

Meeting the needs of Generation Z Latinx community college students

by

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B.S., University of Southern California, 1986
M.A., California State University, San Bernardino, 2012

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Adult Learning and Leadership
College of Education

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Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

Generation Z, individuals born between 1995 and 2010, is projected to soon be the first minority-majority generation in the United States. This generational cohort is attending colleges now and will continue to enter colleges for the next decade. Within the Generation Z population are a large group of the Latinx students who often struggle to meet their educational goals. Exploring the needs of Generation Z Latinx students will help college leaders understand how best to serve this population. Information is becoming widespread on Generation Z as a whole, but research that examines the Generation Z Latinx student is still limited. Data related to the educational barriers and supports, and services needed by Generation Z Latinx students attending a California community college was collected to understand how community colleges can better serve this population and help them progress toward their educational goals. The purpose of this study was to discover what barriers are preventing this cohort from reaching their educational goals and what supports are needed to help improve this populations' educational outcomes. Using a mixed-methods case study to uncover the needs of Generation Z Latinx community college students, this study offers insights on how colleges can best serve this student population. Results of this study offer perceptions from data collection, surveys, and focus group interviews on what are the social, financial, instructional, and cultural needs of these students.

Keywords: Generation Z, Gen Z, Latinx, Hispanic, community college, student perception, postsecondary education, HSIs

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Dedication

The dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, colleagues, and students. First, thank you to my parents who throughout my life have given me support and inspiration to follow my dreams. Thank you to my siblings, who have lovingly supported me in more ways than you know. Thank you to Joseph, who encouraged me to embark on this endeavor and has so patiently listened to everything I know about Generation Z Latinx students. Thank you to my professors who provided excellent representations of what higher education leaders should be like, what issues are critical to address, and why what we do is relevant and critical to our field. Thank you to my wonderful classmates who courageously walked this journey with me and always gave words of encouragement when needed. Thank you to the President and Board of Trustees of the College who invested in my future and made this journey financially feasible and logistically doable. Thank you to all of my students for being examples of courage and perseverance. Thank you to my Generation Z sons, Lukas, Michael, and Christian, who have exposed me to the unique differences this generation embodies. Finally, thank you to all the Generation Z Latinx students who I worked with on this research project for sharing your voice and personal lives with me. Just as you shared that your generation is self-motivated, accepting, and wants to save the world, I am using you as my example to humbly try and do the same.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

A new generation of students who were born in or after 1995 is beginning to enter college and will continue to populate higher education institutions for the next decade. Known as *Generation Z*, or digital natives, this was the first generation to be born into an internet-connected world where technology is the center of all they do (Cilliers, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018). This unique generation of students has characteristics and skill sets that are unlike generational cohorts that preceded them. Seemiller and Grace (2017) found that this generation is driven by a “different set of motivations, learning styles, characteristics, skill sets, and social concerns than previous generations” (p. 7). Generation Z turns to YouTube to learn, values certificates along the way to a traditional degree, and uses social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp to contact others (Cilliers, 2017; J. Fong et al., 2019; Lopez et al., 2018; Loveland, 2017; Selingo, 2018). The typical Generation Z student who attends a higher education institution prefers an educational environment where they rely on digital recordings instead of taking notes, demand instant information and communication, and prefer to raise questions online than face-to-face (Cilliers, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018). Additionally, studies have found an increase in mental health concerns and disabilities amongst this student population, which affects their success both inside and outside of the classroom environment (Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018).

Not only is the Generation Z population unique, but it is also large and growing. The Generation Z cohort comprises approximately a quarter of the nation’s population and is currently the largest age group in the United States (*U.S. Population by Generation 2019*, n.d.). This group is also projected to be the first minority-majority generation in the U.S. (Lopez et al., 2018). A large majority of the minority population in the United States is Latinx. Between 2010

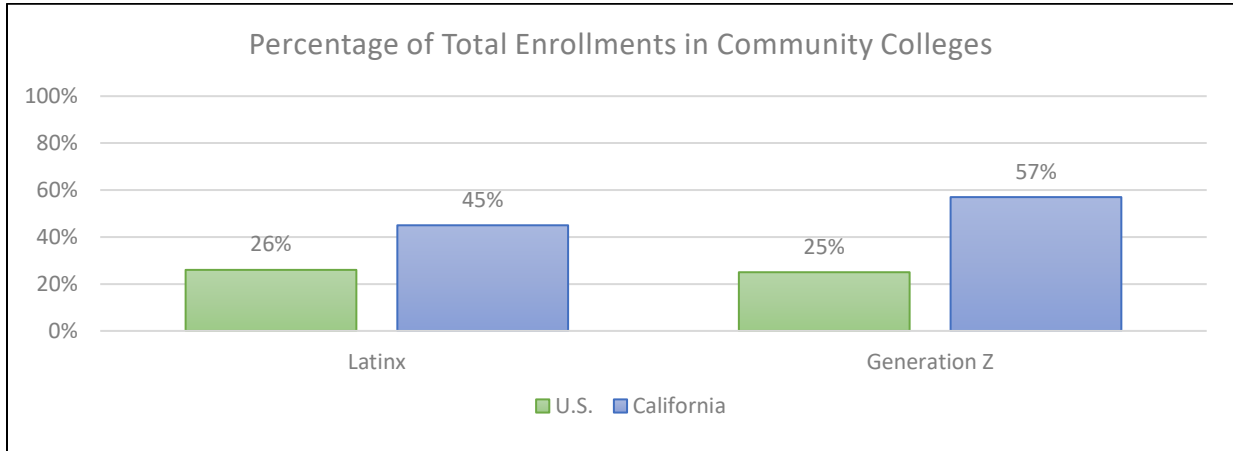
and 2019, the Latinx population increased from 16% to 18% (Noe-Bustamente et al., 2020). In states such as California and Texas, the Latinx population is particularly significant and contains almost 40% of these states' total population (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Currently, the Generation Z Latinx cohort accounts for approximately 25% of the national Generation Z population (Parker & Igielink, 2020). Members of the Generation Z Latinx cohort are now at the age where they are either in college or will be entering higher education institutions for the next decade.

With the anticipated growth of Generation Z Latinx students entering higher education, colleges may want to prepare for this new population of students. Studies have found that Generation Z Latinx students are choosing community colleges as their first choice of post-secondary education (Lundberg et al., 2018; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). According to the Campaign for College Opportunity (2018), policies and practices need to be put into place that “will draw on the strengths of Latinx, eliminate unnecessary barriers, and provide equitable opportunities for Latinx to succeed” (p. 3). In states with high Generation Z Latinx populations, such as California, these practices will impact a large majority of college students.

As shown in Figure 1.1, California surpasses the national average of students who are both Generation Z and Latinx. Generation Z comprises 57% of community college students in California (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-a). This is particularly significant when compared to the 25% of Generation Z community college students nationwide (Snyder et al., 2019). According to the 2020 *State of the System Report* for California community colleges, over 45% of Latinx students attend California community colleges, which is comprised of 116 colleges and is the largest state community college system in the nation (Oakley, 2020).

Figure 1.1.

Comparison of Latinx and Generation Z Community College Enrollments in the U.S. and California



Note. Data in Figure 1.1 is sourced from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month Enrollment component 2018-19 provisional data and the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment componential data (2003 - 2017).

Approximately 70% of all Latinx college students in California choose to attend one of the state’s community colleges when beginning their post-secondary educational paths (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Pew Research reported that California had the second-highest increase in the Latinx population in the nation after Texas (Noe-Bustamente et al., 2020). Most likely, this number of Generation Z Latinx students will continue to increase as data reveals that second-generation Latinx youth are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to attend college than foreign-born Latinx youth, and Generation Z Latinx students are less likely to be immigrants (Parker & Igielink, 2020). As both Generation Z students and

Latinx students impact California community colleges, and most likely will continue to do so for the next several years, community college leadership may need to reexamine the institutional policies, instructional designs, and support services intended to serve the Generation Z Latinx student population.

The need to understand Generation Z Latinx students is pressing for California community college leaders. To meet the future workforce demands in California, the community college system is tasked with implementing policies that will help increase the number of students who achieve their academic goals and enter the workforce (Oakley, 2020). In order to help this cohort of students progress toward their educational goals, instructional designs that leverage newer technologies that Generation Z Latinx students claim support their learning, such as mobile device usage in instruction, may need to be incorporated in the classroom (Beck & Wright, 2019; Mohr & Mohr, 2017). Understanding the barriers to success that Generation Z Latinx students experience in community colleges could help college leaders develop support services that will address educational achievement gaps that Generation Z Latinx students experience, such as placement in remedial Math and English classes, financial struggles, and cultural separation (Chen, 2020; Maldonado, 2019; Oakley, 2020; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). By developing a better understanding of Generation Z Latinx students, California community colleges may be able to improve educational outcomes for this cohort of learners.

Statement of the Problem

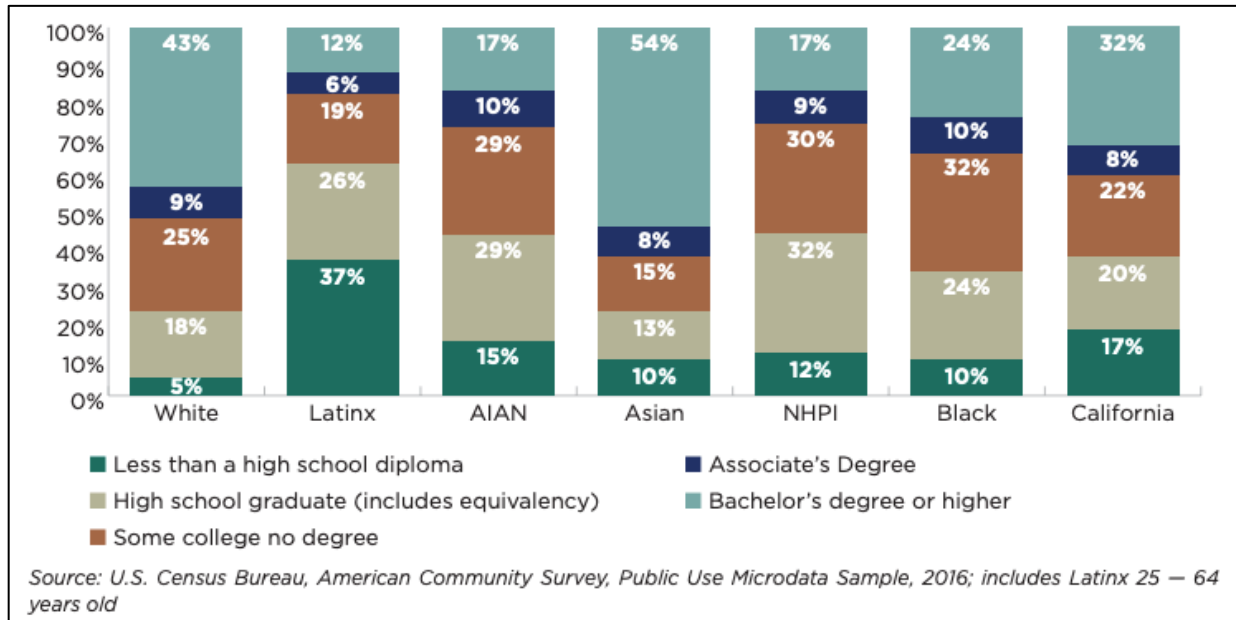
Research indicates that California's educational system is failing at supporting Generation Z Latinx students in meeting their educational goals (Chen, 2020; Hund, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). According to the *State Of Higher Education For*

Latinx In California, Latinx students receive inadequate access to college preparatory curriculum in California high schools and come to college underprepared. While attending a California community college, many of these students experience academic and financial barriers. The same report indicated transfer from community colleges to 4-year colleges or universities is attained by only 13% of Latinx community college students within three to four years compared to 24% of their White peers. This number represented the lowest rate of transfer compared to all other ethnicity groups (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018).

If California community colleges do not remove barriers to Generation Z Latinx student achievement and create effective supports and services necessary for this cohort's academic prosperity, an increasing number of students in this population will not earn a credential. The gap in degree attainment between Latinx and White students is larger in California than in any other state in the nation; and, according to national data from Education Trust (Schak & Nichols, 2018) the gap has widened by two percentage points since 2000. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 1.2, Latinx students have the lowest educational attainment levels in California, and approximately seven out of ten Latinx students in California choose community college as their first post-secondary education choice (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018).

Figure 1.2.

Percent (1.3 million) of California's Educational Attainment by Race



As the new generation of younger community college students enters the California community college system, Generation Z Latinx students have specific needs shaped by their generational and cultural experiences that these institutions may need to address to help them meet their educational goals. The Generation Z Latinx student cohort has generationally specific principles defined by key political events and social trends, as well as culturally-specific identification.

Political events, such as Generation Z's first presidential election in 2016 between Democrat, Hillary Clinton, and Republican, Donald Trump, is one example of a historic event that shapes this generation. Trump won the electoral vote on his platform of cutting taxes, limiting immigration, and "making America great again" (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). This historical election may give context to what many Americans were seeking in their president at the time. During the end of the Trump presidency, social and racial division heightened as

evidenced by historic protests, a spotlight on social justice and identity, and the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 virus on the economic outlet.

Social trends, especially related to technology, also shape this generation. Generation Z is adept at multitasking and tends to spend their free time texting on their phones and communicating online about their attitudes and daily routines using memes or social media platforms such as Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram (Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018). The Generation Z cohort places education as a high priority, however, they are cost-conscious consumers and search for college with a practical mindset attentive to value and relevance (Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018). Selingo (2018) concluded from his research that colleges would need to offer convenient access to career development, tutoring, advising and mental health services to meet the needs of this generation. Seemiller & Grace (2018) found that with movements such as Black Lives Matter, those in Generation Z see people speaking out to address issues of racial discrimination and promote equality. This may lead to college campuses addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in both its hiring practices, policies, and curriculum.

In addition to the characteristics of Generation Z as a whole, research indicates intervention programs are needed to support the specific cultural needs of young Latinx first-year community college students (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017; C. J. Fong et al., 2016). According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2019), in fall 2017, the percentage of students who returned to college at any institution for their second year, persistence rate, was 62% for Latinx students. White and Asian students who entered college at a two-year public institution in fall 2017, had much higher persistence rates than Latinx students of 67% and 73% respectively. Research indicates that Latinx-specific cultural challenges they experience in college may not be currently addressed (Hund, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity,

2018; Tovar, 2015). For example, faculty, academic senate bodies, and college leadership are often not reflective of the Latinx population or student body (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Uncovering and addressing more of the generational and cultural needs that Generation Z Latinx students experience may give a more promising future for this growing population of students.

The Generation Z Latinx student population's growth is significant. Data from the *State of Higher Education for Latinx in California* revealed that in the 2000-01 academic school year, just over 700,000 Latinx students were enrolled in a public California college, comprising about 22% of the state's undergraduates. By 2016-17, over 1.3 million Latinx students were enrolled in public California colleges, comprising nearly 40% of all California's undergraduates. From this population, approximately 70% of these Latinx students attended a California community college (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). If the Latinx population continues to choose California community colleges to progress toward their educational goals, leaders are likely to have an increasing interest in understanding what barriers hinder these students' success and what policies, instructional designs, programs, and support services will empower Generation Z Latinx students to achieve their academic goals.

Background of the Problem

A growing body of research suggests that community colleges may not support Generation Z Latinx students (Bailey et al., 2015; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2017; Navarette et al., 2017). Community college course selections designed with cafeteria-style course selection, frequent student placement into remedial Math and English classes, and college intake and advising structures that do not guide students to paths that lead to careers are all examples of idle structures. In fact, policies such as placement in remedial courses

or ambiguous educational plans may cause students who are underprepared for college, such as many of the Latinx population, to remain longer in college or drop out of school altogether (Bailey et al., 2015; Chen, 2020; Maldonado, 2019). Evidence of this population's inadequate college progression suggests leaders may not currently understand how to support this generation of students who possess characteristics different from the cohorts of students who preceded them.

Generation Z Latinx students are known to have social, emotional, cultural, and academic values that differ from the original population that the community college was initially designed to serve in 1910, when instruction began at California's first community college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019; Galizio, n.d.; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Winter, 1964).

Socially, Generation Z students are known to be closely linked to technology (Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018). Due to the prominent usage of technology in this generation's era, Generation Z students find it easier to connect to technology than it is to connect with other people (Beck & Wright, 2019). Instead of face-to-face social interactions, they prefer to curate their own online "brand," which informs how this cohort sees themselves, how they see others, and how others see them (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). Due to this cohort's experience with instant feedback via online communication through text messages, online likes and dislikes on mobile devices, and socializing on connected platforms such as Twitter and TikTok, the Generation Z population sees technology as an extension of themselves with respect to how they communicate, manage friendships, consume information, and learn. (Loveland, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018). However, this high usage of technology may be one of the reasons this group has unique emotional struggles (Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018).

Social isolation may be just one of the causes why there is a rise in emotional and mental health issues this generation experiences. While issues related to mental health affect all generations, according to Seemiller and Grace (2018) these issues are on the rise with Generation Z youth and college students. Of all mental and emotional health issues facing this generation, anxiety appears to be one of the most prominent mental health challenges for Generation Z youth and young adults. Seemiller and Grace (2018) reported that in 2015, 12% of Generation Z males and 18% of females had received mental health services for anxiety disorders.

In a report by the American Psychological Association (APA), *Stress in America: Generation Z*, more of the Generation Z population surveyed reported the political environment, school shootings, separation and deportation of immigrant and migrant families, are just some of the issues causing this generation emotional struggles (Bethune, 2019). However, these emotional issues that this generation acknowledges as worrisome to them are not the only feature that sets them apart from generations that proceed them.

Generation Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation yet (Lopez et al., 2018; Selingo, 2018). According to the Education Advisory Board (2019), just 52% of Generation Z identify as White, compared with 61% of Millennials; 25% of Generation Z identify as Hispanic, compared with 18% of Millennials. In the same report, it was found that Generation Z is more open to different gender identities and view racial and ethnic diversity more positively than their Millennial predecessors. This report also found that higher education might be more important to Generation Z Latinx students than the same Millennial cohort, as more than half of the Generation Z Latinx population (55%) were enrolled in college, compared with 34% of the Millennial Latinx generation.

As Generation Z Latinx students attend educational institutions across the nation, the impact of services such as YouTube and Khan Academy has changed the way Generation Z prefers to learn (Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018; Twenge & Donnelly, 2016). Attending lectures that are not student-centered, and failing to incorporate technology, project-based learning activities, and soft skills that the workplace expects into the curriculum may also hinder Generation Z student success (Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018). Also, studies have found that particularly Latinx students and students of color have better opportunities for educational success when faculty and senior leaders share the same racial ethnicity as them (Hund, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Hund (2019), found that faculty of color can provide crucial support that these students need. Considering the social, emotional, cultural, and academic traits that Generation Z Latinx students possess, some of the current supports provided by schools and colleges may be outdated and may not offer the sustenance this generation requires to be successful.

The literature that focuses on college experiences of Latinx students, in particular, has become more relevant in the last decade as more Latinx students enter higher education. A survey of this literature revealed that much of this research has included multiple generations of Latinx learners and often focused on nontraditional learners, English language learners, and the overarching social, linguistics, and cultural differences that influence the Latinx student experience (Brandes, 2013; Cejda & Hoover, 2010; C. J. Fong et al., 2016; Smith & Ayers, 2006). While research has been done to examine the uniqueness of Generation Z students in general (Caraballo, 2019; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; J. Fong et al., 2019; Selingo, 2018), little research is available regarding Generation Z Latinx students within the community college context. Minimal research has been conducted on what specific barriers Generation Z Latinx

students face, what support services Generation Z Latinx students might require, or how their needs may be connected to both their ethnicity and their generational cohort. Specific research about the experiences and needs of Latinx students who are part of the Generation Z cohort could help to inform and shape the educational interventions that educators develop that can inform policymakers, administrators, and faculty on how they can better support this population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students to help them meet their educational goals that could include an associate degree, a certificate or credential, or transferring to a four-year institution. By knowing the cultural and generational differences of this population, this study identified the unique barriers, services, and supports that impact their educational goals.

Primary Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study was: How can community colleges help Generation Z Latinx students progress toward their educational goals?

- a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals?
- b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Roberts and Hyatt (2018) stated, a theoretical framework is “a lens through which your research problem is viewed” (p. 105). Two theories shaped and informed this study. First, Strauss and Howe’s (1991) concept of Generational Theory was used as a framework for understanding the majority of incoming community college students born between 1995 and

2010, or Generation Z students. Strauss and Howe (1991) conducted extensive research and developed the theory that generational legacies are formed out of major historical, social, political, and economical events that shape the ways that a generation is perceived. These major events impact the culture within each generation, making the experiences in each generation unique. Strauss and Howe (1991) emphasized that each generation has a personality that distinguishes the generation as a cohesive group with a unique profile:

It is the sum of attributes, a distinctly person-like creation. A generation has collective attitudes about family life, sex roles, institutions, politics, religion, lifestyle, and the future. It can be safe or reckless, calm or aggressive, self-absorbed or outer-driven, generous or selfish, spiritual or secular, interested in culture or interested in politics. In short, it can think, feel, or do anything an individual might think, feel, or do. Between any two generations, as between any two neighbors, such personalities can mesh, clash, be attracted to or repelled by one another. (p. 63)

By using Generational Theory as a theoretical lens, the researcher intended to better understand the perspectives of the population studied, including generalizable traits and needs that may inform the creation of educational inventions to support this generation.

Second, to better understand the underlying factors that influence the educational inequalities experienced by Latinx students in higher education in general, and at the community college specifically, the researcher used Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit), a theory derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT/LatCrit is a lens used to examine the connection between race, racism, and power (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012). As noted by Villalpando (2004), LatCrit is respected by many researchers as an appropriate lens to analyze the experiences of Latinx college students:

Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory offer unique approaches to understanding and meeting the needs of Latinos in higher education. By focusing attention on alleged race-neutral and color-blind practices that in actuality are clearly quite racially biased and exclusionary, CRT and LatCrit can help higher education practitioners develop more responsive and comprehensive approaches that enhance the educational experiences of Latino college students (p. 48).

Villalpando stressed that higher education institutions can use CRT and LatCrit to help serve their Latinx student population when evaluating their progress or when attempting to improve the support services designed to help this marginalized population. Shelton (2018) claimed that LatCrit emphasized multiple aspects of Latinx identity and the role these characteristics play within a racist society, including a specific focus on education. Pérez-Huber (2010) reasoned it is important to recognize that Latinx identity is constructed by intersections of complex factors such as race, gender, and status. To better understand the Latinx population Perez-Huber analyzed the negative perceptions associated with these people of color such as language, immigration status, and culture that differs from the non-Latinx community. CRT and LatCrit theorists admit that educational structures, processes, and discourses operate in contradictory ways with their potential to emancipate and empower (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 314). Using a LatCrit analysis provided a lens to develop the conceptual framework of the intersection of racial and cultural differences that Latinx students may experience.

Both Generational Theory and CRT/LatCrit theories provided grounding for the development of research methods, a lens for conducting the literature review, and a contextual basis for analysis.

Methodology

Through a bounded case study at a single community college where students are predominantly Hispanic, the object of this research was to gather information that led to an explanation of factors that engaged and disengaged this particular cohort. Data for the case study was collected through surveys and semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher analyzed this information to uncover any patterns of responses regarding students' perceptions of their experiences at community college. In addition, the study described the generational and cultural context that these students bring to their college communities.

The researcher used an explanatory mixed method design to develop a case study. Case study research is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context” (Yin, 2009, p. 16). Case studies aim to provide an in-depth understanding of a group or subgroup and can provide practitioners with a greater understanding of how particular systems or situations operate on a group or subgroup. This research centers on the experiences of Generation Z Latinx students who attended a largely Hispanic-serving community college located in a diverse region of Southern California. The research questions focus on identifying how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students to help them meet their educational goals. The study determined what Generation Z Latinx students perceive as being supports or barriers to meeting their educational goals.

Using Yin's (2009) recommendations, data was gathered by surveys and focus group interviews. The study was limited to students currently enrolled at a Hispanic-serving community college located in a diverse region of Southern California who met the following criteria: (a) currently enrolled in at least one credit unit, (b) identified their race or ethnicity as

Hispanic on the college application, and (c) were born in or after 1995. However, any student under the age of 18 was excluded from the study.

Because this research study used the lens of both Generational Theory and LatCrit Theory to center equity, inclusion, and closing achievement gaps for Generation Z Latinx students, the researcher emphasized methods that give voice to students' views. As shown in Table 1.1, a student survey and focus group interviews were used to better understand the perceptions and experiences of this population. Because of the paucity of research chronicling the lived experiences and perspectives of Generation Z Latinx students in community colleges, this case study highlights this population's unique perspectives and perceived needs through focus group interviews of students who met the criteria listed above. Leveraging different sources of data helped the researcher to triangulate data and ensure validity. Further, using a variety of data sources refined data collection tools.

Table 1.1.*Alignment of Problem, Research Questions, Theoretical Lens, and Methodology*

Literature findings	Research questions	Theoretical framework	Methodology
Generation Z Latinx college students have unique characteristics and needs that differ from cohorts that have preceded them.	RQ 1. How can community colleges better serve Generation Z Latinx students progress toward their educational goals?	Generational Theory LatCrit Theory	Focus group interviews, survey
Only 2% of Latinx community college students in California transfer within 2 years.	RQ 1a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals? RQ 1b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?	Generational Theory LatCrit Theory	Focus group interviews, survey
Only 31% of Latinx community college students in California transfer within 6 years to a 4-year university.	RQ 1a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals? RQ 1b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?	Generational Theory LatCrit Theory	Focus group interviews, survey
Latinx students meet their educational goals (e.g., progressing towards degree completion, earning a certificate or transferrable credits, etc.) at a lower level than non-Hispanic White students.	RQ 1a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals? RQ 1b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?	Generational Theory LatCrit Theory	Focus group interviews, survey

Delimitations and Assumptions

Participants in this study were from a medium-sized California community college; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other institutions of higher education in general, or to community colleges specifically, within or outside of California. The study was limited to

students currently enrolled at a largely Hispanic-serving community college located in a diverse region of Southern California who meet the following criteria: (a) enrolled in at least one credit unit, (b) identified their race or ethnicity as Hispanic on the college application, (c) were born in or after 1995, and (d) were 18 years old or older. These factors limited the study to community college students considered members of both Latinx and Generation Z populations and excluded students who are members of other generational cohorts or ethnic groups. Students self-identified as members of the Latinx community, and included persons who are multi-ethnic or multi-racial.

This research assumed that the population sampled may represent the larger population of Generation Z Latinx students across California. Additionally, the responses received from the participants in this study were voluntary and accurately reflected participants' honest opinions and experiences.

Significance of the Study

The 21st century college student population is the most diverse in our nation's history. Generation Z Latinx students are a large portion of that diverse group. The benefits of research on both a generational cohort of students, as well as a specific ethnicity or race within the generation, may lend insight to how community colleges can better serve this unique population. This study could improve the practices in community colleges related to serving Generation Z Latinx students.

The study offers insights into how community college leaders can revise policy, offer support services, and deliver programs that will close the equity gap and lead to progress of students' educational goals and completion of degrees, certificates, or transfers to four-year colleges for this educational cohort. Considering that over one half of all community college students enrolled in 2017-18 were members of this generational cohort at a California

community and will be for the next decade, this student age group is particularly significant (California Community Colleges, n.d.). Equally significant is the fact that in 2017-18, all Latinx students made up nearly half of California community colleges student enrollment, and are more likely to enroll in community colleges than any other racial or ethnic group (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-a).

Findings from this study could be used for institutional policymakers who want to be better informed about the key issues that affect students. Since educational attainment is one of the most effective ways to address socioeconomic inequities related to income and poverty, crime rates, and public health outcomes, it is critical for research to be conducted to uncover what barriers to success Latinx students experience in order for educational leaders to address disparities (Dennison & Swisher, 2019). When educational success begins to significantly increase for the Latinx population, it is likely that local economies will become more robust, tax revenues will rise, and reliance on social safety net programs will fall (Education Trust, 2019). However, if leaders fail to address the barriers to success this population experiences, the gap between the educational attainment of Latinx and non-Latinx populations will continue to widen causing long-term societal, political, and economic repercussions. The research findings could be used when policymakers seek to improve college enrollment and graduation rates. Additionally, findings from this study may offer insights to addressing policy related to instruction, curriculum design, programs, or support services.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge that exists on both the Generation Z and Latinx populations. Since this is the newest generation of students that is now attending community colleges and will continue to populate community colleges for decades to come, the

findings may contribute to those seeking knowledge about what similarities and differences this cohort may hold compared to the generations that preceded them.

Definition of Terms

Academic Programs

Academic programs comprise the core, required, and elective courses that lead to an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT), Associate Degree, or a Certificate of Achievement.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory operates on three basic premises: that racism is pervasive; that racism is permanent; and that racism must be challenged (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012).

Credit Hour

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that approximates one hour of instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week, for 16 weeks (California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), 2015).

First Generation Born

A native-born citizen or resident of a country whose parents are foreign-born.

First Generation College Students

A student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not attended any post-secondary education.

Generational Theory

A theory that states that historical events help to form a generational persona (archetype). (Strauss & Howe, 1991)

The GI Generation

Born between 1901–1924 (Howe & Strauss, 2007)

The Silent Generation

Born between 1925–1942 (Howe & Strauss, 2007)

Baby Boomers

Born between 1943–1960 (Howe & Strauss, 2007)

Generation (Gen) X

Born between 1961–1981 (Howe & Strauss, 2007)

Millennials

Born between 1982–1994 (Howe & Strauss, 2007)

Generation (Gen) Z

Born between 1995–2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2017)

Hispanic

A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (California Department of Education, n.d.-a)

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

An institution of higher education that has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Hispanic at the end of the academic year (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

Latinx

The term Latinx is an inclusive term to refer to people of Hispanic descent. While many other sources use terminology such as Hispanic, Chicano/a, or Latino/a, Latinx is intentionally used to be inclusive of all people who identify with one of these terms. Latinx is a gender-neutral

term that includes men, women, and individuals who do not identify within the gender binary of masculinity and femininity (Salinas & Lozano, 2017, as cited in The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018).

LatCrit

LatCrit is a theory that explains Latinx multidimensional identities as the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012).

Marginalized student populations

Individuals and groups based on multiple aspects of their identity that may include race, gender, gender identity, intellectual or physical ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, sexuality, age, and/or religion (Veenstra, 2011).

Open Access

An open access community college provides education to the majority of students who apply and serves as the main entry point to college for many under-served student populations like Latina/os and African-Americans (University of Southern California, 2016).

Remedial

Also known as developmental education classes, these courses prepare students for college-level courses, most often Math and English, and do not count toward degree requirements.

Title V

A federal program that helps provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, improve conditions for student learning, and improve the use of technology to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. (California Department of Education, n.d.-b).

Transfer

Advancement from a community college to a four-year college or university.

Chapter Summary

Generation Z Latinx students represent a large proportion of students who attend California community colleges. This population of students is a group worth further study given the lack of success these students have in terms of meeting their educational goals. This chapter provided an overview of the study, including the problem and background of the problem being addressed, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. Latinx Critical Theory, LatCrit, a sub-theory of Critical Race Theory pertaining to the historical presence and enduring hiddenness of the Latinx community in the United States, and Generational Theory were introduced as the theoretical lenses that guided this study. An overview of the methodology that was used in this study was addressed including the research assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, as well as the definitions of key terminology found in this study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One of the dissertation presented a background of the problem and the organization of the study. Chapter Two will provide a detailed analysis of the literature that informs this study. The areas of the literature review include what researchers have found regarding student identity, Generational and Critical Race/LatCrit theories, Generation Z and Latinx college students, and community colleges support services. Chapter Three will discuss the research methodology that was used for this study. Chapter Four will describe the analysis of the data collected and key findings from the study. Chapter Five reflects on the findings and offers implications for scholars and professionals, as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Research that includes studies on Generation Z Latinx community college students as a whole is scarce. Boote and Beile (2005) stated, “A thorough, sophisticated literature review is the foundation and inspiration for substantial, useful research” (p. 3). The purpose of this literature review was to summarize existing research to inform the design of this study and interpretation of the findings of this research. The empirical research mentioned in this chapter was obtained through scholarly databases such as ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Sage, Google Scholar, and scholarly journals, books, and other public sources. Preliminary search terms included “Generation Z,” “community college,” “student identity,” “Latinx,” and “Hispanic.” Secondary research included reviewing the works of scholars such as Howe & Strauss (1991) and Stefancic and Delgado (2012). Their works provided crucial information for the topic and understanding the unique historical, social, and emotional experiences related to Generation Z Latinx students.

The design of the literature review includes a review of the theoretical perspectives used as the framework for the study, as well as an examination of the literature broadly related to Generation Z Latinx students in an educational context. The literature reviewed in this chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) student identity, including generational identity, cultural identity, and the intersection of culture, race, and ethnicity; (b) Generation Z community college students, including their learning styles, support services, and career options; (c) Latinx community college students, including their support services, instructional needs, the importance of their cultural identity, and financial factors related to their educational opportunities; and (d) general community college support services and how they impact this community of learners.

Student Identity

Student identity has been defined in various ways. Weidman et al. (2014) defined student identity as a combination of socialization processes that occur and influence significant outcomes. Bowman and Felix (2017) examined the extent to which being a student is important to one's self-image or identity. Scanlon et al. (2007) tied student identity to the practices that the students encounter at college, such as with faculty and peers. A number of researchers note that various factors influence student identity, and therefore, the definition changes (Bowman & Felix, 2017; Kasworm, 2005; Weidman et al., 2014). However, several researchers found that student identity can directly impact student success (Bowman & Felix, 2017; Kasworm, 2005; Scanlon et al., 2007). Across the literature, characteristics such as age, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and culture are all factors that shape a person's identity.

Nationally, community colleges serve a diverse student population of all ages and backgrounds. Race, age, gender, socio-economical background, and culture are some of the factors that contribute to student individuality. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, 57% of community college students identify as female, 45% as White, 26% as Hispanic, 13% as Black, 15% as single parents, 20% as students with disabilities, 29% as the first generation in their family to attend college, and 59% as financial aid recipients (*AACC 2020 Fact Sheet*, 2020). Research on this topic is helpful to understand both the challenges and the opportunities of advancing higher education diversity and inclusion to serve such a diverse population of students (Schak, 2016). One of the emerging factors that educators may also consider when gaining a deeper understanding of students and their needs is the influence of the students' generational cohort.

Generational Identity

In 1991, William Strauss and Neil Howe introduced Generational Theory, also known as the *Fourth Turning* theory, in their landmark book, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (Strauss & Howe, 1991). This work kindled an interest in examining the importance of generational cohort uniqueness on society. Nine years later, the authors revisited their work on Generational Theory and added *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Howe and Strauss developed a theorized generational recurring cycle by looking at past generations to predict future generations' behaviors. Generational Theory forecasts how a generation will mature and suggests society could look to previous generations born under similar circumstances based on historical events to predict what may happen with a current generation. Strauss and Howe (1991) contended generational cohorts had similar perceptions, characteristics, values, and attitudes:

The peer personality of a generation is essentially a caricature of its prototypical member. It is, in its sum of attributes, a distinctly person like creation. A generation has collective attitudes about family life, sex roles, institutions, politics, religion, lifestyle, and the future. It can be safe or reckless, calm or aggressive, self-absorbed or outer-driven, generous or selfish, spiritual or secular, interested in culture or interested in politics. In short, it can think, feel, or do anything an individual might think, feel, or do. Between any two generations, as between any two neighbors, such personalities can mesh, clash, be attracted to or repelled by one another. (p. 63)

Regarding generational differences, the practices of seeking and using information related to generations is helpful for educators.

Howe and Strauss (2007) identified each generation as the collective of all people born over a span of 20 years and identified each generation by name and dates of birth. The generations they described each have defined years of birth and a name associated with that generation, which collectively form the generational constellation.

According to Generational Theory, more than 19 generations have come of age since 1662. Strauss and Howe described these generations based on the historical and societal impacts that surrounded them. However, there has not been a general agreement in the literature with Strauss and Howe's names for each generation. The names and dates of the more recent generations, those since 1901, as designated by Howe and Strauss (2007), are described in Table 2.1, as well as the historical events and defining characteristics that contributed to the naming of each cohort.

Table 2.1.*Generations from 1901-2020*

Generation	Birth Years	Defining Characteristics
GI Generation	1901–1924	The GI Generation was protected by progressive parents and accounted for a high rise in school achievement. In midlife they built up postwar affluent society invented miracle vaccines. Later in life the term “senior citizens” is used to describe them.
The Silent Generation	1925–1942	The Silent Generation grew up during the age of Shirley Temple, the Great Depression, and World War II. This group became rebels and led America’s civil-rights movements, introduced rock and roll, became antiwar leaders, feminists, public-interest lawyers, and the spokespeople for divorce.
The Boom Generation	1943–1960	Also known as Baby Boomers, this generation was influenced by Dr. Spock. They are influenced by optimism perceived in sitcoms such as <i>Father Knows Best</i> . This generation set out to raise their children to become a group who would never follow a Hitler or a Stalin. In terms of societal effects, this generation saw a rise in crime rates, substance abuse, sexual risk, and a plunge in academic achievement and SAT scores. As parents, they were known to hover over their children and later in life reinvented themselves as yuppies and individualists.
Generation X	1961–1981	Generation X grew up as latchkey children, and often distrusted institutions. They lived in a world influenced by the sexual revolution, the rise in divorce rates, and R-rated popular culture. Generation Xers had to circumnavigate the AIDS pandemic, and were introduced to MTV, and a surge in business and military careers. They were the greatest entrepreneurial generation in history and innovated technology resulting in globalization.
Millennial Generation	1982–1994	Millennials arrived after society popularized babies as special and raised them in a hands-off fashion. There was a surge in births of children who were wanted. Child abuse, child safety, and family value books became best sellers. Educational policy, such as “no child left behind,” was prevalent with this generation. The influence of tax cuts and internet access defined the political agenda during the height of the Millennial Generation.
Generation Z	1995–2025	This cohort was originally identified as <i>Homelanders</i> because they stayed at home and engaged in technology. Now more commonly referred to as <i>Generation Z</i> , this generation was born to highly protective style of parenting and nurturing and were the first generation to be born with smartphone technology. Over half of this generation’s parents are Millennials. This cohort of individuals born sometime after 1995 are also known as Gen Zers, Post-Millennials, the Instant Generation, or iGens.

Generational Recurring Cycle

Howe & Strauss' (1991) Generational Theory claimed generations will repeat. Strauss and Howe refer to the repetition of generational traits as the *generational diagonal* which is used to predict each phase of life of one generation based on the fourth generation that preceded it. Beyond classifying the traits of a given cohort, Generational Theory tries to build a framework to predict how current generations emerge from previous ones. Generational theories usually rely on a pendulum idea, suggesting that generations alternate by swinging back and forth along a character axis as they challenge and react to the previous generation's values. Howe and Strauss (2007) theorized a reoccurring cycle of four states: the swing to one side, the coming down to the middle from that side, the upswing to the opposite side, and again the coming back to the middle, but from the opposite side. In their theory, a generational cycle encompasses four generations and two social movements.

However, the literature reveals a drawback to Howe and Strauss' Generational Theory, in that the theory is based on American historical events and may not apply to students whose cultures were not rooted in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), a high percentage of college students have cultural influences outside of the United States. Ethnic minorities may not have experienced American history in the same way as natives. Costanza & Finkelstein (2015) argued against Howe & Strauss' Generational Theory, claiming generations are not monolithic and noting that little solid empirical evidence supports generationally based differences. Nonetheless, most literature on the topic points to the existence of unique features of each generation (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Selingo, 2018; Twenge & Donnelly, 2016). Regardless of where and when each generation

begins and ends, the literature predominately indicates each generation has a unique identity that is influenced and impacted differently than the generations that preceded it.

Cultural Identity

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a perspective used in the United States in many disciplines focused on the systematic and structural inequalities that emerge from racist practices and thought (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Stefancic & Delgado, 2012). CRT became popular after the civil rights movement as Americans sought for a means to understand racism:

Critical race theory sprang up in the 1970s, as a number of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars across the country realized, more or less simultaneously, that the heady advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled and, in many respects, were being rolled back. Realizing that new theories and strategies were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground, early writers, such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, put their minds to the task. (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012, p. 4)

The basic tenet of CRT is that racism is ordinary and prevalent in many facets of society, including law and education. Many policies are set by the rules of Whites (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012). Furthermore, Stefancic and Delgado asserted that CRT posits that even when Whites act on behalf of minorities, Whites are working more in their self-interest than to help minorities.

CRT is a counter to predominant forms of research that ignore oppressive, systemic, and cultural factors that may impact a person's environment and subsequent actions. Instead of discounting these factors, CRT insists racism is an inherent part of modern society by which one can identify inequity (Howard & Navarro, 2016; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). This theory embraces the belief that races are products of social thought and relations. Stefancic and Delgado

(2012) state that race and races are products of social thought and that racism is, “not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012, p. 8).

CRT has been divided into smaller sub-theories such as Latinx Critical Theory or LatCrit. While CRT focuses on the Black and White paradigm, LatCrit has moved to consider other racial groups, predominately the Latinx population (Yosso, 2005). LatCrit is a theoretical lens to understand both the biases and problems that Latinx students face when they enter education. Researchers have studied how race stereotypes are powerful at even an unconscious level and can contribute to how a person identifies (Aragón, 2019; Huber, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Similarly, researchers have found that a critical perspective can be used as an opportunity to reveal problems, strengths, and possibilities for sustainable change (Patton et al., 2016).

Bernal (1998) recognizes CRT and LatCrit are transdisciplinary and draw on many bodies of progressive scholarship to understand and improve the educational experiences of students of color. In Bernal’s examination of the Latinx population, she emphasized the importance of giving voice to their experiences and respecting their lives are different from other non-Latinx populations (Bernal, 1998).

Identity and Intersectionality

Researchers have found that intersectionality, or the examination of the effects of the overlapping identities of race, sex, class, national origin, or sexual orientation can also be a factor when understanding student identity (Howard & Navarro, 2016; Huber, 2010; Stefancic & Delgado, 2012; Veenstra, 2011). Intersectionality suggests that to understand social structures and issues, a perspective that employs an analysis of race, class, gender, and sexuality is necessary. Intersectionality examines how race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual

orientation, when combined, can affect individuality in various settings (Veenstra, 2011). Research indicates that in terms of student identity and intersectionality, one of the most important factors that contribute to the success of Latinx students is for them to attend a college where they see their personal identities present among both their peers and faculty (Budd & Stowers, 2015; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018).

Intersectionality categories of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation can be separate disadvantaging factors (Huber, 2010; Hund, 2019; Stefancic & Delgado, 2012; Veenstra, 2011). Researchers agree when individuals occupy more than one identity, such as both gay and Latinx, or both female and Latinx, there becomes an intersection of recognized sites of oppression (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012). Likewise, Huber (2010) stresses the importance of the ability to examine how multiple forms of oppression can intersect for people of color and how those intersections manifest in daily experiences such as in education. The results of a study by Hund (2019) found when determining student success, intersectionality goes beyond how just the student identifies, but also includes the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and gender of the faculty members. Additionally, Cooper (2011) found in her research that the identity of young Latinx is linked to identity and cultural signals they received from their parents.

Many facets contribute to student identity. Intersections between such factors as race, age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status occur uniquely for each student. When examining the needs of Generation Z Latinx students in a community college, research suggests that "...the sum of the parts of generational identity, cultural identity and intersections related to other factors such as race, gender, socio-economic can account for the multiple ways that students experience life both inside and outside of the educational realm" (Becares & Priest, 2015).

Generation Z Community College Students

Research that includes studies on Generation Z Latinx community college students as a whole is limited. However, research studies have addressed the needs of Generation Z community college students as well as the needs of Latinx community college students separately. To keep uniformity when reporting the findings in this literature analysis, the researcher uses Latinx to include Latin(o), Latin(a), and Hispanic.

A number of researchers agree that generational differences influence the way colleges recruit, admit, counsel, instruct, and support their students (Loveland, 2017; Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018; Selingo, 2018; Twenge & Donnelly, 2016). One significant finding in the literature about the Generation Z cohort is the dramatic and continuing rise in community college enrollment for the less-than-18-year-old students who were enrolled part-time. The number of part-time students under the age of 18 increased from 287,000 in 2001 to more than 773,000 by 2017, an increase of 170% (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019). There is strong evidence that these students are predominantly dual-enrolled in both college and high school classes, and they are influencing the enrollment rates at community colleges.

Key Values for Generation Z

In order to better understand the Generation Z cohort, it is important to understand what this generation finds important in their lives. Across the literature, researchers agree that Generation Z has a unique set of values related to technology, personalization, and outcomes.

Technology

Most researchers agree that Generation Z greatly values technology because it connects them to the outside world and gives them free access to a plethora of information (Parker & Igielink, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018). This generation depends largely on

technology and social media for their interactions with the outside world, often choosing to text or message with friends, even when those friends are physically present in a space with them (Seemiller & Grace, 2018).

Generational theorists Howe and Strauss (2007) predicted that this generation would be “tracked by mobile digital technology, screened by psychological software, and surveilled by entertainment controls that limit their access to anything inappropriate” (p. 51). This prediction has become true, with the increased use of analytics and customized online experiences built into social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Instead of expressing privacy concerns, this cohort has fewer concerns about privacy in this new digital era, as almost all research conducted on the Generation Z population has reported that Generation Z values technology in almost all areas of their lives (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Mohr & Mohr, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018; Twenge & Donnelly, 2016). According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 95% of 13- to 17-year-olds have access to a smartphone, and 97% use at least one of seven major online platforms (Parker & Igielink, 2020). The Generation Z cohort uses technology to socialize with members across the globe, brand themselves on social media platforms, express their opinions on social, political and economic issues, acquire information, shop for products, and engage in future endeavors (Johnson & Sveen, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018). Technology is embedded in this generation’s core values so much that it has become an extension of themselves.

Johnson and Sveen (2020) argued that because technology is an important value of Generation Z students, it is time for colleges to transform, such as moving away from print communication, and adopting to digital platforms. Connecting with this generation through

artificial intelligence, virtual advisors, and chatbots are just a few of the tactics Johnson and Sveen (2020) urge colleges to consider in order to adapt to this cohort of students.

Technology is also enabling student support and guidance in ways previously limited by on-campus staff capacity (Trevino, 2018). Trevino (2018) studied the impact of technology on student advising and found that when institutions utilize technology that leads to more personalized guidance and mentorship, colleges can more efficiently meet this generation's needs. In addition to connecting with Generation Z's value of technology through campus support services, higher education will need to embed technology into learning.

Across the literature, it is agreed that Generation Z expects technology to be incorporated into learning (Hope, 2016; Loveland, 2017; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018). In various studies, Generation Z students reported that learning became enjoyable to them when some mode of technology is merged into their course materials (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018). In a study by Seemiller and Grace (2018), these researchers found that Generation Z students take charge of their own learning through the use of technology, and approximately 90% of Generation Z reported using YouTube to acquire knowledge. Selingo (2018) found that while colleges are improving at helping professors redesign courses to incorporate the latest new technology, he found there was a need for professors to experiment with technology to engage students and improve learning.

Personalization

Not only does Generation Z value technology, but their expectations for personalization are high. Across the literature, it is argued that this generation is not concerned with worrying about how society wants them to be, but is concerned with being unique as they embrace their own and others' personal identities (Beck & Wright, 2019; Gomez et al., 2018; Mohr & Mohr,

2017; Selingo, 2018). Valuing personalization, members of this generation are attentive to inclusion across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. According to Beck and Wright (2019), more than 80% of Generation Z reported having friends whose race differs from theirs.

Generation Z students gravitate to personalization in building not only their identities, but they also expect personalized college experiences (Selingo, 2018). Researchers claim that to appeal to a range of different students from different backgrounds, universities need to segment messaging based on student interests and attitudes by personalizing college for each student (Bailey et al., 2015; Johnson & Sveen, 2020). Bailey et al. (2015) address this next generation of students' needs for personalization by arguing that specific "guided pathways" need to be mapped for each student upon entering post-secondary education. With even higher expectations than previous generations, the Generation Z cohort wants to develop the skills to not simply prepare themselves for the future workforce, but also to create jobs in the future workforce (Johnson & Sveen, 2020; Selingo, 2018).

Generation Z wants personalized and customized learning as well as a push to create learning environments that maximize Generation Z's capacity to learn (Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018). Several researchers and leaders in higher education shared that students now think and process information different from the previous generations, therefore the learning spaces will need to reflect their curriculum preferences and individual learning styles while providing access to a wide variety of media tools (Hodges, 2019; Hope, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018). These environments will need to be accessible, provide abundant information, and couple learning with online platforms, websites, and digitalized learning tools.

Personalization is a value this generation considers important whether it be related to identity, career choices, or educational paths.

Outcomes

This population also values educational and social outcomes. Selingo (2018) found that unlike Millennials and Baby Boomers who chose college amenities such as elaborate housing facilities over services such as tutoring and career counseling in the college selection process, Generation Z wants colleges to help them reach educational goals that will most often lead them to the workforce. “Gen Z students seek financial value and transparency, and they are interested in practical pathways to a good job” (Johnson & Sveen, 2020, p. 39). Selingo (2018) sees Generation Z students as warier about cost than their predecessors. “Their views on personal finance have been shaped not only by the Great Recession but also by seeing their Millennial counterparts take on student debt and struggle in the job market” (p. 19). It is more important than ever for colleges to communicate the value and return on investment of the education they provide.

Research indicates that the college journey for Generation Z is directly connected to their career on the horizon (Bailey et al., 2015; Parker & Igielink, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018). These researchers agree that institutions must adapt to the modern workforce, including offering programs in high-level technology programs such as coding, artificial intelligence, and automation (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018).

Not only does Generation Z value outcomes related to education and careers, in Seemiller and Grace’s (2018) research, they found that 75% of Generation Z want to make a difference for someone, and 74% want to be change agents and believe in making a positive impact in their environment. This generation believes that their efforts will produce effective societal outcomes

(Mohr & Mohr, 2017). While previous generations may have found money as a driving factor when pursuing a career, this new generation of learners is not motivated by validation from money, but that their work makes a difference in the world.

Contrary to what motivates this cohort of students are factors that do not encourage Generation Z students. Seemiller & Grace (2016) found that this generation is not motivated by “public recognition, acceptance from others, competition with others, or the idea that someone will return a favor” (p. 16). Despite being concerned about financial and career stability, Generation Z students are more motivated by relationships and the ability to work toward something they care about than by financial advancement.

Learning Style of Generation

Research related to Generation Z indicates that this generation is disrupting the way learning is occurring in higher education (Hope, 2016; Loveland, 2017; Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018). Generation Z students expect more technology in education (Hope, 2016; Loveland, 2017; Selingo, 2018). The connection between faculty and student generational differences attending a community college was also addressed in a study by Mouchayleh’s (2009) that examined the effects of generational age of faculty on student success. Using a mixed method approach, the research examined the recruitment and retention of community college faculty members, and found significant differences between older and younger generation faculty. Mouchayleh suggested that recruiting younger, ethnically diverse graduate students may help colleges address the social and technological changes of the 21st century. Similarly, Seemiller & Grace (2017) urged college leaders to revisit the practices and philosophies that have been inherent for years and adopt new practices that will enable Generation Z to perform well in society.

Findings by several researchers revealed the need to address Generation Z learning by incorporating group work into classroom lessons, providing opportunities for Generation Z students to interact with the community, offering internship programs for Generation Z students to learn practical skills as well as soft skills on the job, and including more technology-based learning platforms (Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2017; Rivers, 2017; Rosario, 2012) . Similarly, Buzzetto-Hollywood (2018) studied 160 Generation Z students at a historically Black university in Atlanta in a quantitative non-experimental study that found technology played a major role in the students' lives. In this study, a predominant group of minority Generation Z students thought technology would continue to be a focal point of their future. The study confirmed that college computer classes are relevant to Generation Z students, and these learners perceived information security as an important factor for their future. Buzzetto-Hollywood's (2018) study also revealed that Generation Z students desired a wide range of technological support when attending college, and while Generation Z students were confident in searching the web, using software applications, and engaging with social media, they still needed computer programming, cyber security, and computer literacy courses. Also, Hope (2016) informed college leaders that the new generation of students attending college has distinct learning preferences. Hope found Generation Z students prefer learning that is practical and lessons that involved individual work that led to group work and self-reflective learning. The researcher found that this generation did not react positively to informational dumping, group work only, and projects that were not solutions oriented.

The literature suggests students of Generation Z desire a specific learning atmosphere. They choose classroom interactions over lectures, prefer to be closely connected to faculty, and want to acquire knowledge with the independence of what and how they learn. This generation

strives to optimize their time through constructive learning, community involvement and a connection to technology in both their educational and future career paths.

Generation Z Students and Careers

A number of researchers concur Generation Z students will need support to design clear pathways from education to the workforce since this is a high priority for these students (Giunta, 2017; Loveland, 2017; Selingo, 2018). Selingo (2018) stated that career services offering internships, professional mentors, and discipline-related career counselors would be needed in the future to help prepare Generation Z students for the workforce. Selingo (2018) also found that colleges that offer paid co-ops, where institutions become a work college, attracted the Generation Z cohort because, unlike prior generations, Generation Z students are less interested in exploring various majors and interests at college and prefer to take courses that are directly related to their future career, specifically health professions, computer science and engineering, biological science, and sports management (Selingo, 2018). Correspondingly, Mohr & Mohr (2017) found that embedding career preparation, soft skills, and career-relevant assignments in the classroom would be beneficial to promoting professional success after degree or certificate completion for Generation Z students. According to 2019 CCCSE data, student responders who are 24 years and younger, and have been identified as Generation Z in this study, consistently used the on-campus job placement services at a higher rate than non-Generation Z students; however, 26% of Generation Z students reported they were “not at all” or only “somewhat” satisfied with the career counseling services at their community colleges (The Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2020). While this generation seeks assistance with job placement, colleges may need to provide more guidance in helping these students design their educational pathways that will successfully lead them to the workplace.

Support Services for Generation Z in College

Research indicated a revised set of support services will be needed to address the issues and concerns of Generation Z such as parental involvement in their lives, financing a college education, mental health wellbeing, and academic support. Unlike older students, Generation Z students may not have the maturity required to make their way in a new academic environment. In a study by Trevino (2018), she found that it is critical that colleges find ways to engage parents as partners in order to foster Generation Z student academic success. These partnerships might include parental college orientation sessions, or a college website page targeted to disperse information parents can use to inform their young college-aged children. In addition to linking parents to the college experience, financial support may be another support area that this generation requires.

Different from their Millennial forerunners, Generation Z students are very cost-conscious and attempt to mitigate incurring high amounts of debt related to education (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018; Trevino, 2018). Due to experiences in their childhood, such as the 2008 financial crisis and having watched older siblings incur high amounts of student loan responsibility during college, this younger generation is price-conscious, yet committed to education. Selingo (2018) found that colleges may need to expand resources in financial aid counseling and create virtual access to these services.

Furthermore, Selingo's (2018) study found that this generation experienced persistent feelings of depression. Approximately 20% of female and 10% of male students surveyed in his study experienced mental issues related to electronic bullying. Research has also found that other mental health concerns such as anxiety is also growing in this population (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). Selingo (2018) recommended mental health support services be put in place to address the

growing need of mental health and wellness issues this generation experiences since maintaining mental health is an essential part of a successful education.

Latinx Students

A review of the literature regarding the intersection of Generation Z and Latinx reveals a large gap in extant research. Limited information is found in the literature beyond top-line data regarding Generation Z Latinx students. However, by parsing the research on Latinx students as a whole, one can begin to understand how their background, ethnicity, and culture are factors related to their educational achievement.

According to the Pew Research Center (Noe-Bustamente et al., 2020), the Latinx population in the United States reached nearly 60.6 million in 2019 and has accounted for half of the national population growth since 2000. From 2015 to 2019, the U.S. Latinx population grew approximately 2% per year, and 49% of Los Angeles County in California has the largest county Latinx population in the U.S.

Statistics from a number of sources report the increase in Latinx student enrollment in higher education. Research in the *Digest of Education Statistics 2018* for post-secondary education indicated the enrollment rate for Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds rose from 27% in 2007 to 36% in 2017 (Snyder et al., 2019). In 2017, the enrollment rate for White 18 to 24-year-olds was 41%, and the enrollment rate for Black 18- to 24-year-olds was 36%. According to the *Digest of Education Statistics 2018* approximately 3.6 million Latinx students attended a college in the U.S. in 2018 (Snyder et al., 2019). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the Latinx population accounts for approximately 26% of students who attend a community college in the U.S. (*AACC 2020 Fact Sheet*, 2020). In California, in fall 2018, approximately 1.25 million Latinx students were enrolled in a California community college.

National data revealed the Latinx population struggled in education more than other racial groups. Across the nation, approximately 10% of the 16 to 24-year-old Latinx population identify as high school dropouts, compared to 5% of their White peers (Snyder et al., 2019). As of 2017, approximately 69% of Latinx adults over 25 had a high school degree, compared to 93% of their White peers (Snyder et al., 2019).

Such inequities and setbacks follow the Latinx population in higher education. Fry & Parker (2018) predicted the number of Generation Z students who are Latinx would increase. Both qualitative and correlational research studies indicated that the rise in ethnic minorities and the decline in the socioeconomic status of students entering college today would lead to students requiring tutoring and supplemental academic support services to promote their student success (Bailey et al., 2015; Fry & Parker, 2018).

Regarding 18 to 24-year-olds in the United States, approximately 45% of the White population was enrolled in a community college in 2020 compared to 26% of their Latinx peers (AACC 2020 Fact Sheet, 2020). The six-year completion rate for White students was 50% compared to only 37% for Hispanics (Statista, 2021). Also, Latinx students in the United States completed fewer associate degrees than Whites. Whites received roughly 55% of all associate degrees awarded compared to only 2% that were awarded to Latinx students (Snyder et al., 2019). This is in spite of the fact that the high school dropout rate for Latinx students has decreased from 7.2% in 2014 to 5.3% in 2019 (Statista, 2021).

Latinx Students in Community College

Research indicated that Latinx community college students struggle to complete their educational goals for a variety of reasons (Budd & Stowers, 2015, 2015; Gard et al., 2012; Moosai et al., 2011; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). One

challenge the Latinx community college students have when completing their educational goals is lack of family support, which is due to student or parental immigration status, language barriers, or socioeconomic status (Perez, 2018). Also, several studies have found that Latinx students struggle in their academic studies because they often come to community colleges academically underprepared (Bailey et al., 2015; Maldonado, 2019). These students are often put into remedial classes which slows down the timeliness of their goal attainment. In a study that focused on Latinx student transfer success, Budd and Stowers (2015) found “the most important factor is being at a college with large numbers of students like themselves for support” (p. 877). These researchers found that Latinx students often struggle to fit into community college environments, resulting in a struggle to progress toward their educational goals.

Furthermore, research indicated that when Latinx students leave a community college, their chance of ever receiving a baccalaureate degree falls dramatically (Budd & Stowers, 2015). Consistent findings across the literature revealed that student support services, faculty interaction, the impact of family, and financial issues contributed to the Latinx community college students’ performance, specifically timely completion of a degree or transfer to a four-year college or university. These factors are particularly significant due to the high rates of Latinx students attending community college (*AACC 2020 Fact Sheet*, 2020).

Counseling the Latinx Student

Student services, predominately counseling services, is indicated in the literature as a key factor to Latinx student achievement in community college. Research reveals that from the entry point into college, counselors play a key role for Latinx students (Maldonado, 2019). Maldonado found racial disparities between Latinx and White student placement into remedial Math and English classes and found that sometimes counselors were apt to place students of color into

remedial classes. However, most research indicated that counseling was particularly helpful and had a positive influence on the academic success of Latinx students (Gard et al., 2012; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018; Tovar, 2015).

Gard et al. (2012) found when community colleges supported students by hosting opportunities where Latinx students could interact with representatives from a 4-year university, the transfer became easier to accomplish. Likewise, Tovar's (2015) study found "a significant impact of support programs and institutional agents' interactions with Latino/a community college students' success and intention to persist to degree completion" (p. 62). This study further noted the role of counseling was imperative to Latinx community college students' success because counseling sessions offer Latinx students the opportunity to have discussions about career issues. Tovar concluded that the more interactions that Latinx students had with student support services and counseling the better their outcomes were.

Faculty and the Latinx Student

Instructional faculty also play a vital role in Latinx student success at community colleges (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020; Hund, 2019; Lundberg et al., 2018; Moosai et al., 2011; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018; Tovar, 2015). Alcantar & Hernandez (2020) found faculty interaction has the potential to create a sense of belonging, increase persistence, and add to academic success. However, Lundberg et al. (2018) found differences between Latinx male and female student interactions with faculty. Latinx male students benefitted from receiving prompt feedback from instructional faculty, while Latinx women benefitted more from discussing assignments and grades.

Moosai et al. (2011) suggested full-time faculty generally add to Latinx student success more than part-time faculty do. In this study of a 2005 cohort, as the percentage of part-time

faculty increased, institutional graduation rates decreased. For every 1% increase in part-time faculty the institutional graduation rates decreased by almost 1%. The researchers argue this decrease in graduation rates indicates there is a higher rate of contact with full-time faculty, and students attain a higher level of learning gains with more faculty contact. Likewise, Tovar (2015) found that the higher the number of times a student had an interaction with a faculty member outside of class time, the higher the grade point average they achieved.

Latinx student success was also found to be tied to student identification with faculty (Mouchayleh, 2009; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). The Campaign for Community Opportunity (2018) indicated a need for a rise in Latinx faculty: “When students see themselves in the faculty they feel more engaged, supported, and are more likely to succeed” (p. 25). Similarly, Zerquera et al. (2018) found that intersectional issues related to race in Latinx students are correlated to Latinx student educational performance.

Family and the Latinx Student

Research indicates the impact of the family also plays a significant role in community college Latinx student success (Carales, 2020; Razfar & Simon, 2011; Saenz et al., 2016; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Somoza (2010) explained the impact of family on Latinx culture.

The family represents a paramount medium wherein traditional Latino values may be expressed. *Familismo* is a concept that emphasizes loyalty and respect for one's particular family—both nuclear and extended. Within the dynamics of his or her family, a Latino or Latina generally adopts a cooperative rather than a competitive attitude. Deep respect, affection, and support emerge as primary values in the context of the extended network of

family and friends. Additionally, Latinos use the term familismo to identify the strong collectivistic value system (p. 13).

Several studies found parents' educational background was a predictor of Latinx student success (Somoza, 2010; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Particularly, the fathers' educational level had a positive influence on Latinx students' grade point averages, while overall family support had an influence on student persistence (Somoza, 2010). Similarly, a study by Saenz et al. (2016) indicated that for Latinx males attending community college, family members acted as an important role in supporting student success. Also, the number of family generations that were born in the United States has an impact on Latinx student success. The higher number of family generations born in the United States, the better the outcomes were for those students (Somoza, 2010).

Language spoken in the home is another significant factor related to Latinx outcomes at a community college (Carales, 2020; Razfar & Simon, 2011). Carales (2020) found that the language spoken at home was connected to student outcomes. If English was the primary language spoken at home, students were more likely to have better educational gains. Razfar's (2011) research indicated that lower student achievement among Latinx students may be attributed to their educational path. This study found immigrant English as a Second Language (ESL) students in U.S. community colleges who took credit ESL classes were less likely to transfer or complete a degree because the Latinx ESL students often attended community college to seek career-related or basic skills related education. Transfer and degree attainment were not primary goals.

Finances and the Latinx Student

Research also noted Latinx community college students face issues financing their education (Moosai et al., 2011; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Many Latinx students live in high poverty, and financial struggles may be one barrier keeping them from progressing toward educational goals (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). According to the 2019 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) cohort, 51% of Latinx students said a lack of finances would cause them to withdraw from class or from their college, in comparison to 45% of all students who responded to the survey (The Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2020). Additionally, in the same 2019 CCCSE report, approximately 75% of Latinx students reported that they had obtained financial aid advising. Approximately 70% were somewhat or very satisfied with the financial advising services, and approximately 72% reported these services were very important to them.

Financial aid programs are beneficial to Latinx students and especially make college more accessible for undocumented Latinx students (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019). In Ngo and Astudillo's (2019) study, student graduation rates increased when financial support was provided by college institutional funds. However, Moosai et al. (2011) found that when students received federal grant aid, the overall graduation rates slightly fell for students attending a community college. Other research indicated that when looking at the Latinx student population even small financial contributions, such as fee waivers provided by community colleges, made education more affordable and substantially increased student outcomes (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019). While the research indicated that financial support can be beneficial to Latinx students' educational

performance, in most cases evidence indicated community college financial advising sessions with Latinx students also was an important factor.

Community College Student Support Services

Support programs such as counseling, mental health services, disabled student assistance, academic tutoring, financial aid services, and transfer support are collectively the types of services referred to as student support services. Some support services may also include mentoring, financial advisement, E-advisement, experiential learning opportunity, and service learning. However, the core support services often are academic counseling and personal advising, assessment, orientation, tutoring, financial aid advisement, transfer advisement, and disability services (Alexander, 2004; Carales, 2020). This literature review focuses on core support services.

History and Background of Student Support Services

In community colleges, student services emerged during the 1960s, and today are vital to the operation of the well-functioning community college (Vaughan, 1982). Shifting its emphasis from student discipline, control, and housekeeping, student services has changed substantially (Vaughan, 1982). Vaughan found that, over time, the community college population shifted and expanded to include more women, military veterans, and minorities. With this shift, a more holistic approach to supporting students became increasingly necessary. He noted one of the most significant changes to college success was the adoption of Student Support Services (SSS). TRIO Student Support Services, a federally funded program established to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants, offers a wide range of services dedicated to ensuring greater success rates of first-generation and low-income students (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). The first reauthorization of The Higher Education Act in 1968 prompted the

TRIO label that continues today. TRIO refers to the three programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Service. These programs were designed to assist eligible students to begin and complete a post-secondary education. Chaney et al. (1997) wrote, "Student Support Services (SSS) is one of the largest federal TRIO programs designed to help disadvantaged students stay in and complete college" (p. 197).

Demographics continue to shift in terms of age, race, and socioeconomic status, which demands increased attention to the design and implementation of student support services (Bailey et al., 2015). According to Bailey et al. (2015), more discrepancies in educational goal attainment may occur if colleges do not focus efforts on improving services that will increase outcomes of marginalized students. Bailey et al. (2015) suggested that colleges find a way to provide comprehensive support to marginalized student groups or it will become highly possible that the equity gap will continue to expand. Comparable to academic classes and extracurricular activities, researchers agree varied methods of support are needed to assist students to meet their educational goals while attending a community college (Chaney et al., 1997; Cooper, 2011; O'Meara, 2012; M. C. Sanchez, 2010). The review of the literature reveals these services have changed in sync with the shift in student populations as student support services have been designed and redesigned to meet the changing needs of students. Bailey et al. (2015) contended that improving student supports and the overall student experience is necessary, and targeted reforms must be implemented as part of a broader institutional restructuring. Researchers McClenney et al. (2012) claim support services are greatly needed, given that many community college students acknowledge that they quickly fall behind within the first few weeks of their first academic term.

Support Services for California Community College Students

To serve as a safety net for students who experience barriers while attending college, California community colleges offer a plethora of programs to help support student learning. Some of the historic programs mentioned above continue to support Generation Z Latinx students. Other services were put into place as a result of Title V, “a federal program to increase capacity to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, improve conditions for student learning, and improve [the] use of technology to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students” (California Department of Education, n.d.-b). As early as 1969, the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) began as a California state-funded program designed to assist students with economic, linguistic, and educational challenges defined in Title V to enroll and succeed in higher education (Santa Barbara City College, n.d.). In 1976, California's Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS) was enacted to help bridge the gap between the California community colleges and students with disabilities (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2018).

In 1998, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program began to provide cash assistance to very low-income families and assisted eligible parents to attend community college to meet the requirement which is to make progress toward finding and keeping a job (Public Policy Institute of California, n.d.). In 2007, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office partnered with the Foster Youth Success Initiative to give support to foster youth to navigate the challenging transition into adulthood as they navigate the higher education system. Academic support, skill training to help with independent living, and accessing financial aid are just a few examples of how the Foster Youth Success Initiative supports students meet their educational goals (*CAFYES - NextUp*, 2018).

In 2012, the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012 (California Education Code, Sections 78210- 78219) established the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) to increase California community college student access and success by providing matriculation services, including orientation, assessment and placement, counseling, and other educational planning services for at-risk students (CCCCO, n.d.-c, p. 1). This new state legislation required that all federally funded community colleges offer support to both credit and non-credit students in the areas of orientation, assessment and placement, educational planning, counseling, advising and follow-up services. According to the California Chancellor's Office (n.d.-b), the services were designed to be a part of matriculation, which encompasses all of the support that helps students navigate and feel at home in the college environment and reach their educational goals.

Currently, California community colleges continue to offer some of the same traditional support services that were offered in the past. However, to meet the changing needs of modern-day students, community colleges across the state have begun to offer new and innovative support services to meet changing student needs. These current support programs include such services as the California Promise Program, Health and Mental Health Services, Veteran Resource Centers, and services for undocumented students (CCCCO, n.d.-c).

The *California Promise Program* was funded for \$46 million beginning in 2018-19 and is a continuation of a grant that began in 2016 (CCCCO, n.d.-c). This program aims to reduce or waive community college students' tuition to create equitable opportunities for lower income students and improve student performance. While some community colleges use the *Promise Program* to waive enrollment fees, some use the funding to cover the cost of childcare, transportation, books, or other educational expenses

Since 2011, California community colleges have focused on providing students with health and mental services (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-b). These provisions include health assessments and treatment, psychological counseling, and crisis intervention, first aid and community partnerships. Community college partnerships have given rise to meeting the needs of students who experience food or housing insecurities by providing a growing number of on-campus food pantries and housing options for students (CCCCO, 2019).

In July 2018, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office awarded a \$2M innovation grant to Irvine Valley College to coordinate activities in community colleges throughout the state to increase the success of student Veteran programs. The goal of this grant was to enhance support services through Veteran's Resource Centers (Montgomery et al., 2019). Veteran Resource Centers support students who have served or are serving in the U.S. military.

California community colleges offer robust services and protections to approximately 70,000 undocumented students who are protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-e). According to the CCCCCO, these services include immigration legal services for students and their families and exemption for these students from paying out-of-state tuition fees. In addition to the services, they provided for undocumented students, the CCCCCO also reports that national and state support services to help meet the growing needs of the Latinx population are also available.

Support Services for Latinx Students

Support services aimed to assist Latinx students are available both nationally and locally. Many community colleges across the nation tailor support programs to meet the specific needs of their Latinx students. Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are eligible for five-year funding awards from the U.S. Department of Education through Title V, which is funding to help

colleges with more than 25% Hispanic students align resources to strengthen Latinx student recruitment, retention, and transfer (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b). In addition, the U.S. Department of Education offers funding through the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) for community college students who are either migrant workers or children of seasonal or migrant workers (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Models for Supporting Latinx Community College Students

Excelencia in Education, an organization that accelerates Latino student success, recognizes community colleges across the nation that design programs to support Latinx achievement and target the issues related to the Latinx student experience in post-secondary education (Excelencia in Education, n.d.). Examples of such recognized programs include *Mi Casa Es Su Casa* at Lone Star College System in Houston, Texas. The program connects Latinx community college students to the local campus community. *Mi Casa Es Su Casa* has led to an increase in transfer rates and degrees of Hispanic students on campus (Excelencia in Education, n.d.). Another example of a support program at a community college recognized by Excelencia in Education offers Latinx students support in Science Technology Education and Math (STEM). The Math Tutorial Lab at Santa Barbara Community College provides underrepresented community college students individualized culturally relevant tutoring for all Math and Statistics courses through faculty and peer tutoring (Excelencia In Education, n.d.).

Another organization that encourages support for the California Latinx population is the *Puente Project*. The *Puente Project* provides three areas of support service to students: teaching, counseling, and mentoring (CCCCO, n.d.). The *Puente Project* trains school and college staff members to assist Latinx students to meet their educational goals (CCCCO, n.d.-b). Research on the effectiveness of the *Puente Project* revealed that this project acts as a positive factor on

student achievement and heightens Latinx cultural awareness (J. A. Sanchez, 2018). The *Puente Project* also supports Latinx students with English learning opportunities. These language support courses use multicultural literature and provide instruction on critical thinking and language arts skills to help Latinx students with writing (Center for Educational Partnerships & University of California, Berkeley, n.d.).

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) is a national organization that supports the distinct needs of Latinx students. Founded in 1985, HACU was created to assist HSIs better support Latinx students. HACU recognized that “...more consideration, resources, and creativity need to be invested in Hispanic higher education to tackle the demographic and economic changes of the coming century” (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012, p. 158). Researchers argue that HSIs remain the most underfunded category of institutions serving one of the neediest ethnic populations in America (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Organizations such as HACU focus their efforts on improving legislation and government support, promoting strategic alliances and partnerships, and developing academic cooperation programs for the Latinx community.

Community College Engagement and Assessment of Services

Community colleges are being asked to rise to new challenges. These institutions must respond to the increasing expectations for quality, performance, and accountability set by governing boards, state and federal governments, accrediting organizations, and the public. Key among those expectations is that community colleges should emphasize assessments to help in the improvement of student retention and student learning (Bailey et al., 2015). One national organization that assesses student learning is the Center for Community Colleges Student Engagement (CCCSE). This organization uses a detailed survey to gauge community college

students' insights on the quality, performance, and student learning experience at community colleges across the United States.

The survey, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), provides colleges with students' response data in several areas of their community college experience such as student support services, instruction, and barriers to completion (Center for Community College Student Engagement, n.d.-a). McClenney et al. (2007)) argued that CCSSE was built on the belief that “student engagement—involvement, integration, and quality of effort in social and academic collegiate experiences—is significantly related to student learning, persistence, and academic attainment” (p. 2). Over the years, this study has continuously found that community college student engagement matters and is directly tied to student academic performance, persistence, and degree and certificate attainment.

Summary

The research about student identity reveals that students' lived experiences and membership in a particular cultural, racial, or generational group influences the ways they learn, the attitudes and beliefs they hold about education and learning, and the types of support that pertain to their needs. Numerous studies suggest Generation Z students respond to instruction that includes technology and opportunities for cooperation, and less lecture and rote learning.

The research indicates that Latinx students benefit from faculty members with similar ethnicities as them, families that support them, and financial policies that reduce their educational costs. Research further suggests that how colleges are currently serving students may not be optimal to meet the goals of this generation of learners. The literature reveals that Latinx students are falling behind other groups of learners in student achievement and persistence, despite being the fastest-growing population of college students. While California community

colleges have provided support services to both non-traditional and traditional students for decades, a need to reexamine these services so they better meet the needs in areas where the current students are struggling is crucial.

Although several studies have been completed on the characteristics of Generation Z students, and numerous studies have examined Latinx students, few studies have examined both. Limited published research collectively captures how community colleges can best serve Generation Z Latinx students to help them meet their educational goals. Nevertheless, researchers urged community colleges to redesign their institutions in order to increase the completion rates of the next generation of community college students (Bailey et al., 2015). There remains a gap in the literature that addresses Generation Z Latinx characteristics and their barriers to community college academic success. Thus, this study intended to address the gaps associated with understanding the Generation Z Latinx students by reviewing collected and analyzed relevant data that was collected and analyzed, as described in Chapter Three, which details the research design and methodology.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Chapter three describes the methods used in this research study. First, the problem that this research addresses and the research questions are identified. Next, the methods section defines (a) Generational Theory and LatCrit Theory as the two theoretical frameworks that provided the foundation of the research design; (b) the design approach for conducting the research; (c) the parameters for the selection of the study's population and sample; (d) the data management process, including documenting data collection, analysis, and quality assurance; and (e) ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter three concludes with a summary of the key points of the research methods.

Reflexivity

Researchers enter a study with the influences of their individual experiences, beliefs, and assumptions. Lochmiller & Lester (2017) stated that “reflexivity is the process of intentionally accounting for your assumptions, biases, experiences and identities that may impact any aspect of your research” (p. 95). This practice is used as a tool to help make meaning within the research. The researcher is currently a Professor and Chair of English as a Second Language in a noncredit program at a California community college. Both Generation Z Latinx students and Latinx students who belonged to previous generations have been a part of the researcher's professional life. Most of the students the researcher has taught over the past eleven years are Latinx adults. At the college, the researcher develops programs, plans course schedules, handles student issues, instructs English language courses, and advises students on matters related to their educational paths. Because most of the students the researcher oversees in the workplace are immigrants to the U.S., the researcher has noticed there is a lack of knowledge this population has about the U.S. educational system. The researcher deems the Latinx population

faces barriers non-Latinx students do not face. The researcher has often tried to clarify the U.S. educational system and direct the students to where helpful resources related to their educational goals can be found. The researcher's interest in the Latinx student population comes from this close professional relationship with the Latinx student population. However, none of the participants in this study were students of the researcher because in this study a criterion to participate was to be enrolled in credit courses. Also, the researcher is a parent of Generation Z children, and the connection to those born between 1995 and 2010 is personal. The researcher believes that this generation is unique and quite different than former generations. Therefore, the interest in this study on Generation Z Latinx students stems from both the researcher's professional and personal experiences.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to identify how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students to help them meet their educational goals. By knowing the cultural and generational differences of this population, this study identifies the unique barriers, services, and supports that impact their educational goals.

Primary Research Questions

The primary research questions that guided this study were: How can community colleges help Generation Z Latinx students progress toward their educational goals?

a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals?

b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?

Theoretical Lenses

The theoretical framework is the foundation for a research study (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory (1991) was used to provide a framework to understand the generational persona that has emerged with Generation Z students. A generational perspective is one tool for understanding students. Exploring the factors that shape a generation's peer personality and discerning identifying characteristics of that personality was a lens to answer the research questions. Additionally, Critical Race Theory and LatCrit are useful in making explicit the underlying disparities and different challenges that Latinx students face in higher education, particularly at the community college (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012).

Using both Generational Theory and CRT LatCrit Theory helped to describe how the intersectionality of both the time in history a person is born and one's race can influence a population's experiences. Generational Theory and CRT LatCrit Theory served as a foundation for designing the survey questions and the interview protocol. Generational Theory informed the design and implementation of the survey in the following ways: first, the survey was deployed digitally, as researchers indicate that Generation Z members prefer to interact with information in a digital format. Second, Generational Theory guided the formulation of survey and focus group questions, seeking to confirm or disconfirm the traits and preferences of this population as described in a number of studies (Hodges, 2019; Selingo, 2018). LatCrit Theory informed the study in a number of ways as well, including the design of the research questions targeting barriers and supports specific to this marginalized group. The assumptions made clear by LatCrit include that race and ethnicity influence the way that Latinx students experience the higher education system and may experience race-based challenges that differ from other ethnic or racial groups. The researcher took additional steps to ensure that students' voices were central to

address the research questions. Additionally, these theoretical lenses were used when analyzing the data by mapping the themes found in the focus groups discussions and survey question responses.

Research Design

The researcher used an explanatory sequential mixed method design to develop a case study. The process of collecting and evaluating data included three phases: (1) surveying students; (2) conducting focus group interviews with students; and (3) analyzing survey and focus group data.

Yin (2009) states that a case study method allows researchers the chance to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. A case study is practical when the researcher is interested in “understanding the individual parts, the relationships among them and how they function as a whole” (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 104). Additionally, Lochmiller and Lester state a case study is “an approach to qualitative research in which a practitioner-scholar focuses on a detailed study of one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 289). To distinguish the characteristics of Generation Z Latinx students at a community college, the boundaries of the case, a single community college, gave the researcher an appropriate setting for the study. The researcher used an explanatory sequential mixed method design to answer the research questions.

Explanatory sequential designs are described as a two-stage design in which quantitative data is used as the basis on which to build and explain the findings with qualitative data. The quantitative data informs the qualitative data selection process, which strengthens a project (Almalki, 2016). Almalki (2016) emphasizes that this design is commonly used in education. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) state that when using a mixed methods design, the researcher can

interpret the quantitative data to inform the qualitative data design. The benefit to using an explanatory sequential mixed method design is that this model “enables the focus of the research to be maintained, as a result of one set of data building upon the other” (Almalki, 2016, p. 292). In this manner, “qualitative data can be quantitized or quantitative data can be qualitized to extract meaning from the data sets that might otherwise be hidden” (Mills et al., 2010, p. 2). By using a mixed-method design, which incorporated surveys and focus group interviews, the researcher attempted to give voice to Generation Z Latinx community college students in developing the case study.

The rationale for selecting an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was that the goal of the researcher was to understand the factors that are leading to the low performance levels of Generation Z Latinx students at a community college and how to improve success rates for these students. Studies on Generation Z college students have focused mainly on the collective population of Generation Z college students (Hope, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Selingo, 2018). Studies that help educators better understand Latinx college students of any age also have been conducted by many researchers (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020; Budd & Stowers, 2015; Lundberg et al., 2018; Saenz et al., 2016; The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018; Tovar, 2015). However, to obtain meaningful data and report expressive findings on the intersectionality of the characteristics that influence Generation Z Latinx students in post-secondary education, the research used multiple sources of data. According to Mills et al. (2010), “the combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques enhances legitimation as the qualitative analyses involve descriptive precision and the quantitative analyses ensure numerical precision” (p. 2).

This study was designed to incorporate students' voices to access information that may influence how community colleges can best serve this population. The first phase of the study consisted of quantitative data collection through the use of a survey. The survey focused on uncovering any perceived barriers to success or areas for which the Generation Z Latinx students said they might need to increase their academic success. Surveys are practical when a researcher aims to collect data about views, experiences, or perceptions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the data collected from the surveys in a meaningful way. Lochmiller & Lester (2017) stated that descriptive analysis is effective to understand how the data is dispersed in terms of frequencies such as the mean, the median, and the mode of distribution. The descriptive analysis also helped the researcher determine the measures of variability and how the data results were distributed amongst the responses.

The next phase of the study consisted of collecting qualitative data through focus group interviews to get a deeper understanding of the initial quantitative results. The focus group interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol, which Lochmiller and Lester (2017) note "provides the practitioner-scholar with more flexibility" (p. 151). This approach allows for the researcher to ask structured questions to guide the interview and introduce the topics in a more conversational way to explore various emerging themes. In addition, this structure allows the researcher to ask additional open-ended clarifying questions when necessary (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

The researcher considered the fact that all of the study participants will be 26 years of age or younger as a factor when deciding to use focus group interviews. According to Lochmiller and Lester (2017) "focus groups can be especially useful when conducting qualitative research with

students, as it is often less intimidating for a young student to participate in a focus group with their peers rather than being interviewed one-on-one by a researcher” (p. 151). To delve deep into how community colleges can best serve Generation Z Latinx students to meet their educational goals, the researcher explored the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about this population’s experiences at a community college by asking open-ended questions in the focus groups.

The final phase of the study involved the integration of the quantitative and qualitative data to address the study’s research questions. Using triangulation of the data, the researcher was able to build a clearer understanding of Generation Z Latinx community college students.

Study Setting

The researcher chose to conduct the study at a community college because a large number of Generation Z Latinx students choose to attend community college as their first post-secondary education choice (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). The study setting was also selected because it is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), designated as an institution “eligible to receive supplemental federal funding to expand educational opportunities for, and improve the attainment of, Hispanic students” (U.S. Department of Education (USDE), n.d.). To achieve HSI status from the USDE, at least 25% of the enrolled full-time equivalent students at the institution must identify as Hispanic. Garcia (2019) emphasized the U.S. postsecondary system is stratified by race, and it is helpful to understand HSIs from a systems perspective. Calderón Galdeano et al. (2012) stated that HSIs represent a “unique opportunity to educate and graduate Latino students through efficient strategies that address the attainment gaps...” (p. 157).

Also, the researcher chose this particular HSI community college as the case site to increase the chance of engaging a large sample of the Generation Z Latinx population. In fall

2020, the Latinx population encompassed 74% of the total 10,680 student population at the community college site where the study was conducted. Of the total 74% Latinx student population, 75% were born in or after 1995, which categorizes them as Generation Z Latinx students. All participants who were included in this study were born in or after 1995 and self-identified on the California Community College (CCC) application as Hispanic, so all were deemed as members of Generation Z Latinx student cohort.

In March 2020, the study setting site was closed due to ongoing health and safety restrictions related to COVID-19. Since the closure of the campus, the majority of classes for the Spring 2021 semester (the period of time in which data collection was conducted) continued to be held online. At the time the study was conducted, the college was still using synchronous and asynchronous online instruction only to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19. The researcher anticipated students would likely discuss the influence the unique experience the school closure and the pandemic had on their progress toward meeting their educational goals.

Participants

The quantitative part of this research study used purposeful sampling to identify participants from the larger population of Generation Z Latinx students at the selected community college. Purposeful sampling is used when the researcher selects participants based on a distinct criteria (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Participants in this study were students currently enrolled in at least one credit course at the selected California community college. To capture the experiences of both Generation Z and Latinx students, the researcher limited participants to students between the ages of 18 and 26. According to Howe and Strauss (2007), the more we know about peer personalities, the better educators can target delivery of effective educational programs. The requirement that the student be between 18 and 26 years old was to

ensure the sample group was inclusive of the Generation Z cohort. There are other Generation Z Latinx students dually enrolled in both high school and at the community college, but for the purpose of this study, they were not included in the sample.

To unearth the experiences of these students related to their Latinx identity, the researcher limited the study to students who self-identified as Hispanic on the survey. The researcher's intent was to examine the data and capture the insights of a cohort of Generation Z Latinx students, which was reflected in this sampling from the participants in this study. The sampling strategies for identifying the participants for the focus group phase of the study are described in the -qualitative data collection section that follows.

The researcher conducted a series of focus groups that were organized by the number of credits students have completed. The rationale behind this is that the researcher anticipated that students who have attended community college for a longer period of time may have different experiences related to student support services, instruction, and programs than students who have recently entered college or have completed only a few credit units. Separate focus groups were conducted for students who had completed 0–12 units or are just entering post-secondary education, those who completed 13–24 units or making progress through their community college courses, and those who completed 25 or more units and are close to graduation. Focus group interviews allowed the researcher to attain insight into the perceptions and experiences of this population. Furthermore, separating the focus groups into students' academic attainment levels helped the researcher have distinguishing discussions related to the research questions.

According to the enrollment data at the target college, there were approximately 6,000 Generation Z Latinx students who were eligible for the study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study targeted the entire population of participants with the understanding that participation

may be negatively impacted by the college's temporary closure. Based on this number, the researcher had a goal to receive at least 10% of the administered surveys returned complete and acceptable for analysis. Further, the researcher set a goal of 30 participants who completed an acceptable survey to agree to participate in a focus group. These numbers parallel the research from Creswell and Creswell (2018) that states a rough estimate of sample size for qualitative educational research studies to be at least 30 participants.

Instrumentation

Quantitative Instrument: Surveys

The quantitative data collection instrument was a mobile-friendly electronic survey formatted on SurveyMonkey. The first part of the survey consisted of a set of demographic questions, however, information obtained from the participants did not make it possible to identify the subjects. Item types included rating, ranking, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. The researcher used several 5-star rating questions, as star ratings and reviews have become increasingly utilized for expressing opinions especially during the lifetime of Generation Z. Demographic questions, such as gender, race, and year of birth, were useful in targeting the desired population and addressing research questions related to the characteristics of Generation Z Latinx students. Also, this added value to the descriptive statistics by identifying the patterns, trends, and frequencies of this population.

The second part of the survey included questions adapted from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a national survey administered annually at a sample of community colleges by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) (Appendix A). The CCSSE is a "well-established tool that helps institutions focus on good educational practice and identify areas in which they can improve their programs and services for

students.” (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, n.d.). The survey included questions related to the Support Services section of the CCCSE instrument to identify what supports and services Generation Z Latinx students report best assisted them in achieving their educational goals.

The researcher’s survey also contained questions on a range of topics related to Generation Z Latinx students’ community college experiences, such as their experience with counseling, faculty, preferred instructional modalities, and academic support services. These questions connected to specific elements of Generation Z Latinx students’ characteristics, barriers to reaching their academic goals, and what Generation Z Latinx students report assisted them in reaching their academic goals. The remainder of survey questions were developed specifically for this study in alignment with LatCrit Theory. Questions were related to such areas as instruction, support services used, and environmental supports (i.e., family and community). Responses to these questions were used to identify if specific barriers, opportunities, and aspects of Generation Z Latinx students helped or hindered their educational progress. The survey questions were aligned to the overarching research questions and were informed by findings from the literature related to Generation Z Latinx experiences and by the study’s theoretical models.

Lochmiller & Lester (2017) encourage researchers to pilot a study to determine whether the wording of particular questions prompts the types of responses that the researcher anticipated, as well as to determine logistical aspects of the survey such as length of time to complete the survey (p. 136). The survey was piloted first with volunteer members of the researcher’s professional network, with a focus on obtaining feedback from individuals who had taken at least one credit-bearing course at a community college. Piloting helped to ensure that the

wording, organization, and structure of the questions supported answering the research questions for this study. Because of the availability of these individuals, some did not meet the generational requirement or ethnicity requirement but were under the age of 30 at the time that the instrument was piloted. The researcher first emailed the volunteers a link to the survey questions and followed up with individuals of the pilot group to elicit feedback on the survey. The responses were used to refine the survey instrument before the study participants were surveyed.

After the initial survey was deployed, the information gathered helped to inform the development of the semi-structured focus group protocol, including focus group interview questions and probing follow-up questions. The final draft of the focus group protocol was sent to the same volunteers for piloting, and the feedback provided shaped the final semi-structured focus group protocol that was used in the study. By piloting the survey and focus group questions, the researcher was able to determine whether the presentation, wording, organization, and structure of the survey instrument and focus group protocol made sense to the participants.

Qualitative Instrument: Focus Group Interviews

The focus group protocol used a semi-structured interview script that contained both close-ended and open-ended questions regarding the characteristics of Generation Z Latinx students, barriers the students have experienced in reaching their educational goals, and the support services Generation Z Latinx students believe they need to help them meet their educational goals. The focus group questions were developed after analyzing the results from the student survey. The researcher set focus group norms for questioning and allowed the students to use the chat feature in Zoom to answer questions at any time. Additionally, the students were allowed to turn off their Zoom cameras, which displays a live video of their face, if they wished

to have more anonymity. The transcripts generated by the focus group recordings were coded to further protect the identities of participants.

Data Collection and Data Sources

Quantitative Data Collection

Surveys are appropriate to measure quantifiable data such as individuals' views, experiences, or perceptions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Using SurveyMonkey, an online survey link was designed to connect with students in the designated study population to invite them to share demographic information and responses about their experiences in community college. Using the institution's student information system to obtain student email addresses, the researcher sent an e-mail invitation to invite a segmented sample of all students to participate in the survey. In order to achieve participant recruiting success in completing the survey, a drawing was held for two \$100 Amazon gift cards. Participants needed to fully complete the survey to be entered into the drawing.

The original segmented sample group consisted of approximately 2600 students enrolled in the spring 2021 semester at the college. However, after filtering out students under 18 or older than 26 and students who did not have an email address on file, the total sample size was reduced to 1,468 student email addresses. The survey was available for responses for approximately three weeks, and the researcher sent out weekly reminders to students inviting and reminding them to complete the survey. From the 1,468 emails sent, 33% were unopened, 9% of the email addresses were invalid, 2% opted out, and 56% were opened. Despite four reminder messages being sent to recipients, a 5% response rate or 69 surveys was yielded from the school's data system email list.

To promote more participation, the researcher contacted faculty members who were advisors of select student clubs targeted to Generation Z Latinx students and requested faculty to share the weblink to the survey with the club members. Also, the researcher requested faculty members across the curriculum to post the SurveyMonkey weblink and email invitation on the announcement page of Canvas, the school's learning management system. An additional 206 surveys were returned from this effort. The researcher could not identify how many students received the Canvas announcement, nor the number of club members who were sent the survey weblink, because faculty did not provide this information.

In total, 275 surveys were returned which included the surveys accessed from the institution's email list, an invitation to student club members, or the Canvas course announcement page. The researcher filtered these 275 completed surveys by eliminating any surveys where the respondent's birth year was not 1995 or after, or where the respondent did not mark their ethnicity as Hispanic as at least one of the ethnicities selected, or where the respondent did not indicate in how many credit units they were enrolled. If a student selected Other on the race demographic question and identified as a member of the Latin American community on the ethnicity demographic question, the responses were included.

The collected data was stored online in a password-protected SurveyMonkey account and analyzed using SurveyMonkey's administrative level analytical tools. Only the principal researcher had access to personally identifiable information provided by the students.

Qualitative Data Collection

After collecting and reviewing the survey data, the researcher conducted qualitative focus group interviews. The end of the survey prompted all survey respondents to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group interview. A total of 37 students

expressed willingness to be part of a focus group, including nine respondents who had completed 0-12 units, seven who completed 13–24 units, and 21 who completed 25 or more units; all were invited to a focus group interview.

The researcher created focus groups based on the number of completed units to understand if time spent in college affects the experience and needs of this population. Grouping the participants by the number of completed academic units helped add structure and focus to the focus groups, allowing the researcher to probe experiences specific to the location of a student on their educational path. Three groups were formed by using the criteria outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1.

Focus Group Criteria

Group	Number of units completed
1	0–12 Academic units
2	13–24 Academic units
3	25 or more Academic units

From these groups, four students participated in the 0–12-unit group, five students participated in the 13–24-unit group, and three students participated in the 25 or more-unit focus group, for a total of twelve participants. Due to student availability, Focus Group 2 and Focus Group 3 included students who had not completed the designated number of units for that grouping.

The qualitative data collection instrument was a semi-structured focus group protocol. The focus group interviews were conducted via the internet due to the closure of the case study site. The interviews were recorded using Zoom. All precautions were taken to secure the Zoom web conferencing room to ensure the integrity of the data collected, the anonymity of

participants, and the quality of the recording. The audio digital files from the interview were recorded and transcribed and the researcher coded the data by identifying themes.

An incentive to join the focus group interviews was awarded to all participants in consideration for their time invested. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that a valuable strategy for a researcher to use when designing a study that the researcher thinks may be difficult to get participation in is to offer a small financial incentive to the participants. A \$10 Starbucks, gas card, or In-N-Out Burger gift card was initially offered to respondents. However, in order to motivate students to participate, the researcher increased the gift card amounts to \$20. Upon completion of the focus group interviews, the researcher mailed the gift cards to the participants.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the study was analyzed in several ways. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) state that “data triangulation in case study research is possible through the use of varied data sources, with evidence being gathered across time and space” (p. 106). The mixed data sources the researcher used in this study included the use of surveys and focus group interviews.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data was analyzed by software available at the administrative level of SurveyMonkey which allowed the researcher to perform a descriptive analysis. The researcher analyzed the data to identify the characteristics of this student population, what they reported as barriers to their educational advancement, what support services this population uses, and the Generation Z Latinx sample population’s overall community college experience. Next, the researcher presented the data by use of tables as adjuncts to the discussion of the data and presented the interpretation and meaning of the data as it relates to the research questions. This analysis allowed the researcher to understand the prevalence and frequency of specific responses,

demographic characteristics, and experiences. The information was then filtered, disaggregated, and grouped in ways that supported identifying key themes and categories that emerged from the responses.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The focus group interview data was thoughtfully analyzed. First, the researcher used Zoom to transcribe the focus group discussions. Using an inductive approach, the focus group interview responses were coded, and codes were grouped into categories to establish themes. According to Creswell (2018), coding involves identifying terms "...based in the actual language of the participant (called an in vivo term)" (p. 199). By analyzing the data in a methodical way, the researcher aimed to uncover deeper insights and produce clearly articulated, defensible findings backed by rigorous evidence.

The researcher looked for similar information in the focus groups as in the survey responses, however, the researcher discovered richer responses with more narrative to better understand the students' reasoning of why they answered the questions in a particular manner. Also, the focus group interviews gave the researcher a chance to explore the narratives that exemplify or challenge the experiences that Generation Z Latinx students reported in the survey responses.

Data Quality

The researcher used thoughtful steps to increase the quality of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative Data Quality

Content validity of the survey was attained by using the CCSSE survey as a credible tool to model the student survey. The CCSSE instrument has been administered to community

colleges since 2001, and the survey provides critical information on student engagement, a key indicator of student learning. Like the CCSSE, the Survey Monkey survey asked questions that assessed institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated with student learning and student outcomes (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, n.d.). Creswell and Creswell state that the reliability of a survey is defined as the instrument's ability to provide consistent results (2018). According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement (n.d.), the CCSSE survey is a reliable and credible instrument to use in research:

The CCSSE survey serves a number of purposes, including:

- A benchmarking instrument—establishing national norms on educational practice and performance by community and technical colleges.
- A diagnostic tool—identifying areas in which a college can enhance students' educational experiences.
- A monitoring device—documenting and improving institutional effectiveness over time. (Paragraph 3)

Using the CCCSE survey as a model to write the research questions, the researcher's aim was to validate the accuracy of the findings in order to establish trustworthiness.

Qualitative Data Quality

Additionally, the researcher conducted member checking during the interviews by paraphrasing, summarizing, and asking the participants to confirm whether the interpretations were correct. Creswell (2018) claims that member checking is an integral part of creating trustworthiness in qualitative research because an ongoing dialogue between the "informant's reality and meanings will ensure the true value of the data" (p. 199). Additionally, the study used

triangulation among the survey data and the semi-structured interview responses. Using the various data sources supported the findings and provided congruence.

Ethical Considerations

This study conformed to the ethical considerations of respect for persons, balancing risk and benefits, and fair recruitment (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Participants were informed of their rights to exercise their autonomy by providing informed written consent to participate in the survey and verbal consent to participate in the focus group, which emphasized their participation was completely voluntary and allowed them to choose to participate or to withdraw at any point. The consent form was placed as the first page of the survey. For focus group interview participants, a consent form was read to them by the researcher before beginning the interviews. The consent form included acceptance to record the Zoom session and the recording did not begin until all participants agreed to the recording.

The participants were asked for demographic information on the survey, and for the winner of the drawing to be notified, participants were asked for their name, phone number, and email address. Participants were informed they could skip that optional question if they chose not to participate in the drawing. The phone number information for participants who chose to participate in the drawing was kept in a locked file. Participants were assured of confidentiality and were informed that as the data is tabulated, their information would be coded with a pseudonym and was not related to their phone number or any other student identifiable number. Also, for the qualitative data, any time participants' quotes were noted, pseudonyms were used to indicate individual responses.

Limitations

The study was limited to virtual data collection. Due to the closure of the college related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus group interviews were held via Zoom, an online conference system. Furthermore, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some students may have discontinued participation in the study because of issues unique to the pandemic, such as health issues or economic constraints.

The data the researcher collected was from one community college that is an HSI in a diverse region of Southern California, and the results may not generalize to different geographic locations of the country.

Summary

Generation Z Latinx students are an important population at community colleges. As this new wave of learners enters college, understanding this generation's unique characteristics including their learning styles, barriers to success they experience at community college, and support services they report may assist them in reaching their educational goals, is important for them to attain their academic goals. Consequently, the central phenomenon of this research was pursued by selecting Generation Z Latinx students attending a California community college. The objective of this study was to determine how community colleges can best serve Generation Z Latinx students.

The study provided an understanding of the characteristics of this population unique to both their age and ethnicity, what educational barriers they report at community college, and what services they report may help them. A research approach was selected to ensure the best compatibility to the questions asked. To answer the research questions, a qualitative case study explanatory mixed method strategy was the most appropriate approach.

This chapter addressed reflexivity, and then presented the methods this study used to answer the research questions including: (a) Generational Theory and LatCrit Theory as the two theoretical frameworks that provided the foundation of the research design; (b) the design approach for conducting the research; (c) the parameters for the selection of the study's population and sample; (d) the data management process, including documenting data collection, analysis, and quality assurance; and (e) ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Next, Chapter 4 will present the findings of this research.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings

The purpose of the study was to identify how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students to help them meet their educational goals. By knowing the cultural and generational differences of this population, this study was designed to uncover the unique barriers, services, and supports that impact Generation Z Latinx's educational goals. Toward that aim, a mixed methodology approach was used. Survey responses provided the quantitative aspect of this study and the qualitative section of this research utilized semi-structured interviews. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How can community colleges help Generation Z Latinx students progress toward their educational goals?

a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals?

b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?

In this chapter, quantitative findings are shared first as the data collected provided insight on the research questions and aided the researcher to develop the questions for the focus group interviews.

Segmented Groups

The students' responses from both the surveys and the focus groups were reviewed in the aggregate and segmented into three groups: (1) *Newcomers*, (2) *Midpathers*, and (3) *Seasoned*. Students who indicated completion of 0–12 course credit units were identified as *Newcomers*, those who completed 13–24 course credit units were identified as *Midpathers*, and students who completed 25 or more course credit units were labeled *Seasoned*. Additionally, three separate

focus group interviews were conducted based on whether the focus group participants were *Newcomers, Midpathers, or Seasoned*.

Distribution and Response

The survey questionnaire was created in SurveyMonkey, a secure electronic survey platform. A unique hyperlink was created to access the electronic survey. A segmented email list was provided from the college's Institutional Research Department for students who were currently enrolled in at least one credit unit. An initial email (Appendix B) was sent on May 7, 2021, to 1,468 students inviting them to participate in the study and included an anonymous link to access the survey. The survey remained open for three weeks and was closed on May 31, 2021. Out of the 1,468 students who were sent the electronic survey, 69 responses were gathered.

In addition to the segmented student email list, an email invitation with the survey weblink was sent to students who were members of the college's Latinx student organization. Also, the email with the SurveyMonkey link was posted by faculty across the curriculum on their course announcement pages in Canvas, the learning management system (LMS) used at the sample college, inviting students to participate in the survey. In total, 206 responses were collected from the Latinx club members and students who accessed the survey through the email or a Canvas course announcement page. The exact number of students who received the email announcement from the Latinx club advisor or through the Canvas announcement pages is unknown to the researcher.

The researcher screened the returned surveys by examining the date of birth, ethnicity, and number of credits enrolled. Any student surveys that did not meet the criteria of being (a) currently enrolled in at least one course credit unit, (b) identified by race or ethnicity on the survey as Hispanic, (c) born in or after 1995, and (d) 18 years of age or older were eliminated.

The researcher recoded some responses in the Ethnicity data where *Other* was selected but the students wrote in other answers that categorized their ethnicity as Latinx. Fourteen students skipped the question on birth year and eight students skipped the question of ethnicity, so these surveys were not used in the analysis. Additionally, eight students did not report the number of course credit units enrolled so these surveys were not included in the analysis because they could not be categorized as a *Newcomer*, *Midpath*, or *Seasoned* student. In total, the number of surveys analyzed for this study, based on the above screening and criteria, was 172.

Validity and Reliability of Instrumentation

The survey was created by adapting the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), which has been administered to community college students since 2001 (Center for Community College Student Engagement, n.d.-b). A copy of the CCSSE is presented in Appendix A. As noted in Chapter 3, the CCSSE instrument has demonstrated high validity and reliability (Center for Community College Student Engagement, n.d.-a). Modifications were made to the CCSSE instrument to eliminate questions that did not apply to this study's purpose; original questions were also added to specifically address the study's research questions.

Descriptive Demographics

Survey participants were asked several demographic questions; the results are presented in Table 4.1. The demographics included gender, ethnicity, number of course credit units completed, enrollment status, employment status, and financial aid status. Generation Z Latinx students in this study were more likely to be female (68.6%), identify their race as solely Hispanic (82.0%), enrolled full-time (72.7%), be unemployed (45.5%), and receive financial aid (73.3%).

Table 4.1.*Descriptive Demographics of the Study Sample*

Characteristics	N=172	%
Gender		
Female	118	68.6
Male	52	30.2
Non-binary	2	1.2
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latinx only	141	82.0
Hispanic/Latinx and White	24	14.0
Hispanic/Latinx and Asian	3	1.7
Hispanic/Latinx and Black	2	1.2
Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian	1	0.6
Hispanic/Latinx and unidentified ethnicity	1	0.6
Course credit completed		
25+ credits	86	50.0
13-24 credits	46	26.7
0-12 credits	40	23.3
Enrollment status		
Full-time	125	72.7
Part-time	45	26.2
Did not answer	2	1.2
Employment status		
Unemployed	78	45.4
Part-time	52	30.2
Full-time	41	23.8
Out of the work force	1	0.6
Financial aid		
Received grants/scholarships	126	73.3
Did not receive financial help	35	20.3
Received loans	10	5.8
Did not answer	1	0.6

To ensure confidentiality, the 12 focus group participants were given pseudonyms to be used when quoted throughout the research results. Table 4.2 provides a breakdown of the Generation Z Latinx pseudonyms used and demographic characteristics of each of the students including gender, full-time or part-time enrollment, major area of study, and employment status. All students except one, Seasoned Jose, were supported financially through grants. The

Generation Z Latinx students who participated in the focus groups were representative of the students who answered the survey.

Table 4.2.

Descriptive Demographics of Generation Z Latinx Student Focus Group Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Academic status	Area of study	Employment status
<i>Newcomers</i>				
Elena	Female	Full-time	Social Sciences	Unemployed
Julia	Female	Full-time	Social Sciences	Unemployed
Sofia	Female	Full-time	Social Sciences	Part-time
Stella	Female	Full-time	Social Sciences	Unemployed
Ximena	Female	Full-time	Business	Unemployed
<i>Midpathers</i>				
Camila	Female	Full-time	Communication and Humanities	Part-time
David	Male	Part-time	Social Sciences	Part-time
Mariana	Female	Full-time	Health Science	Unemployed
Cory	Non-binary	Part-time	Social Sciences	Part-time
<i>Seasoned</i>				
Ana	Female	Full-time	Business	Part-time
Jose	Male	Full-time	Social Sciences	Part-time
Monica	Female	Full-time	Social Sciences	Full-time

Quantitative Research Findings

The quantitative findings presented below provide data used to analyze how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students.

Who are Generation Z Latinx Community College Students?

In order to better understand the unique characteristics of Generation Z Latinx students, several survey questions were asked regarding their choices related to identity, interests, preferences, and motivators. When students were asked what part of their identity was important to them, they were able to select more than one choice and enter additional factors in a short response. The most popular aspect that students identified as important to their identity was

Culture (78.5%). Other popular responses were Ethnicity (59.3%), Gender (51.7%), and Age (43.0%) as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3.

Valued Aspects of Generation Z Latinx Students' Identity

Aspect of identity	N=172	%
Culture	135	78.5
Ethnicity	102	59.3
Gender	89	51.7
Age	74	43.0
Nationality	65	37.8
Race	61	35.5

As shown in Table 4.4, four themes emerged when students were asked what interests are important to them outside of academics. These themes included Hobbies and Entertainment (69.0%), which included activities such as reading, traveling, crafting, cooking, and gaming; Health and Fitness (39.1%), which included working out at the gym, hiking, walking, and playing sports; Lifestyle (14.2%), which included engaging with online influencers, fashion and makeup, food culture, anime culture and listening to podcasts; and Family and Community (9.9%), which included activities such as attending church and spending time with family and friends.

Table 4.4.

Interests that Generation Z Latinx Students Find Important

Interests	N=161	%
Hobbies and entertainment	112	69.0
Health and fitness	63	39.1
Lifestyle	23	14.2
Family and community	16	9.9

When Generation Z Latinx students were asked what influenced their decision to attend their community college, students reported that they were attracted to community colleges specifically because of affordability (80.5%) and location (72.0%). Additional factors included degrees offered (38.4%), parent recommendation (28.7%), or teacher/counselor recommendation (26.8%). Other responses included exploring options, not being able to attend elsewhere, and delaying university due to COVID-19. Table 4.5 summarizes the factors that influenced the students' decisions to attend community college.

Table 4.5.

Factors that Influenced Generation Z Latinx Students to Attend Their Community College

Factors	N=164	%
Affordability	132	80.5
Location	118	72.0
Degree/program(s) offered	63	38.4
Parent recommendation	47	28.7
Teacher/counselor recommendation	44	26.8
Friend recommendation	14	8.5
Other	6	3.7
Athletic program(s)	4	2.4

Generation Z Latinx students overwhelmingly reported their goal or reason they attended community college was to transfer to a 4-year college or university (76.0%). Also, approximately half of the students (52.6%) reported their goal was to obtain an associate degree. A small number of students chose the “other” option for this question, and those responses included self-improvement, learning job-related skills, and earning a certificate. Table 4.6 summarizes the reasons or goals Generation Z Latinx students attend community college.

Table 4.6.*Generation Z Latinx Students' Reasons or Goals for Attending Community College*

Reason or goals	N=171	%
Transfer to a 4-year college or university	130	76.0
Obtain an associate degree	90	52.6
Self-improvement or personal enjoyment	33	19.3
Learn or update job-related skills	19	11.1
Complete a certificate program	18	10.5
Change careers	10	5.9
Other	4	2.3

When Generation Z Latinx students were asked the open-ended question related to what social, political, economic, or personal events occurred that influenced their decision to attend the community college, students reported that both personal (78.7%) and economical (36.2%) events were prevalent reasons, while historical reasons (9.4%) also played a role in some students' decision to attend a community college. Table 4.7 summarizes the response to the question regarding events that influenced Generation Z Latinx students to choose community college.

Table 4.7.*Events That Influenced Z Latinx Students' Decision to Attend Community College*

Event type	N=127	%
Personal	100	78.7
Economic	46	36.2
Historical	12	9.4
Political	1	0.8
Social	1	0.8

The themes that emerged under personal reasons for attending community college were family, being a first-generation student, and career attainment. One student indicated her personal reason related to family.

[My] personal [reason] would be not leaving my little brother and single mother alone.

It's tough because [my mother] works all day and since a young age my brother has been my responsibility. I didn't think it was time to leave them. It worries me.

Other students stated their personal reasons for choosing community college were because their parents were unable to go to college and they wanted to make a better life for themselves. One student summarized how attending college would help to make their life better.

I am a first-generation student and so I was very influenced from a young age to go to school and make a name for myself because if I chose not to, life would be more difficult in the sense that I would barely be making ends meet because I would be working a minimum wage paying job as opposed to an actual career where I can make more money. The need for stability is so embedded into my life personally from my dad's struggles growing up and so it is crucial for me to decrease that struggle or make it nonexistent in my future.

Two themes that emerged under financial reasons for attending community college were the lower cost of community college and the financial support programs offered at the college. The free tuition program, Pledge, offers two free years of tuition and fees for students who have graduated from a local high school. The Pledge program was an attraction to many students, as well as the opportunity to reside at home while taking college courses locally. One student stated the financial reason for their decision. "My family is one income and I have 2 younger siblings, one who is also doing dual-enrollment...because of this, I needed to spend time earning money in order to transfer."

The theme that emerged under historical reasons or events for attending college was the COVID-19 pandemic. Students reported the feasibility of attending college away from home was not practical.

I would not want to pay double just for online...with COVID-19 it seemed better to stay close to home since classes were available online... [Because of] COVID I didn't want to spend money if I'm not going to be able to go to school my first year so that's another reason why I chose to stay.

In addition to the reasons or goals for attending community college, Generation Z Latinx students were asked to choose their top three long-term goals after completing community college from a list of six choices; students had the option to add others. Students' top three long-term goal selections were to have a satisfying career (76.4%), to finish a 4-year degree (56.5%), and to support their family (55.9%). Students also indicated an interest in making a difference in the world (39.8%), finding a job (39.1%), or starting their own business (24.2%). Students' long-term goals are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8.

Generation Z Latinx Students' Long-term Goals

Long-term Goal	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Total	
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>N=161</i>	%
Have a satisfying career	40	42	41	123	76.4
Finish a 4-year degree	38	31	22	91	56.5
Support my family	24	18	48	90	55.9
Make a difference in the world	10	29	25	64	39.8
Get a job	31	21	11	63	39.1
Own my own business	12	14	13	39	24.2

Generation Z Latinx students were also asked what or who inspires them to work towards their goals. Students were asked to choose their top three choices from a list of 10 choices provided and students could share additional inspirations. Table 4.9 displays that these students are most inspired by their parents (88.3%), self (76.1%), or friends (35.6%). Less frequently cited inspiration came from their spouse or significant other (22.1%), their spiritual beliefs (19.6%), and their teachers (14.1%). A summary of responses is provided in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9.

Generation Z Latinx Students' Inspiration to Work Towards Their Goals

Inspiration	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Total Responses	
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>N=163</i>	%
Parents	61	44	39	144	88.3
Self	52	46	26	124	76.1
Friends	14	21	23	58	35.6
Spouse/Significant other	11	14	11	36	22.1
Spiritual Beliefs	8	7	17	32	19.6
Teachers	2	9	12	23	14.1
Celebrities	4	6	5	15	9.2
Your children	1	4	3	8	4.9
Social Media Influencers	1	1	5	7	4.3
Work Supervisor/Boss	0	1	5	6	3.7

In terms of a declared major of study, Generation Z Latinx students listed a variety of disciplines as their selected major at their community college. One-third of Generation Z Latinx students reported their top majors as Social Sciences (33.5%); Health Sciences (17.1%) and Business (12.4%) followed. The majority of students that selected *Other* were majors already offered at the college such as Spanish, American Sign Language, and Criminal Justice. Table 4.10 summarizes students' responses.

Table 4.10.*Generation Z Latinx Students' Majors*

Major	N=170	%
Social Sciences	58	33.5
Health Science	29	17.1
Business	21	12.4
Other	15	8.8
Sciences	13	7.7
Arts, Music, or Theater	12	7.1
Community Services	12	7.1
Computer Science	7	4.1
Career Technical Education	4	2.4

Several questions were asked using a 5-star scale, which is a familiar method to express opinions used by this generation. On this 5-star scale, 1 indicated least preferred and 5 indicated most preferred instructional modality. When indicating class modality preference, Generation Z Latinx students favor either asynchronous online classes or fully face-to-face classes over hybrid or synchronous online classes as reported in Table 4.11. Although the mean scores are identical when looking at online (asynchronous) and face-to-face course preferences, 45.7% of students gave online (asynchronous) a top 5-star rating, and 42.9% gave face-to-face classes a top 5-star rating representing a slight preference for online (asynchronous) course modality.

Table 4.11.*Preferred Instructional Modality*

Course format	N	M	SD	5-Star %
Online (asynchronous)	164	3.83	1.31	45.7
Face-to-face	161	3.83	1.30	42.9
Hybrid	159	3.33	1.41	27.0
Online (synchronous)	164	3.04	1.35	17.1

A variety of questions were presented on the survey related to how much Generation Z Latinx students liked certain assignments and activities from professors. Again, students were

asked to rate their professors using the familiar 5-star scale for various activities or interactions with their professors. The scale ranged from *did not like the activity at all* to *really liked the activity*, and included an option to select “not applicable.” Responses that indicated “not applicable” were removed from the analysis. As shown in Table 4.12, Generation Z Latinx students really liked it when professors showed them resources available to them that are helpful (61.2%), created activities and assignments relevant to the workforce (55.7%), communicated with them in a mode they preferred such as text, WhatsApp, or preferred email (50.3%), encouraged student contact with students from different economic, social, racial, or ethnic backgrounds (48.2%), used engaging technology (39.6%), and created activities and assignments that involve community-based projects (33.6%).

Table 4.12.

Professor Activities

How much do you like when your professor...	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>5-Star %</i>
Shows me resources that are available to me that support my success in the class.	163	4.34	0.96	61.2
Creates activities and assignments that are relevant to the workplace.	164	4.20	1.10	55.7
Uses a mode of communication with me (text, WhatsApp, preferred email, etc.) that I prefer.	164	4.10	1.14	50.3
Encourage contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.	162	3.89	1.30	48.2
Uses engaging technology for learning.	162	3.93	1.12	39.6
Creates student activities and assignments that involve community-based projects (service-learning activities).	164	3.56	1.35	33.6

Less significant for Generation Z Latinx students was the ethnicity of their counselors and professors. When students were asked how important it is that their counselors or professors were the same ethnicity as them, the mean was 2.31 and 2.18 respectively, on a 5-star scale

where 1 is not important and 5 is very important. Only 6.8% of Generation Z Latinx students indicated that it was very important for their counselors or professors to be the same ethnicity as them, as shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13.

Importance of Same Ethnicity

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>5-Star %</i>
Counselor ethnicity	162	2.31	1.34	6.8
Professor ethnicity	162	2.18	1.32	6.8

Supports and Services

Students were asked several survey questions in order to discover what supports and services Generation Z Latinx students reported needing to make progress toward their educational goals. The survey questions covered the onboarding processes, counselors, professors, academic supports, career development support, health resources, and student clubs and organizations.

In terms of onboarding, students were asked how helpful their counselor was in putting together their educational plans. The mean rating was 2.57 with a standard deviation of 0.86, based on a 3-point scale where 1 is not helpful, 2 is somewhat helpful and 3 is very helpful, as shown in Table 4.14. Half of the students rated their experience with their counselor in terms of designing an educational plan and selecting classes as very helpful (50.3%).

Table 4.14.

Generation Z Latinx Students' Rating of Counselor Help

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Top rating %</i>
Helpfulness of counselor	149	2.57	0.86	50.3

When asked about the registration process and selecting a major, the majority of students found both of these processes to be easy. Students reported the registration process somewhat easy (46.5%) or very easy (26.5%) and choosing a major somewhat easy (40.9%) or very easy (22.2%) on a 4-point scale where 1 is very difficult; 2 is somewhat difficult; 3 is somewhat easy, and 4 is very easy, as shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15.
Ease of Registration and Selecting a Program or Major

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% Somewhat easy	% Very easy
Ease of registration	170	2.95	0.81	46.5	26.5
Ease of selecting a program or major	166	2.92	0.85	40.9	22.2

Students were asked to identify all orientation programs they participated in when entering the college. As shown in Table 4.16 a majority of Generation Z Latinx students were likely to complete an online orientation program prior to starting college (61.4%) and participate in a college completion program (60.2%). Fewer students took a first-year College 101 course (12.9%), and 9.9% did not participate in any orientation programs offered.

Table 4.16.
Experience of Orientation for Generation Z Latinx Students

Self-reported participation	<i>N</i> =171	%
Completed the online orientation	105	61.4
Participated in the college completion program	103	60.2
Took a first-year college 101 course	22	12.9
Did not participate in any orientation	17	9.9

Once more, using the popular 5-star system where 1 is not very likely to use the service, 5 is very likely to use the service, students were asked to rate the likelihood of using various services or supports at their community college. One-third of students (32.7%) stated that they

were very likely to use services related to basic needs such as meal plans, laptop lending programs, bus passes, and a food pantry, equally as much as they were likely to use services related to academic needs (32.3%) such as a tutoring center, transfer center, the library, and technology assistance with a mean of 3.49. Likely to also be used were health resources such as the student health and wellness center, mental health services, and a fitness center with a mean of 3.07, as well as the career development services which included the usage of a career and workforce center, workshops on resume writing, and help with job search with a mean of 3.13. Student resource centers such as a Dreamer resource center or a sexual diversity pride center and membership in clubs and organizations such as student government or the club for Latinx students were less likely to be used. Findings are summarized in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17.

Generation Z Latinx Students' Likelihood of Using Specific Services and Supports

Services	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>5-Star %</i>
Basic needs	162	3.27	1.55	32.7
Academic needs	164	3.49	1.35	32.3
Student health and wellness	163	3.07	1.44	23.3
Career development	163	3.13	1.34	21.5
Student resource centers	163	2.71	1.53	20.7
Clubs and organizations	164	2.59	1.43	15.6

Finally, Generation Z Latinx students reported what services that are not offered would they be likely to use to support their success in college. Table 4.18 illustrates that students would likely use rideshare discounts (59.5%), housing assistance (54.4%), and a college thrift shop for clothing and other needs (47.5%). Meals delivered at home was selected less than other services (38%).

Table 4.18.

Services That Generation Z Latinx Students Said They Would Be Likely to Use to Support Their Success

Services	N=158	5-Star %
Uber/ Lift rideshare discounts	94	59.5
Housing assistance	86	54.4
College thrift shop for clothing and other needs	75	47.5
Meals delivered at home	60	38.0
Other	7	4.4

Students who selected “other” stated a need for daycare, internet access, textbook access/fees paid, and work opportunities, which are offered on this particular campus, but students may not be aware they are offered.

Barriers

In addition to the support services Generation Z Latinx students found helpful, this cohort stated several barriers they confronted at community college. When asked to choose the top four barriers they faced when working toward their educational goals, students stated that lack of motivation (70.4%) and money (66.7%) were most problematic. Family obligations (45.1%), work obligations (40.1%), and registration processes (36.4%) were also hindrances many of these students reported. Almost a quarter of the students reported barriers such as issues with the college, professors, counselors, or staff (28.4%), parents not understanding the college system (22.8%), or lack of social support from significant others or friends (21.0%) also presented a challenge. Table 4.19 represents the students’ responses to the barriers experienced while progressing on their educational path.

Table 4.19.*Barriers Generation Z Latinx Students Faced in Working Toward Their Educational Goals*

Barriers	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Total	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>N=162</i>	%
Lack of self-motivation	42	33	19	20	114	70.4
Money	29	24	32	23	108	66.7
Family obligations	30	14	15	14	73	45.1
Work obligations	14	19	11	21	65	40.1
Registration	7	9	28	15	59	36.4
Issues with the college or staff	13	12	14	7	46	28.4
Parents do not understand U.S. college system	4	17	9	7	37	22.8
Lack of social support	3	11	11	9	34	21.0
Illness	8	6	5	7	26	16.0
Transportation	6	3	3	13	25	15.4
Other	--	--	--	--	8	4.9

Specific courses were also cited as a barrier for Generation Z Latinx students. Table 4.20 reveals that more than two-thirds (67.9%) found Math to be problematic and slightly less than half of the students (44.2%) also found Science difficult. Fewer students reported English (20.6%) as a barrier. Few students found Social Sciences and other courses difficult.

Table 4.20.*Courses that Generation Z Latinx Students Found Difficult and Needed Help With*

Courses	<i>N</i>	%
Math	112	67.9%
Science	73	44.2%
English	34	20.6%
Social Sciences	14	8.5%
Other	11	6.7%

The survey responses provided the researcher with quantitative evidence about who Generation Z Latinx students are and what is important to them, a summary of the supports and services these students described needing to meet their educational goals, and a list of the

barriers this cohort experienced while progressing toward their educational goals. Next, the researcher conducted focus group interviews to further uncover who Generation Z Latinx students are, what challenges they experience, and what support they need to be successful.

Qualitative Focus Group Data Analysis

Three focus group interviews were conducted on Zoom with Generation Z Latinx students. The researcher initially grouped participants by the number of course credit units completed. However, one participant attended a focus group that did not match the number of course credit units completed due to personal time restrictions. At each Zoom focus group interview, the participants were given the option of sharing their video, and all consented to have the interview recorded (See Appendix C. Focus Group Protocol). Each student was given their choice of either a \$20 Starbucks, In 'n Out, or gas gift card for participating in the focus group interview. Each focus group interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and each group was asked the same six questions. The findings are discussed in the following sections.

What Makes Generation Z Unique?

Generation Z Latinx students think their generation is unique for several reasons when compared to other generations. Four overall themes emerged when Generation Z Latinx students were asked to describe the characteristics of Generation Z. *Connection to technology* and *open-mindedness* were two themes that were spoken about frequently in all focus groups. *Determined* and *challenged by mental health issues* were two minor themes that arose with the *Newcomers*.

Connection to Technology

The degree of technological connectedness was a central theme identified as what makes Generation Z unique. This generation was the first generation to grow up with the internet and with a high degree of online connectivity. Because of this, this generation reported “being good

at everything.” They know how to get answers quickly from the internet and find that social media platforms help build stronger communities and are helpful in many situations. However, due to the lack of filtered content on the internet, this generation reported being confused by what is true or not true. *Seasoned Jose* described how the internet is confusing for his generation.

The internet gives us everything. It will give us both sides. It will show us the good and the bad. That is one thing that makes me think we are that we are both one of the good generations but also one of the bad generations as well. There is so much false information out there. The second we read it, we want to believe it.

Open-minded and Accepting

One student expressed that due to the exposure to the internet, this generation is more open-minded than preceding generations. Generation Z students reported they are accepting of various ideologies and individuals. Due to the connectedness to the internet the students reported being exposed to more diversity which leads to more acceptance. *Seasoned Jose* explained how exposure to differences leads to more acceptability.

Platforms such as Facebook or Instagram have so many people that are posting and others are following that I believe it’s now making it easier for us to accept new things and people for what they are and not judge them for what they like or what they do in their free time. That’s something I believe that makes Generation Z a bit unique than most others.

Newcomer Sofia described her generation’s open-mindedness. “I feel like we are not bonded by those ideas that have been created about others and we are more open-minded about getting to know people. We don’t put people in boxes that society puts them in.”

Other students described Generation Z as being more open-minded when it comes to career paths. *Midpathet Mariana* stated she has a lot of friends who decided not to go to college after high school, but instead opened small businesses.

It's not like before. I feel like before all you have to do is go to college. Now if you go that's really good but there's also other options. We are more accepting if you go or if you don't go to college.

Careers such as real estate agents, YouTube influencers, social media workers, and business owners were mentioned as non-conventional career paths this generation explores. *Seasoned Jose* described the difference between his mother's generation and Generation Z as related to career paths.

Our parents told us that without college, you can't be happy, or you can't have a good life. But that was all just a lie. You can be happy. You can have a good life. ...Now, they're getting paid millions just for posting one video up and having people follow.

In addition to pursuing unconventional career paths, this generation also reported not following the traditional American gender roles. In prior generations, one *Seasoned* student described that in the past, women went to college, got a job, and then started a family. Unlike past generations, Generation Z men and women no longer follow this path.

Determined

Most *Newcomers* started college after their college was forced to close in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These students began attending community college in the 2020/21 academic school year. The students described their generation as being determined. This theme emerged mainly as related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the school closure. *Newcomer Elena* described why she characterized Generation Z as determined.

I would say that we are determined. I think very determined when it comes to tough situations like the pandemic. Even though we didn't get to go to school, because I was graduating from high school when the pandemic hit, and we didn't know what was going on, this is a situation of how we handled it [well]. ...going to college, staying safe... It was really tough for us. I think just how we handle things is with determination.

Another student described this generation as being determined or even "stubborn" because they make decisions for themselves and without much concern for what family or friends think.

Mental Health Challenges

A less dominant theme that emerged amongst *Newcomers* is the mental health challenges their generation experiences. Although Generation Z students reported they had the determination to persevere through the COVID pandemic, this generation characterized themselves as struggling with self-motivation and procrastination related to learning remotely during the pandemic. One student stated how she struggled with being isolated at home during the pandemic. She struggled with the self-motivation to complete assignments and with procrastination. Another student reported online learning during COVID was draining because of the number of hours required to be in front of a computer. One student summed up how she worked through her mental health challenges. "Having the need to push yourself can be hard but it's worth it. You have to talk yourself out of those negative thoughts." Not only does this generation characterize itself as being challenged by mental health issues, one student stated she perceived that mental health issues overall were on a rise with this generation.

Why Do You Attend a Community College?

Three dominant themes emerged when the Generation Z Latinx students discussed their reasons for attending community college. These themes included supportive aspects, value, and unsure direction and readiness.

Supportive Aspects

The most frequently mentioned reason for choosing a community college was related to support. This support came from both the support offered at the college by means of proximity to home, programs offered, familiarity of the community, support for family, and support from family.

One frequently mentioned support program was the Pledge program. Students reported that because their high school counselors had recommended this program, and because of the cost savings incurred by entering the community college under this program, they chose to attend community college.

Other students stated that community college enabled them to complete their general education requirements cost-efficiently and conveniently. Many students specified that they felt it was wise for them to complete the same general education requirements at a local community college before transferring to a 4-year university. For one *Newcomer*, attending community college supported her educational goals during the COVID pandemic because higher education institutions across the nation transitioned to online learning during the pandemic. In addition to completing their general education requirements, students also reported they could remain home and either receive support from family and friends or give needed financial support and help to their family members.

Family backing impacted this group of Generation Z Latinx students' decision to choose community college. Many of the students interviewed stated that they were first generation college students and their families could not support them through the college processes. Therefore, for these students, staying at home and attending community college allowed them familiar surroundings and emotional support while meeting their educational goals. Other students interviewed reported that attending community college supported their ability to manage their home and work lives and also allowed them to continue supporting parents and siblings while remaining at home.

Financial Value

The lower cost of attending community college significantly reduced the financial barrier to higher education for Generation Z Latinx students. Almost every student reported that they chose to attend community college because of the inexpensive cost. These students held they did not have the money to attend a 4-year college and they felt that community college was a better choice financially. The two free years of tuition and fees the students receive from the Pledge program, as well as cheaper tuition and fees at community college compared to 4-year institutions, were reported as having a strong effect on these students' decision for choosing community college due to the financial benefits it provides.

Unsure Directions or Unpreparedness

This group of Generation Z Latinx students expressed uncertainty and unreadiness for college, both emotionally and academically. Many students interviewed shared that they were unsure of what they wanted to major in or what classes they wanted to take, so they chose community college to explore and define their options. Furthermore, emotional unreadiness came in the form of being unwilling or set to leave their families or familiar environments. As

well, students reported that academic unreadiness was a factor in choosing a community college. *Seasoned Jose* summarized his choice to attend community college was based on his lack of academic unpreparedness.

For me a tiny community college was my first reason because my high school didn't really train us on how to be a college student. If I went to university right away, I would have failed and not passed any classes. My high school didn't have the right math. It didn't have the right English sometimes. So, going to a community college first and seeing how they did everything actually did help me and support me to seeing where to go for university.

Supportive aspects related to attending community colleges, the financial value of community college, and being unsure of the educational readiness were the three threads that influenced the choice of Generation Z Latinx students to attend community college.

However, attending community college was not reported as being every student's first choice. Sometimes, students do not make a conscious decision to attend a community college first, but rather it becomes a secondary plan in situations when they attend a 4-year university and have to return home because of financial struggles and lack of support needed when away from home. *Seasoned Monica* described her experience of attending university and returning home after one semester because the struggles away from home became detrimental.

After high school, I went to a UC school [...]. Being first-generation, I just went off with what other people advised me. [...] For me, it was really expensive to afford a UC. I had to drop out of the UC and attend community college.

What Social, Political, Historical, or Economic Events Have Impacted Your Educational Goals?

Generational theorists Strauss and Howe (1991) argued that historical events shape a generation. When Generation Z Latinx students were asked what social, political, historical, or economic events helped or caused problems related to their educational goals, three themes emerged. These included families, finances, and COVID-19.

Families

Many reported being first-generation students. Because their parents had no lived experience in higher education, they often do not receive emotional support. The students' immediate and extended family members complained about the amount of studying and homework the students were required to complete, which caused the student to be apart from their families. The participants reported that the culture of their parents' home country collided with the culture in the US. For example, *Newcomer Ximena*, whose parents were born in Mexico, described how her family became frustrated with her for studying too much.

They have a cultural difference over there and then here it is something else. If you study in Mexico, it usually takes less years to actually already stabilize yourself and get your career done with and you can start working. In [my family's] case they are saying that you're focusing too much on studying and not enough on the rest like your family, like having a family or getting a job. They think you are dedicating too much time on studying and it is kind of a waste of time.

Her parents felt she needed to be more with the family and this posed a conflict for her. Likewise, *Newcomer Julia* expressed how she struggled with the same lack of support from her family. "They try to encourage me NOT to spend so much time doing my homework and tell me

to go to a party or something. When I say I have homework, they don't really understand how long it takes.”

Similarly, *Newcomer Elena*, who grew up in an indigenous community shared how post-secondary education is less popular in her culture than working in the fields.

So, for us young ladies, we get married at a young age and we don't end up going straight to school. Some of us end up getting married or going straight to work in the fields. Most of us end up going to the fields to work. When I went last summer to work over there, a certain person told me, ‘Are you going to continue your education or not? If you aren't, there are always the fields. You don't need no diploma. You don't need anything to go there.’ So that is how I saw things and I chose to, instead of going to work or getting married, I decided to go to attend college. I could get a better education, help out my people.

Finances

Generation Z Latinx students struggle financially to afford college (Krogstad, 2016; Pluviose & Weissman, 2021; Tovar, 2015), and the focus group students confirmed this. First, applying to receive financial aid posed a problem for some students. These students reported the socio-economic level of their families was low; however, they still struggled to receive financial aid due to financial aid criteria.

For *Newcomer Julia*, the FAFSA application was too complicated to fill out and her parents were unable to help her. “...from an economic standpoint, when I first got out of high school, I didn't apply to college because...I didn't know how FAFSA worked so I kind of assumed I wouldn't qualify and I didn't know how to do it.” *Seasoned Monica* reported how her parents worked more than one job to make ends meet which put her at a disadvantage to receive

financial aid. “My parents work overtime, which is something that FAFSA does not consider. They don’t consider how my parents have money...FAFSA doesn’t consider that my parents have two jobs.” Similarly, *Midpather David* reported he did not qualify for financial aid although he struggled financially and had to work part-time to save up so he would have enough money to attend a 4-year university. Generation Z Latinx students expressed confusion, worry, and frustration about the financial stress of attending college.

COVID-19

Seasoned students expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic was a major historical occurrence that has impacted their educational goals, while the *Newcomers* and *Midpaths* did not report this historical event as having affected them. Some *Seasoned* students reported COVID-19 as a historical event that made their educational path easier while others found the pandemic caused problems. After the school closure, *Seasoned* students appreciated that their teachers used online textbooks and websites and shared that synchronous classes created an environment in which to ask questions more easily. For *Seasoned Jose*, he reported Covid was positive because it allowed him to manage his time better. “It was positive in a way because when I was at the college I was away from my family and there were times I got sad...it got a bit easier because I could maintain a balance between homework, class, and this new job I had at the time. It was pretty simple.” But for others, the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult. *Seasoned Ana* shared her struggles.

I remember in December 2020, my entire family got COVID. It was during finals, which made it even more difficult because I was sick and taking finals. It was also difficult because classes were also online. I had to find time to study for myself. Whereas, I feel

like in-person it is just easier to grasp on to the information. Online it is so easy to get distracted by little things around you and your household.

Whether negatively or positively, the school closure and the COVID-19 pandemic was a major incident that affected Generation Z Latinx.

What Barriers Have You Experienced in College?

While one participant mentioned that he had no barriers at community college and all had been “smooth sailing” for him, three main themes emerged related to the challenges or barriers the other Generation Z Latinx students experienced at college. These themes included lack of personal or institutional support, college processes, including course offerings and scheduling, and the COVID-19 pandemic, as also discussed in the previous question.

Financial Struggles

Generation Z Latinx students experienced financial hurdles related to attending college. Some students experienced a financial barrier because their families did not make enough money to help them pay college tuition and fees and they needed financial aid. The struggle began for these students when applying for financial aid. Both first-generation students and students whose parents attended college expressed difficulties filling out the FAFSA application. One student expressed how she did not understand why she was rejected for financial aid although she came from a low-income family. Moreover, another student whose parents worked multiple jobs to help pay for college reported not being able to qualify for financial aid because her family made too much money. Also, having to become financially literate also presented a problem for *Midpather Ximena*. “I think the [biggest] challenge right now would probably be financial because I have to be aware of how to use my money wisely.”

Generation Z Latinx students not only reported their struggle to pay college tuition and fees, but also the auxiliary costs of attending college, such as buying textbooks and materials. Students reported that professors often required expensive book purchases. *Midpather Mariana* explained her situation with buying her book.

My most expensive book I have had to buy was \$150. I did not have my financial aid because I had to wait the whole year to receive it. I had to pay out of my own pocket. ... I wish there were a cheaper option.

When students could not afford to buy their own textbook(s), students stated that the college library allowed them to use course textbooks, but the textbooks could only be used at the library. Because there were often not enough textbook copies available at the library to meet the student demand, it is common to have long wait times to use certain textbooks needed to complete homework. *Seasoned Jose* explained this challenge.

I had to wait a long time for a book because someone else was using the book. You get to spend two hours [using the book], but then, what happens if you don't have those two hours to spend there? What if you had to go to work or what if you have to go home?"

Finally, some students reported feeling obligated to find a way to help financially support their families, which strains their ability to spend money on their education. *Newcomer Elena* stated, "I needed to help out my mother and there are three of us. I have a younger brother. I'm the oldest."

College Processes

Generation Z Latinx parents are often unable to give financial support or knowledge about college to their children, which includes institutional processes related to post-secondary education. From the onset of their higher education paths, Generation Z Latinx students

frequently expressed that they struggled with understanding the college processes and procedures. Students frequently mentioned challenges filling out the college application and completing the FAFSA application.

One frustration related to this process was the lack of consistent information from their college. Students reported long wait times or no replies to their emails, difficulties making appointments with counselors, and not receiving any information on special programs (such as programs for Dreamers or low-income students). Students also reported how scheduling, course offerings, and programs created a barrier. While the college offered courses at a main campus as well as at four off-site campuses, students expressed difficulties taking classes close to home because only a limited number of classes were offered at the off-site campuses, or the classes were offered at inconvenient times.

COVID-19 Pandemic

While having described themselves as technologically adept, Generation Z Latinx students nevertheless struggled with isolation and motivation related to having all of their classes online after the school closure when the COVID-19 occurred. One student shared that she struggled to motivate herself to study alone and turn in assignments. Another student expressed feeling drained by the long periods of time required on the computer when taking all of their classes online. Also, students expressed being distracted by activities in their household and having difficulties with dependable internet access while sharing Wi-Fi with family members.

Other students struggled during the pandemic because they expressed a lack of quality instruction during the pandemic. *Seasoned Jose* explained that his professor did not know how to use a computer or how to use Zoom. He shared, “[The lack of online experience for the instructor] slowed me down a bit to the point where one class I even just passed automatically

because [the professor] didn't know how you do Zoom." *Midpath* Mariana expressed she wished "[class] was in-person and the teacher would help me.... Instead of trying to figure out a time where we could set up a Zoom." Other students became frustrated due to a lack of response or direction from their professors or counselors during this remote learning period.

Finally, it was frequently mentioned that COVID-19 created a bottleneck of students needing help and questions answered when the college closed. There became an increase of students trying to get help related to the changes caused by the pandemic. This barrier was particularly unique to the *Newcomers* who entered the college in the middle of the pandemic and did not have the chance to attend their first semester on campus. However, enrolled students also had similar experiences. *Newcomer Sofia* described her frustrations when she tried to get help after the school closure.

One of the main challenges...is that I didn't have someone that could help me. Being able to contact the counselors was a bit more challenging due to all the other students trying to contact their counselors. It was just too much.

What Has Helped Support Your Success While Attending Community College?

Generation Z Latinx students reported that the people around them, as well as the wide array of comprehensive programs and services offered to them by the college, helped support retention, transition, and overall academic success.

Social Connections

The relationships that Generation Z Latinx students have with individuals in their lives influenced their academic success. This connection included family members, peers, and faculty. Even though some students shared they experienced a lack of family support as a barrier, there were other students who experienced the opposite. The *Newcomers* found support from family

members helpful especially when family allowed them the time and space to complete homework and focus on their assignments. *Newcomer Elena* expressed that it was important for her family to be accepting of the decisions she made in college, even when her family had other desires for her career.

It doesn't matter what other people say. It's what you really want to do, no matter if it pays a lot, or if you get don't get enough money. Some people get into a career that they don't really end up loving...what helped me a lot was to choose a career that I want instead of [my family] thinking this is a good career for you.

In addition to family, a connection to college peers was reported as supporting academic success. *Seasoned Jose* mentioned that the connection he had with the members of his college sports team allowed him to work in a team study group. The team members were easily accessible to help him with assignments when a faculty member was not available.

Faculty members and counselors are also key people who influence Generation Z Latinx students. This generation of students appreciated when faculty put the link to free textbooks and resources on Canvas, and these students reported it was particularly helpful when both the professors and counselors informed them about the support programs available to them.

In addition, counselors were mentioned as being helpful when assisting students choose a major and providing information needed about special programs. Dedicated counselors in special programs such as TRIO or EOPS support students along their educational path. *Midpather Cory*, who identified their gender as non-binary, described how their counselor maintained a close relationship and served as a safety net for them while at the college.

The counselors also made sure to check up on us and help us set up our classes. I think the first time we did it I signed up for two semesters so they had an idea [of what classes I

needed]. Then we could also schedule appointments with them, so we could make sure every semester we signed up for the classes that will go towards our major.

Comprehensive Programs and Services

One of the helpful support services mentioned in all three focus groups was the tutoring center. The students appreciated getting help in Math, and having their writing critiqued by the tutors. *Newcomer Sofia* stated that she struggled with Math and that the college tutoring services helped her to pass her Math course. Generation Z Latinx students also emphasized that the tutoring center provided critical support needed to complete writing assignments across the curriculum.

To some Generation Z Latinx students, the use of the tutoring center was a new concept. *Seasoned Ana* shared that she appreciated it when her professor required all students to have their papers evaluated by a tutor at the tutoring center.

I had a professor who actually required us to go to [the tutoring center] to get our papers peer-reviewed. When we did that, we would get full credit. If you didn't do it, then you get half credit. So, you essentially did not get a good grade if you didn't get your paper peer-reviewed. Back then it was a little odd. But now, looking back, it helped me gain the courage to actually go to [the tutoring center] afterwards for different classes to use some of the services.

Similar to the tutoring center, many students expressed the help they received from the library was beneficial, especially the book loan program. While students mentioned the high price of course textbooks as being a barrier to academic success, it was very helpful when they could check out the course textbook for free or use a reference copy of the book at the library.

Special programs that target specific student groups were deemed supportive to Generation Z Latinx students' recruitment and success. Some of the helpful special programs mentioned by the students included Edge/Pledge, which is a summer bridge and free tuition program offered to local high school graduates; Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS); and federal TRIO programs. The Edge/Pledge programs were cited as being financially accommodating because of the free tuition and free book components. Likewise, the book vouchers offered to EOPS students helped students in this program cover the cost of their books.

If You Were College President, What Would You Do Differently?

The comments regarding if they were president of their community college were related to more engagement, support, and communication.

Engage with Students

Generation Z Latinx students reported that they would like the president to better understand them. *Seasoned Monica* stated that this could be accomplished when the president interacted closer with students. She suggested that as president, she would engage with students by dispersing frequent student surveys to uncover the needed support services students require. Another student expressed how she would engage more with students by having a suggestion box where students could inform the president of ways to improve the college. Students also reported that as president, they would provide more help to students in a timely manner and offer easy access to support personnel.

Additional Support

Generation Z Latinx students frequently reported a need for additional support systems to help them meet their educational goals. These resources are needed from onboarding through completion. *Newcomers* reported they would offer more onboarding FAFSA workshops and

provide more information to students about programs and services offered. *Newcomer Elena* stated how she would have counselors reach out to students instead of students having to reach out to counselors.

I would set up a meeting with every student. I would try to help them out. I would say, ‘Do you need anything?’ or ‘Have you had your educational plan all set up?’ ‘Is there anything you need?’ I think that is the main thing that I would want to change.

Similarly, *Midpathers* and *Seasoned* students reported experiencing challenges associated with having a lack of counselors and how they would hire more counselors. *Midpathers David* described what he would do if he were president in regards to transfer counseling.

I would have a really big push on counseling towards students on helping them figure out what they’re going to do after they leave college. I would try to bring counselors not only from the UCs, but also from other well-known universities to talk to our students.

Basically, [I would help] students to establish connections to where it would be easier for the students to make the next step rather than having to figure it out on their own.

Seasoned Ana stated that she would also have counselors interact closer with students.

I think a lot of people get lost along the way, or they just don’t really know what to do next. It is difficult, and I think having a plan or roadmap for them to follow over however many years they want to take classes is a good thing.

From the recruitment to the transfer stages of the educational paths, Generation Z Latinx students stated the need for more overall guidance from counselors.

Better Communication

Many Generation Z students agreed that a clearer means of communication was needed from the college. While the college offers many support programs and services, many students

stated they were unaware of services such as application and FAFSA workshops, counseling classes, and transfer help. When the Generation Z Latinx students were asked in the focus groups how they preferred the college to contact them, email was most preferred (n=11); text messages (n=4) and phone calls (n=2) were less popular preferences.

Personal email was preferred by many, particularly Gmail because Outlook was considered “outdated” by some participants. Students also reported receiving too many emails in general from the school which caused difficulty deciphering what was important and what was not important. *Seasoned Monica* shared that she missed an important transfer ceremony because that information was buried in all the emails the college sent.

Summary

This chapter presented the data and results from the quantitative and qualitative phases of research studying how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students progress toward their educational goals. The quantitative research identified the characteristics and preferences of this generation, what barriers they face related to meeting their educational goals, and the supports and services they need to make progress toward their goal. The qualitative research allowed the researcher to look beyond the quantitative data to learn and confirm the meaning behind the survey responses.

In the next chapter, the researcher will present a summary of the study, a review of the methodology, and implications of the study. In addition, the chapter will present the researcher’s interpretations of the findings to the research questions, along with relating the findings to the literature collected for this study. Finally, the researcher will end with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview of the Problem

Generation Z Latinx community college students comprise a substantial number of students attending community colleges in the California Community College system. More than 1.8 million students in California attend one of the 116 California Community Colleges, and of these 1.8 million students, approximately 57% are Generation Z, and approximately 45% are Latinx students (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-c; Snyder et al., 2019). Generation Z has unique preferences, values, beliefs, and opinions unlike previous generations of community college students. The importance for colleges to recognize and address this generation's characteristics and culture is becoming more relevant as a growing population of Generation Z students enters higher education.

However, Latinx students' educational attainment rate is currently lower than other students. In fact, only 15% of Latinx students in California transfer from community colleges to 4-year colleges or universities within 4 years, which is nearly half the White students' rate (28%) (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). The same report revealed that approximately 70% of Latinx students in California choose community college as their first post-secondary education choice. As more Generation Z Latinx students struggle to accomplish their educational goals, community colleges will need to look for innovative ways to increase the educational success of this underserved population of students as they continue their higher education.

As California community colleges continue to serve Generation Z Latinx students, the recognition of barriers this population experiences that prevent them from completing their

goals, as well as the identification of the supports and services needed to increase the educational success of this growing and disproportionately struggling population, is imperative.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students to help them meet their educational goals such as an associate degree, a certificate or credential, or transferring to a four-year institution. By knowing the cultural and generational differences of this population, this study aimed to identify the unique characteristics of Generation Z Latinx students, the barriers they encounter on the educational paths, and the services and supports that impact their achievement.

The research questions that guided this study were: How can community colleges help Generation Z Latinx students progress toward their educational goals?

- a. What barriers to success do Generation Z Latinx students experience in making progress toward their educational goals?
- b. What supports and services do Generation Z Latinx students need to make progress toward their educational goals?

Review of the Methodology

This research was conducted using an explanatory sequential design mixed-method study to develop a case study. The first phase of the study consisted of quantitative data collection through the use of a survey. The survey focused on uncovering the characteristics of Generation Z Latinx students, identifying the perceived barriers Generation Z Latinx students encountered when progressing toward their educational goals, and determining the supports and services Generation Z Latinx students reported they might need to increase their academic success.

Survey responses were mined from a segmented data set of students provided by the Institutional Research Department of a mid-size California community college. Also, Generation Z Latinx students who were members of a college club for Hispanic students, and enrolled in college courses across the curriculum, were sent invitations inviting them to participate in the survey. From these sources, a total of 276 surveys was returned. Surveys that did not meet the criteria of (a) currently enrolled in at least one credit unit, (b) identified their race or ethnicity as Hispanic on the college application, and (c) were born in or after 1995 were eliminated from the study; those under the age of 18 were also excluded. In total, 174 surveys qualified for use. Of the 174 usable surveys, 12 students agreed to participate in one of three follow-up focus group interviews.

The qualitative phase of the research included three segmented focus group interviews. These interviews aimed to group students based on the number of units completed. The criteria for the focus group interviews are described in Table 3.3. However, some focus groups were mixed due to student availability. Both the survey data and the transcripts from the focus group interviews were analyzed to address the research questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Study data was collected using an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the characteristics of Generation Z, the barriers to success they experienced as they progress toward their educational goals, and the supports and services they report needing. The initial quantitative phase was an explanatory survey designed and administered to qualifying students. The survey was designed on SurveyMonkey and analyzed using the SurveyMonkey advanced statistical analytical tools for descriptive statistical analysis. The qualitative phase included three focus group interviews conducted via Zoom and

recorded with participant approval. Interviews were transcribed and inductive coding was used to develop themes that emerged from the data. The researcher highlighted any quotes seen as valuable in helping college leaders understand the Generation Z Latinx population and better serve this cohort of students as they progress toward their educational goals. Together, the two phases were designed to create a better understanding of who Generation Z Latinx students are, what barriers to success they experience in college, and what supports and services they need to make to reach their educational goals.

Discussion of the Findings

Both Generational Theory and Latin Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) were used as the theoretical frameworks to examine the data and answer the research questions. Generational Theory was used as a framework for understanding the majority of incoming community college students, Generation Z, students born between 1995 and 2010. Strauss and Howe (1991) conducted extensive research and developed the theory that generational legacies are formed out of major economic, historical, social, and political events that shape the ways a generation is perceived. These major events impact the culture within each generation, making the experiences in each generation unique. Strauss and Howe (1991) emphasized that each generation has a personality that distinguishes the generation as a cohesive group with a unique profile. Additionally, LatCrit Theory was used as a framework to understand the social injustices created at a systematic level for Latinx students (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012). Using LatCrit Theory as a framework helped explain the multidimensional identities that emerge as the intersectionality of racism, classism, and other forms of oppression affect Latinx students on their educational paths. LatCrit Theory also provided a lens to uncover how Latinx students' lives might be different from other non-Latinx populations.

Specifically, within the explanatory sequential mixed-method design previously discussed, both the quantitative and qualitative results support the notion that Generation Z Latinx students have unique characteristics developed by historical events such as the revolution of technology and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Generation Z Latinx students experience barriers in college related to cultural differences, socio-economic challenges, and academic unpreparedness. For example, many first-generation students struggle with cultural disparities such as what is expected of young adults in their parents' home countries versus the expectations of young adults in America. Also, the examination of the experiences Generation Z Latinx students encounter due to low socioeconomic status revealed the struggles these students reported when attending college. For community colleges, this translates into understanding both the unique generational characteristics of this student population as well as the cultural assets this group of students brings with them to post-secondary institutions. Presented next are the study findings and interpretations specific to each of the research questions as they relate to how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students in progressing toward their educational goals (RQ1), the barriers to their educational success (RQ1a.), and the supports and services needed to attain their educational goals (RQ1b.)

Research Question 1a. Barriers

The researcher used survey data and focus group interviews to determine the barriers to success that Generation Z Latinx students experienced when progressing towards their educational goals while attending a community college. By analyzing the data gathered directly from Generation Z Latinx students at the community college and assessing the literature regarding the needs of this population, the researcher found that finances, cultural barriers, institutional and instructional responsiveness, and self-motivation related to the COVID-19

pandemic were all factors that impeded students' progress towards their academic goals. The study suggests that community colleges can address barriers to Latinx Generation Z students' academic achievement in several ways.

First, reducing the cost of both tuition and materials may ease anxieties related to the financial obligation of attending college as supported in previous research (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-d). Minimizing the cost of tuition at community colleges would benefit Generation Z Latinx students, especially those currently unqualified for existing state and federal financial aid. One survey respondent described the frustrating circumstances of her financial aid situation. "I was not given much financial aid because I'm considered a middle-class student, but I was not able to afford my education because my parents do not hold prestigious careers." Similarly, *Midpather David* expressed his struggles with managing work, school, and personal obligations.

The only thing [that impacts my educational path] was not only trying to find a job, but also juggling finding a job, my responsibilities here at home, and also keeping up with school...I also never qualified for financial aid because I also fall into the middle class...That is the biggest thing. I am working part time.

Without having to worry about financing college, students could take classes without working full-time or part-time jobs to pay for classes and required course materials. Generation Z Latinx students could chart their academic courses with the assurance that they will be able to afford to complete their programs or transfer to a 4-year university. Demystifying and simplifying the process of applying to and succeeding academically in college may ensure that more students progress on their pathway to earning a college degree, transferring to a four-year

university, or completing a certificate that enhances their career. *Midpather Camila* shared her struggle with college processes.

I think, for me, was not really knowing where I would get my financial aid from because I don't qualify for FAFSA. And so, I didn't really get clear instructions or directions about where I could get it or if I could use the Dream Act and exactly how that would work. So, it was kind of hard like I mentioned before getting help from the counselors and knowing exactly what I had to do in order to get my financial aid.

Simplification of the application and financial aid process is consistent with previous research conducted by Bailey et. al (2015). These researchers found that "...deadlines and dates for the application and reapplication process—for example, for transfer-bound students, application for four-year college aid—should be incorporated into student milestones..." (p. 213).

Second, cultural barriers create difficulty for Generation Z Latinx community college students. Colleges must take greater steps to understand the cultural context that Generation Z Latinx students bring with them to their academic environment. Many Generation Z Latinx students in this study identified as first-generation college students. Both the students and their families and friends were unfamiliar with the processes of applying to, attending, and completing studies in the U.S. higher education system. *Newcomer Julia* shared how she was alone to navigate the college system. "I wasn't sure what to do because my parents didn't go to college...I just picked the one that was closest to me and tried to figure out how to apply..." *Newcomer Julia* also explained how her family lacked knowledge about college. "Something that actually ...makes it harder is ...because my family hasn't gone to college they don't understand how much work it takes to do all the homework and things like that." Likewise, *Newcomer Elena* expressed the hardest part of beginning college was being left alone with no

one to give her directions on how to navigate the college processes. "...since I didn't have anybody to guide me and everything, I was doing it all by myself. So, that was the hardest part."

Programs that orient both students and their families about valuable resources, tools, scholarship opportunities, and financial aid assistance programs would help Generation Z Latinx students succeed. Additionally, generational differences that are specific to the Generation Z Latinx students conflicted with the generation of their parents. Some students surveyed shared their parents' generation held high value to hard work and although their parents valued education, they did not always understand the time required away from family to attend classes and complete assignments. As shared by *Newcomer Ximena*, her family, whose origins are from Mexico, did not understand the time commitment of college.

[My family] are saying that you're focusing too much on studying and not enough on the rest like your family, like having a family, or getting a job. They think you are dedicating too much time on studying and it is kind of a waste of time.

Offering students resources to overcome the cultural and generational barriers encountered in their personal lives could help these students balance the obligations of family, work, and school.

Third, Generation Z Latinx students believe college leaders are not responsive to their concerns and needs. Students shared that they want academic leaders to hear and react to their concerns. As suggested by students in the focus group interviews, simple calls to action such as providing a box for students to ask questions or offer suggestions and concerns could be helpful. Providing an easy-to-find link on the school's website page where students could ask questions or get help was another student suggestion. Furthermore, research supports that Generation Z students expect answers quickly (Loveland, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). TikTok, YouTube, or text messaging may be more helpful for communicating with Generation Z Latinx students

than having them wait for an email response or phone reply. Communications methods that worked for previous generations may seem outdated to Generation Z Latinx students who are accustomed to finding information almost instantaneously on the internet. Providing a variety of ways for students to communicate with institutional leaders, faculty, and staff in a mode Generation Z Latinx students prefer could give students the answers and guidance needed.

Finally, Generation Z Latinx students struggled with self-motivation and the challenges the school closure caused after March 2020. Colleges can address the social, academic, and psychological effects Generation Z Latinx students experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For many students sampled, the pandemic occurred while transitioning from high school to college. Responsiveness from college staff was difficult and information was difficult to obtain. *Midpathers Mariana* shared how she struggled to get her questions answered by the college staff when the pandemic hit.

For me what was difficult was that sometimes I had questions, but since everything was online when we signed up for college I had to wait for the people to respond to my emails. I had to wait for my counselor... I wish everything could have been in person so that everybody could help each other out.

For other students, the pandemic caused a disruption in their education because classes were moved online. *Seasoned Yolanda* shared how moving from face-to-face classes to fully online classes affected her. "I had to find time to study for myself. Whereas, I feel like in-person it is just easier to grasp on to the information...Online it is so easy to get distracted by little things around you in your household." Similarly, *Newcomer Ximena* stated how she struggled with online learning. "...we had to stay at home and do online classes. That was pretty draining. I just think being on the computer for a long time is draining." As students continue their studies

online, and as colleges begin to transition back to campus, leaders will need to take deliberate action to reconnect with students again. These measures could include actions such as reducing the student-to-counselor and student-to-support personnel ratio to better address the social, academic, and psychological challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. Additionally, colleges might want to provide clearer direction regarding counseling and mental health resources. *Seasoned Monica* shared the importance of having more counseling and mental health services available to students.

I like the idea of more disability and general counselors or even maybe more mental health counselors. Personally, I had never been to a mental health counselor before. But when I needed one I was lucky that I was in a community college at the same time. I contacted my main counselor first, and then I found out they were there. For me, there are those resources but our college does not make them very accessible for those who need them.

Mental health barriers, persisting at a time where there are no clear pathways, and continuing at a time when social and academic supports are online-only, are new issues necessary for college leaders to address. College leaders will likely need to monitor the unique issues these students have experienced as they return to campus and strive to continue on their educational paths.

In short, the study findings augment the literature, suggesting that the needs of Generation Z Latinx students are unique to both their generational and cultural demographics and that there are opportunities for colleges to restructure their organizations in ways that reduce or remove these barriers.

Research Question 1b. Supports & Services

In reviewing the focus group and survey data gathered in this study, and surveying the literature regarding Generation Z Latinx students, a number of opportunities to enhance supports and services emerged. The researcher found that services and supports related to the academic, financial, and social aspects of attending college are needed. The study revealed academic support is a key factor to student success, and approximately 32% of the students surveyed said they were likely to use academic support services. Students found the tutoring center a significant support not only in difficult courses such as Math, Science, and English, but in classes less demanding as well. *Midpather Cory* shared how the tutoring center supported their academic success.

One of the things that the professors tried to inform us about quite often was something called ...the tutoring service. That really helped a lot because you could either sign up to meet one on one with someone and they would walk you through a paper or walk you through equations or whatever the situation might be. For one of my recent classes, I did my whole paper draft. Then I just submitted it. Someone peer-reviewed it and I got a copy back of all the things I could do better.

Students also found it beneficial when their instructors required them to have class assignments peer-reviewed at the tutoring center before submitting the assignments as it created the opportunity for the students to become familiar with the tutoring services. Similarly, there was pointed relevancy of the instructor's role to Generation Z Latinx students. It was notable that Generation Z Latinx students reported the role of their professor was crucial to their success. This cohort of students wants professors to show them resources to support their success, create assignments that engage instructional methods such as community-based projects and activities

relevant to the workplace, and communicate in ways they can relate to such as texting and WhatsApp. These findings are supported by previous research on Latinx students' faculty interaction, where Alcantar & Hernandez (2020) found that faculty interaction has the potential to create a sense of belonging, increase persistence, and add to academic success.

Furthermore, according to the students interviewed, first-year college experience support programs that offer both financial and academic support provided students with wide-ranging support. However, contrary to the previous research conducted on Latinx students, Generation Z Latinx students in this study did not state it of high importance that the ethnicity of their professor is the same as them.

Second, Generation Z Latinx students reported basic needs, such as a food pantry, rideshare coupons, and an on-campus thrift shop, almost as important as the need for academic support, such as free tuition and material costs. Noteworthy to mention is students who participated in programs such as Pledge, EOPS, and TRIO reported specifically that the free book vouchers, workshops such as how to choose a major and how to fill out the FAFSA, and having a designated counselor were helpful and reduced the anxiety that other students not participating in these programs experienced. *Seasoned Monica* shared how support programs helped her.

But now that I am a community college student and part of the TRIO Program and Pledge that has helped me a lot. Some students have to fight for a counselor with the general students but rather these programs have a designated counselor for you. That really helped me with transferring and helps me now at the community college.

These findings support the literature that federal, state and local funded programs such as the ones mentioned by the students do support student success.

Lastly, Latinx community college students require social support from family, friends, classmates, faculty, and counselors. Students who reported having a sibling or friend who attended the college were less likely to struggle through the college processes. Also, being a member of an athletic sports team proved helpful for other students because of the social connection, but school clubs such as Associated Student Body and school resource centers such as the LGBTQ Center were less valued as a support. *Seasoned Jose* shared how being on the cross-country team and connecting with his friends, family and professors supported him both academically and socially.

For me, one thing that helped me succeed at [the community college] was that I had a team with me. I joined the cross-country team. They were really supportive. They were really helpful. They actually showed me a few steps on how to do math and how to do fundamentals of statistics. Also meeting some people there helped me and even some of the professors took their time away from their free time to talk to me. So, really it was friends, family, teammates and other things that helped me in this college.

Generation Z Latinx students want to be connected to their peers and the community. Students surveyed said it was very important to them when their instructor encourages contact among students and liked it a lot when their professor provided opportunities to participate in community-based projects. In line with previous research findings by Seemiller and Grace (2016), Generation Z Latinx students are motivated more by relationships and the ability to work toward something they care about than by financial advancement. Classroom and community connections might be a better nucleus for social connection and support for this group of students than clubs and resource centers.

Additional Findings Related to the Literature

As findings revealed in the previous chapter, Generation Z Latinx students expressed that barriers such as college processes and procedures, finances, and motivation hindered progression toward their educational goals. These same students thought services such as counseling, the tutoring center, and engaging pedagogy supported their progress toward their educational goals. These results are supported through previous research that indicated Latinx students are more likely to experience these barriers and need these supports (Bailey et al., 2015; Maldonado, 2019; Tovar, 2015).

This study also aimed to explore the intersection between Generation Z and the Latinx generational and cultural identities. First, the findings in this study support that student identity can directly impact student success (Bowman & Felix, 2017; Kasworm, 2005; Scanlon et al., 2007). Consistent with Perez's (2018) study on undocumented Latinx students in higher education, the Latinx Generation Z students in this study shared that their parental immigration status or socioeconomic status sometimes presented a challenge. Students in this study said their self-identity sometimes collided with their cultural identity, and often differed from the cultural identity of their parents. Perez's (2018) research also argued the significance of family, or *Familismo*, loyalty and respect for one's immediate and extended family, and adopts a cooperative attitude placing importance on family needs over individual needs. However, although the students in this study said family was important, they also articulated a more competitive than cooperative attitude to the family cultural norms. Generation Z Latinx students indicated that they are forming identities that are independent of family. While the students in this study expressed a high need to stay close to family and siblings to offer their family help, they also communicated their frustration that their parents and relatives from their home

countries oftentimes do not understand the academic demands and time requirements to be a successful college student. Additionally, students in this study shared that they are more apt to decide their educational path based more on what they desire for their future than on what their family members want them to do.

As Veenstra (2011) found in his study based on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, this study also uncovered the struggles, especially expressed by the Latinx female students, that exist in the intersection of gender norms and class conflict from one generation to the next. *Newcomer Elena* expressed how the norms expressed in her rural community conflicted with her desire to remain single and pursue higher education instead of getting married and adopting a predetermined role within that community.

I come from an indigenous community. So, for us young ladies, we get married at a really young age and we don't really end up going straight to school. Some of us end up getting married or going straight to work in the fields. Actually, most of us end up going to the fields to work. When I went last summer to work over there, a certain person told me: 'Are you going to continue education or not? If you aren't, there is always the fields. You don't need no diploma.' ...I decided to go to attend college. I could get a better education, help out my people.

Second, this study did not support research by Budd & Stowers (2015), who found the intersectionality between student ethnicity and that of their peers and faculty as one of the most important factors that contribute to their success. Only 6.8% of Generation Z Latinx students studied gave a 5-star rating regarding the importance that faculty and counselors be the same ethnicity as them. Likewise, Generation Z Latinx students in this study stated that identity-centered college clubs and organizations were also not as important, with only 15.6% of students

in this survey giving a 5-star rating to indicate they were very likely to use these types of clubs and organizations. Congruent with faculty and counselors of the same ethnicity being less important to this group, membership in college clubs targeted to the Latinx community such as *Atlas Con Futura*, was perceived less likely to be used or necessary during this cohort of students' educational journey.

The findings in this study support that Generation Z Latinx students share many of the same characteristics as the larger Generation Z college students as a whole. First, students in this study said they want to be counseled and guided on their educational paths, and they believed they were more connected to technology than other generations. This study supports previous research by Trevino (2018) as well as by Seemiller & Grace (2018), who argued that colleges need to utilize more technology that leads to personalized guidance and mentorship. Second, this study's findings are supportive of Mouchayleh's (2009) study on how the generational age of faculty plays a role in students' success. Students in this study expressed their frustrations with faculty who struggled with technology use as well as with college website pages that were outdated. Third, in terms of instructional modality, Generation Z Latinx students in this study support the previous findings that Generation Z values technology; nonetheless, their expectation for personalization is high. Likewise, several researchers (Hodges, 2019; Hope, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2018; Selingo, 2018) found that this generation processes information differently than previous generations, though students in this study indicated that they preferred both online learning and face-to-face instruction equally. Fourth, this study supports previous findings by Bailey et al. (2015) and Johnson & Sween (2020) that personalized college experiences, such as guided pathways, need to be mapped for students to prepare this generation for the future

workforce. Approximately 56% of Generation Z Latinx students in this study expressed that they “really liked” when their instructor creates activities and assignments relevant to the workplace.

Overall, this study provided actionable insights into how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students as they progress toward their educational goals. The findings, and how they relate to previous research findings, were integrated throughout this chapter. In addition, the discussion of the findings indicated how this research fills the gap of what is known about Generation Z Latinx students. Generation Z Latinx are a student population that differs slightly from previous generation’s cultural norms, but adheres to the generational characteristics of Generation Z as a whole. As stated by Seemiller and Grace (2016), this generation is driven by different motivations, learning styles, characteristics, and skill sets unlike generational cohorts that preceded them. Therefore, community colleges should address how these differences could be accommodated, how the specific barriers can be removed, and how supports and services can be developed to help these students progress on their educational pathways.

Implications and Recommendations

Educational leaders in community colleges must address the needs of Generation Z Latinx students. Seventy percent of this population selects community college as their first choice for post-secondary education (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Without addressing the unique needs of Generation Z Latinx students, who experience an intersectionality between similar characteristics of Generation Z as a whole but a cultural identity that sets them apart from other Generation Z students, colleges will continue to see lower success rates of this population completing associate's degrees, certificates and credentials or transfer to a 4-year university. If community colleges continue current practices, the barriers to success Generation Z

Latinx students are experiencing now will continue to impede these students as they pursue their educational goals.

Demographic trends indicate that this population of students will continue to grow in the United States and in California (Noe-Bustamente et al., 2020). However, Generation Z Latinx students were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and dropped out of community college at higher rates than their peers (Weissman, 2021). Community colleges risk permanently losing these students without adapting strategies for re-engaging and retaining students. The same patterns of inequity that have historically hampered the socio-economic mobility of Latinx students will continue if colleges do not transform their current ways of operating and serving students.

Failing to meet the needs of Generation Z Latinx students also has long-term implications. The choices that colleges make now will have an impact not only on this generation, but also on future generations. Without increasing Generation Z Latinx students' educational attainment, this group will continue to lag behind their peers in terms of social mobility, earning potential, and influence on social and political changes (Romano & Eddy, 2017). The value of a college education can support students' earning potential over their lifetimes, prepare them for improved career opportunities, and open the door to networking and social influences.

Programs

This study revealed gaps in the current programs to support Generation Z Latinx students in community colleges. Students and families are mystified by the many layers of information, processes, and requirements that are necessary to enter and continue in community colleges. Many programs do exist to support students, but awareness, accessibility, and the design of the

programs are still impediments. For example, having a full-time minimum wage job will disqualify a student from accessing full financial aid; however, students shared a perception that work outside of school would ease their financial burden. It is not only financial challenges that create a roadblock. Students shared difficulties in meeting their mental health and basic needs while attending community college and voiced a need for guidance in their transition to careers or 4-year universities after completing their studies at their community college.

Programs that address these barriers could include:

- Parent-focused programs that start in high school or middle school and cover topics that best prepare students for the transition to higher education, selecting a college, and navigating the educational system and the many requirements that parents will need to be involved in, such as: completing course requirements in High School, preparing for and taking the SATs/ACTs, selecting and applying to colleges, completing applications, submitting a FAFSA, selecting classes, building a course schedule, and understanding graduation and transfer requirements;
- Support for basic needs, such as food pantry and lower-cost on-campus meal options, transportation vouchers, housing assistance, textbooks and course materials, and subsidized child care;
- Mental health resources, such as culturally-responsive counseling and therapeutic resources, stress-management, and dealing with major life changes;
- College-led efforts, such as Pledge, that comprehensively support students in their first year with academic, financial, and social resources;

- Simplify college applications, the FAFSA, and eliminate the need to take out student loans through reduced and free tuition programs;
- Nationally-targeted initiatives that allocate more funding and research towards raising awareness of this larger generational and cultural shift in higher education, supporting students in finding mentors, leadership opportunities, and careers;
- Coordinated efforts to leverage social media and new modalities of reaching this population of students with relevant information and skills that lead to academic success and socio-economic mobility;
- Coordinated efforts between government agencies, higher education institutions, and private organizations that streamline the pathways from high school to college to career.

Developing these programs will require further research and a clearer understanding of Generation Z Latinx students' needs, challenges, and opportunities.

College Knowledge

Students cited a disconnect in the knowledge and expectations of their families regarding the processes and structure of the higher education system in the U.S., especially for first-generation immigrant families, or families whose experience with higher education was outside of the country. Students who were successful in navigating their way through the higher education system frequently cited the help of a sibling or peer; those who were less successful were navigating the system alone. Students also struggled with the transition between high school and community college. Whereas in secondary education there is a high degree of support in selecting courses, meeting expectations, and accountability for attendance and performance, post-secondary education requires students to exercise discipline, self-motivation, and direction.

Some interventions that could benefit students include:

- Identifying near-peers, cohorts, or readily available counselors who can ensure that students have consistent guidance throughout their educational journey;
- Educating professors and staff about the resources and supports available to students so that they can serve as a bridge to these services;
- Strengthening partnerships between K-12, higher education, and employers to support students earlier in the pursuit of their goals;
- Pacing and simplifying information so that students have just the right amount of information when they need it, delivered in a modality that students find accessible (e.g., short videos, TikTok, text messages, alerts in Canvas).

Although helping students gain the necessary knowledge about college will support their success, colleges can do more to adapt to this growing cohort of learners. To that end, colleges must shift from preparing Generation Z Latinx students for college to redesigning colleges to meet the needs of this generation.

College Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call for colleges and universities across the nation. Many college leaders have learned that college systems and processes were not set up for flexibility, access, or the diversity of students' needs. Beyond this, the pandemic has uncovered the importance of access to and knowledge of technology. The impact of the digital divide became apparent as many Latinx students were disproportionately affected by school closures. A failure to address the digital divide will likely lead to a widening gap in student achievement, a problem that also existed long before the pandemic. Responses collected in this study uncovered the other challenges that students faced before, and especially during, this pandemic. Students

shared barriers in finding information on the college website; finding contradictory information; and accessing counselors or getting guidance during critical decision points. Even before the pandemic, some college operations were not responsive to the needs of Generation Z Latinx students who participated in this study and became even more apparent during the pandemic.

Changes made to accommodate students during school closures (transitioning services and supports online, adopting new communication strategies, and increasing availability of technical resources and course materials) should continue as we emerge from the pandemic and reimagine how our campuses will function. Adapting community colleges to center around the needs of Generation Z Latinx students will require:

- Adopting new media and technologies that are familiar to Generation Z Latinx students, such as YouTube, TikTok, Canvas pop-up alerts, text messages, instant messages, and personalized emails;
- Improving self-service options, such as navigating the website, registering for courses, finding resources, booking appointments with counselors and tutoring, and scheduling office hours with instructors;
- Creating course offerings and schedules that are designed around the needs of students rather than availability of faculty and classrooms. Consider continuing face-to-face and online instruction, and consider offering HyFlex modalities (instructional modality that gives students the option of attending in-class, participating online, or doing either on a class-to-class basis);
- Addressing students' academic challenges in gateway courses to prepare them for higher-paying careers in Science Technology Engineering and Math;

- Training faculty to improve their instruction through the use of new and emerging technologies;
- Advocating for 4-year baccalaureate degrees to be awarded through community colleges or through college partnerships to ease the burden of transfer;
- Improving coordination between the California Community Colleges (CCC), California State University (CSU), and University of California (UC) systems to support students' onboarding and transition between systems, giving students greater flexibility while maximizing state resources;
- Partnering with industry leaders to educate students on shifts in the job market, how to improve student employability, and on the selection of their program(s) of study;
- Developing programs that are more responsive to the emerging job market and students' interests, which includes students' growing interest in social science, healthcare, and business as well as entrepreneurship.

Colleges and universities have traditionally faced difficulties in rapidly responding to both generational and cultural shifts of their students, as well as changes related to the workforce and economy. However, community colleges are already observing declining enrollments since the pandemic, particularly at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Weissman, 2021). To remain relevant in the coming decades, and to close the equity gap between Latinx students and their White counterparts, community colleges have an urgent responsibility to realign their practices with their vision of student success—and the time is now.

Recommendations for Further Research

Generation Z Latinx students will continue to funnel through community colleges over the next ten years. Further research on this cohort of students would be helpful for college leaders to be conversant on how community colleges can better serve Generation Z Latinx students. First, more robust data is needed to evaluate and improve how this population is supported and served. As this study provides a glimpse into who Generation Z Latinx community college students are, the barriers to success they experience, and the supports and services needed, administering a similar study to more students throughout the community college system would yield broader information.

Second, as many Generation Z Latinx students reported being first-generation, further research is needed that explores how being the first generation in their family to be born in the U.S. or the first generation in their family to attend a higher educational institution affects their educational path.

Third, an exploration into the changing image of a college education is needed as the role of higher education is shifting. For many decades, receiving a college education was seen as enough accomplishment in and of itself for success. Now, social media trends have altered the way education is valued in today's gig economy, a term that refers to the increase in short-term contracts rather than permanent or stable jobs (Woodcock & Graham, 2020). Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube influencers are earning incomes that even college graduates do not receive.

Additionally, companies such as Google and Apple are offering specific training to employees for career skill-building and entry-level employment opportunities that bypass a higher education degree. These programs specifically train entry-level employees to compete in a digital world. A study to explore the effects of the gig economy on higher education could help

colleges rethink how programs are designed for the next generation of students. Fourth, as this study focused on Generation Z Latinx students, the potential insights of specific segments of Generation Z Latinx students, such as gender or major, might be useful to gain insight and a fuller understanding of how Generation Z Latinx students are similar or different based on specific demographic information. By having knowledge of specific groups within the Generation Z Latinx population, college leaders can garner specific knowledge for developing customized programs and services.

Conclusion

As educators, we have the opportunity to address systemic inequities and inspire the next generation of leaders and visionaries. If we fail to act quickly, the barriers of the past will continue to replicate the same oppression, systemic racism, and economic inequality that has held back so many generations of Latinx learners.

One Generation Z Latinx student shared her dreams, and the role that community college plays in her future.

[I saw] the struggle my family went [through] to maintain a job. College [was] one of the many ways to obtain a career, I went for it. I ... love the social aspect of school. I didn't want to leave high school into the sad cold world of a minimum wage job with no extra self-development or activities. So, I see college as a self-development, career building, and a social institution.

This quote represents the renewed sense of optimism and determination that Generation Z Latinx students have to improve their lives, and the lives of generations to come.

When Latinx students achieve great educational success, it is likely that local economies will grow more robust, tax revenues will increase, and dependency on social safety net programs

will decrease. However, if leaders do not address the impediments to success that this community faces, the gap between Latinx and non-Latinx educational achievement will continue to increase, resulting in long-term societal, political, and economic consequences. The findings of the study could be used by policymakers to boost college enrollment and graduation rates. In addition, the findings of this study could help policymakers address issues such as instruction, curriculum design, programs, or support services.

Educators have a duty to deliver the promises made in promoting higher education—the services, supports, and instruction that will make those dreams come true. These students have rich experiences and ideas to share, and by adopting their determination and hope, we can reimagine an educational system that is truly equitable.

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6. During the current academic year, how much reading and writing have you done <u>at this college</u> ? (Please respond to each item)	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
a. Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or packets of course readings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Number of written papers or reports of any length	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Mark the response that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current academic year have challenged you to do your best work at this college.

Extremely challenging ⑦ ⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① Extremely easy

8. Which of the following have you done, or are you currently doing <u>at this college</u> ? (Please respond to each item)	Yes	No
a. Internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. An English course taught specifically for students whose first language is not English (ESL, ESOL)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Developmental/remedial reading course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Developmental/remedial writing course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Developmental/remedial math course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Honors course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How much does <u>this college</u> emphasize the following? (Please respond to each item)	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Providing the financial support you need to afford your education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following? (Please respond to each item)	None	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	More than 30
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Working for pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Participating in college-sponsored activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, intramural sports, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Commuting to and from classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How much has your experience <u>at this college</u> contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? (Please respond to each item)	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Writing clearly and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Speaking clearly and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Thinking critically and analytically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Solving numerical problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Working effectively with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Learning effectively on your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Developing clearer career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Gaining information about career opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. This section has three parts. Please answer all three parts, indicating (1) how often you have used the following services during the current academic year, (2) how satisfied you are with the services, and (3) how important the services are to you at this college. (Please respond to each item)

	(1) Frequency of Use				(2) Satisfaction				(3) Importance		
	5 or more times	2-4 times	1 time	Never	Very	Some-what	Not at all	N.A.	Very	Some-what	Not at all
a. Academic advising/planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Career counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Job placement assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Peer or other tutoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Child care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Financial aid advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Computer lab	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Student organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Transfer advising/planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Library resources and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Services for students with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Services for active military and veterans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. During the current academic term at this college, I completed registration before the first class session(s).

- Yes; I was registered for all of my courses before the first class session(s)
- Mostly; I was registered for most of my courses before the first class session(s)
- Partly; I was registered for some of my courses before the first class session(s)
- No; I was not registered for any of my courses before the first class session(s)

14. The one response that best describes my experience with orientation when I first came to this college is:

- I took part in an online orientation prior to the beginning of classes
- I attended an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes
- I enrolled in an orientation course as part of my course schedule during my first academic term
- I was not aware of a college orientation
- I was unable to participate in orientation due to scheduling or other issues

15. During my first academic year at this college, I participated in a first-year experience program.

- Yes
- No

16. During my first academic term at this college, I participated in an organized learning community (a formal program in which groups of students take two or more classes together).

- Yes
- No

17. During my first academic term at this college, I participated in a student success course (a course that teaches the skills needed to succeed in college).

- Yes
- No

18. I was told that I should enroll in a developmental/remedial course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.) in my first academic term at this college, and I...

- Did enroll in more than one of these courses
- Did enroll in one of these courses
- Did not enroll in any of these courses
- Not applicable

367 PERFE

SERIAL #

PLEASE DO NOT MARK IN THIS AREA

○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

- 19. During the current academic term at this college, my instructors clearly explained a class attendance policy that specified how many classes I could miss without a penalty.
 - All of my instructors explained a class attendance policy
 - Most of my instructors explained a class attendance policy
 - Some of my instructors explained a class attendance policy
 - None of my instructors explained a class attendance policy
- 20. Before the end of my first academic term at this college, an advisor helped me develop an academic plan (a personalized plan with a defined sequence of courses for completing a college certificate or degree and/or for transferring to a 4-year college or university).
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm still in my first academic term; I have not yet developed an academic plan
- 21. Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable
- 22. During the current academic year at this college, I have participated in supplemental instruction/supplemental learning (extra class sessions with the instructor or an experienced student).
 - Never
 - Less than 1 time a week
 - 1–2 times a week
 - 3–4 times a week
 - More than 4 times a week
- 23. How likely is it that the following issues would cause you to withdraw from class or from this college? *(Please respond to each item)*

	Very likely	Likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely
a. Working full-time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Caring for dependents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Academically unprepared	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Lack of finances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Transfer to a 4-year college or university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- 24. How supportive are your friends of your attending this college?

	Extremely	Quite a bit	Somewhat	Not very
24. How supportive are your friends of your attending this college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- 25. How supportive is your immediate family of your attending this college?

25. How supportive is your immediate family of your attending this college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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- 26. Indicate which of the following are your reasons/goals for attending this college. *(Please respond to each item)*

	Yes	No
a. Complete a certificate program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Obtain an associate degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Transfer to a 4-year college or university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Obtain or update job-related skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Change careers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Self-improvement/personal enjoyment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3/8" PER" LINE

34. How many **total** academic terms have you been enrolled at **this college**?

- This is my first academic term
- This is my second academic term
- This is my third or fourth academic term
- This is my fifth or sixth academic term
- I have been enrolled more than six academic terms

35. Would you recommend **this college** to a friend or family member?

- Yes
- No

36. How would you evaluate your overall educational experience at **this college**?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

37. Do you have children who live with you and depend on you for their care?

- Yes
- No

38. Mark your age group.

- Under 18
- 18–19
- 20–21
- 22–24
- 25–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–64
- 65+

39. Your gender identity:

- Man
- Woman
- Other
- I prefer not to respond

40. Are you married?

Yes	No
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. Is English your native (first) language?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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42. Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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43. Are you an international student or non-resident alien?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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44. Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by **this college's** athletics department?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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45. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian
- Pacific Islander (non-Native Hawaiian)
- White
- Other
- I prefer not to respond

SAMPLE

46. What is the highest academic credential you have earned? (Mark only one)

- None
- GED
- High school diploma
- Vocational/technical certificate
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's/doctoral/professional degree

47. Who in your family has attended at least some college? (Mark all that apply)

- Mother
- Father
- Brother/Sister
- Child
- Spouse/Partner
- Legal Guardian
- No one

Additional Items
(Please respond to these items if requested)

1. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	11. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
2. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	12. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
3. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	13. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
4. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	14. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
5. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	15. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
6. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	16. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
7. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	17. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
8. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	18. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
9. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	19. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
10. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	20. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E

Using the list provided, please fill in the bubbles that correspond to the code indicating your program, major, or pathway of study. In the top row, indicate the first number in the program code. In the bottom row, indicate the second number in the program code.

<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9

Appendix B - Online Survey Email Invitation

Hello Generation Z Latinx Students,

I am a graduate student from Kansas State University, and I am doing a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is entitled: ***Meeting the Needs of Generation Z Latinx Community College Students***. So, I think you might be the perfect fit to help me with my research!

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to find ways that community colleges can do a better job at helping you meet your educational goals. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and don't worry, your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from the survey at any time and all survey responses will be deleted, including the informed consent agreement.

An informed consent agreement will appear on the first screen page of the survey. There will be no individually identifiable information, remarks, comments or other identification of you as an individual participant. All results will be presented as a collective summary. If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by emailing me at: airhart@ksu.edu. The results of this research project will be published in a dissertation, but your identity will remain anonymous and confidential.

I personally want to thank you for helping me with my research. Don't think I am asking you to do this survey and leave empty-handed 😊. If you complete the survey, your name will be put into a raffle drawing and 2 names will be drawn to win a \$100 Amazon gift card!



[Click here to get started and take your chance to win!](#)

[TAKE GEN Z LATINX SURVEY](#)

Questions and comments about this survey may be directed to any of the following:

- Alison Airhart, airhart@ksu.edu
- KSU Dissertation Co-Chair Jennifer Spielvogel, jspielv@ksu.edu.

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224
- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224.

Thanks again for your participation!

Appendix C - Focus Group Interview Email Invitation

Dear [Participant Name],

Thank you for your participation in my survey on Generation Z Latinx Community College students. You have been chosen to participate in a 30-minute Zoom focus group interview! When you attend the focus group interview, I will send you a \$10 gift card of your choice from either Starbucks, Gas Card, or In-N-Out Burger.



The focus group interviews will be on Tuesday, June 16, 2021. I am trying to pick the best time for everyone, so please **reply to this email by letting me know which times below on June 16 you are available.**

Tuesday, June 16, 2021

- 11:00 am – 12:00 am
- 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Once the focus group interview dates and times are scheduled, you will receive a meeting invitation with the Zoom link.

With your permission, the session will be recorded and transcribed, but these data will be available only to you and me. The results of this research project will be published in a dissertation, but your identity will stay confidential. Again, your participation is voluntary.

Thanks again for your participation!

-Alison

Questions and comments about this focus group may be directed to any of the following:

- Alison Airhart, airhart@ksu.edu
- KSU Dissertation Co-Chair Jennifer Spielvogel, jspielv@ksu.edu.
- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224
- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224.