necessarily talk to about those things. And also [I] remember that just going through classes, I felt like I was not as prepared as some of my peers. I remember that the first chemistry test that I had, like, I didn't do as well as I thought. I would talk to other people, and it seemed like they were understanding everything that was going on in the class, and they were like, doing extremely well. So, I remember I kind of struggled a bit like the first semester just feeling like I was [not] prepared or just I like I would often compare myself to other students. So that was pretty difficult.

...

[During] freshman year I was in this program...well, it was an organization, the [name removed]. And through this society, I was paired up with a mechanical engineering mentor who I think was working at APS. I remember I reached out to her about this issue and she kind of guided me through in the sense of she like gave me some advice as to how to deal with the issues. I remember she had told me that maybe it comes from a lack of...or maybe it comes from just like other peers maybe having different opportunities in high school and that's why they might have been more prepared or also like maybe my studying methods needed to be improved, or I could start going to office hours, things like that. And I think once I kind of reached out to her about that, that's when I kind of tried shifting my mindset.

...

[After that,] I think I started seeking out like just different options. I remember I started going to tutoring centers more, kind of started like taking different opportunities to try to do better, academically.

This change also encouraged Belinda to further her growth by volunteering in another student organization. Olivia was also in a STEM field and was about to give up on her degree until she was encouraged to attend a women's conference. She was re-motivated after speaking to women like her:

One thing that kind of did regain some of my motivation was I attended another like a program event...It was called the GROW conference graduate resources...
...

My classmates [name removed], she brought it up to me in one of our classes. She was like, "Oh, this is really cool. It's for graduate school and it's focused on women. We should go it at the time."

...
it was it was well worth it. I got to talk to a lot of other women. That event really put into perspective, kind of like the way Ivy League schools really are just kind of based on reputation because essentially...We were all using the same books.

We were all going over the same curriculum.

However, her negative experiences (i.e., microaggressions and ostracization) were latent enough to discourage her from seeking education or employment in STEM fields post-graduation. Natasha similarly felt out of place. She had imposter syndrome in her University's honors and study abroad programs. However, this did not stop her from

pursuing other opportunities to expand her experiences and build her platform to become a doctor.

Stacy participated in student organizations to give back to the community (e.g., SPARKS). Not only did these experiences fuel her persistence, but also led to her attendance at a particular event led to a career change in the teaching field:

I got an email about doing a volunteer event that wasn't a panel, but it was more like volunteer at a high school to pass out backpacks for low income families. I was like, "Okay, I'll do it." I ended up having time because I wasn't working that day and I was like, "I'll sign up for it." And that's where I met a person that I was telling her about it, "this [inequities] is so unfair." She was telling me that she was starting a school, but she wasn't starting it yet, but she had another school that I might fit in with. That's when I started working at the school and they focus on giving the same opportunities to specifically minority, I mean, all students, but specifically families with low income, minority students and stuff like that. It kind of shifted my entire idea of what I wanted to do.

Bailey and Abbey were the only participants who were not as involved in educational opportunities when asked. Abbey helped set up the HMDP events as part of her scholarship obligations; she was asked on one occasion to speak on wellness because of her social work degree. Bailey participated in a Diversity Learning Conference to exposed peers to speakers with different backgrounds. She regrets not participating more in her university.

Campus Climate. Campus climate and institutional expectations were also significant influencers. Most participants experienced some form of disruption in their

transition to college. Bailey, for instance, realized that most of her peers came from a legacy of alumni and wealth. They saw college as a means to go through the motion and eventually find a husband. This perspective stood in opposition to Bailey, who was grateful to be at the University. She also realized that the university expectations were different and the campus climate had an 'othering' effect:

It was a little intimidating, because I did feel kind of out of place. I think I mentioned before that most of the girls on my campus are upper middle class from very small towns in the [location removed]. They came from very small graduating classes. They were very academically focused. They were usually like the valedictorian of their class, but their upbringing was very different. They had a lot of extracurricular activities when they were growing up. Obviously, very like lavish vacations and even just the culture in general in the [location removed] is very friendly, very unlike Arizona. And so it's just different. And I found that I started identifying a lot of differences. There was not a lot of diversity. As much as I think that they try to invite or welcome diversity into their school, I found that it wasn't as diverse...I [also] felt like I had to prove myself in a lot of aspects, like I had to compete. I was like the spokesperson for my ethnicity...so first year [and] second year, it was really hard in the sense that it was an adjustment change. I can remember countless times where I would tell my parents, I wanted to go home. It was going to be over for me because I just couldn't handle the fact that...yeah, I was a good student but I felt like the people that I was with in classes were rigorous in the sense that they had really good study habits. For me, it was very different to kind of build a study habit and to

kind of really follow through. It was difficult for me in that sense. I didn't feel like I had a lot of support. I ended up finding a support group or finding refuge in a community of other Latinas, who were there as me. We were both kind of struggling together...just kind of finding the cultural differences, but also like how hard it is to like you're in college now, you're with other people. There are people with different views. It was hard to adjust to that.

Bailey was competing against institutional limitations by being “the spokesperson for my ethnicity” and larger societal/class differentiations in the ways that her classmates came with different experiences and preparation than her own. Consequently, Bailey felt out of place and academically unprepared. This was not unique to her.

Similarly, Olivia experienced culture shock and microaggression. Before enrollment in her STEM field courses, she was around people like her through experiences, like HMDP and early general ASU courses. However, she quickly realized that she didn't see people like her in her STEM courses. Coupled with this was her interactions with peers who made comments or kept their distance. This experience made her feel inadequate or different. For example, her peers showed judgment when she disclosed coming from a low-income neighborhood. These experiences spoke to her eventual lack of motivation to complete her degree.

Lastly, Natasha experienced extreme anxiety from her transition to ASU and relied on medication to cope. Though she took dual enrollment courses, “it wasn't the same as being in college.” She suggested that it is essential to let students know that it is common to experience a learning curve when they transition to college, even if they feel ready to start college:

Interviewer: Okay, so it sounds like when you moved to ASU, and then having to deal with the realization that you had to prep for medical school was what kind of increased the anxiety?... You just felt like there was still a big jump between...

Natasha: Yeah

Interviewer: high school and college, even if you took dual enrollment classes? Do you think that there would have been something different that could have been done to help narrow that gap so they didn't feel so stressful?

Natasha: Um, I feel like [the HMDP] tried a lot obviously with like having those workshops and like having us take college classes but I don't know... I feel like it was just kind of something you have to experience, but maybe if they had let us know that it would be okay if that happens.

This chapter examined influencers contributing to the following milestones: college selection, college enrollment, and college persistence. Participant responses were presented by milestones to account for any unique nuances. The outcome of this structure also produced themes common across some milestones. This was especially the case for Family, Finance, and Institution Spaces. However, how they manifested differed as participants went through their academic journey. For example, Family was actively engaged in the college selection process but tapered off into a supporting role towards bachelor degree completion. This type of progression did not indicate less support. Rather, familial support was just tailored to what the family could contribute to the academic journey. Overall, the evidence suggest variability in how the influencers manifested in each milestone. However, this variability does not negate from the importance the above influencers play on the Latina academic journey.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS: WHAT FACTORS DO PARTICIPANTS BELIEVE INFLUENCED THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

I asked participants to broadly reflect on who and what were part of their academic journey. Because life does not happen in a controlled environment, the intent of this request was to capture other intersecting forces outside of college-going journey that can contribute to a holistic presentation of the academic journey. Many shared their stories under three main themes: Family, Finances, & Institutions.

Family

Family played an important role in participants' academic journey. The most significant influencers were parents. For participants with separated or divorced parents, the primary support came from the mothers. This was the case for Olivia, Belinda, and Natasha. Interestingly, their fathers did return years later, which resulted in varying impacts. For Olivia, her father returned to win her support as it increased his chances to become a United States permanent resident. She realized his intentions were not genuine when the relationship negatively changed after she testified for his residency petition. This revelation negatively impacted her academic performance in college and resulted in therapy sessions:

My dad and I's relationship...to be frank, it's quite terrible like my father was...I've come to realize, through years of therapy, he's very much so a narcissist. The only reason why he kind of came back during kind of college and in the last few years of high school was he ran into some legal trouble...his involvement with me...was very performative. It was very much so kind of to

bring me to these gatherings with his employers or with his family members to say, “My daughter is in college! Look at her. She's so great. Like, I'm her dad.” Once real life hit where I was like, “Hey, Dad, I really can't juggle like doing this math program and having a job and still trying to figure out other things I really can't juggle a job right now. Can you please help me out with groceries once in a while?” That kind of relationship just completely shattered and he was like, “No, I don't want to help you.” And I think after my sophomore year in college, my second year for sure he was just like, “Um, no. You got to figure this out. You're an adult.”

The HMDP is built on the premise that family is a support for the participants. In situations like Olivia's where non-participating parents can potentially harm student success, how should they proceed? Can or should they account for parental impact that is antithetical to student success? Should they create strategies on how to engage in dialogue with unsupportive parents (however the lack of support may look like)? The silver lining is participation from one parent implies that some support exists. Targeting their college readiness strategies to that supportive parent allows the HMDP to align with their objective to include family and may be enough to maintain familial support towards degree completion.

In Belinda's case, her father became more frequently present as a byproduct of her mother's request for help with their son's medical needs. Still, their conversations remained superficial:

Interviewer: I'm kind of curious about your relationship with your father. What role or how much was he a part of your life?

Belinda: So, they got divorced when I was about five years old...I remember that for a while he wasn't around. Eventually, my mom kind of asked him to start visiting us just because to help with my brother. So really the only kind of contact that I had with him was whenever he would come visit, which is maybe like once every other week. But it was very like...we weren't really engaged in any conversations. If anything, he would kind of say "Hi" but that's about it.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay, so since the conversations were a superficial, can I assume then that you guys didn't talk too much about school?

Belinda: Right, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, and so you guys didn't really talk about school...And did this relationship carry the same kind of dynamic throughout your entire life or has the relationship changed since the beginning?

Belinda: I think it's been about the same.

Interviewer: Okay, so right now it's pretty much the same thing too? With your brother's passing, has he been around consistently the same or is his participation been different?

Belinda: I would say it's probably like maybe he'll come around once a month, but it's still only for, like, I guess we still don't talk that much either.

Interviewer: So now he comes around even less?

Belinda: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And in those few occasions that he comes around, what would he do? How would he participate in what was happening in your family dynamic?

Belinda: I guess he mostly just talks to my mom and kind of asked how things are going. Sometimes he still helps her. Well, because when I was still going to school, he would still kind of help her by giving her some money since I wasn't working yet. So that's primarily the reason why he comes.

Belinda's experiences echo Olivia's in that she also had an unsupportive father. However, in both cases they found their support in the other parent. The additional bonus is their mothers' participation in the HMDP gave the mothers college readiness knowledge to support and engage in discourse with their daughters. Not all the participants had negative relationships with their fathers. Natasha had no contact with her father until she needed his permission to participate in a traveling scholarship the summer after her high school graduation. He agreed to support the opportunity, and they have since been in contact about her academic journey. In fact, Natasha and her sister visited their father in Mexico recently because of their renewed relationship.

If their parents were together, the degree of support ranged for each participant. For instance, Victoria frequently referenced her mother's heavy investment in her academic journey. Stacy acknowledged her father, whose experiences of injustices motivated her to initially pursue human rights law. Abbey also acknowledged that her support largely came from her father, who used his life experiences as an example (i.e. *consejos*) of the challenges she would face without a degree:

I remember being really young and my dad taking me to go pick them [my two older half-sisters] up so they could spend some time at our house and my dad always constantly telling me, like, as we're waiting in the car and waiting for my sisters to get in the car, "I want you to always remember that school is the number

one priority. There's nothing else in life more important than school right now.” And just kind of telling me like, “You won't be able to live a stable life if you don't get an education.” He would just have these talks with me, like if I was an adult. I mean like, “If you don't go to school, like this is how your life will end up. You don't want to be like me and your mom.” Because they both worked really tough jobs, like long hours. They would always just be telling me, like a constant talk from him about how important education is. Once my sisters got pregnant at 15, he would tell me these words. He's like, “Your sisters, let me down so now I expect you to not disappoint me.” And so that was always that pressure of, like, “I don't want to disappoint my dad.” It was like this feeling of I wouldn't ever want to be any sort of like disappointment to him. My dad has always been a very loving and he's always provided me with everything that I've ever needed and I didn't want to disappoint him. Having that in the back of my mind kind of allowed me to have the mindset of, like, “I need to make sure that I always get good grades in school. I need to make sure that I do what I need to do to get into college.”

The literature and participant responses so far demonstrate the importance of family in the Latinx academic journey (Ceja, 2004; Marrun, 2020). In Abbey's case, her father's use of *consejos* motivated Abbey to not “disappoint” her father. This resolve sustained her motivation as she later credits her desire to not “disappoint” her father as a major reason for persisting towards degree completion.

Despite the varying degrees of support, all had at least one parent who wanted college as part of their daughters' academic journey. Unfortunately, many parents were

unfamiliar with the college readiness and -going process. Thus, they pursued educational opportunities that gave them resources to make their educational aspirations a reality.

This was certainly the case for Bailey. Her parents did not understand the “how” behind achieving a college education. In her parents’ first attempt to progress their older sister towards college, the journey was challenging because they did not have guidance. By the time they turned their focus to Bailey, they shifted their approach to pursue opportunities that could provide direction:

My sister is the eldest out of us two. I think my parents put a lot of pressure on her to kind of be that example for me like going to college, making sure that like she was kind of like the model immigrant, right? And, unfortunately things didn't play out that way...my parents push for us to go to university but like [they] don't really have the ways on how to do it. My sister didn't either and no one was there to guide her. She didn't have HMDP. She didn't have...any kind of other outlet. So, it was difficult for her to kind of decide what she wanted to do. For me, seeing that as a child, I felt like the pressure was on me to perform to go to college, to make sure that in some ways that my parents didn't feel like, “oh,”—I don't want to be vulgar—but like that “we didn't f* up.”...She eventually ended up going to ASU. She ended up graduating, but it took her a while to get there. And just now, she's like in her early 30s and she's just going back to do her masters. It took her a while. It was a different path. But I think when we were younger, it definitely played a role on me. My sister is smart and she's brilliant, but I think she didn't have that guidance. And in my situation, I did have that guidance. I think my parents were like, “oh, it's a second time around. We

should probably start asking for help.” So HMDP, when the counselor brought that up, my mom’s like “Okay, we’re going to sign you up directly. We’re going into that.” Or when my mom approached this lady who was doing pro bono work for college students, for college admissions like my mom didn’t hesitate. She was like, “okay, I’m going to present you to her and she’ll help you out for how to choose colleges.” That was the difference between both of us.

Powerfully, Bailey benefits from her sister’s experiences with her parents. Her parents too benefitted from those experiences and the ones with HMDP.

Similarly, Victoria’s parents sought a range of (~eight) different academically- to culturally-focused programs to support her academic journey. Parents also lent support in less active ways, mainly creating a space in which participants felt supported. For Abbey, this space included “moments of education” for her parents, who initially did not know the importance of extracurricular activities.

Other family members played a role in participants’ academic journey. Their support included: creating pathways to success for each other and/or fostering spaces of support and encouragement. Several participants had siblings that constructed pathways of success for each other. For Natasha, her older sister participated in many educational opportunities that created a path for her to follow. For Angela, her siblings were younger, so she made a path of access for her younger siblings. She became their life/career coach and assisted in navigating life decisions after high school. Additionally, Angela was the first in her family to pursue college and wanted to complete her degree for them. She said:

I just wanted to kind of be there for them. Kind of in the same way that my mom was. Just making sure that if they had any questions that I would try and answer them, if I could. And just kind of share from my experience, especially when it came to figuring out about their career choices. Even though I went to college, I know that it's not for everybody, especially depending on the career that you want. I didn't pressure them as much about going to college, but more about figuring out, "what do you want to do when you grow up and finding the path that's going to get you to that job." Even though my dad would pressure me to convince them to go to college, I didn't really want to do that...For me, it was more giving them options and letting them decide because it's their lives. It's not mine. It's not my parents. It's whatever is going to make them happy.

Angela appears to be continuing the lessons of being a role model and engaged partner that her mom was for her.

For Belinda, her sibling's impact was different. Her brother had muscular dystrophy. He inspired her educational and career choices; she wanted to cure her brother's condition. Her brother was also part of the reason why she took a gap year after graduation. He passed away, and she did not want to move out of state while grieving. Besides paths of success, other family members fostered spaces of support and encouragement. Olivia and Victoria referenced these spaces when they talked about other family members. Both acknowledge the support they received from their aunts when academia became challenging. For Olivia, her aunt was part of the family core that provided a positive distraction from the demands of academia:

...as far as like family and interacting on more of like...talking about more academic related things, it generally didn't go there. I think my family served more as like that breather that I needed from school. When I would come home, or when I was living back at home, it was an opportunity to talk about pop culture, what was going on, like in the media or just kind of [what's] going on like in general politics. It wasn't anything necessarily like academic-related.

The role Olivia's aunt played demonstrate the different ways family can support. Some may be through non-academic ways, but are still helpful for persisting towards academic goals.

For Victoria, she experienced many outside pre-college pressures, including high expectations from her mother, that her aunt became a support system to cope with these challenges:

[In] high School, she was huge. Like I said, my mom was pregnant throughout all my high school years. She was really big when I was like really stressed with tests. I can go to her, "I'm so stressed." Or, if I was failing something—because high schools is a whole different story with grades—but like I said, my mom was pregnant all the time so she wasn't really paying attention to me so much in high school. My aunt was really my go-to for like if I was doing bad in a class and just kind of to vent. She really did listen and she would just be like, "Can't you just ask for help? Like, ask for help and stuff."

Similar to Olivia, Victoria's aunt provided non-academic support that was valuable to cope with the pressures of being a student. Overall, the above demonstrate that family

members, outside of parents, play an important part of the educational journeys of the women in this study.

Finances

Finances were significant to participants' academic journey—all shared financial challenges pre-college within the family. In fact, many shared vivid experiences that defined their economic status. Olivia was the daughter of an immigrant who occasionally traveled with her mom to clean homes of wealthy families. While her mom cleaned, she spoke with the homeowners' children. During these conversations, she realized the extreme differences in access between her and these children:

I lived with my mom in this very small apartment for the majority of my childhood and then I would get dragged to these huge mansions [that my mom cleaned] when there wasn't a sitter available. It was very clear. I am very financially disadvantaged. There's this one conversation with one of the kids. I think at the time I was taking gifted education. I was talking to them about it. Like, "oh yeah, I'm in this weird class where I get asked weird questions like, not like concrete questions more—I didn't know at the time they were more conceptual questions—I was like, there's just weird questions asking me like how I would solve this problem. And, I don't really know. It's just, I guess I kind of have to give this answer." And these kids were like, "oh, do you guys have tutors in your class?" And it's like, "no, we don't have tutors like that." Just kind of like little things like that just made me realize like, "whoa, I am not at the same level at this and I have to work way, like twice as hard to do what I have to do."

Olivia came to understand her status vis-à-vis the families that had her mother cleaning. Inherent in her comment is also a clear indication of how access to resources (like tutors) are accessible to those schools or school districts.

Stacy moved residence every six months because her parents could not afford the rent. Eventually, they settled at a complex owned by a landlord willing to give them housing in exchange for labor. She helped her parents renovate residences after school during her childhood. Natasha moved from Mexico with her mother and lived in a motel with no transportation until they could afford an apartment. They took public transportation or carpooled with family when they needed to travel:

Natasha: ...when my family and I [when] we first moved here, we didn't have a lot. For the first couple years—I think we talked about like moving residences and stuff—so for the first couple of years, the first residence we lived in was actually a motel. We didn't a lot of money, but when my mom was able to get a job, we had a little bit more money than we have. For the first couple years, we didn't have a car and then she was able to get one really cheap. I always say like we were lower middle class because I feel we weren't like poverty, but I'm not sure but like I feel like, obviously, we didn't have like extra money for things I wanted [but] didn't need but my mom always made sure that like we had food and everything. I think there are a couple times we had to go to like a food bank. One thing that I remember [in] my childhood is we didn't have a washer and dryer so we had to go to like laundry mats.

Interviewer: Okay. And how long were you going to laundry mats?

Natasha: Probably to like third or fourth grade and I want to say we didn't get a car 'til probably like second grade-ish. Before we had a car, we had to like take everything ourselves to laundromat... We didn't steal. We borrowed a little grocery cart right across the street [to carry our things].

Interviewer: So now I'm curious because it sounds like it was a few years before your mom was able to get a car. How did you guys get to different places like go to school, grocery shops, [and] all that stuff?

Natasha: So school, thankfully, the bus came to pick us up like right in front of our motel. I think they just made up a stop for my sister and I. My mom to get to work, she would take like two or three different buses that connected. My grandma and grandpa, back then, lived here and so did two of my aunts. Sometimes, like on the weekends, my mom would go grocery shopping with them and then they would just bring the food back to where we live.

Access to a car and to schools funded by higher property taxes creates more educational opportunities for students like Natasha. In this case, she notes that it was well into her elementary years that she was in a precarious economic structure. However, her family accessed resources (e.g. carpooling or utilizing shopping carts) to stay afloat until they create more permanent financial stability.

Victoria also shared an example of how finances affected her academics. She attended a prestigious high school paid by a donor. Unfortunately, she did not have access to the same level of resources as her peers and was reprimanded on one occasion by a teacher for turning in a handwritten lab report. Her teacher called her handwritten lab report “unprofessional” and then lectured her on the college paper expectations:

[I usually do] computer work at school, but that weekend, I thought I was going to be able to go to my uncle's house and he had like a computer that I could type up my assignment. It was a lab report. I was taking bio[logy]. I'm never gonna forget that. And I was going to do it, [but I] wasn't able. [I] was freaking out and didn't know how to communicate this to my parents because I didn't want to make them feel bad. So, I just hand wrote this whole lab report [and] submitted in like that; turn it in like that. The professor was not happy...I remember her speech like, "This is unprofessional. You don't ever turn anything [handwritten]. You need to know this because no college class is going to accept any written work." And obviously that hit hard just because I didn't know how to tell her, "I don't have a computer. I don't have internet. We can't afford that."

Afterward, her parents found an old computer and purchased an internet plan to support her academic needs. In financial contexts like the above, it is expected that grades and decisions to persist in college would be negatively affected (Crisp et al., 2015; Longerbeam et al., 2004). However, participants prove these expectations wrong as they pursued/accessed financial aid resources to offset educational costs.

Employment played a secondary role in their academic journey. Only two participants mentioned working before college. Stacy worked with her family after school since fourth grade to remain in their residence:

I remember that we were very poor. There was a time we were jumping from apartment to apartment. We couldn't afford the rent and...I started working when I was in fourth grade. And the reason why is because my parents couldn't afford to pay rent. What happened was that the manager, in exchange for rent, he asked

us to help him remodel some of his apartments. So instead of us paying money, we would pay with labor. I remember going to school, and then coming home and literally working because we would work, we would paint, we would repair, we would do everything, and then go do homework

Stacy's family found ways to pay for rent, which included her engagement in the work. The rigors of doing so certainly impacted her educational successes. Natasha worked at a fast-food establishment to pay for pre-college extracurricular activities. In both cases, the time spent away from studying may have influenced their academic journey.

Everyone else started working during college to supplement any college and/or family needs. Interestingly, many eventually found employments in fields that aligned with their career goals. For example, Natasha works in a medical office while she prepares for medical school; Belinda works in a lab to build experience while she applies for graduate school; Bailey works in the same company she interned as a graduate student; and Stacy and Angela became a teacher after realizing that this was their purpose.

Institutions

The last common theme that played a significant role in participants' academic journey is Institutions. Specifically, they highlighted faculty, staff, peers, religion, and school involvement as instrumental to their success.

Faculty. All participants shared faculty member(s) in grade school who invested in their education. Victoria had two key players who became bridges to many opportunities. These were her 2nd grade teacher, who eventually became the vice

principal, and his wife, her 5th grade teacher. Interestingly, the wife personally asked her mother to join the QUEST program to become Victoria's mentor:

[The vice principal] told me about this [QUEST] program. We apply in fifth grade, which it did happen [I got in]. [The vice principal's wife] told her mom, "Hey, get involved in this program and request this student—which was me—she's so sweet. I love her mom. I love her family, blah, blah, blah." So then, [his wife's] mom got into the program and became my mentor starting sixth grade.

Through these relationships, they connected Victoria to many academic programs and opportunities. Now, Victoria babysits their children. There is a sweet circularity to this.

Natasha highlighted two English teachers. The first English teacher helped her develop her confidence in writing and increased her reading horizons. The second teacher was extremely hard but taught her how to synthesize citations and write papers quickly. Bailey's French teacher inspired a love for the French language and culture, saying:

My French teacher...She was like this person who made you love the language, but not from just like looking at books. It was more of like, "I want to get you immersed into the culture without you really being there and seeing like, what is out there for you." And I really enjoyed that kind of hands on, kind of experimental teaching. That's part of the reason why I kept doing French even from high school, and even in college. It's because I had really good foundations, or I had really supportive people who made me love the language. I mean, I could have taken the easy route. She was half Latina, half German and she was like, "Bailey, you know Spanish so I mean, push yourself. Do French. Like, why

not?” I was like, “You know what? Why not?” I mean, I could take the easy route and I could do Spanish but I'm going to do French and I ended up loving it. She's someone who really impacted me because even if I only have French classes with her, she motivated me to become better. She was just like, you know, “If you're looking to like edit your essays, or kind of look at your college applications, like I'd be happy to do that.” That's something that I appreciate about like teachers who go above and beyond to support their students.

Bailey's exposure to a “warm demander” as a teacher created the opportunity for her to grow as a student and person.

Belinda had two teachers with differing purposes. Her 8th-grade teacher introduced her to different opportunities and helped her apply to her first high school. When she moved to another high school her junior year, her engineering teacher played a role in confirming her decision to stay in STEM. Interestingly, she likened her high school engineering teacher to a father figure because he consistently checked in on her academically and overall. Olivia recognized her high school vocational teacher as highly influential. He came from a disadvantaged background like her but worked while advancing in degree levels. Because they had similar experiences, he greatly inspired her to do the same. Coupled with this was his transformation to a mentor figure who helped with the college selection process (i.e., applications and college search/evaluation) and checked on her college-going journey.

Interestingly, two participants shared faculty who helped them with next steps or supported their academic success in graduate school. Like in high school, Belinda developed meaningful relationships with two instructors who helped her decide on and

prepare for graduate school. Angela grew as a teacher because of mentorship from one instructor and completed her Master's degree because of accommodations from another:

Dr V. was my clinic instructor the whole time during my grad school. She really helped me to become a better teacher. She really did push me. She wanted me to be the best that I could be. Dr. T., I had her for a couple of classes. I had her I think in the beginning of our [graduate] program and then at the very end for the whole year for our research project. She was the professor for that. She really helped when I had that [car] accident and really helping me to get my work done and to graduate on time...Actually, when we graduated, she was at our graduation and she told me that...that she really learned a lot from me as a teacher, because sometimes you just kind of, she said, "You just have to trust your students that they sometimes know what what's best for them."...That really that really touched me.

Staff. Staff from various institutions similarly supported their academic journey. Besides providing supplemental support in the college readiness and selection process, some staff augmented other parts of participants' academic journey. For Natasha, this meant her high school counselor discussing and supporting her next steps after high school:

I had the same [high school] counselor as my sister, because I think it was alphabetical. He knew my sister and so I would always just go in there whenever I had questions. I was doing sports, so like we talked about if I want to do sports in college and helped me with that. He wrote a bunch of letters of

rec[ommendation] for me for all my many scholarship and college applications.

So, we were pretty close.

Supportive staff were critical for many of the participants in this study.

For Victoria, her high school principal found a donor to pay her high school tuition. This was the only way she could remain in her private high school. In Olivia's case, she acknowledged another ASU staff, who had a long-running impact that started from high school and lasted well into college. For Stacy, this meant having a principal and community representative who consistently checked in on her family's welfare:

I do remember specifically my high school principal and there was a community representative in my high school. Both of them played a big role in my academic journey because they were always there for me. They were always there to answer questions. They were always there for my family, which also was very important....my principal played a very, very great role during that time. He was like a second father to me.

All of these examples demonstrate the enhancement of having staff, who are willing to support students.

Peers. The degree of peer support varied among participants. For some, they were almost non-existent because they were shy or their parents disapproved of the friendship. Eventually, they did develop bonds with peers by high school, even if it was superficial. This was the case for Abbey and Stacy. Abbey did not have many friends as her parents did not approve of her neighborhood best friend and her high school AVID peers only provided the collegiate experience of a college-going culture:

The classmates that I would have in AVID, I would say that they would be kind of my main friends of support because we all had that same goal of getting to college.

...

the classmates that I had in my AVID courses, they were all my classmates. They would live near the high school...And so now coming back to my neighborhood, my community, I had definitely a best friend that lived in my neighborhood, but how can I word this? My parents didn't view her as the most positive influence. Me and her were always on separate paths. I would tell her about what I would do in school and how important it was...She didn't really like school. School just wasn't for her but me and her got along like really well as friends and just talking about other things that were not school-related. But, I didn't have that much access to her because my parents were so strict.

Abbey was forced, in some ways, to build friendships with her peers who had similar aspirations. Similarly, Stacy developed bonds in high school through different extracurricular programs. However, her bonds remained superficial because her wealthy peers could not relate to the family context in which she lived. Victoria built relationships in her high school with other minority students who were on scholarship like her. Interestingly, Victoria kept these relationships for the sole purpose of companionship as she did not like their competitive nature:

My mom has never really taught us that [we should be competitive]. And also, because I have so many siblings she is always [saying], "be happy for the other." So just being in this small group, I was just in it just to have friends. To just not

eat lunch alone or to not go to dances alone or to not do school activities alone.

But I wasn't okay with it, just because it was just very competitive of, like, "oh, look what I'm doing."

For Angela, she valued friendships only when she recognized their importance for mental health and work-life balance during Graduate School:

Interviewer: And did you have any kind of friends that you created relationships with in your classroom or in your courses, your psychology courses or your major courses?

Angela: Um, I did...so in my last year in my undergrad, we had a project base class. It was about nine credits. There was a group of us, a group of four of us. We would spend a lot of time together because it was a nine-hour class. Those are kind of the closest friends I had because we would spend a lot of time together...We had someone's house that was designated for our meeting spots. Sometimes we would meet on campus together and then during the times we would meet off campus for a project, we would like get food, and then we would talk about what was going on in our lives before we got to work...And then sometimes we talk about like the project and like how we felt about it and kind of stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay, so it sounds like you did build some kind of friendship. Do you think that...and maybe it's kind of obvious, but I'm just trying to get it from your words...Do you feel that that friendship or those friendships that you built in that group project, do you feel like it was an important part in your journey?...Do you feel like it participated in it in any way?

Angela: I think it made me realize like, how nice it was to just kind of talk with people like about other things than school because in undergrad like I didn't really talk with much of anyone. I was kind of just like trying to get what I needed done. And then when I was at work, we would talk kind of in the same extent but it wouldn't really go farther than work...like it would all be while we were at work like talking about like our social lives and stuff like that. So, it was kind of nice to like talk about our personal lives and school together so that's what kind of changed once I got to grad school. [I] was making sure that I had friends that I could talk with and hang out with.

Being a high achieving student can be lonely. In Angela's case, she augmented friendships with her surrounding peer group.

Belinda, Olivia, and Bailey were the only ones who developed deep relationships with peers pre-college who supported their academic journey. Belinda's peers were part of her core, in which she confided about the college selection process. Olivia had peers who journeyed with her through pre-college academic programs. Bailey had peers who connected her to college information and created a culture of ambition:

I had a close-knit group of friends in high school that were very academically oriented...we were in the same classes and they're always looking for more...maybe it was their lifestyles, or maybe it was the way that they carry themselves or their upbringing, but I really loved it. I'm like, "oh, they're going on vacation. They know multiple languages. They're looking at these colleges." And I think without those kinds of group of people, at least to kind of see what opportunities are out there, I think I would have felt kind of lost because my

parents, like I mentioned before, were so limited in terms of like the school system in the United States. They were like, “okay, do your best,” but like they didn't really know the methods or the ways to go about it. And unfortunately, like in high school, when you have your high school counselor, I don't know if it's because they just see so many students but I found that it was like they kind of quickly put a label on you? And eventually, they were like, “Yeah, well, maybe you should like not look at those schools. Maybe you should just like try to see what's safe.” Unfortunately, that was not a route that I really enjoyed, and so I avoided that kind of help. I ended up looking towards my friends and looking towards people who were like, I guess, ambitious in a sense. They were like, “Oh, well I'm looking to go here. Oh, what's this, like what kind of programs are they offering?” So that was really positive.

All of these instances demonstrate that having peers who were similarly minded regarding academics served as support systems for the young women in this study.

Religion. Participants also shared institutional experiences that played central roles in their academic journey. A few mentioned the church as helpful to their journey. For example, Victoria's family were active members of their church. The spiritual connection helped her continue as a student since her previous suicide attempts. Interestingly, there was also a financial link through her mom's friendship with a nun at their church. The nun was a friend of the principal at Victoria's high school. Because of this bond, the nun asked her principal friend to look into financial opportunities to cover Victoria's high school tuition. The outcome was a sponsor who was willing to pay for her entire high school career:

God provides and how God provided was, so this nun found that out and told her nun friend and then her friend found me a sponsor. They were just going to sponsor me that year because I was too late. I did get on the waiting list for this high school. I didn't get automatically accepted. Since I was on the waiting list, I didn't apply for scholarships...so when I did get accepted like when I did get a spot, there was no money. So that's why they were only going to sponsor me that year. This family [sponsor] was so sweet. It wasn't even like one sponsor. It was like a whole family.

...

[At the yearly fancy dinner for donors and girls on scholarship is] where I met them...the whole family...they really liked me. They ended up sponsoring all four years [of high school].

There are intersections here between finances and religion, as it relates to the support of Victoria's high school tuition.

For Natasha, her church advocated for education and held educational event days to augment that advocacy:

Institute is what college students take. Seminaries is what high school students take. It was also a non-credit course that I would take, but I had to put it into my schedule...They would have an education day every year where they would tell us stuff that we should know. They do the whole budget thing where they're like, "if you want to have this, look how much you're gonna need to make."

This support carried into college as her LDS Institute instructor wrote a letter of recommendation for medical school.

School Involvement. The most significant institutional experience, however, was participating in many programs. Besides HMDP, participants were members of other college readiness/academic programs or participated in extracurricular activities. Many learned the importance of involvement (through HMDP) and pursued pathways to them. These included school clubs/sports, summer programs, study abroad/student exchange programs, mentoring programs, and varying academic programs. Participation in these opportunities sometimes led to other opportunities. This domino effect was the case for Natasha. She participated in the Math Guild club and the ACE program, resulting in a letter of recommendation for her honors program and accumulation of college courses to transfer to ASU, respectively. For Belinda, participating in MESA & a Biomedical Engineering internship confirmed her passion for the STEM field and narrowed which part was of most interest, respectively:

I remember in seventh grade, I was involved in this one program called MESA and I remember we did different projects like solar ovens or just like different like engineering-based projects. And I guess like that was really a point where I kind of felt like I was more so interested in hands on stuff. And I guess that's when I kind of started figuring out more so what I wanted to do.

...

[Additionally,] the summer between my sophomore and junior year, I did an internship at a medical device consultancy company. I liked it because it incorporated a lot of the engineering aspects into the job. I was able to do a lot of like research and development, as well as like quality engineering. As much as I liked it, it also made me realize that like I didn't want to go into the field of

medical devices and that it wasn't really the field of biomedical engineering that I wanted to go into.

For Abbey, AVID provided academic support, something she needed as academics was not her strongest suit. Stacy and Olivia's participation in a summer program helped narrow down their college selection to ASU. Lastly, Victoria's involvement in QUEST during 5th grade solidified her decision to pursue college:

I think fifth grade was super clear with the QUEST program. I clearly remember still today how the recruiter...She had a meeting with me, my parents and her. And she just told us like this is what the program is about. And basically, you know, "We want to help first generation make sure that they do go to college, but we know like sometimes parents don't know. Obviously, you guys want your kid to go to university, but you don't know how and how that's going to be accomplished. So that's why we partner you up with a mentor and they're going to help you out until you make it to that four years college thing. They'll help with scholarships and all that..."...from that moment on, it was very clear...I just knew that I was going to do it.

After exploring who and what was part of their academic journey, participants examined the concept of academic success. Specifically, they answered two questions: 1) Did they agree that academic success was a successful experience **and** outcome? and 2) Did they feel their experiences and outcomes were successful? All participants agreed academic success was a successful experience **and** outcome, except for Olivia, who placed more weight on experiences. She believed a current student who has not graduated can still feel academically successful through positive experiences:

Interviewer: Do you think your experience and outcome was successful?

Olivia: I think so, yes. Personally, I think even if I hadn't finished the degree, I think the experiences that I had and the connections that I made, they definitely put me in a place to where I gained a lot as a person and I gained a lot academically just on knowledge-wise. I've built lifelong friendships. I experienced things that I potentially... Who's to say that I was ever going to be in an analysis program? I think, yeah, I resonate a lot with that. It's kind of a shame that more people don't think that way because a lot of people kind of kick themselves a lot for not finishing, but a lot of the achievements in their journey are commendable. You know, there's people that are in the middle of their undergrad and they haven't yet completed their program, but that doesn't mean they're not successful

Interviewer: Right.

Olivia: I think the finish line with like a degree, it can be detrimental and very limiting, personally.

Interviewer: So what you mean by the finish line of a degree?

Olivia: Yeah, like how seeing that as a "finish line" or like a deadline or even just kind of like the concept of having to finish that in four years, I think that can be very detrimental to students that you know have these outside things that make their academic progression a little harder. At least like that was something that affected me a lot like, "oh I didn't finish in four years." Well, at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter. It just matters a) that your time was well spent [b]

you gave it every ounce of like your all and [and c) you] gained as much knowledge.

Olivia highlights the confluences of friends, finances, and finishing. This is critical to her future and points to the power of having early interventions in students' educational journeys.

Participants included further caveats to this definition when they translated it into their own lives. Some recognized that successful experiences comprised character development. This was particularly the case for Stacy and Belinda; they grew from their lived experiences as college students. Belinda was a shy person, but she "put herself out there" because of her academic experiences. Abbey provided another layered caveat by claiming that successful experiences included accessing someone for support during challenging/difficult moments. Stacy had many personal life-defining moments during her time in college that produced character growth. She is very proud of her growth but recognizes the outcome a low graduating GPA would have on options for graduate school:

Based on my experience...I wouldn't necessarily call it all a successful experience. I mean, yeah I overcame a lot of obstacles, but there's also things that I wish would have changed, that I could have changed. One example would be like my grades, right? Because I scored so low, the possibilities of getting a master's became further and further and that was part of what I wanted to do in my academic success. So even though I did overcome a lot of obstacles and I was successful in many areas, I don't think that it was **all** a successful experience. But then at the same time, it did come with the lesson. So I learned a lot. It is a

learning experience but I mean...it doesn't have to be a successful experience for it to be an academic success. It can still be considered an academic success, but it still affects you, depending on what you didn't succeed in.

For Stacy, academic success was different than a successful experience. Obtaining a degree is an academic success but there can still be negative (academic) outcomes from experiences during your academic journey that did not feel successful.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS: WHAT DO PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVE ARE THE SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN HMDP?

Besides college readiness, there were other consequences from participating in the HMDP. The outcomes ranged from short- to long-term effects, some with transformative natures that converted short-term consequences to long-term outcomes. These consequences fell into the following spaces: finance, college selection/college persistence, family, the HMDP staff-peer relationships, and paying it forward.

Finances

Finances were an immediate consequence of the program. It built financial literacy on how to pursue financial opportunities to cover college costs. Stacy shared:

We started going to the workshops in eighth grade. We started getting ready for high school so they talked about how high school is going to look like and kind of like what we wanted to do while in high school so that we were prepared for college. Even at that like young age we kind of got exposed to a little bit of what we needed to do in order to be prepared, which was nice because then I had the opportunity to kind of plan things out. Instead of just being like thrown in there and be like, “Alright, junior year of high school, you need to do this... You need to do x, y, and z in order for you to get scholarships and be able to look good for whatever college you're applying to.”

It also uniquely qualified participants for a scholarship. Victoria shared: “Being part of it can also help you apply for the early outreach scholarship, which is like \$5000 a year...[inaudible], half of your tuition at ASU so that's a big incentive why you should be

part of it". Natasha similarly shared that participation in HMDP and another program qualified her for a different kind of scholarship:

Because I did HMDP and [program name removed], both of those programs qualified me for a scholarship called CSA which is called College Success Arizona, where they provided scholarship and mentorship services if you're from Arizona going to an Arizona University.

This short-term result produced long term outcomes that carried them through to degree completion. Only a few participants lost some or all their financial aid because they did not maintain satisfactory progress. Abbey lost some of her financial aid because of a myriad of personal and extenuating reasons that affected her GPA:

...[the scholarship coordinator] would have monthly like supervision, I would say, and she will look over my hours. She would also look over my grades because in order to keep that scholarship, you had to keep a certain GPA. And the reason why I developed like a relationship with her is because my sophomore year of college, I feel like I struggled. I struggled and my GPA lowered and so there was a point where like my scholarship was going to be taken away. I had to kind of tell her like what was going on in my life. She understood and she kind of she worked with me. I was able to still keep my scholarship, because I think it was semester type of evaluation. It wasn't like a yearly evaluation.

Abbey kept her scholarship until the end of her sophomore year. By the beginning of her junior year, the current scholarship coordinator moved to a new position and was replaced by a new coordinator who discontinued her scholarship. Stacy, on the other hand, lost all her scholarships due to extenuating family needs that required her to direct

more hours to work than her degree. The scholarship lost made her journey to degree completion exceptionally challenging. However, she coped through the (financial) support of her employers and her internal drive to graduate. The literature shows the importance of college costs and financial aid (Bozick et al., 2016; Gross, 2011; Heller, 1999). It affects decision making in college selection, enrollment and persistence. In decisions to persists, loss of financial aid due to extenuating reasons creates further challenges towards degree completion. In Stacy and Abbey's case, they worked longer hours to supplement college costs and familial needs, which meant less time for coursework.

College Selection and Persistence

Besides financial aid, participants also shared the program's influence on their college selection and persistence story. Though participants credited the Program in their college selection process (see Chapter 5), they also likened the college selection process to a short-term consequence of the HMDP. Participating in the HMDP on the ASU campus led many participants to see ASU as their "home." They were so comfortable with ASU that it became an essential element in their college selection process. In fact, all but one participant chose ASU as their college of choice.

Besides being instrumental in selecting a college, participants shared that they learned techniques/strategies and resources to support their college persistence/success. For instance, Belinda learned about different resources on campus (e.g., tutoring center), which she leveraged as a student to support her success in courses:

Well, since [the HMDP] took place at ASU, it definitely got me more familiar with the campus and also like the different resources there. I think that made me

realize how supportive the school was like towards their students. I think that's one of the things that I really liked about ASU when I was like picking what schools I wanted to apply to or what school I wanted to move forward with. Many also identified helpful study habits or time management strategies that the HMDP shared to support their success in the classroom¹⁵. These habits and strategies, which they most likely implemented in high school, carried them into the college setting as a long-term consequence.

Interestingly, one participant shared the impact giving back to the HMDP did for her persistence. It reminded Stacy why she pushed through and what she wanted to be in the future, despite all the additional demands from her family's financial strain:

While I was in college because of all those [family and financial] struggles I sometimes lost the motivation and the desire to just keep going and in continuing to follow my career...So standing on the other side, the girls that I saw reminded me of me, if that makes sense. So even during like the interview process—I was part of the interview process at some point where I was volunteering time—and I got to interview a couple of the seventh graders going into eight grade. That was like [at] the beginning of the program and they got to answer a lot of the questions that I remember answering. That was that refresher that I needed, like, okay, this is why I did this program. This is why I pushed myself through high school. This

¹⁵ Though these strategies are helpful once in college, knowing how to be successful in the classroom can also give participants confidence in their college readiness.

is why I'm pushing myself through college because I had dreams. I had goals and aspirations and I wanted to continue doing them, even though it was difficult and at times, I honestly felt like I should of have quit.

It is essential to note the potential value HMDP can play in college persistence if participants volunteer as college students¹⁶. It can build motivation, which is linked to educational outcomes, to press forward towards degree completion (Crisp et al., 2015).

Family

Another area of short- and long-term impact was on the family unit. Participation in the HMDP had a lasting impact on the mother-daughter relationship and influenced life choices among other family members. Many participants shared that parental inclusion in the HMDP strengthened and sustained mother-daughter bonds during and post-HMDP. The bond grew either because the program's structure inherently placed both parents and daughters on the same page towards understanding college readiness or because the program's time commitment 'forced' busy mothers to carve out time to spend with their daughters. Most claimed the strengthened bond was due to the first reason, and two claimed it was due to the second. Nonetheless, the strengthened bond produced two outcomes: 1) greater ease in having mother-daughter conversations on the college-going experience, and 2) growth in parental understanding of the college-going journey. For example, Abbey's relationship with her mother significantly flourished when they began to participate in HMDP. The program taught her mother how to prepare

¹⁶ Of course, this would not be applicable to those who do not go to ASU nor pursue higher education.

for college and created a space to connect with other parents who showed how they supported their daughters. This transformed the mother's approach towards supporting Abbey. When she became a college student, her mother extended this transformed support strategy and became more understanding, helpful, and aware of her daughter's college-going experience at ASU:

Abbey: She became definitely more supportive in my educational career, my educational path. She was definitely more understanding. She would just kind of help me out with what she could in regards to if I was like really stressed out because of an assignment. She was more understanding. She was more supportive. She would kind of take the time to hear me out. I would say that that's how our relationship grew and got stronger because she became more supportive because she was aware of all of the different things or, she just was aware of how stressful college could be?

Interviewer: Mm hmm. How did she become aware?

Abbey: I think it was because of HMDP...hearing how college will be like, and what is expected.

For Natasha, parental inclusion increased her desire to share her academic journey with her mother: “[The Hispanic Mother Daughter Program] conditioned me. It made me want to share my academic journey more with my mom once I was out of the program, like in college and stuff.” The HMDP inclusion of parents was a powerful move for academic success. The bonds formed between and the knowledge built in mothers and their daughters, produced lasting impact beyond college selection.

In addition to transforming mother-daughter relationships, three participants shared that the HMDP had lasting impacts among other family unit members. Stacy's mother was inspired to learn English and to pursue her own business. She listened to English-speaking television programs and read many English-written books to develop her English-speaking skills. She also started looking into how to actualize her aspirations for opening a cooking business:

Interviewer: With your mom being a part of HMDP, did it inspire her in any way...I was just curious if HMDP had any other personal effect on your mother, individually?

Stacy: It pushed her to start learning English...It was a the big turning point for her. I mean our sessions [at the HMDP] were translated in both Spanish in English, but it kind of pushed her to start teaching herself English a little bit more and also just start doing what she wanted to do. She started looking into baking and cooking, and all those stuff that she wanted to do, and she wanted to accomplish.

Interviewer: Okay, did she go forward with it? Did she start baking and...?

Stacy: Yeah, she's currently doing that now.

Interviewer: Okay. And is she trying to do that as a hobby or?

Stacy: More like financial as well...like start to create a clientele.

Interviewer: Okay. So for her—and let me know if I'm inferring too far or I'm on the wrong page—it sounds like for her, seeing what the HMDP was offering in terms of a career, but in your case, it's educational career for next steps in your

life also motivated her to want to do something about what she wanted to do? Is that correct?

Stacy: Yeah. In a way, it did. It kind of taught her about all the different possibilities that were out there.

Interviewer: Okay. You said that she wanted to learn English. How did she go about teaching herself English?

Stacy: Just watching English TV, listening to videos, [and] just reading a lot. She's definitely like still practicing, but she can now have those conversations and stuff like that.

This not surprising as there are newspaper articles showing a history of programmatic impact on mothers (Auffret, 1996; Khoury, 1998; Yara, 2004). However, the documentation was generally in the form of mothers returning to college or obtaining a college degree. In Stacy's case, her mother took action to accomplish personal and career goals and not acquire a degree. This outcome demonstrates the myriad ways the HMDP can impact mothers.

What was less documented, was sibling impact. Two participants shared more on this. For Natasha, her older sister was in the program before her and created a pathway to participate when she became eligible. For Angela, she became a source of guidance for her younger siblings as they navigated adulthood and post-secondary education: "I had to help my brother and sister get to that point by myself based off of what I had learned from [the HMDP]. I think it had a lasting impact because of that." She helped her brother apply for scholarships and colleges, and she helped her sister process her career

goals/aspirations. Natasha and Angela's story is a testament of other forms of unintended familial impact.

Relationships Within the HMDP

Participants highlighted varying degrees of peer and staff relationship within the HMDP. Interestingly, most participants claimed they did not have any friendships with their HMDP peers. Some explained that they were shy or could not relate to their fellow peers. Bailey shared her interactions with HMDP peers:

Because a lot of us came from different backgrounds and from different kind of goals or objectives that we wanted to meet going into this program, sometimes I felt like with the girls, it was very surface level, very superficial in the sense that it would just be like small talk, or talking about the workshop. Because we lived in different areas of the valley, sometimes it was hard to relate... We were also young so it's not like—we started driving at what? 16?—so we couldn't see each other before then. It was more of like we saw each other when we were on the ASU campus during the workshops. Aside from the girl, the participants in the program, I would also actually reach out to the to the people who are leading the workshop. The students [presenting] at that time were students in college and they were previous HMDP participants. I would really approach them to just kind of understand a little bit more of what that workshop was about or just to be curious about if they had ever approached like going out of state or like talking about tuition. Things that were like kind of nitty gritty, but that we couldn't really discuss within like an hour workshop or an hour and 30 minutes. I felt like I

talked more to the people who were who were leading the program more so than the participants.

Interestingly, Stacy mentioned that she built connections with HMDP alumni only after completing the program:

I built more of a connection during my college time. I don't continue to talk to a lot of the girls, but like I made some friends from girls that were part of the program in the past, but I didn't talk to in the past. I met them while I was volunteering [with HMDP]...

Though there was attrition (as mentioned by Stacy in Chapter 4), it is surprising that peer relationships were not formed in a 5-year program. Bailey cited lack of commonality. However, the reason could also be because of programmatic structure. If most of the Program's content delivery was in the form of workshops that reduced in frequency over time (see Chapter 4), most in-person time was spent listening and learning about college readiness. This leaves little room for participants to interact and form peer bonds. Because of the value of peers in the academic journey, the HMDP should consider ways of fostering peer relationships (González et al., 2003; C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Llamas et al., 2018).

Unlike peer bonds, participants expressed more variation in their relationship with the HMDP staff. Most shared there was no relationship, except for Abbey, Victoria, and Natasha. Abbey shared that her relationship with HMDP staff was short. She initially created a bond with her HMDP representative, who consistently checked in on her for the first two years of her membership. However, the relationship eventually became non-

existent as the visits became fewer. She shared that she did not have lasting relationships with people from HMDP because facilitators did not have a history of staying:

[The HMDP representative] would visit me at my school. She played a big role in my experience with HMDP because I believe she was with me from eighth grade to freshman year, I want to say? She would just kind of like check in with me and it was really great because she also spoke Spanish. If I would tell her how my parents were having these questions or I was having to give them explanations, she would talk to my mom...Honestly maybe there was like a shortage of staff because I didn't receive a visit from anybody for a while. I want to say that I was only like visited maybe like once a year in high school?

On the other hand, Natasha experienced a more long-term relationship as the HMDP staff during her time in the program became a member of her Honor Thesis committee for her bachelor's degree.

Interview two:

...we had like an advisor that was assigned to us through the program. That advisor would come and visit our schools probably like twice a semester to go over, like, how are you doing, like what classes are you taking, what's your grade in each class, what are your goals this semester, and that sort of deal.

Interview one:

...my counselor from HMDP, she ended up accepting another job within ASU. She moved after I graduated high school, but I actually ended up connecting with her for my honors thesis creative project...She was actually the second committee member on my [honors thesis] committee

Natasha started the HMDP two years after Abbey. Could Natasha's experience have been unique, or did the program change to provide more stable staff members? Either scenario is possible since the program undergoes continual evolution from program evaluations. It may benefit the Program to conduct a comparison between cohorts. Still, whether Natasha's experience was unique or common, there is value in her experience as her bond with the HMDP staff resulted in a long-term consequence that contributed to degree completion.

Paying it Forward

To a lesser degree, some participants shared moments of paying forward their experiences with the HMDP. For example, Victoria, Stacy and Abbey shared that they participated in (as a scholarship requirement and eventually volunteer) and/or spoke during workshops at the HMDP. Stacy shared her interactions with the HMDP during college:

Stacy: ...I had an opportunity to work with them as like as a member that would be part of the workshops and would help set up and guide students and take them into groups. We always had people that would take us into a different room if we needed to. I became one of them. So the experiences was definitely different. I was on the other side of it. I will say it was rewarding...Although I didn't play a role in like preparing an actual workshop, I was there to like set up and to be there during the workshop. I had an opportunity to speak at one of their workshops as well so it was really rewarding.

Interviewer: Wow, good. So the times that you are helping out for these workshops, were you hired as a student worker or was it a combination of you being hired and then volunteering?

Stacy: So it started as volunteer work and then I heard that they had an open [inaudible] and I ended up applying and then I ended up getting hired. Then, I ended up leaving because I got admitted to do my internship in DC so I ended up quitting all my jobs here...then I came back and I try to volunteer as much as possible...I was part of the application process. We got to review the applications of the new group coming in...

Interviewer: Okay, do you still volunteer for them or when did you stop?

Stacy: I think last year was the last time I was part of it.

Interviewer: Okay, so 2019...I could put down?

Stacy: Yeah, the last thing that I did was the application process.

Giving back to the HMDP was “rewarding” for Stacy. She had the opportunity to give back to a program that made a large impact on her academic journey.

Participants shared other ways to pay it forward. Other than volunteering at the HMDP events, two participants used their acquired knowledge on college readiness to share with others how to prepare for College. Natasha shared what she learned with a younger neighbor who needed assistance with FAFSA: “Recently, I actually helped a neighbor who her daughter is about to graduate high school this year and I helped her fill out the FAFSA from the knowledge I had from HMDP.” Stacy shared her information with her high school peers as they progressed together:

It was interesting because I do know that like the high school that I went to, I felt like I knew more than all my other peers and that's because I learned a lot of it through the Hispanic Mother Daughter Program. So by the time their school started talking to us about scholarship, like I had already told other people like, “oh no, like this is what you could be doing.” So I was also trying to like mentor other people around me, like providing the information that I was getting and like giving it to other people so that they would be also like prepared.

Both Stacy and Natasha expanded the reach of the HMDP by contributing to others on their academic journey.

Overall, this chapter outlined short- and long-term consequences to the HMDP. Participants shared consequences in the following spaces: finances, college selection and persistence, family, relationships with the HMDP staff, and paying it forward. The above demonstrate the scope of the HMDP reached beyond the immediate college readiness impact on Latinas. The potential for this impact is not be taken lightly as there are possibilities for expanded impacts in other spaces and people. I now turn to Chapter 8 to conclude this dissertation and offer implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Latinxs are the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2020b). They are also a young population who are or will enter a skilled-based workforce in the U.S. (Amaro-Jiménez & Hungerford-Kresser, 2013; Arizona Board of Regents, 2020, 2022; Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). One way to prepare for such a workforce is to create the conditions so that more Latinx can acquire college level degrees. However, recent data show low degree completion rates among Latinx despite improvements in college enrollment (de Brey et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; US Census Bureau, 2020b). To address low completion rates, I wanted to explore what contributed to the Latinx academic journey that led to successful outcomes. My primary goal for this dissertation was to understand this journey through the eyes of successful Latinas who had engaged with the Hispanic Mother Daughter Program at Arizona State University.

Current literature that explores the experiences of Latinx students in higher education highlighted four main themes of influence in the Latinx academic journey. These were Individual, Family, Finance, and Institution. One of the strategies used is to foster college readiness through programs for pre-college students. This study focused on one college readiness program: The Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP). To frame this study, a psychosociocultural (PSC) approach and the LatCrit Theory were selected as lens to design the research and interpret the data. Because intersecting identities can produce unique stories, I narrowed my sample size to Latina students and

explored their academic journey towards degree completion. The following research questions structured this exploration:

1. How and in what ways do program participants believe HMDP prepared them to be college ready?

- a. The HMDP implemented four strategies to support college readiness. These were: 1) Program content focused on how to be college ready, 2) Periodic check-ins with program participants to track progress towards academic goals, 3) Fostering a motivating culture, and 4) Including parents during the content delivery. These contributed to feelings of college readiness. Though participants had feelings of college readiness, it is important to note that these feelings did not always translate to being ready for college life/expectations.

2. What factors do participants believe influenced their college selection, enrollment, and persistence?

- a. To account for nuanced stories, I identified themes within the following milestones: college selection, college enrollment, and college persistence. Four main factors influenced college selection: Individual Influencers, Family, Finances, and Institutions (i.e. faculty, staff, peers, campus climate, location, pre-college involvement, and university programs). Participants weighed each factor separately and together in their college selection process. Two main factors contributed to the college enrollment experience: Family and Institutional space (i.e. transitional strategies, resources, peer support, and staff support). Lastly, participants

highlighted the following as important in their persistence towards degree completion: Psychological Factors, Family, Finances, Romantic Partners, and Institutions (i.e. peers, faculty, staff, educational opportunities, and campus climate). Interestingly, Finances and Family intersected in the college going experience when parts of participants' income contributed to familial needs.

3. What factors do participants believe influenced their academic success?

- a. Family, finances, and institutions were three main influencers in participants' academic success. Within the family unit, parents played an especially important role in providing support and motivation for educational goals. Siblings and other family member were less common as influential members in participants' academic journey. For finances, all participants had financial hardships during their childhood and relied on financial aid to fund their educational goals. Institutions were the largest space with people and experiences that contributed to their academic success. These included: faculty staff, peers, religion, and school involvement.

4. What do participants perceive are the short-term and long-term consequences of their participation in HMDP?

- a. There were 5 main short- and long-term consequences from participation in the HMDP.
 - i. The first consequence is financial literacy strategies taught in the HMDP gave participants research strategies to search for future

academic and career opportunities, and participation in the HMDP granted participants access to financial aid opportunities. The results of the research strategies and financial assistance carried them towards degree completion.

- ii. The second main consequence is experiences through the HMDP aided them in the college selection process and in the development of college persistence strategies.
- iii. The third main consequence is learning about the college preparation and going process improved familial support and mother-daughter bonds. Interestingly, the inclusion of family in the HMDP built cultural capital for other family members to access and encouraged some mothers to pursue their respective life goals.
- iv. The fourth main consequence is that staff-student and peer-peer relationships were highly variable with most participants sharing that such pairings really existed in their experiences.
- v. The fifth main consequence is that participants paid it forward by volunteering in the HMDP events during college or sharing their acquired knowledge to community members.

In this chapter, I will present three main sections before I conclude. In the first section, I will identify four key findings common across participants' academic journeys. As appropriate, I will utilize research from the literature review, LatCrit, and the PSC approach to make sense of these themes. In the second section, I will present implications of how the data can inform researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in

supporting Latina students. In the third section, I will share specific recommendation for researchers, policymakers and practitioners. I then end the dissertation with concluding remarks.

Common Themes Across the Research Questions

The previous results chapters answered each research question in detail. Overall, four themes were common across participants' academic journey. These were: Individual, Family, Finance, and Institutional Space. This is not surprising as the literature similarly highlighted these four main themes (Acevedo, 2020; Arana et al., 2011; Bonifacio et al., 2018; Ceja, 2006; Chlup et al., 2018; Crisp & Nora, 2010; González et al., 2003; Oseguera et al., 2009). Below, I will expound on each theme and utilize the literature and conceptual framework, as appropriate, to interpret them.

Individual Influencers

The literature highlighted two main influencers at the individual level: academic performance and personal/psychological variables (Arana et al., 2011; Bonifacio et al., 2018; Crisp et al., 2015; Latino et al., 2021; Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017; Trusty et al., 2003). Even though participants referenced these two individual influencers, it was to a lesser degree as the other three themes.

Academic concerns may not have been important because participants were high performing students before college. The HMDP had high GPA requirements for admission and tracked academic performance from 8-12th grade. This kind of environment can foster a culture of high academic expectations. In the few moments that participants shared their academic challenges, they were commonly experienced in the first semester after the transition from high school to university. Interestingly, all who

experienced this transitional phase created and enforced coping mechanisms to support their success. They accessed university services (e.g. tutoring centers), participated in study groups, tailored study strategies to match university/course expectations, and leveraged their social networks (through mentors). Their strategy is similar to participants in Zell's (2010) study who created strategies for success after experiencing a phase of "self-discovery." Could the transitional phase between high school and college be moments of "self-discovery" that generated success/coping strategies for participants in the present study? Another reason for these coping strategies is perseverance. All participants shared childhood (financial) challenges. In those setting, could they have learned the character of perseverance and survival and translated them into the college experience?

A few participants mentioned personal/psychological variables. Similar to the literature, these were motivation and ethnic identity (Arana et al., 2011; Bonifacio et al., 2018; Cavazos et al., 2010; Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). All had educational aspirations for college but many were motivated because of external factors. This is not surprising as the literature suggests that motivation can be indirectly influenced by outside forces (Arana et al., 2011; Cavazos et al., 2010; Crisp et al., 2015; Zell, 2010). For this study, the outside force was primarily a person(s). In fact, all participants mentioned completing their degrees because of someone's support, motivation, and/or guidance. Even Angela, who credited an individual desire to pursue college, wanted to complete her degree for her family. She wanted to end the cycle and be the first in her family to acquire a bachelor's degree.

Some participants also mentioned ethnic identity and acculturation. Participants in this study valued associations with people who looked and thought like them. This was especially the case for Bailey and Olivia. Fortunately, Bailey was able to find solace in faculty and peers like her. Olivia found herself more isolated as she progressed in the STEM field. She found fewer people who looked like her and experienced microaggressions from peers in the STEM fields. This experience was partially why she almost did not complete her bachelor's degree. Ethnic identity and microaggression have been linked to career/educational outcomes and may explain why Olivia almost discontinued her degree and turned away from the STEM field upon her graduation (Bonifacio et al., 2018; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Vela et al., 2019).

Though not directly discussed in the interviews, could their challenges with college adjustment and fitting in be associated with the issues of whiteness as property? Ladson-Billings & Tate IV (1995) noted that whiteness as a property in the educational setting is transferrable to other students. This means that alignment to the "white norms" results in access to the privileges of whiteness. Since participants did not relay privileges, could it be that a misalignment to "white norms" excluded them from these privileges? Or, could it be that the complexity of their intersecting identities would have still resulted in exclusion as they did not align with financial and/or gender expectations?

Family

The literature demonstrates that family was significant to the Latinx academic journey (Chlup et al., 2018; Marrun, 2020; Sánchez et al., 2010; Vela et al., 2019). This study similarly revealed that family was an important force in participants' academic journey. Parents, in particular, were large support systems that encouraged educational

aspirations from an early age. Like the literature, many parents valued their children's educational aspirations but did not understand how to pursue college (Chlup et al., 2018). Access to programs (e.g. the HMDP) and to people (e.g. teachers) with college readiness knowledge were the main ways that parents supported participants' academic success in this study. Stacy credited the HMDP for building parental knowledge on the college readiness process and demystifying assumptions garnered from media sources. The HMDP environment taught Abbey's mother strategies to support her daughter for the rest of her educational journey.

Parents (i.e. the fathers) who did not access programs and networks implemented alternative strategies. They mainly established high academic expectations—because they assumed this was how to get into college—or shared *consejos* of their life struggles to inspire their children to pursue college. These (non)traditional means to support academic success is similar to other studies that found creative ways to lend support when parent did not understand the educational system (Ceja, 2004, 2006; Chlup et al., 2018; Marrun, 2020). This study further supports the literature that Latinx parents *do* value education (Chlup et al., 2018; Marrun, 2020). Because some are unfamiliar with the American educational system, they leverage resources at their disposal to support their children.

Siblings are an important source of information when parents are unfamiliar with the college going process (Ceja, 2006). With the exception of Natasha, participants either did not acknowledge their siblings in their educational journey or became sources of cultural capital for their younger siblings. This means that participants had no family members with college readiness knowledge and looked outside the family network for

this information. Natasha was the only exception to this experience. Her older sister established an educational path that granted Natasha access to the same resources and opportunities as her sister. She was also able to discuss with her sister what to account for when pursuing ASU (e.g. the Honors program). Natasha is an indication of what can happen when such cultural capital is accessible within the family.

In addition to people, the literature showed family-student interactions persisted in college (Arana et al., 2011; Covarrubias et al., 2019; González et al., 2004). Furthermore, familial impact manifested in different ways after high school as Latinx students navigated the demands of family and college life. In this study, all participants similarly maintained strong familial ties in and described various ways their familial roles changed by college. Participants shared that their families were the core reason for their persistence towards degree completion. They provided a place of solace from college demands—even if they did not understand the college experience—and became a source of motivation to persist. However, the close family ties resulted in new or maintained familial roles post-high school. A few participants contributed to family bills or provided educational advice to their younger siblings.

It is important to recognize that family is important for participants in this study. It formed the foundation of their educational aspirations and became a source of strength towards degree completion. When their families were in need, participants did not express negative feelings for contributing to that need. Considering the importance and complexity of familial impact, it is important to understand the degree of the family-college dynamic in the academic journey. Only then can we get closer to creating strategies for academic success while avoiding a deficit mindset that dismisses the

family. The HMDP recognized the importance of family. Their strategy to incorporate parents demonstrated the positive impact familial inclusion can play on the Latina academic journey.

Finance

Finances are known to influence Latinx college selection, enrollment and persistence in higher education (Bozick et al., 2016; Cano & Castillo, 2010; Heller, 1999). Participants in this study also shared that finances were important in their college-related experiences. However, finances were also pivotal pre-college. Financial impact was present since childhood and manifested in different forms along the academic journey. During childhood, it took the form of financial hardship. Many participants mentioned financial challenges that had long-standing impacts in their educational contexts. The financial hardship made them aware of gaps in access to important educational resources (e.g. tutors) and that college pursuits could only happen with financial aid.

By the time college became part of their discourse, participants pursued different resources to make their educational aspirations a reality. These resources were primarily college readiness and academic programs (e.g. AVID, HMDP, or ACE). Their participation in these college readiness experiences may explain why participants did not experience “sticker shock” from college costs (Gross, 2011). Exposure to college readiness information may have equipped them with tools to financially prepare for college. The HMDP is one of those programs that invest in financial (aid) literacy. Interestingly, their investment produced lasting impacts as participants utilized the same learned strategies to research future opportunities for themselves (e.g. Natasha securing a

pre-med internship during college) and/or others (e.g. Stacy sharing about relevant scholarship opportunities to her high school peers).

By the college selection stage, financial impact manifested in the form of affordability. Almost all participant weighed college cost and financial aid offers in their decision-making process. This evaluation is not surprising as the literature shows that tuition affects enrollment (Bozick et al., 2016; Heller, 1999). The only exception was Angela, who prioritize financial consideration lower as she believed she could secure scholarships to cover college costs. Still, none of the participants could pay for college without outside financial support. Fortunately, participants were able to secure financial aid to cover their entire Bachelor's degree. The only exception was Abbey. However, her financial aid was large enough to cover almost all college costs.

Another financial manifestation that can affect college selection is immigration status. Approximately fourteen percent of Latinx with some college education are not U.S. citizens (US Census Bureau, 2020a). However, financial aid through FAFSA require candidates to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents (*Eligibility Requirements | Federal Student Aid*, n.d.). This put Latinx students in a unique position to offset cost through less traditional means (e.g. employment, loans, etc.) Since no participants mentioned policy restrictions and immigration status, they may have met qualifying requirements and/or secured financial aid with no immigration restriction.

In college, financial impact was more in the form of maintaining financial aid and/or working to support (additional) living costs. Sometimes these living costs expanded beyond participants. A few participants mentioned contributing to familial financial needs while in college. This meant some participants divided their time

between college and family demands. However, this division can produce complications when this delicate balance is challenged. This was especially the case for Stacy and Abbey who lost scholarships and worked more hours to offset college (and family) costs. This pull factor can affect persistence towards degree completion (Arana et al., 2011; Crisp & Nora, 2010). Fortunately, other influencers (e.g. familial or employment support) contributed to Stacy and Abbey's persistence.

Institutions

Institutions and all its derivatives (e.g. people, spaces, culture, policy) are powerful forces of impact (Acevedo, 2020; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Lewis et al., 2000; Lundberg et al., 2018; Oseguera et al., 2009). Their effects are immediate and long term, generally manifest through people or experiences, and vary in form at different points in time. Below, I attempt to account for these elements while exploring how this study is informed by the literature and conceptual framework.

Social Networks. The literature highlights three primary actors in the Latinx academic journey: teachers, academic counselors, and peers (Cook et al., 2021; C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Lundberg et al., 2018; Marciano, 2017; Oseguera et al., 2009). In this study, participants also referenced teachers, staff and peers. Who they considered important were inconsistent through time. In high school, many referenced teachers more than staff. This could be because participants spent more time with their teacher in the classroom than their high school counselors or administrators. Participants also referenced moments when teachers stepped outside their teaching roles to support participants' academic journey. Participants may have recognized that their teachers went above and beyond and appreciated the support. By college, participants referenced

faculty less. Research shows how important faculty is to the student academic journey (Lundberg et al., 2018; Oseguera et al., 2009). For those who referenced faculty in the study, it created pathways for future career/academic options. These opportunities indicate what could happen if faculty involvement/mentoring were more saturated in the student college experience.

Staff played a different role for participants. They were more sources of information than mentors. Many were academic advisors or counselors who provided the necessary tools to assist students with next steps. In high school, this meant providing college readiness information. In college, this was to track student progress towards degree completion. These experiences are similar to the literature (Acevedo, 2020; Cook et al., 2021; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). Unlike the literature, most participants in this study did not suggest that their academic counselors/advisors worked through a deficit approach (Acevedo, 2020). In the one occasion when Natasha shared a deficit approach, their minimal impact indicate that other factors had stronger effects (e.g. educational aspirations, familial impact, and/or an embedded college going culture). The fact that participants likened academic advisors as resources and less as mentor may indicate why participants were not affected or did not recognize the deficit approaches to counseling. Their source for motivation and mentorship was found elsewhere (e.g. college readiness programs, teachers, or family).

Peers were the third primary actor for participants. They are known to: 1) supplement support when students lack faculty/staff access (González et al., 2003; Marciano, 2017; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006) and 2) provide adjustment and overall well-being during college (C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Llamas et al., 2018). However, only

a few participants mentioned their importance during college. The rest either had no friends or maintained a certain distance from their friends. With less reference of college faculty, it was expected that participants would express more value on peers (González et al., 2003; Marciano, 2017; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006). However, the data were contrary to expectations.

Still, peers are important for college adjustment and overall well-being (C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Llamas et al., 2018). Participants with peers in this study valued their friendships similarly. Those who struggled to adjust either had no peers or could not relate to them. This were especially the case for Bailey and Abbey. Bailey struggled to adjust to the students and faculty in her initial department. In an effort to support her adjustment, Bailey change her major and pursued spaces with faculty and peers who shared similar backgrounds. Abbey, however, struggled with the campus but did not implement strategies for adjustment like Bailey. Additionally, she did not mention close peers for most of her academic journey. Would her adjustment have been smoother if she had close peers who progressed with her towards degree completion?

Campus Climate. Some participants shared campus climate impacts. All but one mentioned high school campus climate as part of their academic journey. The only exception was Victoria who attended a private high school. High academic expectations and peer competition were part of her experiences in this school. More participants discussed campus climate experiences in college. Their experiences included struggles with academic expectations, microaggressions, culture shock, and peer disconnect. These experiences are not unexpected as the literature outlines the same for students of color (Kiyama, 2018; Lewis et al., 2000).

Because campus climate experiences can impact college persistence, this study provides a unique opportunity to learn strategies used by participants who graduated. Participants in this study found faculty and peers with similar backgrounds, utilized counselors, practiced wellness, and participated in school experiences that fostered motivation. In all these instances, participants actively pursued solutions tailored to their needs. Though benefiting from universities resources require action on the part of students, should the link between resources and access be tighter? For instance, the literature shows that diverse faculty and staff strongly aids in retention (Oseguera et al., 2009). Yet, accessibility to university employees vary. In this study, Bailey took it upon herself to seek peers and faculty as her support system. Similarly, her faculty took the initiative to incorporate his students into his *familia*. In both instances, Bailey explain the peer and mentor search process as her own doing. On the other hand, Belinda accessed support through organizations affiliated with her department. Out of these experiences, she gained peer and career mentors. What would happen if access to university employees were more consistently built into the student experience? In Bailey's case, how would her peers or mentors search process change if her department had organizations like Belinda? Educational institutions are powerful spaces. They can make significant impacts to campus climate experiences if they create culturally and racially sensitive strategies of support.

Surprisingly, not many participants included race/ethnicity in their academic experience. Pre-college, most participants did not directly incorporate race/ethnicity in their stories of resources and finances. By college, only two directly mentioned race/ethnicity in their college experiences. These were Olivia who experienced

microaggressions for being a woman of color in the STEM field and Bailey who recognized a large disconnect between herself and those in her initial department. There could be two reasons for such few stories. First, most participants did not build strong or many relationships in college, which could increase the chances of identifying race-based experiences. It could also be because of this study. Since the intent was to explore the Latina academic journey, I structured the research topic and framed the research design to intentionally maintain an open approach. The hope was to be comprehensive while accounting for nuances. However, this approach can create limitations. The interview script was broad to not lead on participants in their meaning making process but flexible enough to adjust/tailor questions to participants' unique stories. The outcome is participants were not asked to expand on racialized experiences if they did not incorporate those into their stories.

Policy. Policies establish how spaces function and guide how actors behave. Though participants did not specify the importance of policies, they were affected by them. There are particularly two policy-related moments that can have long term effects on the academic journey. I explain those two below.

The first is the HMDP recruitment and operations policies. The HMDP targeted young Latina students with high academic performance. The program delivers to this population content and experiences to sustain/improve academic performance during grade school and to prepare for college. Though participants praised this program for its impact, it does imply an element of exclusion. The HMDP targeted a population that was already performing well and further equipped them with the tools and knowledge to improve their academic standing and college readiness. Some of the programmatic

strategies included: 1) Hosting events that connected participants to other programs (e.g. summer STEM programs), 2) Sharing about other academic opportunities (e.g. dual enrollment courses and financial literacy), 3) Fostering a space to discuss and prepare for college (e.g. workshops on the college applications process), and 4) Establishing check-ins with participants to review and support individualized academic goals. The outcome of the above strategies were long term impacts on their college experiences. One example was regularly using the tutoring center after learning about it from the HMDP. Another is implementing research strategies learned through the HMDP to find more academic opportunities while in college (e.g. Natasha's internship in New York). However, what about those who did not meet the HMDP's admission criteria? What if their disqualification is because English is not their first language? Should they be excluded because of language when there is room to grow in the English language during the five-year program? The HMDP should consider the impact of language in their exclusion as they can contribute to a divide in the Latinx student population if these students do not have alternative pathways to access similar academic and college readiness information. Incorporating a LatCrit lens that identifies outcomes from intersecting identities can help the HMDP identify other forms of exclusions that they may unknowingly practice, which may contribute to inequities with the Latinx community.

The second moment was financial aid policies in college. Two participants mentioned that they lost some or all of their financial aid due to personal reasons. Punitive policies that remove financial assistance without consideration for extenuating circumstances can have a ripple effect on academic success. Take, Stacy, for instance. If

Stacy was given leniency due to her familial obligations, how would her experience change towards degree completion? If she was approved to still keep her scholarships, would she work less and (therefore) re-allocate more time towards her academics since her income would solely go to family needs—rather than family and academic needs? What would be the outcome of this alternate experience? Stacy is proud of her accomplishments but recognizes that her low graduating GPA disqualified her from many graduate level programs. If the core reason for her GPA is time (as mentioned in the data) then she could have potentially avoided this long-term impact, if she kept her scholarships.

HMDP. College readiness programs play an important role in the academic journey (Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003; Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen; Martin, Simmons, & Yu, 2013). The HMDP was no exception. Participants found the HMDP valuable in building their knowledge on college readiness and success, and in strengthening parental support/buy in for college. Participants' stories also demonstrated the power of positionality within institutions and of culturally sensitive strategies in program structures. LatCrit and the psychosociocultural approach (as proposed by Gloria & Rodriguez [2000]) helped to make sense of these two highlighted elements.

The HMDP is housed within a higher education institution. Access to this institutional space allowed the HMDP to leverage campus spaces to host events and workshops, university personnel to foster motivation and build connections, and financial resources and opportunities to plan for college costs. This position within the institution proved useful as many participants appreciated the HMDP for incorporating institutional experiences and information. However, what potential exists being rooted in a space (i.e.

higher education) with capacity for powerful impacts? According to LatCrit and CRT, institutions are powerful entities of impact and real change require radical movements (Bernal, 2002; Delgado, 2003; Hartlep, 2009; Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). If institutions are a prime space to enact radical change, the HMDP has the potential for even larger impacts. The HMDP has already seen successful outcomes from leveraging the institutional space. What would happen if the program modified their college readiness strategies to make even larger changes? What would those larger changes be? Because institutions are complex systems, how much change can the HMDP implement before other elements of power within the institution push back (see interest convergence in Chapter 3; Bell, 1980)? If stakeholders are convinced that the outcome of programmatic changes create conditions for a better economy (by way of increasing the historically marginalized to be competitive in the job market), the HMDP may gain support to make changes that extend their impact in space and network.

The second element is culturally sensitive strategies. The HMDP primarily used two culturally sensitive strategies: 1) role models to foster motivation and build social networks, and 2) parental inclusion (specifically mothers) to establish parental support systems for the daughters. Their strategies seem similar to the PSC approach to Latinx student counseling (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). The PSC approach relied on three main dimensions: psychological, social support, and cultural factors (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). The psychological dimension stresses self-beliefs, ethnic identity, and acculturation. The HMDP aligns more with self-beliefs as it fosters information sharing vehicles that build motivation and confidence in college readiness.

However, it still incorporates elements of ethnic identity and acculturation by the inclusion of role models who look like participants.

The social dimension centers on family, role models, and mentors (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). The HMDP supports relationship building between daughters and parents, students and university staff, peers and peers, and parents and university staff. Interestingly, relationships only grew stronger between parents and daughters. The remaining relationship pairings were few, superficial, or non-existent. There could be a few reasons for this. Most HMDP events were lecture-style workshops, which created less opportunities to interact with other parents, peers, and staff. Another reason could be frequency in HMDP personnel change. Participants shared that representatives of the HMDP frequently changed. This environment makes it challenging to create and maintain relationships with HMDP staff. If the HMDP modified program strategies to foster greater relationship building, would it (academically) benefit participants along their academic journey?

The cultural dimension focuses on cultural congruence with the university climate (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). This implies a negotiation between the family and university culture. To some degree the HMDP addresses the university culture by hosting events and workshop on the campus to build familiarity. However, the strategy most praised by participants is parental inclusion. Many participants share that their parents valued education but were not sure how to pursue college. The HMDP program provided the knowledge to know how to prepare for and what to expect in college. This new-found knowledge fostered a system of parental support that reflected understanding and empathy. Such a system can aid in the negotiation between family and university

cultures. This study already provides evidence of this negotiation. For example, Abbey found her mother more understanding and supportive during stressful moments in college after learning about the college going experience in the HMDP. Overall, HMDP strategies that aligned with the PSC approach demonstrated success for participants.

However, it is important to also acknowledge that the HMDP strategies supported cultural congruence to *some* degree. Though their contribution to parental knowledge assisted in positive college going experiences, they did not prepare participants for other forms of campus adjustments. The HMDP would benefit from incorporating a LatCrit lens into their curriculum. For example, the data in this study showed that the intersection of race, gender, and class for some participants produced experiences of disruption and microaggression in college. In situations like this, the program could have incorporated LatCrit curriculum into their content to give participants tools on how to make sense and face potential discrimination. Because of the endemic nature of racism (and other forms of oppressions), assisting participants on how to utilize LatCrit as a tool of agency bolsters Latinas survival in a higher education setting (see “Recommendations” in the below for other examples).

Implications

The data analysis showed four key findings that contributed to participants’ academic journey. These findings offered insight on what to consider in different spaces. In this section, I will provide implications on how the data can inform researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

Implications for Research

This study contributed to research on the Latinx academic journey. Specifically, it highlighted the degree of impact familial participation in a college readiness program has on the Latina academic journey. Additionally, it is the only study (to my knowledge) that aims to provide a comprehensive story of impact by accounting for nuances valued by participants and the four main influencers identified in the literature: Individual, Family, Finance, and Institutional Impact. In what follows, I provide a few salient points for the research community to consider in light of this study:

- Researchers should consider the importance/potential of intersectionality. LatCrit included intersectionality as a tenet because it accounts for the multidimensional nature of the Latinx population (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006; Hernandez-Truyol, 1997). This approach proved useful in this study as accounting for intersecting influencers captured comprehensive yet nuanced stories. However, there is more that intersectionality can offer. Researchers can apply this lens in research designs to highlight inequities, power, and marginalized voices in their data (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Haynes et al., 2020; Hunting, 2014).
- Researchers should keep in mind that non-academic influencers can be significant contributors to the academic journey. In this study, finances and family were significant influencers. Participants credited financial assistance for allowing them access to college, and parents for maintaining their motivation to persist towards degree completion. Both of these influencers are non-academic but carry strong weights in determining the outcome of participants' academic journey.

- Researchers should keep in mind that influencers can have long-running histories for participants. For example, financial impacts in this study were present since childhood and manifested in different forms as time progressed.
- Researchers should consider the complex nature of some influencers. For example, family was an evolving space of support and complication in this study. Participants contributed to familial (financial) needs, but also found support and motivation for their educational aspirations from the family. Within the familial space, the support system is also subject to change as parents learn new strategies and tools of support.
- Researchers should consider the cultural importance of family in the Latinx community. The LatCrit lens to examine culture, family, and finance revealed that parents did their best to support their daughters (e.g. *consejos*, housing, and/or food) considering their contexts. Though this support does not align with traditional expectations (e.g. family covering some or all of the college costs), participants still valued what their parents offered. Researchers should acknowledge these forms of support, particularly because they are valued and contributed to persistence towards degree completion.
- Researchers should consider power and impact in institutional spaces. The HMDP, housed in an institutional space, leveraged institutional resources to support their college readiness strategies. The main resources included hosting events at ASU to build familiarity and comfortability with the college campus and providing opportunities to scholarships through ASU to offset financial costs. Participants found these strategies useful in their college preparation. The

outcome of this study demonstrated impact more than power. However, researchers should consider both impact and power because of the institution's ability to maintain the status quo or make social change (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

Implications for Policy

Policies shape educational outcomes and overtime produce structures that can maintain the status quo (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). In today's context where conversations on diversity and equity are high, it is particularly important that policy makers participate in the conversation about college access and success for underserved population. Based on this study, I provide considerations for policymakers:

- Policymakers should consider (research on) the impact of intersecting influencers when crafting student success strategies. This study demonstrated that importance when participants shared individual, familial, financial and institutional influencers as significant contributors to their academic journey. In fact, this study provides an example of how a program can incorporate more than one influencer to support college readiness. The HMDP accounted for culture and family in their program strategies and were praised by participants for their positive impact. Though opportunities exist that address specific influencers (e.g. providing scholarships to address financial need), it is recommended that policymakers keep in mind how interconnected these influencers are in contributing to the academic journey.

- Policymakers should acknowledge that high academic performance is not enough to achieve educational advancements. For example, all participants in this study had high academic achievements but had challenging financial backgrounds. Without financial assistance, they could not pursue college. This study demonstrates how powerful non-academic influencers can be in the educational journey.
- Policymakers should account for power and impact of institutional spaces. This study provides glimpses of institutional impact: access to the institutional space created familiarity with the campus climate, social networks in the institutional space built or broke motivation for academic persistence, and institutional policies defined college access and academic support. Policy changes in and through institutional spaces can create large impacts on the academic journey.
- Policymakers should consider the consequences of systemic inequities in their schooling systems. In this study, seven of the eight participants did not credit a college readiness strategy from their high school in their readiness experience. Rather, they looked outside (e.g. the HMDP) to prepare for college. This strategy implies high school college readiness strategies were minimal, insignificant, or non-existent. The eighth participant who did acknowledge a college readiness strategy by her high school attended a private school with large school funding. This difference implies the systemic inequities that exist among schools. The outcome of these inequities can exacerbate negative academic outcomes for students who attended schools with minimal to no valuable college readiness strategy but do not access outside help.

Implications for Practice

This study provided two layers of insights from participants: 1) The academic journey towards bachelor degree completion and 2) The impacts of the HMDP on that academic journey. Findings from these layers can provide further implications for practitioners. I share a few considerations for practitioners below:

- Practitioners should keep in mind the importance of non-academic influencers. In this study, very few participants mentioned academic challenges but many still struggled towards degree completion because of other reasons. Accounting for these influencers and how they intersect will assist in defining strategies that align more with positive academic experiences towards degree completion.
- Practitioners should keep in mind the alignment between the PSC approach and the HMDP college readiness strategies. Recognizing this approach, can encourage practitioners to determine if increasing alignment between the PSC approach and the HMDP will produce greater programmatic impacts. However, this study also shows the importance of institutional impact. It is important, that practitioners account for institutional spaces even when they consider the PSC approach in their college readiness strategies.
- Practitioners should keep in mind the unintended consequences from participation in the HMDP. In this study, participants shared impacts that expanded to other people and extended across time. Particularly interesting is the HMDP's impact on parents. Though the target population for impact were Latinas, involvement of parents resulted in some mothers making changes in their respective lives and in stronger mother-daughter bonds. This indicates that the HMDP has the potential

to expand their influence to intentionally support mothers. Practitioners should keep in mind the outcomes of the HMDP strategies and how to utilize them in a way that benefit others.

- Practitioners should consider the power and strength of the Latinx community. In particular, the family unit and its potential to transfer college-related knowledge and support to extended parts of their social network. Their practice of paying it forward (as evident in the data) to other familial and community members highlights a space through which practitioners can extend their impact in addressing educational access and inequities.
- Practitioners with (in)direct decision-making powers for the HMDP should consider this study for future decisions. This study gives insight on participant experiences and programmatic impacts. Such evidence-based data can potentially inform future programmatic decision making.

Recommendations

This study explored the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP) and completed at least a bachelor's degree. Data analysis revealed four main themes that contributed the academic journey in unique ways. These nuanced outcomes set the foundation to expand on specific recommendation in different spaces. Below, I propose recommendations for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

Recommendations for Researchers

Because the academic journey can be nuanced, this study was narrowed to a subpopulation. This leaves room for more research to be done in other sub-population

through different research designs. Just like this study, it is important to acknowledge intersecting forces and identities that contribute to participant stories where appropriate.

I suggest a few recommendations for researchers below:

- Current data show that the Latinx student population is more evenly split between two- and four-year colleges compared to other racial/ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a). To avoid overlooking a potentially large subpopulation, research should be conducted in the community college setting. Specifically, I recommend an exploratory study on the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the HMDP but attended a community college. How would participant stories differ (if any) from those who went to a four-year institution? What would be their reasons for selecting a community college over a four-year institution?
- Latinos have historically lagged behind Latinas (de Brey et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). A gap in outcomes Latina and Latino students inherently implies that unique elements exist to explain this lag. This is not surprising as LatCrit highlight the unique experiences that derive from the intersection of identities (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). More research should be done to identify these caveats. (NOTE: It is important to recognize that research like this is not generalizable. Though the intent for an intersectional approach is not to generalize, enough literature re-affirming similar themes will increase generalizability [for subpopulations].)
- The HMDP had recently opened membership to Latino students. Research should be done on the educational outcomes for this population, especially in comparison

to Latina students. The comparison might give insights to variables unique to each population and to whether the program can successfully support all genders in the Latinx community.

- The HMDP recruitment policies excluded some students from participating. Studies should be done on participants who were denied admissions to the HMDP. What was their academic journey? Did they access alternative resources (if any) to supplement their academic journey? In this same vein of membership, research should also be done on the academic journey of those who did not complete the HMDP. How different were their academic experiences compared to those who completed the HMDP?
- LatCrit and the literature emphasizes the importance of race/ethnicity. Additionally, some participants in this study found solace in people who looked like them. Considering these points, it may be beneficial to return to the study and inquire how race/ethnicity is incorporated into HMDP's college readiness strategies and/or obtain deeper participant perspectives on what it meant to interact with people who looked like them.
- This study provides a qualitative approach to exploring the Latina academic journey. Other methods should be used to capture other nuanced elements of the Latina academic journey. For example, a more quantitative approach can be used to measure the degree that each dimension in the PSC approach played in contributing to the academic journey.
- More research should be done to bridge research and practice. This study is a step in that direction. However, more research should be done in partnership with the

HMDP staff to provide more robust data for stakeholders to make decisions that are (hopefully) socially just in higher education.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Institutions and their policies can have large impacts on the Latinx academic journey (Bernal, 2002; Delgado, 2003; Hartlep, 2009; Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Because of their influential force, I provide a few recommendations for policymakers below:

- The Latinx is a large and young population (US Census Bureau, 2020b). However, their low educational attainment rates do not prepare them for a working force that heavily relies on skilled labor and values college-level degrees (Amaro-Jiménez & Hungerford-Kresser, 2013; Arizona Board of Regents, 2020, 2022; Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). To contribute to the skilled-base US workforce, it is important that policymakers expand their investment in programs that support Latinx educational success. Their investment can provide overall benefit to the economy and establish means for social and economic mobility to a population generally marginalized.
- The Latinx academic journey is composed of intersecting influencers from academic and non-academic spaces. Because all these influencers contribute to the student experience, it is important for universities to be student-centric. Policymakers should create **and** publicize policies and processes that account for extenuating circumstances. Such supportive structures can promote student success and degree completion for populations who may need nuanced support. (NOTE: This recommendation does not imply that student-centric models do not

- exists. Rather, institutions should create more student-centric policies **and** promote the execution of current and new policies that contribute to a positive and successful college experience)
- The literature shows that faculty access aid in student retention (Lundberg et al., 2018; Oseguera et al., 2009). However, few participants in this study identified impactful college faculty. Though they graduated, would their college experience have been more positive if college faculty was included in their social networks? Policymakers should create strategies that bolster these social networks. One way is to shift employment expectation. They can prioritize mentoring and (financially) reward faculty for contributing to the student experience. Many student success programs already exist at the university level; it's just a matter of faculty participation. However, if faculty do not have time and/or if their job descriptions do not include these kind of social contribution, faculty mentorship/support are less likely to happen. For these reasons, policymakers should establish policies that value and support faculty involvement without adding more to their job duties.
 - A LatCrit lens highlights the intersection of race, gender, and class in some disciplines can produce microaggressions and overall disruptions in the college experience. Policy makers should incorporate teaching moments that celebrate differences and the significance that diversity can play in the overall growth of their respective fields (e.g. STEM, Education, Business, and others). This can be in the form of adding a course in degree program requirements that engage in this discourse.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Practitioners have direct access to students. This means that they have the immediate ability to make direct impacts on the college student experience. Considering this, practitioners should be equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to support student success. I provide a few recommendations for practitioners below:

- The HMDP should also consider the benefits a LatCrit lens can provide to their programmatic strategies. LatCrit's strength in using the intersections of multiple identities (e.g. race, gender, class, immigration status, language, etc.) in various spaces and levels provide a unique opportunity for growth and outreach. Here are a few recommendations:
 - The data showed that the intersection of race, class, and gender produced moments of disruptions and/or microaggression in college. As part of their college readiness strategy, the HMDP should utilize their workshops to engage in discourse on race, class, gender, and others in the educational context and to discuss ways of coping with these experiences. This will give participants tools to make sense of and to address these experiences (should they be part of their academic journey). A potential coping strategy is to suggest that participants find mentors in the institutions (e.g. faculty of staff) who can provide advice on navigating higher education (Oseguera et al., 2009). Another strategy is to recommend that participants build a peer support structure early on to assist with adjustments and buffer negativity in the college context (C.-Y. S. Lee et al., 2020; Llamas et al., 2018).

- The HMDP admission criteria restrict participants to those proficient in the English language with high academic performance. This creates inequities within the Latinx student community as high academic achievers with the tools to navigate the English-speaking world are given more help to succeed. Those who do not fit these expectations are potentially tracked into spaces that reduce access to academic opportunities (Davila & de Bradley, 2010). It is important that the HMDP recognize the potential effect of who they exclude and offer alternative resources to this population. That way they are contributing to the overall Latinx community to some degree. One way to do this is to provide resources with alternative support and opportunities to the teachers who recruit for the HMDP and share them with Latinx students not recruited for the HMDP.
- There are other departments that follow a multidimensional approach to support students. Within the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Erica Mitchell (Executive Director of Student Services) established a Student Success Team (SST) dedicated to a wholistic approach to student support. Funneled through a coordinated care strategist, they access resources in financial, wellness, career, and academic spaces to support student needs. The SST also work in collaboration with faculty and academic advisors. Other departments should implement similar wholistic approaches and tailor them to their student needs. If Stacy was in this setting, faculty would have recommended Stacy to both academic advising and the SST. In the advising setting, the advisor could have

acted as a medium with the faculty or, at the very least, coached the student to navigate conversations regarding requesting an incomplete. If the incomplete was granted, Stacy would have had more time to complete assignments and avoided financial (and time) lost from re-taking the course(s). In the SST, the strategist would have accessed an emergency fund to assist Stacy with purchasing books (since this was one major reasons for why she didn't submit assignments), connected her to the financial coach to explore other financial support systems, and recommended her to the career coach to identify higher paying jobs.

- The literature indicates the importance of ethnic identity in educational outcomes (Bonifacio et al., 2018; E. M. Castillo, 2002; Vela et al., 2019). Particularly, how it can shape educational expectations (Bonifacio et al., 2018). The HMDP is a college readiness program built on incorporating culture. They are a prime foundation to incorporate topics of race and ethnicity. It is important that they include topics of race and ethnicity in their discourse so that participants have the tools to navigate racialized experiences in their academic worlds, especially in fields with low racial/ethnic diversity.
- Race-based organizations are linked to positive impacts in the Latinx college experience (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Villalpando, 2003). In this study, Belinda similarly shared the benefit of having a Latina mentor who assisted in her transitional phase from high school to college. Practitioners should establish widespread mentoring opportunities for people of color. Like Belinda, mentors can help Latinx students make sense of college expectations and provide tools of how to successful navigate the academic world towards their career goals.

- Family is known to impact the entire academic journey (Chlup et al., 2018; Covarrubias et al., 2019; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). In this study, participants similarly shared its longitudinal impact on their academic journey. Even the HMDP recognized its importance and incorporated family into their college readiness strategies. However, how would programmatic structures and impact differ if the HMDP shifted its strategy to foster a structure similar to the *familia* in addition to parental inclusion? For now, participants praised the HMDP for including their mothers but did not liken the HMDP to a family. Could a structural shift to a *familia*-like setup happen if content delivery avoided lecture-type workshops or if the HMDP context encouraged high HMDP staff retention? More engagement among the HMDP members and consistent HMDP staff could support a *familia* structure.

Conclusion

This study explored the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother Daughter Program (HMDP). In this chapter, I reiterated the problem statement, research topic, and research questions. Nuanced explorations of each research question produced four major themes that contributed to participants' academic journey: Individual, Family, Finance, and Institution Space. Through these four themes, I expanded on implications and recommendations for researchers, policymakers and practitioners. Considering the above, there are a few key takeaways to consider from this study.

First, I highlighted in the first chapter that college degree completion rates were low even though college enrollment rates improved (US Census Bureau, 2020c). To

address low completion rates, it was important to explore what contributed to the academic journey. This study revealed that intersecting influencers worked together to contribute to the academic journey towards degree completion. This insight can inform strategies for narrowing the gap between college enrollment and degree completion rates.

The second takeaway is academic journey is composed of complex experiences. The literature demonstrated this complexity when a review revealed four main themes. This study further supported this complexity by showing similar themes. In this complexity, it is important to recognize that influencers will come from varying facets (e.g. academic and non-academic spaces) and intersect in unique ways to produce unique stories.

The third takeaway is it is important to identify concepts and theories that can account for the population, its nuances, and the levels through which impacts can occur. This was why I selected the PSC approach and LatCrit. Besides their common strengths in capturing comprehensive yet nuanced stories among Latinx students, they complemented each other in accounting for individual to institutional level impact and in offering practical to theoretical lens of analyses on the Latinx academic journey. This study contributes to the discourse on the Latinx academic journey. The hope is that the final product will prove useful to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. The additional desire is that HMDP-specific data is beneficial for HMDP staff for future programmatic decisions. I recognize that this is just one study in a myriad of research on the Latinx academic journey. However, my personal reasons to participate in this educational space places me one step closer to contributing to the academic success (however this is defined) of underserved populations.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT LETTER

The Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program emailed the below recruitment script on behalf of the researcher:

Hello,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Bryan Brayboy in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP).

I am recruiting individuals to participate in three, 90-minute interviews. After completion of all three interviews, a transcript (or narrative) of your interview will be emailed to you for your review. Interviews will be done remotely. Interviews will be audiotaped and deleted within one year. Those who qualify must have completed the HMDP and graduated with a bachelor's degree. You must be 18 or older to participate. If you qualify and are interested in participating, you will be asked to complete a consent form. You will receive \$10 for each interview for participating.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 602-515-2631 or email me at tiffany.r.williams@asu.edu.

Thank you,

Tiffany Williams
Phd Candidate
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

The Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program: The academic journey of Latinas of who completed the program

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Bryan Brayboy in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP).

I am inviting your participation, which will involve three 90-minute interviews and a follow up narrative given to you for your review after completion of all three interviews. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. You must have completed the HMDP and graduated with a bachelor's degree to participate. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. At the beginning of each interview, you will be emailed an electronic \$10 gift card to show appreciation for giving your time.

Although there is no benefit to you, possible benefits to your participation can influence future college readiness strategies for Latina girls. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be kept confidential by limiting who has access to the data. Because I will conduct three interviews per person, I will also keep a master sheet with your contact information to track your interview dates. After all interviews are completed for the study, the master sheet with your contact information will be deleted. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: 602-515-2631 (my number) or Dr. Brayboy at (480) 965-5327. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

INTERVIEW #1

Introduction: Thank you again for agreeing to participate in Interview #1 for this study. As a reminder, I am conducting a research study to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP). You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Before the beginning of each interview, you will be emailed an electronic \$10 gift card to show appreciation for giving your time. A \$10 e-gift card was just sent to your email. To remain confidential and anonymous, I plan to use a pseudonym in place of your name. Is there a name that you would like me to use to use in place of yours?

Lastly, I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. If you approve the recording, I will let you know when I start to audio record the interview. Can I audio record the interview?

It is on record that I am given approval to record this interview.

1. Interview #1: The purpose of this first interview is to capture an outline of your academic journey so far. I am particularly interested in how you got into HMDP and what happened after that. If you feel that we need to start earlier to explain how you arrived to participating in HMDP, let's start there. (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Pay attention to membership in **HMDP, college selection, enrollment, & persistence.**)
 - a. Give me a timeline of your educational journey from the time, just before you started going to school and now.
 - i. (How old are you?)
 - ii. Who was part of your academic journey? Teachers? Parents/Family? Friends?
 1. Thinking at a large scale, how would you define their parts/roles in your academic journey?
 2. What were your conversations about school or academic journey like with these people? What were they about?
 - iii. What – What experiences in school were instrumental in shaping your academic journey? (i.e. examples)
 - iv. What – Thinking outside of school, was there anything outside of school that was a part of your academic journey?
 - v. When – If you could create a timeline when did your academic journey begin and when (if any) did it end?
 1. (When did you start Kindergarten?); (When did you start HMDP?); (When did you graduate High School?); (When did you start College?); (How long were you in College for?; When did you graduate?)

- vi. Where did you live during your academic journey? How often did you move, if at all (K-12 vs college)? What was that process like for you as it relates to your education? Can you share the changes in your location?
- vii. Is there anything else we didn't discuss that was a part of your journey?

Thank you for sharing with me your story. I appreciate your willingness to walk me through your journey. Would you like to schedule Interview #2? I like the gap between interviews to be a few days. That way our last conversation is still fresh in our minds. Is there a particular day in the next few days that work for you?

INTERVIEW #2

Introduction: Thank you again for agreeing to participate in Interview #2 for this study. As a reminder, I am conducting a research study to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP). You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Before the beginning of each interview, you will be emailed an electronic \$10 gift card to show appreciation for giving your time. A \$10 e-gift card was just sent to your email. To remain confidential and anonymous, I plan to use the pseudonym you selected from Interview #1 in place of your name.

Lastly, I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. If you approve the recording, I will let you know when I start to audio record the interview. Can I audio record the interview?

It is on record that I am given approval to record this interview.

2. Interview #2: In our first interview, we outlined a general overview of your academic journey. In this interview, let's go into detail about some of the major milestones you mentioned. I am particularly interested in what it was like being a member of HMDP, selecting a college, enrolling in classes and persisting through college. Please provide me with some details of your journey by breaking it down based on the milestones (e.g. selecting and enrolling in coursework and completion of college) I mentioned? Let's start with the first and move on from there:
 - a. (How old are you?)
 - b. (When did you start Kindergarten?)
 - c. HMDP (When did you start?; When did you graduate High School?):
 - i. What was it like to participate in HMDP? Walk me through it.
 1. What was HMDP?
 2. How did you learn about it?
 3. What did you do in it?
 4. Who did you interact with?
 5. When and how often were you engaged in the program? For how long?
 6. Where did you go to fulfill your role in HMDP?
 - d. Selecting a college: (When did you start?)
 - i. What was that like? What/who was a part of selecting a college? Family? Location? Scholarships? Faculty? Student? Staff? Community? Friends? Program of study?
 - e. Enrolling in classes:

- i. What was the enrollment process like? What/who was a part of the enrollment process? Faculty? Family? Academic advisors? Student? Staff? Community? Friends? Program?
- f. Persisting through college:
 - i. What was it like being a college student for this?
 - ii. What were the biggest challenges for you academically? Socially? Financially? Otherwise?
 - iii. How long did you remain in college? (from what year to the other year?; When did you graduate?)
 - iv. Who and what influenced your decision to stay/go? Programs? People?
- g. **CONDITIONAL:** If in graduate school:
 - i. What is it like being a graduate student? Are there differences between your graduate experience and your undergraduate experience? If so, what were they?

Thank you for sharing with me your story. I appreciate your willingness to go into detail. Would you like to schedule Interview #3? I like the gap between interviews to be a few days. That way our last conversation is still fresh in our minds. Is there a particular day in the next few days that work for you?

INTERVIEW #3

Introduction: Thank you again for agreeing to participate in Interview #3 for this study. As a reminder, I am conducting a research study to explore the academic journey of Latinas who participated in the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program (HMDP). You have the right not to answer any questions, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Before the beginning of each interview, you will be emailed an electronic \$10 gift card to show appreciation for giving your time. A \$10 e-gift card was just sent to your email. To remain confidential and anonymous, I plan to use the pseudonym you selected from Interview #1 in place of your name.

Lastly, I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. If you approve the recording, I will let you know when I start to audio record the interview. Can I audio record the interview?

It is on record that I am given approval to record this interview.

3. Interview #3: In the first interview, you provided an overview of your academic journey. In the second interview, you provided details of various milestones in your journey. Now, that we deeply explored your academic journey, I am curious about your thoughts or reflections on this journey. Specifically, what did participating in HMDP, selecting a college, enrolling in college, &/or persisting through college (individually & collectively) mean to you? We can start individually on what each mean to you and then think about what all of them as a group mean to you. I would also like to ask what you think your academic journey may mean to other people who participated/interacted/witnessed your journey? Would that be okay with you?
 - a. What did participating in HMDP mean to you?
 - i. What were/are your thoughts about your mom participating in the program with you?
 - ii. How did your membership in the program impact your academic journey?
 1. How ready for college did you feel having gone through the program?
 2. Were there any of your peers who did not participate that had different experiences?
 - iii. How did it affect your academic journey? (i.e. short-term versus long-term consequences)
 - b. Can you give me your impression of the college selection process? What did it mean to you? How did your selection impact the way that you experienced college?

- c. Can you give me your impression of the college enrollment process? What did it mean to you? How did it affect your academic journey?
- d. Can you give me your impression of your experience in college as it relates to persistence? What did it mean to you? How did it affect your academic journey?
- e. Putting all these experiences together, what do these experiences mean to you? What do you think they may mean to others (i.e. parents, siblings, friends/peers, community)?
- f. Recently, I read an article that defined academic success as not just about a successful outcome but also about a successful experience. Do you agree? Thinking back on all that we talked about, do you think your experience and outcome was successful? How else would you define your academic journey?

Thank you for sharing your reflections on your academic journey. Your support in this three-part interview will grant us the opportunity to get a deeper understanding of the academic journey of Latinas who completed the HMDP program. Should I have any questions as I re-listen to your interviews, can I reach out to you for clarifications/insights?

APPENDIX D
MASTER CODE SHEET

ID	Parent ID	Depth	Title
1	AS	0	Academic Success
2	AS	1	AS-Family
3	AS	2	AS-Fam-Father's Impact
4	AS	2	AS-Fam-Mother's Impact
5	AS	2	AS-Fam-Non-parental Family Impact
6	AS	2	AS-Fam-Parental Impact
7	AS	2	AS-Fam-Parental Knowledge
8	AS	1	AS-Finances
9	AS	2	AS-Fin-Employment
10	AS	2	AS-Fin-Family Context
11	AS	1	AS-Institution
12	AS	2	AS-Institution-Faculty
13	AS	3	AS-Institution-Faculty-Graduate School
14	AS	3	AS-Institution-Faculty-Pre-College
15	AS	2	AS-Institution-Involvement
16	AS	2	AS-Institution-Peers
17	AS	3	AS-Institution-Peers-Graduate School
18	AS	2	AS-Institution-Religion
19	AS	2	AS-Institution-Staff
20	AS	1	AS-Statement
21	CS	0	College Selection
22	CS	1	CS-Family
23	CS	1	CS-Finances
24	CS	1	CS-Institution
25	CS	2	CS-Institution-Campus Climate
26	CS	2	CS-Institution-Faculty
27	CS	2	CS-Institution-Location
28	CS	2	CS-Institution-Peers
29	CS	2	CS-Institution-Pre-College Involvement
30	CS	2	CS-Institution-Program Offers
31	CS	2	CS-Institution-Staff
32	CS	1	CS-Individual Influencers
33	CS	1	CS-Meaning
34	CS	2	CS-MNing-Comrade
35	CS	2	CS-MNing-Difficulty Level
36	CS	2	CS-MNing-Regrets

ID	Parent ID	Depth	Title
37	CE	0	College Enrollment
38	CE	1	CE-Family
39	CE	1	CE-Institution
40	CE	2	CE-Institution-Peers
41	CE	2	CE-Institution-Resources
42	CE	2	CE-Institution-Staff
43	CE	2	CE-Institution-Transitional Strategies
44	CE	1	CE-Practical Setup
45	CE	1	CE-Statement
46	CP	0	College Persistence
47	CP	1	CP-College Financial Cost
48	CP	2	CP-Employment
49	CP	2	CP-Financial Aid
50	CP	1	CP-Family
51	CP	1	CP-FamilyxFinances
52	CP	1	CP-Institution
53	CP	2	CP-Institution-Campus Climate
54	CP	2	CP-Institution-Educational Opportunities
55	CP	2	CP-Institution-Faculty
56	CP	2	CP-Institution-Peers
57	CP	2	CP-Institution-Policy/Structure/Process
58	CP	2	CP-Institution-Staff
59	CP	1	CP-Meaning
60	CP	1	CP-Psychological Variables
61	CP	2	CP-PV-Motivation
62	CP	2	CP-PV-Self Beliefs
63	CP	2	CP-PV-Strategies
64	CP	3	CP-PV-Challenges
65	CP	3	CP-PV-Practical Strategies
66	CP	3	CP-PV-Wellness
67	CP	1	CP-Romantic Partners
68	HMDP	0	HMDP
69	HMDP	1	HMDP-College Readiness
70	HMDP	2	HMDP-College Readiness-Perceptions vs Reality
71	HMDP	2	HMDP-College Readiness-Readiness Statement
72	HMDP	2	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy

ID	Parent ID	Depth	Title
73	HMDP	3	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Checkups
74	HMDP	3	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Fostering Motivation
75	HMDP	3	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Information Sharing
76	HMDP	4	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Information Sharing-Academic Skills
77	HMDP	4	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Information Sharing-College Application
78	HMDP	4	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Information Sharing-Events/Retreats
79	HMDP	4	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Information Sharing-Financial
80	HMDP	3	HMDP-College Readiness-Strategy-Parental Inclusions
81	HMDP	1	HMDP-Consequences
82	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-College Selection/Persistence/Success
83	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-Equity
84	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-Family
85	HMDP	3	HMDP-Consequences-Lasting Impact
86	HMDP	3	HMDP-Consequences-Mother-Daughter Relationship
87	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-Finances
88	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-HMDP Relationships
89	HMDP	3	HMDP-Consequences-HMDP Relationships-Peers
90	HMDP	3	HMDP-Consequences-HMDP Relationships-Staff
91	HMDP	4	HMDP-Consequences-HMDP Relationships-Staff-Long Lasting
92	HMDP	4	HMDP-Consequences-HMDP Relationships-Staff-None
93	HMDP	4	HMDP-Consequences-HMDP Relationships-Staff-Short
94	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-Paying it Forward
95	HMDP	3	HMDP-Consequences-Paying it Forward-Give back to HMDP
96	HMDP	3	HMDP-Consequences-Paying it Forward-Peers
97	HMDP	2	HMDP-Consequences-Personal/Character Growth
98	HMDP	1	HMDP-Program Structure

ID	Parent ID	Depth	Title
99	HMDP	1	HMDP-Recruitment

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APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Bryan Brayboy](#)

[CLAS-SS: Social Transformation, School of \(SST\)](#)

480/965-5327

Bryan.Brayboy@asu.edu

Dear [Bryan Brayboy](#):

On 4/30/2020 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	The Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program: The academic journey of Latinas of who completed the program.
Investigator:	Bryan Brayboy
IRB ID:	STUDY00011901
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;• HMDP Alumni Academic Journey, Category: IRB Protocol;• Interview Scripts, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);• recruitment_methods_04-24-2020.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 on 4/30/2020.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required.

Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Tiffany Williams

Tiffany
Williams

Bryan
Brayboy