AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Theresa Neimann for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education presented on February 20, 2020

Title: The Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural Two-Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Latina students are underrepresented and undereducated in rural community colleges. There are gaps in rural community college research specifically focusing on Latina retention. This research identified the factors detracting from and/or enhancing the college experience for Latinas in rural community colleges.

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to find the factors that support and those that hinder Latinas in achieving their educational goals as they pursue a rural college-going experience. Tinto's (1975; 1993) model of student departure and retention provided a theoretical explanatory lens.

Setting: One rural community college in the Pacific Northwest was selected. Interviews were conducted via the location choice of each participant.

Subjects: Participants included 14 purposively selected Latinas over the age of 18 who took at least one term of credit bearing classes at a rural community college in the Pacific Northwest.

Research Design: The study used a qualitative, narrative design, with social constructivist approach. A qualitative interview guide was utilized to interview participants.

Data Collection and Analysis: Data were analyzed from interviews and responses were transcribed based on a narrative analysis transcription protocol. Word and phrase analysis and thematic content of the responses were analyzed using MAXQDA software. A codebook was created to keep track of participants and their responses. A spreadsheet for each theme was created separating the categories and codes.

Findings: Seven themes emerged from the narrative analysis that depicted elements of positive or negative college-going experiences: These themes included: career goal, parental-family expectations/support, financial support, learning and instruction, student services support, peer and teacher support, and cultural barriers. Some of the findings in this research contradicted Tinto (1975), who held the belief that in order for students to be retained, they must first separate from their pre-college social groups and form new social groups. In this research many of the participants maintained their pre-college social groups and yet were retained in the community college. Another finding contradicted Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory in which student retention is predicated on the positive association between academic integration and high school grade performance; however this research revealed a different finding: nine participants received a GED rather than a high school diploma, suggesting limited academic high-school rigor and integration. More than half of GED participants went on to complete their college studies. An analysis of the data also revealed that high school students who drop out before they graduate experience less rigor, less academic integration than those students who graduate. Tinto (1993) also suggested, as part of social integration, that faculty and peer interaction is invaluable to student retention. Although many participants in this research felt academically supported, some noted that they lacked academic support; yet most completed, transferred, or were retained. Most of the participants who had no financial support from the college completed, transferred, or

remained enrolled. Despite lack of financial support being a negative experience, retention rates appeared similar between those with or without financial burden, which conveyed a difference with previous literature.

Conclusions: Given the limited research on this group of students, the findings provide insights for future researchers and for theory development. Though future research on Latina retention is needed in rural colleges, the practical implications from this research will help community college personnel embrace a change in the academy such as serving students' needs expressed in intentional opportunities for academic and social engagement and better access to financial, student services, and other resources.

The Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural

Two-Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies)

by
Theresa Neimann

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Theresa Neimann, Author

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Chapter One: Focus and Significance

From their inception, America's community colleges have espoused the ideal that higher education should be accessible to everyone. However, not everyone has equal access (*Celebracion de Excelencia*, 2015; Santiago & Callen, 2010). The Latinx[1] population, as a group, is failing in tertiary education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012).[2] Although there are multiple studies that addressed why Latinx failed (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006) these studies did not provide an adequate account of the rural aspects of Latina community college-going experiences.

Latinx Culture

In a general sense, the Latinx culture has common core values, traditions, and experiences that differ from those found predominantly in the dominant, White culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Gandara & Contreras, 2009). For example, according to the Center for Disease Control (n.d) and National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2016), Latinx culture possesses positive assets that lead to their social and emotional health. Generally speaking, the

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[1] For purposes of this research the author uses the term Latinx (designating both male and female) and Latina-(female) of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (NCES, 2016). The participants named in this study are females regardless of how they self-identify ethnically who have ancestry from any of these countries. There are some areas in this research where the author uses the term Hispanic to identify studies and work conducted specifically on this group. The ethnicity Hispanic relates to being a person of Latin American descent and especially of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin living in the U.S. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race; origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States (Llagas & Snyder, 2003; NCES 2012). The National Center for Education Statistics, the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the United States Census Bureau in this research has combined the data for both Hispanic and Latinx (unless otherwise noted). Instead of using both terms (Hispanic, Latina/o) simultaneously and repetitively the author uses the term Latinx or Latina.
[2] The data include students of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Latinx population tends to hold collectivist values or group orientation values whereas individuals often look to one another for opinions. In addition, some tend to have larger household sizes than their White counterparts. Faith and church attendance are often central to the Latinx family and community life (Krogstad, 2016). *Familismo*, is another Latinx positive cultural asset, it is a term that signifies the value of family over individual or community needs and the expression of strong loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among family members (Sy & Romero, 2008).

Furthermore, although frequently referred to as a single ethnic group, the Latinx population are a highly heterogeneous mix of individuals with varying values and traditions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). It is assumed that programs in education and policies intended to improve education retention and reduce education disparities of women who identify as Latinas may be less effective because they do not consider or adapt to the cultural differences that are inherent in Latinx culture. Therefore, this present research addressed these issues and focused specifically on (a) the barriers that exist toward Latina retention, (b) the coping styles for Latina retention, and (c) the roles that gender and local environment play, as these factors are part of Latina college-going experiences. If Latinas are going to be successful in rural community colleges where they may face different challenges than in urban colleges (Effland & Kassel, n.d.; Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012) these factors must be addressed (*Celebracion de Excelencia*, 2015; De Brey, Musu, & McFarland, 2019a; Gildersleeve, Rumann, & Mondragon, 2010; Oregon University System, 2011; Saenz, 2008; Schultz, 2004; Strange et al, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Among the challenges that faced Latina rural community colleges students included: attending college part-time, being the first in their family to attend or

graduate college, being from a low-income background, work and family commitments, and need for financial support (Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014).

This study explored issues and challenges that Latinas faced in rural communities and identified the experiences that were essential in order for Latinas to be successful. Understanding the rural college-going participatory experiences of the Latina student population may add to the literature and may enable community college personnel to capitalize on what works for Latinas in order for Latina women to be involved in a positive college-going experience.

Latinx Population

The Latinx population is increasing rapidly; by 2050, Latinx are projected to represent over 25% of the United States population (NCES, 2003). Between 1990 and 2013, the Latinx population more than doubled, from 23 to 54 million (NCES, 2016). Furthermore, based on census data documenting birth rates, immigration, and residence in the United States, the rural Latinx student population is expected to increase (*Community Facts*, 2014, Llagas & Snyder, 2003; Mather & Pollard, 2007; NCES, 2016; Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, 2010; *President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics*. (n.d.); Zong & Batalova, 2015; Zong et al., 2019).

In rural areas of the United States, 13% of Latinx and Hispanic students ages 25 and older in the year 2000 held associate degrees. In 2015, this increased to 17% (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017).

At the same time the Latinx population is increasing, educational attainment rates have largely remained stable (De Brey, Musu & McFarland, 2019b). According to the 2010 census data, of the 16-24-year-old Latinx population born in Mexico and migrated to the United States,

39% dropped out of high school (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). The National Council of La Raza noted that only 10% of U.S. born Latina women complete four or more years of college, as compared with 14% of Black women and 23% of White women (National Council of La Raza, 2014). Latina students are not earning postsecondary credentials at the same rate as their White female counterparts (Iturbide, et. al., 2009; Raffaelli & Gustavo, 2009). The White-Latinx gap in the college enrollment rate has narrowed however. Latinx enrollments are on the rise; between 2003 and 2013, the gap in enrollment rates decreased from 18 to eight percentage points (NCES, 2016). Moreover, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Latinx students more than doubled between 2003–04 and 2013–14. Across racial/ethnic groups the share of bachelor's degrees earned by Latinx students ages 25-29 were 15% compared to 41% for White students (Pew Research Center, 2014). Though the numbers are growing, there are still inequities in college enrollment and attainment for Latinx students, in particular those who live in rural areas. Among the nation's Latinx student population, rural Latinx students have been shown to be the least likely to attend college (*Celebracion de Excelencia*, 2015; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012).

Community college students differ from their peers enrolled in public and private 4-year institutions in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and income level. Latinx students are overrepresented at community colleges: 14% of students in community colleges identify as Latinx compared to nine percent of students at public four-year institutions (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008). Rural community colleges often have resource constraints which exacerbate these differences (Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013).

The issue of inequitable college enrollment and degree attainment for underserved students, including Latinx students, has been noted by the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC, n.d.a). The State adopted a goal that by 2025, 40% of all

adult Oregonians will hold a bachelor's degree or higher, 40% will complete an associate degree, and 20% will hold a high school diploma or equivalent (Oregon Learns, 2017; Oregon State University, 2018; Oregon University System, 2012). Oregon's Governor, Kate Brown, has provided additional state funding aimed at meeting the 40- 40-20 goals, which included student grants and Career and College Readiness (CCR) resources, as well as hiring staff to focus on new strategies to keep students engaged and on track toward graduation (Kate Brown Committee, 2017). With legislation passed in 2017 and effective on January 1, 2018, Oregon clarified the 40-40-20 educational goal which focused it strategically on young Oregonians rising through the education system (HECC, n.d.a.). Unfortunately, Latina rural college students have been under-represented within the scope of Oregon's 40-40-20 goal (Oregon Learns, 2017).

Educational attainment by race/ethnicity as noted by the 2016 data from Oregon Department of Education (HECC, n.d.b.) suggested that the Latinx student population has far to go toward meeting Oregon's 40-40-20 educational goals. The data revealed 38% of the Latinx student population (ages 25 and older) did not have a high school diploma or General Education Development or General Education Diploma (GED) in 2016. The data show that 23% of the Latinx student population hold an associate degree, while roughly 35% of their White counterparts have completed the same degree. Another disparity was shown in bachelor's degree attainment. Among the Latinx student population, 14% held a bachelor's degree in 2016 compared to 32% of White Oregonians.

In 2016, of the Oregon Latinx population ages 25 and older (rising through the education system), 23% had an associates or certificate from a community college, compared to 39% of White students (HECC, n.d.b.). In order to increase the retention and success rates of Latina rural community college students, community colleges in rural areas must make it possible for

more Latinas to attend and have a positive higher education experience. Therefore, community college leaders need to understand what factors detract from and/or enhance the college experience for Latinas in rural community colleges.

Latinx Cultural Assets

Often missing from student success discourse are positive cultural assets that Latinx college students have been shown to possess. For example, in a qualitative study of 47 Latinx university students, Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala, (2014) found that Latinx students possessed specific cultural wealth assets that led to students' college success. Findings indicated that Latinx students possessed strengths and life experiences that were often overlooked in mainstream college student success discourse which included: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistant 'ganas'/perseverance (motivation sufficient to act), ethnic consciousness, spirituality/faith, and pluriversal assets (infinite ways of thinking) (Gloria & Castellanos 2012; Rendón, Nora. & Kanagala, 2014). Many Latinx students' firm commitment to their families and to the Latinx community and the notion that they serve as role models for others in similar situations pushed them to succeed in college. In addition, the ability to become transformed from the college experience, their ability to use bilingualism to their benefit, their ability to resist micro-aggressions and to serve as personal support systems for their peers, and their remarkable capacity to maneuver themselves both in the foreign world of college and in their personal worlds led to their college success (Gloria & Castellanos 2012). The study also showed that many Latinx students had sheer determination and drive to succeed, of having a deep sense to "give back" to their communities, to have a purpose in life, and to function with an intellectual consciousness of pluriversality, a critical high-level cognitive skill which is

advantageous when oppressed people have to negotiate shifting power structures and cultural conditions (Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014, p. 5).

Even though strategies for success exist, multiple barriers still prevent some of the Latinx population from persisting at community colleges (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Yosso, 2014; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006). First, some Latinx students are less academically and socially integrated into the college environment (DiBrito, Torres & Talbot, 2000; Musu-Gillette, De Brey, McFarland, Hussar, Sonnenberg, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2017). Instead of complete social and academic integration, the American educational system often places Latinx students in an "other" category (Gandara & Contreras, 2009, p. 20). Second, some Latinas are less academically prepared than their White female counterparts, due in part to the inequality of the education system (Gloria, 1997; Kena, Musu-Gillette, & Robinson, 2015; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). As a result, students may be required to enroll in developmental education courses, increasing the time and the costs to completion. Third, evidence suggests that many Latinas encounter racism on campus (Farrigan, 2017; Maduena, 2012; Rivas-Drake & Mooney 2009). Not only do some Latinas contend with discrimination based on their racial identity-language, and skin color (Turner, Reynolds, Haslam, & Ryan, 2000), some must also contend with discrimination within their own culture, because oftentimes there is a stigma of inferiority given to the female role: some Latinas have been victimized by a double discrimination—sexism and racism (De La Torre, 2009; Joaquina-Villasenor, Estefani-Reyes, & Munoz, 2013; Nieto, 1976; Villegas, Lemanski, & Valdéz, 2010). Fourth, the Latinx population are more likely to attend community colleges because tuition is cheaper; however, many drop out because they lack the resources to continue (Biswas, 2005; Cavazos, Johnson, & Sparrow, 2010).

Capitalizing on cultural wealth strategies are essential if more Latinas are going to have successful college-going experiences. The findings from this present research can lead to recommending solutions useful for student service personnel, policy makers, faculty, and administrative services.

Tinto's Theory of Student Retention and Departure

Theory-informed research is critical because theory is developed knowledge, and through research new knowledge has been shown to enrich established theory (Bernath, 2007; Foucault, 1972). Many researchers have sought to develop models to explain why students withdraw from college (Bean, 1980; Manski, 1989; Pascarella, 1985; Tinto, 1993). Tinto's (1993) integration framework is one of the most prevalent theoretical perspectives explaining this problem. Tinto (1975) explained the value of social (moral value and collective affiliation integration) integration and academic engagement dynamics as factors in student retention and departure. His theory provides a holistic accounting of many of the key factors that came into play which shaped student motivations and what they are prepared to do when they get to college and influence the meanings they make of their experiences (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Manski, 1989; Pascarella, 1985). Tinto's (1993) model explained the nuances of student persistence as a function of dynamic relationships between the individual and other actors within the college and their home communities. These relationships are posited to impact college persistence and withdrawal (Pascarella et al., 1986). His theory further articulates reasons for student retention and departure and helps to explain how students respond to the unique challenges they face during college.

Tinto's (1975; 1993) theoretical framework was used when preparing questions in the interview guide for this qualitative research; it explained student persistence as a function of

dynamic relationships between the individual and other actors within the college and their home community. The interview questions elicited responses from the participants that helped to determine whether Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory was useful in framing factors which led to retention or departure for Latinx students as they attended a rural community college. This research project was designed and contributed to the knowledge whether or not Tinto's theory of student departure and retention was an appropriate interpretation. Also, the research was meant to provide insight into the college-going experiences of Latinas attending a rural community college.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Tinto's (1975; 1993) model of student departure and retention was the theoretical explanatory lens used to explain why some Latinx students attending rural community colleges persist and why others do not. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that supported and those that hindered some Latinas in achieving their educational goals as they pursued a rural college-going experience. This research focused on the analysis of two questions:

1. What factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as contributing positively toward retention while attending a remote rural community college in Oregon?

The results from this question identified positive factors/experiences that Latina women self-reported as contributing toward retention while they attended a remote rural community college. These can then be examined and determined whether they conformed to the supported factors Tinto identified in student departure and retention.

2. What factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as detracting from retention while attending a remote rural community college in Oregon?

The results identified negative factors/experiences that Latina women self-reported as detracting from retention while attending a remote rural community college. These can be compared with the negative factors Tinto (1993) identified in student departure and retention.

The relationship the research questions have with Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory was explored in this research project. Latina voices in and of themselves are authoritative, but equally important is how theory informed phenomena which challenged or supported existing knowledge and assumptions. Whether or not these factors conformed to Tinto's (1993) model was also addressed in this research. Therefore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding Tinto's (1993) theory that may be helpful in understanding how Latinas responded to the successes and challenges they faced while they attended a rural community college. Furthermore, aspects of the research findings may lead to needed revisions in Tinto's model.

The research questions helped to frame and interpret the experiences of Latinx students attending rural community colleges. The participant testimonials in this research identified experiences that enabled students to succeed and also defined institutional or other barriers that impeded student success. The participants named their own experiences and affirmed what they knew to be true in the interview narratives regarding their college-going experiences.

Identifying the positive and negative factors may be used to guide rural community colleges in structuring student services to meet the needs of Latina students. If college administrators and personnel capitalize on the factors that create a favorable college experience for Latinas, it is likely that more Latinas will have a successful rural college-going experience. In addition, the findings from this study will help rural community college administrative and other personnel understand what factors detract from and/or enhance the college experience for Latinas when attending their institutions.

Qualitative Focus and Contributions

Theoretical inquiry is central to the vitality and development of a field of knowledge (Bernath, 2007). The connection between theory and the content of the narratives was heuristically important (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This connection was central to fleshing out an understanding of the Latina-gendered and cultural journey of trying to navigate a rural community college experience. The narratives revealed the personal struggles and resilience as they sought a college-going experience. Social theories, such as Tinto's (1975; 1993) in particular, provided the explanatory theoretical lens which helped the researcher bring Latina epistemologies into the conversation of recognized scholars. Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory of retention provided an explanatory conceptual platform in which to analyze facts, self-perceptions, assumptions, hypotheses, and findings. This theory suggested that there are levels of student social and academic engagement that lead to student persistence or departure.

The model further suggested that students entered college with individual characteristics and make decisions that lead to their retention or departure from college. Students entered with specific commitments and beliefs that helped them both finish and stay in college (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Scholars noted, together with these commitments, there also existed a complexity of several overlaying factors, which were the result of Latinx students negotiating different aspects of their cultural identity while navigating their college-going experiences (Alcoff, 2006; Arredondo, 2003; Blackwell, 2011; Castellanos, & Gloria, 2007; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Pedroza, 2010; Turner, & Reynolds, 2010).

Key Terms: Defined

Latinx–For purposes of this research the author uses the term Latinx to designate both male and female of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish

culture or origin, regardless of race (NCES, 2016). The participants named in this study are Latina females regardless of how they self-identify ethnically who have ancestry from either of these countries.

Hispanic–Though Hispanic origin is an ethnicity rather than a race, and therefore persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race; origin which can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States (Knapp et al. 2012). The National Center for Education Statistics, the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the United States Census Bureau in this research has combined the data for both Hispanic and Latinx (unless otherwise noted). Instead of using both terms (Hispanic, Latinx) simultaneously and repetitively the author uses the term Latinx.

Cultural capital in this study is informed by Abel (2008), as the "operational skills, linguistics styles, values and norms that one accrues through education and lifelong socialization" (p. 2). That is, some individuals have access to more resources than others solely based on what family or culture they were born into and their access to resources.

Cultural competency is demonstrated by incorporating, at all levels, the organization of the following: the importance of culture; the assessment of cross-cultural relations; including vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences; the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally specific needs (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Dominant culture refers to European American culture, which has had a hegemonic monopoly and as a result is embedded within most American institutions.

Familismo is a cultural value integrated within the Latina psyche, emphasizing family loyalty, responsibility, and closeness, often requiring Latina women to put the needs of their family before their individual self-actualization needs (Sy & Romero, 2008).

First-generation status refers to students who are the first ones in their family to attend a higher-education institution. National data on students with first-generation status are at a distinct disadvantage in accessing and succeeding in institutions of higher education (NCES, 2016).

Rural (locale code 43), includes territories that are more than 25 miles from an urbanized and 10 miles from an urban cluster (Provasnik et al., 2007). Remote in this study refers to a rural-remote community with a community college student population fewer than 1,500. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in cooperation with the Census Bureau revised its definition of rural schools. There are now four major locale categories—city, suburban, town, and rural—each divided into three subcategories. The Census designated rural areas are those that do not lie inside an urbanized area or urban cluster (Warburton, Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001). The U.S. Census defines rural territory as more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and also more than 10 miles from an urban college (Goreham, 2008; Warburton, Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001).

Underserved population refers to populations that face barriers and challenges in accessing and using resources, due to geographic location, SES, religion, sexual orientation, gendered-identity, racial, and ethnic populations. Underserved populations usually encounter unique challenges such as language and navigating other cultures, physical and/or cognitive ability, alienage status, age (United States department of Agriculture, 2017) or stereotype threat (Valencia & Black, 2002).

Summary

This research emphasized challenges Latina students faced and helped to explain the cultural and individual characteristics with which students enter college. Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory of retention provided a platform for understanding the complexities of factors involved in determining the support needed by Latinas in order to be able to remain in college and to work towards the achievement of their educational goals. The purpose of the study was to find the factors that supported and those that hindered Latinas in achieving their educational goals as they pursued a rural college-going experience. The research questions are: (a) What factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as contributing positively toward retention while attending a remote rural community college in Oregon? and (b) What factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as contributing positively toward retention while attending a remote rural community college in Oregon? The details of this research may provide insights for both the recipients and participants of this study by exposing and documenting barriers to retention as well as documenting culturally-influenced coping mechanisms of some Latina students attending rural community colleges. Study findings are expected help community college policy makers, administrators, students, legislators, and other constituents of higher education institutions at both the two and four-year levels to examine their own practices and services to assist Latinas' retention in college.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This review focused on introducing Latinx retention complexities and successes of their college-going experiences. The literature review helped to frame and interpret the experiences of Latinx students attending rural community colleges. Tinto's (1975; 1993) perspectives on student success and departure provided a theoretical platform in which to view and interpret the holistic accounting of many key factors affecting student retention (Manski, 1989; Pascarella, 1985). This is especially significant for Latina students as their persistence or withdraw may be a function of dynamic relationships between the individual, their culture, and other actors within the college and their home communities.

Approach to the Literature

The research questions guiding the literature review focused on experiences Latinas have encountered while attending a rural community college and pursued credit-bearing education. The search terms used were only in English, these included the words: Latina, Latino, Latinx, Hispanic, higher education, retention, minority students, and community colleges and rural. Among the databases used included Google, Google Scholar, ERIC, ASHE-ERIC, psycINFO, CQ Researcher, ProQuest Research Library, and Oregon State University ProQuest, from years 2006 to late 2019. Many of the articles in this review came from peer-reviewed journals in English, mostly from the years 2006-2019 but some from the late 1900s such as *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, Journal of Research in Rural Education, Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Education, Journal of Research in Rural Education,* and articles from the U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics. Key books that focused on theory and qualitative research were Tinto's, *Leaving College and Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition* (1993); Creswell's *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and*

Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (2012); Merriam's *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation, Revised and Expanded from Qualitative Research, and Case Study Applications in Education* (2009)*.* Other relevant studies were also utilized.

Overview of Identified Literature

The literature review covered four major topics. The first was problems with the cultural deficit model. The second was Tinto's (1975; 1993) Theory of Retention and Departure. The third topic discussed factors that have been shown to be related to college experiences for Latinx students (as well as specifically for Latinas). The final topic covered the challenges of rural colleges, particularly for Latinas.

Deficit approach to studying Latinx students. Though not the theoretical underpinning for this present research, the concept of the cultural deficit model was characterized as a perception that certain populations such as minorities, were sometimes "deficient" because their culture and socioeconomic standing were different from the majority culture (Lopez, 2009; Reeder, 2017; Valencia & Black, 2002). Though minorities, especially first-generation immigrants, may sometimes find it difficult to navigate in a culture not of their origin, this does not necessarily denote deficit characteristics but denotes a lack of the dominant culture familiarity. For example, the lack of the dominant culture familiarity might include the lack of certain navigational knowledge such as in higher education (Lederman, 2012; Valencia & Black, 2002), public education, or certain employment expectations.

The deficit model is often used to put blame on the victim (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Valencia & Black, 2002) to explain why minorities fail to register or fail to be retained in higher education (Irizarry, 2009) instead of defining systemic oppression models or discussing lack of institutional commitment toward Latinx students (Castellanos & Gloria 2007; Valencia & Black,

2002). The model documents reasons that prevent minority students from succeeding that usually blames the student. Scholars have noted such myths from the deficit model concerning Latinx students included factors such as parents not encouraging their children to get a college education, students not valuing education, low SES, inability to understand application forms, and lack of family support for schoolwork (Castellanos & Gloria 2007; Reeder, 2017; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Recognizing and understanding the idea of the deficit model was critical when analyzing literature on why some Latinx students have lower college and university retention rates than White students. The cultural deficit model argued that the failure of minority students to complete their education was due to negative characteristics that were culture bound. Irizarry (2009) summarized it in the following way: society "…blamed the victims of institutional oppression for their own victimization by referring to negative stereotypes and assumptions regarding certain groups or communities" (p. 1). Lopez (2009) and others (Castellanos & Gloria 2007; Reeder, 2017; Valencia & Black, 2002) indicated that the current debates on educational reform have had a tendency to state that the achievement gap between White and Latinx students resulted from individual deficits, while ignoring the barriers of inequality in institutions of higher education that these minority students faced.

Tinto's theory of retention and departure. The application of theory, such as Tinto's (1975) model of student retention, applied to research was important as it provided a foundational lens that helped the researcher apply a methodological approach in which to interpret, understand, explain, and predict levels of academic and social integration which led to retention or departure for some Latinx students. Tinto's (1975) early theory claimed that students were more likely to remain in school if they were socially and academically integrated

into the culture of the institution. Tinto's (1975) initial theory also noted that students entered an academic environment characterized by individual internal factors such as grade performance and intellectual development-which led to levels of academic integration which either correlated to retention or departure. According to Tinto's (1993) later revisions, students entered higher education with specific commitments and beliefs to both finish and stay in college, which has also been supported by previous research (Manski, 1989; Pascarella, 1985; Pascarella et al., 1986). Even later revisions (Tinto, 2015) discussed the imbalance of earlier theories by laying out a conceptual model of student institutional persistence as seen through the eyes of students and discussed the role institutions must play in order to promote student persistence.

Revisions to Tinto's theory. Initially Tinto (1975; 1982) viewed college dropout as the person-centered behavioral consequence of individual attributes such as lack of motivation, and lack of skills on the student's part. However, Tinto (1993) provided revisions to his 1975 model that included other characteristics affecting retention external to individual choices. He (1993) noted retention success depended upon students entering a social system in which robust and intentional peer group interactions and student/staff interactions fostered student social integration. But the results from years of debates, a heightened focus on the additional role of institutions in increasing student retention now exists (Braxton et al., 2004; Lundberg, Kim, Andrade, & Bahner, 2018; Tinto, 2015).

The role of institutions in helping minority students. Braxton et al. (2004) presented revisions to Tinto's model through sociological, economic, and psychological considerations. By positioning social integration as the decisive factor in retention, Braxton et al's revisions suggested that certain characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, academic ability, SES, high school preparation, and self-efficacy) form primary student commitments to the institution and to

achieving a degree. The student's commitment to the college in turn affects the student's perceptions of institutional elements, including the institution's commitment to the student's welfare, support from faculty and staff, and the potential for social interaction with peers. Carpi, Ronan, Falconer, Boyd, and Lents (2013) agreed with Braxton et al. (2004) that if students were socially integrated into the college environment they also experienced student enrichment in intentions, goals, and institutional commitments, as well as strengthened commitments towards furthering college experiences and retention.

Additional examples of institutional elements that helped to foster social integration included involvement in clubs, sports, student activities, and the connection to peers. Meeuwisse, Severiens, and Born (2010) found that Latinx students who felt like they did not belong to an institution were less likely to persist in school, and similarly students who felt isolated, and lacked the ability to interact with other students or faculty, were less likely to continue in school.

According to Braxton et al. (2004) the student's ability to pay for college was regarded more as a reason to reduce social barriers and ease integration than as a financial gauge. Instead of academic integration, Braxton et al's amendments highlighted the crucial role of the college in providing quality teaching, academic advising, and other tasks that encouraged student engagement. Braxton et al's focus on institutional action complimented Tinto's (2015) later version that highlighted what institutions can do to promote student motivation to persist and, in turn, increase student persistence to completion. "Institutions can impact student college experiences on motivation which can be understood as the outcome of the interaction among student goals, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perceived worth or relevance of the curriculum" (Tinto, 2015, p. 2).

But Tinto's earlier (1975, 1993) models of student retention and departure did not fully account for minority student persistence. Tierney (1992) suggested that factors that were influential on student departure may look differently for other groups of students such as minority students than for White students. Today, in practice, college administrators may assume that issues related to the retention of minority students were similar to those of the dominant White students and that retention theories created for majority populations may equally apply to non-majority groups (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004).

Other scholars (Bordes-Edgar, Arrendo, Robinson-Kurpius, & Rund, 2011; Espinosa, 2011; Lacy, 1978; Martin & Meyer, 2010) studied retention and departure factors with minority student populations and found that minority students increased persistence if they have experienced adequate academic integration noted by academic preparedness, GPA scores, academic engagement, and research opportunities. Using the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) survey that was distributed to 5,793 Latinx community college students in randomly selected credit-bearing courses at 674 community colleges in the United States, Lundberg, Kim, Andrade, and Bahner (2018) found that one of the biggest factors propelling Latinx retention were institutional commitments, particularly faculty engagement that was viewed as institutional agents of support. Tovar's (2015) findings were similar to Lundberg et al.'s (2018) student-faculty engagement positively led to retention for Latinx students. Lundberg et al. found that faculty and student interaction regarding discussing grades or assignments, talking about career plans, receiving prompt feedback, working hard to meet instructors' expectations, and viewing faculty as approachable significantly and positively predicted learning for Latinx students. It should be noted that Tinto (1999) included frequent and

quality contact with faculty, staff and peers as the most important predictors of retention for students.

In a recent study theoretically grounded in Tinto's model of retention, Braxton, et al., (2014) found financial pressure was the most consistent institutional impediment to college retention for all students, and institutional control over academic quality was critical to minority student retention. Abrica and Martinez (2016) also found the same dynamics that impeded minority retention. However, Abrica and Martinez also found that many minority students possessed a sheer determination to complete their studies when faced with many challenges.

Critique of Tinto's model. Whether Tinto's model can be used as a theoretical guide to inform reasons why some Latinx students are retained or departed has been a topic of research and debate. One shortcoming was the model's failure to address factors external to the institution's immediate environment. Studies have focused on the influence of economic factors on voluntary student withdrawal such as the interaction of finances with other factors (Andrieu & St. John, 1993; Braxton et al., 2004). These findings provided evidence for the importance of external factors such as financial factors to student degree completion. Another limitation of Tinto's model was the insufficient consideration of differences in the educational experiences of students from different backgrounds, such as minority students (Braxton et al., 2004; Tierney, 1992). This shortcoming has attracted more debate, given that the student's cultural origins as well as the ability to understand and become involved in the campus culture, were critical for persistence (Cuadraz, 1996; Gandara, 1982; Kuh & Love, 2000; Yaqub, 2010). Scholars (Castillo et al., 2006; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000) noted that Tinto's earlier models primarily focused on a person-centered approach as the student must adapt to the cultural norms and values of peers, faculty, and the social/academic structures of the institution. But this model did not

work for minorities who might be unfamiliar with these norms and structures, and instead

retention failure was viewed as a minority student deficit as integration implied assimilation and

Tinto's model assumed that students of color should assimilate-but often did not (Castillo et al.,

2006; Oseguera et al., 2009). Some researchers (e.g., Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004; Tierney,

1992) have begun to explore how aspects of identifying with a minority group may contribute to

departure. Even though students had strong academic backgrounds, their persistence decisions

were negatively impacted by experiences of cultural and social isolation, negative stereotypes,

low expectations from teachers and peers, and non-supportive educational environments

(Oseguera, Locks, & Vega; 2009; Yaqub, 2010). Notably, these factors are not captured in

Tinto's model.

Factors affecting college experiences for Latinx students. This section of the literature

review focuses on factors that have been found to impact college experience for Latinx students.

Much research in the literature focused on four-year college experiences from urban and

metropolitan areas, which may be more affluent and offer more resources than rural community

colleges (Greenberg, Teixeira, & Swaim, 1998). Though there were gaps in the research

literature that focused on Latinx participation in rural higher education, research has been

consistent in indicating that such Latinx involvement in higher education was present at lower

levels than their White female counterparts (Inside Higher Education, 2012; Saenz, 2008;

Santiago, 2011). Notable themes that emerged from the literature review included: (a) academic

integration, (b) social integration, (c) sense of belonging and purpose, (d) and gendered context.

These factors are discussed below.

Academic integration: First-generation students. First-generation students have been

shown to be more likely to be female, older, married, and have lower incomes and more

dependents (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin 1998); this was also consistent with research on Latinx students attending rural two-year colleges (Schultz, 2004). Unfortunately, first-generation students have also been shown to be less likely to graduate. For instance, in a longitudinal study (Ishitani, 2003), student departure was 71% higher among first-generation students than for those students who had both parents graduate college with degrees. Ethnic minority groups in general tend to have lower levels of academic integration when compared to White and Asian American students (AACC, 2012; Bernstein, 2013). Among first-generation students, Latinx students have been shown to have lower levels of academic integration than their White counterparts (NCES, 2011, 2016; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin 1998; Rodriguez et at., 2000; Schultz, 2004). One possible explanation for lower levels of academic integration for ethnic minority groups included the lack of a college-going culture within their families. Families have tended to pass on advantages or social capital of their social positions to their children via a process of education expectation development, an idea consistent with retention theories and literature on first-generation students (Fadel, 2012; NCES, 2011; Yosso, 2005).

Research is inconclusive regarding the institution's role in student integration. Braxton et al., (2004) opined that the college's role in providing quality teaching, academic advising, and other tasks encouraged student engagement-external to student motivation. Bordes-Edgar et al, (2011) and Crissman-Ishler (2005) supported the idea that student motivation in the form of academic integration was a predictor of retention. They also found that internal factors, such as high school grades, have consistently been a strong predictor of first-year college grades. This held true for many Latinx students as well. Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2009) interviewed 1,000 Latinx men and women from an elite higher education institution of whom 45% attended a minority serving high school to see if they encountered racial disparity on campus. The study's

focus was college transition and perceived minority orientation. Latinx students in the study adopted one of three profiles—assimilation, accommodation, and resistance; these orientations mattered for college engagement. The participant transcriptions revealed that the non-assimilators (both accommodators and resistors) experienced less academic engagement than the assimilators.

Researchers (Baum & Payea, 2004; Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011) indicated that part-time enrollment and low graduation rates were common factors with first-generation students; this was consistent with literature that focused on Latinx students as well (Rodriguez et al., 2000). For example, of the first-generation Latinx high school completers who enrolled in post-secondary education in the fall of 2014, approximately 45% completed (NCES, 2016). They were also more likely to enroll at public community colleges and attend part-time (NCES, 2016) and they were twice as likely to take remedial courses (21% for Latinx versus 10% for White students) after controlling for high school rigor (NCES, 2011; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Research further found that first-generation students and students from the lowest income quartile were less likely to transfer to four-year institutions (Bailey, Davis-Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005).

Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) validated that academic integration was a predictor for retention, even for some first-generation students. In addition, research from Cejda and Rhodes (2004) was crucial, because they found that faculty feedback and encouragement, even among first-generation students, was a strong positive influence on whether community college students transferred to the university. Additional research showed that such feedback and encouragement from faculty represented a positive retention predictor for Latinx students as well (Gandara, 1982; Gloria & Castellanos, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Cejda and Rhodes

(2004) also found that robust academic integration involved intentional communication with peer-group members for building rapport, class participation, and group study involvement which helped move some Latinx students through the community college academic pipeline. Cejda and Rhodes (2004) reasoned that if faculty took a sincere interest in the students that some of the following traits would increase: students' seriousness and motivation regarding attendance, completing assignments, and accepting responsibility for their academic achievements. Finally, being mentored by faculty members also helped some Latinx students to stay academically focused and motivated (Braxton et al, 2004; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004).

Social integration. Students who feel that they belong to the institution's social environment have been shown to be more likely to succeed (Musu-Gillette, Robinson, McFarland, Kewal Ramani, Zhang, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016). Social integration represents the extent to which a student finds the college culture to be congenial with his or her preferences, which were shaped by the student's background, values, and aspirations. Some scholars have measured social integration in college as a composite of peer-to-peer interactions and faculty-student interactions (Kuh, et al., 2005; McKay & Kuh, 1994), although there can be other important factors. Though college social integration was critical to student success, other social support systems were found to be equally effective among some Latinx students. Hurtado and Carter (1997) proposed social support systems, whether internal or external to the college culture, were positive components for Latina retention. Cejda and Rhodes (2004) maintained that sincere and intentional faculty interactions were among the social assets identified as a key factor in Latinx student retention.

Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala (2014) found that support systems were critical to Latinx success, without cultural wealth it is difficult for some Latinx students to succeed. Yosso (2005)

found that many minorities, including Latinx students, lacked the dominant cultural capital—a type of community cultural wealth which was needed in order for students to be successful in college. This included but was not limited to: (a) aspirational capital, (b) linguistic capital, (c) social capital, (d) navigational capital, and (e) resistant capital (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Conversely, other scholars (Castellanos, & Gloria, 2007; Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014) purported that many Latinx students possess many of these assets. Steeped in their own cultural wealth are strength assets and life experiences that are often overlooked in mainstream college student success discourse. Latinx strengths included many of the aspects that Yosso et al., (2009) noted minorities might have lacked. According to Rendón, Nora. and Kanagala (2014) Latinx students indeed possessed "aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistant, 'ganas'/perseverance, ethnic consciousness, spirituality/faith, and pluriversal assets" (p.5). Nevertheless, Joaquina-Villasenor et al. (2013) noted, when college faculty mentored Latinx students by using a culturally specific model identified by Latinx students, retention rates increased. This included using textbooks written by Latinx authors, Latinx engagement in monthly community projects that addressed Latinx issues, and engagement in a course assignment that required examination of family and cultural values relative to the curriculum (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007).

Furthermore, Tinto (1993) postulated that, if students are to be successful in persisting in college, students first must separate from the group with which they were formerly associated, such as family members and high school peers. They then undergo a period of transition during which students begin to interact in new ways with the members of the new group into which membership is sought and incorporate or adapt to the normative values and behaviors of the new group. Though the separation from the old group is important, studies have pointed to positive

associations in the promotion of student retention whether or not students separate from the old group (Martin & Meyer, 2010).

Additional scholars have found that if Latinx college students maintain strong support systems—whatever form they take, they were more likely to succeed (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013; Lacy, 1978). Therefore, forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships on and off campus were critical to Latinx student retention (Martin & Meyer, 2010; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Nevertheless, research in college student retention has found that, if students form meaningful relationships especially with faculty, staff, peers, friends, and mentors, they were more likely to experience social integration and have positive college-going experiences (Carpi, Ronan, Falconer, Boyd, & Lents, 2013; National College Access Network, 2011). These data held true for Latinx students attending rural two-year colleges as well (Schultz, 2004).

Sense of belonging and purpose. In a qualitative study, Zell (2010) found that having a sense of purpose was more critical to Latinx student success than rather or not they felt like they fit in to the college environment. Other scholars found some Latinx students who had been excluded from connections with faculty and staff lacked a sense of belonging (Iturbide, Raffaelli, & Gustavo, 2009; Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013; Maduena, 2012; Munsch, 2011; Pedroza, 2010). This idea has merit since one's culture shapes one's ontological frame of reference (Cantu, 2011; Cotera, 1977; Espin, 1997; Garcia, 1997). Latinx students are more likely to connect with Latinx faculty who shared the same culture than with White faculty (Schultz, 2004). In addition, scholars have found that having allies or friends who shared the same ancestral homeland and/or shared similar cultural aspects such as language, while attending

community colleges, offered a feeling of safety and social-sense of belonging (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Iturbide et al., 2009; Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013).

As noted from research literature, Latinx students who were unable to form social group involvement at an institution often faced difficult emotional transitions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013; Zalaquett, & Lopez, 2006). American College Health Association (2012) survey data indicated that 23% of undergraduate students had felt lonely at some point, and 25% had felt very sad during this same time period. These data were pooled from a variety of student demographics, not just first-year students, regardless of ethnicity and gender, and highlighted that loneliness was a common emotion for many students.

Although the data from the American College Health Association (2012) were based in a university setting, the generalization may be significant for community colleges as well. These results highlighted that, if students experienced loneliness, they were less likely to make friendships and become involved on campus, more likely to continue to feel lonely, face academic difficulty, and leave the college. This may be especially significant for retention efforts of rural Latina students attending a two-year college.

In addition to the importance of maintaining interpersonal relationships, study findings have shown that, if the college provided Latinx students with access to outreach programming and services, then retention was more likely. Similarly, if the college facilitated connections to campus and community resources, students tended to have a more positive college-going experience leading to retention (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000, Martinez, 2004). Providing social interactions in various college activities (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lacy, 1978) with peers, teachers, and college personnel (especially of the same or similar background) has been shown to increase student satisfaction, sense of belonging, and ultimately

retention (Iturbide et al., 2009; Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Rasca-Hidalgo, 2001; Yosso, 2014).

However, not all college-sponsored social groups and activities produced the same positive outcomes. According to a systemic review of 27 selective four-year institutions, Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2015) found that although involvement in political organizations were positively related to Latinx grades, participation in multi-ethnic groups or intramural sports were found to negatively affect Latinx students grades.

Cultural and gendered context. Gender and culture influence Latinas' conception of knowledge, bi/multi-cultural understanding, practices of inquiry, and justification towards attending college. Culture shapes the way Latinas construct identity (ies) and understand their experiences including seeking an education (Bebout, 2011; Bernal et al., 2006). Valuing cultural differences can help to explain a variety of viewpoints in the classroom, but often Latina culture has not been valued in a higher education context (Obera & Wall, 2008; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

But what if faculty made a more concerted effort to incorporate Latinx values in the classroom, it would make sense that this would increase college-going success. The infusion of Latinx ethnic values can provide reasonable, ethical, competent, and means of ensuring that education is culturally relevant for Latinas. For example, according to Castellanos and Gloria (2007) integrating the core aspect of *familismo*-creating learning environments that fostered relationships for Latinx students within the educational setting was a coping strategy and essential for retention. In addition, tapping into the aspects of loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity inherent to familial relationships-guided and groomed by family support, ensured

that Latinx students were connected and related in ways that were simultaneously comforting

and effective (Saenz, Garcia-Louis, Drake, & Guida, 2018; Zell, 2010). Moreover,

> The concept of *comunidad* (community), the caring for and responsibility to community, was closely related to *familismo*, as the system of *compardizcgo*, or coparentage of children within families and communities as *padrinos* (godfathers) or *madrinas* (godmothers), the responsibility to help care and provide direction (e.g., emotionally, physically, spiritually, or financially), was a system of interpersonal connections (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007, p. 380).

Oftentimes, micro-aggressions, stereotype threats, inequities in education, and daily

indignities have appeared as the norm in both the classroom and in rural areas (Gandara, 1982;

Obera & Wall, 2008; Orbe, 2008; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Yosso, 2014). For

example, viewed from various studies on Latinx retention, curricula have been used as one of the

means to maintain the White, homogeneous, middle-class privilege paradigm, while silencing the

"other"—multiple voices that represent minority students, particularly Latinx students (Nevarez,

2001; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010).

Feminists, Gloria Holguín Cuádraz, Latina Anónima (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001),

Nieto-Gomez, and Yolanda Nava have reported that traditionally teachers and textbooks have

made erroneous assumptions about Latinas. They often have not been sensitive to Latina

aspirations towards self-actualization but have consciously or unconsciously stereotyped these

women as being only fulfilled in the dual roles of motherhood or wifehood (Nieto, 1976).

Another myth held by some educators was that parents of Latinx students do not value education

because many of them have not finished high school and lacked higher education experience and

therefore have not encouraged their daughters to enroll in college (Valencia & Black, 2002).

Latina ethnic and gendered identity is nuanced with specific concerns and challenges that

are tied to them having to straddle two or more cultures, while navigating various roles that

affect their college experiences (Anzaldúa, 1999; Villegas, Lemanski, & Valdez, 2010). In

addition, this idea of plural identity, according to Anzaldúa (1999) and other scholars (Carales et

al., 2018; Cotera, 1977; Garcia, 1977; *President's Advisory Commission on Educational*

Excellence for Hispanics, n.d), suggested that there are complex challenges that accompany

some Latina individual or cultural expectations. Such expectations come with being bound to

various self-concepts, such as personality traits, abilities, behavioral characteristics, ideologies,

social roles, language affiliations, *familismo* expectations, and group memberships. In addition,

having a plural identity means there is no single story.

Some Latinas often encounter complex social challenges, in addition to experiencing

multiple identities. These include privilege, discrimination, and disadvantages that occur as a

consequence of adopting various identities. At the same time many Latinx students have

developed coping strategies inside and outside their communities as they seek a college

education (Bordes-Edgar, Arrendo, Robinson-Kurpius, & Rund, 2011; *President's Advisory*

Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, n.d.). To this end, Bernal et al., (2006)

noted:

> Latinas live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the
> operation of structures of power. Latinas are members of more than one community at the
> same time and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege. The idea of
> identity addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other
> systems of discrimination create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women.
> It takes account of historical, social and political contexts and also recognizes unique
> individual experiences resulting from the coming together of different types of identity.
> Latina subjectivities are viewed as always shifting and often contradictory.
> Simultaneously, Latina identities and consciousness revolve around concrete material
> forms of interlocking oppressions and multiple positions. The authors maintain that Latina
> student's social, cultural, and gendered locations contribute to their critical, oppositional
> or mestiza consciousness in ways that have allowed them to apply lessons from their daily
> lives and begin to transform the meaning of their lived experiences. As such their identity
> is always in process as they constantly remake their subject positions (p. 78).

In a study involving 111 Latinx students (which included Latinas) enrolled in a two-year college, Lesure-Lester (2003) identified several stress-management styles that led to persistence for Latina students. The stress-management aspects included: active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, seeking social support, reinterpretation, faith and spiritual guidance. Additional coping strategies included self-discovery, college adjustment, self-efficacy, sense of purpose, and continuously strategizing. In addition, the positive perceptions held by faculty and advisors at the college helped Latina students, which positively affected their retention (Zell, 2010). Social and academic integration, enrollment intensity, and perception of belonging were also shown to be positive predictors of Latinx retention by Crisp and Nora (2010b). Using Crisp and Nora's model of social capital, Tovar (2015) conducted a quantitative study using a data set from approximately 200 Latina community college students. Their findings revealed that Latina motivation to persist included their interaction with institutional agents, the availability of support programs, and their commitment to attend college. These aspects represented positive factors for retention.

Not only must Latinas contend with the fact that they may face discrimination and stereotype threat based on their racial identity, they must also contend with the fact that they are sometimes discriminated against within their own culture. For example, there may be a stigma of inferiority given to the female role (Villegas, Lemanski, & Valdéz, 2010).

Though some colleges have provided multicultural education to educators and support personnel, the training should also include space where Latinx students can inform personnel about their struggles (Cuadraz, 1996; Gandara 1982; Yaqub, 2010; Yosso, 2014). Such institutional commitment has helped Latina adult learners affirm their cultural consciousness which has assisted them to reclaim their internal strength, both of which have been marginalized

through the processes of acculturation and assimilation (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Rasca-Hidalgo, 2001).

Latinx in rural communities and community colleges. There are more than 600 rural or non-urban community colleges in the nation. Approximately half of the rural institutions are located in population centers of less than 10,000 (Vineyard, n.d.). Almost two-thirds of these colleges enroll fewer than 1,000 students. In 2004, approximately 27% of all 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in rural colleges or universities (KewalRamani et al., 2007). The total students in contact each year is in the several millions (AACJC Task Force Report, n.d.). Rural community colleges function as "neighborhood schools of higher education;" specifically, they provide access to (a) general education for transfer; (b) for-credit technical, vocational, and occupational programs of 12 months to two years in duration that lead to high-skill, high wage jobs; (c) workforce training for high school graduates, high school dropouts, currently employed workers, and the long-term unemployed; and (d) community services, serving as regional cultural centers for the performing and fine arts (Rural Community College Alliance 2019, p. 1).

Not all colleges have the same access to resources. Some rural colleges can have lower endowments, less funding, fewer transportation options, and fewer course offerings including student clubs and activities. Possibly because of a lack of funding, such colleges have fewer financial scholarships than urban institutions (McPhail, 2011). Many small rural institutions do not experience the same privileges or clout with legislative bodies and regulatory agencies that universities, four-year colleges, and their sister community colleges in urban areas experience. Many small rural colleges suffer with budgetary inequities; staffing challenges; lack of updated laboratories and instruction instruments; inadequate administrative services; inadequate library and media services; inadequate space and space utilization for students and staff; outdated

physical plant operations; inadequate staff development opportunities; and inadequate student activities and student services (AACJC Task Force Report, n.d.).

As of 2016, there were 127 million White, and 36 million Latinx living in remote rural areas; 12 million White students and four million Latinx students lived in these areas in the United States (Hillman & Weichman 2016). Of the 135 rural counties (more than 25 miles from a broad-access public community college or university), there are only 37 Minority Serving Intuitions (MSIs) (Hillman & Weichman 2016). Many Latinx have lacked access to higher education based on where they lived. Many live in these rural areas, more than 25 miles from a broad-access public community college or university, and do not have access to the high-speed internet connection needed for their education. Previous work on rural education has identified areas where access to physical campuses was limited (Effland & Kassel, n.d.; Hillman & Weichman 2016). Although some students moved to enroll in college, the further that prospective students live from a college or university, the less likely they were to enroll (Goodman, Hurwitz, & Smith 2015; Kennedy & Long, 2015). Additionally, prospective students, including some Latinx students, who have work and family commitments may be less likely to move to attend college. Research from Rosenboom, and Blagg (2018) postulated that people who lived in rural areas were among those with the least access to higher education, which included some Latinas.

Some rural high schools offer fewer robust college preparatory courses such as Advanced Placement (AP), which positions students from rural schools at a structural disadvantage in terms of college enrollment and ultimately completion (Ruiz & Perna, 2017). According to Ruiz and Perna (2017) rural youth are more likely to have "parents who not only lack a bachelor's degree, but also have lower expectations that their children will attain a four-year degree; parental

educational attainment and parents' expectations for a child's attainment are predictors of college attendance and attainment" (p. 8). Due to these and additional limitations, a positive college-going experience in rural community colleges can be a challenge for many Latinas. Scholars purported that some Latinx students, particularly those in rural areas, experienced lower SES, financial limitations, lower academic performance, missed social opportunities, and less valuable networking. Furthermore, many rural community college institutions have generally been limited in providing opportunities for multicultural learning to students (Demi, Coleman-Jensen, & Synder, 2010; Maltzan, 2006). In addition, some faculties in rural colleges have often lacked the linguistic, cultural, and gendered responsive-pedagogy and curricula innovation (Cho et al., 2012; Cuadraz, 1996; Gomez-Cervantes, 2010) that are more predominant in urban colleges and universities.

Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC, n.d.) reported that 82% of Latinx attending Oregon's community colleges in 2016 had unmet financial needs. At the same time, many of these rural colleges have fallen behind urban colleges in providing culturally appropriate role modeling, scholarship opportunities, and culturally competent administration and faculty (NCES, 2003; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Sy & Romero, 2008). Such conditions further hinder the success for a number of Latinx students who aspire to a college education (Cho, Rios, Trent, & Mayfield, 2012; Cotera, 1977).

Oseguera et al. (2009) noted that colleges and universities have lacked college personnel with the same ethnicity and gender as their Latinx students. For example, in 2000 only three percent of full-time faculty (including support staff) from degree granting institutions were Latinx (NCES, 2003). If this is true in urban areas it can be assumed that it is even less pronounced in rural community colleges. In addition, according to Demi et al. (2010) and other

scholars (Biswas, 2005; Gross et al., 2006; Huber & Malagon, 2007) support structures for Latina students have been generally lacking in rural communities. For example, there tended to be fewer child care options, fewer transportation options, higher school district financial distress, and fewer qualified teachers, which can lead to higher dropout rates for Latinas. Also complicating these challenges, in addition, limited curriculum, the inability to retain culturally competent teaching staff, and limited resources contributed to rural college dilemmas of ineffectively meeting the complex needs of Latinx students (Hicks & Jones, 2011; Maltzan, 2006; Mather & Pollard, 2007; Saenz, 2008).

   Challenges of rural college environments. The isolated nature of rural colleges located within small communities may present unique challenges for Latinx students, affecting their college-going experience (Ast, 2014; Demi, Coleman-Jensen, & Synder, 2010; Hicks & Jones, 2011; Nevarez, 2001; Saenz, 2008). Rural areas can be limited in resources needed for academic success; including employment options, child-care, ease of transportation options, family earnings, limited cultural competence in various community agencies, and quality education (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Ast, 2014; Goodman, Hurwitz, & Smith 2015; Oregon University System, 2011). Added to these challenges are the expectations from some Latinx families that students work and help with family responsibilities (Ceballo, 2004). Latinx students may also be expected to help when translation services are needed for their parents as well as to help contribute financially to the family (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.). These challenges—limited resources for academic success, lack of employment options in rural areas, limited family earnings, and cultural expectations—combined together can add to the difficulties some Latina students face as they attend community college. These added difficulties can lead to limited support, low academic expectations, and limited academic and social

integration (Joaquina-Villasenor et al, 2013). These factors in turn can negatively impact Latinx

college retention (Cuadraz, 1996; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rodriguez et al., 2000; Yosso, 2014).

As higher education remains dominated by White values such as competition instead of

collaboration, independence in place of interdependence, self-importance instead of group-

importance, or even worldliness versus spiritual values, some Latinx students may experience an

incongruence of their cultural values and those of the educational setting (Castellanos & Gloria,

2007). Factors that have been previously found to have a positive impact on Latinx retention

are: participatory and group learning, appropriate support systems, tutoring services, instructors

that mentor students, social integration, English and Spanish language fluency, use of personal

and community resources, family support, and financial backing (Bernal et al., 2006; Kuh,

Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; McKay & Kuh, 1994; Musu-Gillette, de Brey,

McFarland, Hussar, Sonnenberg, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2017; Yaqub, 2010). In addition, drawing

from several theories including Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Integration, Crisp and Nora

(2010a) studied 567 first-and second-year community college Hispanic students and found that

several indicators were significant positive factors leading to student retention. These included:

influence of educational attainment of parents, a strong financial support so that students can

attend college full-time without having to work, and advantages of a robust high school

academic curriculum.

Rural context: Socio-economic status. Understanding the successes and barriers that

rural Latina students faced while attending college must be considered in the context of the

culture of Latinas, rural communities, and rural colleges. Rural areas by definition are known for

small population sizes and large distances from urban and suburban centers (Goreham, 2008;

NCES, 2001; Provasnik et al., 2007). Some social scientists point out the greater cohesiveness

of small towns and the tendency for the values of the family, the church, and other social institutions to be felt more strongly. Such have traditionally been termed the backbone of America.

Latinas in rural areas are underrepresented in higher education (NCES, 2016). More poverty exists in rural areas for some Latinas; therefore, many have less access to resources to support higher education costs. Without accessing the needed resources, some Latinas experience decreased academic performance as opposed to their White female counterparts who have more access to such resources (NCES, 2016).

Chacon et al (1986) investigated Latinas at a rural community college. The sample included 508 women at five campuses. The researchers found that academic performance was found to be often related to SES. The authors asserted an additional finding: Latina women have a double disadvantage of ethnicity and gender due to the extra demands placed on them (Chacon, Cohen, & Strover, 1986). Solórzano, Acevedo-Gil, and Santos (2013) research was consistent with research from Chacon, Cohen, and Strover (1986).

In rural areas there are more low-wage jobs not requiring college degrees. Therefore, rural youth without degrees tend to stay in their home communities, while those with college degrees tend to migrate to more populated areas (Ast, 2014; Biswas, 2005).

Poverty in rural areas compounded issues facing college-going success for Latinas (Bishaw, 2014; National Women's Law Center, 2009; Rodriguez et al. 2000). One national study (NCES, 2016) pointed out that about 28% of Latinx in non-metro areas were living in poverty, twice the rate of Whites. Furthermore, in 2013 the percentage of Latina children under age 18 living in poverty, in 2013, was 30%. Other studies purported that more than one in two Latino children living in single-mother families were living in poverty (Aud, Hussar, Johnson,

Kena, Roth, Manning, Wang, & Zhang, 2012; Saenz, 2008). From 2000 to 2014, the poverty

rate increased for Latinos, from 28% to 31%, and White children from nine to 12% (United

States Census Bureau, 2017).

Though the uninsured rate fell in rural areas from 2013-2015, people of Color in rural

areas often have limited access to employer-sponsored coverage, combined with low income

(Kaiser Family Foundation, 2017). Those most at risk of being uninsured have included low-

income individuals, adults, and people of color. The cost of coverage continued to be the most

commonly cited barrier to obtaining insurance. Health insurance made a difference in whether

and when Latinx students got necessary medical care, where they got their care, and ultimately,

how healthy they were (Garfield, Orgera, & Damico, 2019).

Rural areas have different dynamics than urban areas. It is estimated that 39% of all

English–language-learner females especially living in rural areas work in service industries,

often received minimum wages (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1999). A lack of job

availability and a lack of higher education opportunities in rural areas have contributed to a

movement of higher wealth families into urban areas, leading to a concentration of lower-paid,

entry-level positions in rural communities. Compounding these phenomena, rural communities

continue to lack in educational and social capital over multiple generations.

Summary

Though there are gaps in studies focusing on Latinx participation in rural higher

education, studies that have been done on Latinx retention have been crucial in understanding the

present trends (*Celebracion de Excelencia*, 2015; NCES, 2001; NCES, 2018; Reeder, 2017;

Rosenboom & Blagg, 2018; Ruiz & Perna, 2017). There is a clear need for administrators,

instructors, policy makers and scholars to understand what accounts for the well-being and

persistence of Latina rural college students as they experience a rural community college-going experience. Chapter two indicated the factors that motivated Latinx (and Latina) students to pursue a higher education, included achievement motivation and active coping strategies (interactions with supportive individuals and resilience (Crisp et al., 2015) concern for family; culture, identity, (Castellanos, & Gloria, 2007; Crisp et al., 2014) encouragement, and mentoring from teachers and support from counselors (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Lundberg et al., 2018). This chapter also showed that dynamic relationships impacted retention or departure for Latinx students. Factors that have been found to impact Latinx retention such as academic integration, social integration (DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Musu-Gillette, de Brey, McFarland, Hussar, Sonnenberg, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2017), social-economic status, and lack of resources of rural communities and community colleges (Hicks & Jones, 2011; NCES, 2003; Saenz, 2008) were also presented. In addition, some Latinx college students were confronted with issues that add stress to college life, which included simultaneously straddling different cultures, lack of support systems, financial stress (Braxton et al., 2004; Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014), and the new expectations for students. Living in rural communities provided less economic opportunities for Latina students and their families may lead to higher poverty rates than White females. This added economic issues to the challenges these students faced (Andrieu & St. John, 1993; Braxton et al., 2004). Some Latinas may face sexism at home (Nieto, 1976), balancing dual responsibilities including domestic responsibilities and finding time to study (De La Torre, 2009; Joaquina-Villasenor, Estefani-Reyes, & Munoz, 2013; Nieto, 1976; Villegas, Lemanski, & Valdéz, 2010).

Tinto (1993) noted students are more likely to stay in college if they are socially and academically integrated. Echoing Tinto (1993), scholars found academic preparedness,

characterized by high GPA scores, academic engagement, faculty mentoring (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Herrera et al., 2017), student advising and opportunities for scholarships led to retention (Bordes-Edgar, Arrendo, Robinson-Kurpius, & Rund, 2011; Espinosa, 2011; Lacy, 1978; Martin & Meyer, 2010). Finally, findings suggest that if Latinx students can maintain intentional and robust social connections with peers, college activities, teachers (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Herrera et al., 2017), college staff and significant supportive family members, they are more likely to be retained (Crisp et al., 2015).

Chapter Three: Methods

The objective of the study was to understand the experiences of Latina students in a rural community college. Such experiences provided details about factors which contributed to and detracted from Latina retention. The research questions attempted to gather the first-person experiences voiced from the Latina participants' viewpoint. Such data can inform faculty members, administrative personnel, and other rural community college constituents so that they might consider ways to increase Latina student retention. Two research questions provided the focus of this research:

Research question 1 (RQ1) asked, "What factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as contributing positively toward retention while attending a remote rural community college?" These experiences were compared with factors identified in Tinto's (1975; 1993) models of student departure and retention.

Research question 2 (RQ2) pertained to negative experiences and was stated as, "What factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as detracting from retention while attending a remote rural community college?" Again, these factors/experiences were compared with those identified in Tinto's (1975; 1993) model.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods used in this study. The chapter includes a description of the researcher's positionality, the research design, participant sampling, measurements, setting, procedure, IRB, data collection, and analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations of the research.

Researcher's Positionality

Over the years teaching Latinx students, the researcher had heard countless stories of Latina experiences reflecting Latina values, beliefs, reactions, and emotions. Therefore, conducting qualitative research with a focus on narrative design seemed the best research method to use in order to probe into personal stories of Latina college-going experiences (Bowen, 2008; McLellan et al., 2003). In addition, using an interpretive social science philosophical approach seemed the most appropriate aspect to use in this research due to the humanistic qualitative element (Bowen, 2008; Mclellan et al., 2003).

The researcher's positionality in this research was determined by many developments including learning about the outcomes of oppression which lead to societal injustices. The researcher's work with Latinas has shaped her awareness of Latina gendered and ethnic oppression but also of the cultural capital wealth this population possessed. She worked as a community college faculty member for seven years in a remote community, including teaching English as a Second Language (ESOL), GED classes, and other classes. The researcher is a White female, therefore comes from a privileged frame of reference. After conducting the research for this study and reflecting she realized she held previously assumed biases such as, Latinas should have accents, dark hair, brown eyes and dark skin. Therefore, this study was transformative for the researcher in and of itself. She continued to read and analyze literature about researcher's biases and came across the notion of *the deficit model* from a doctoral dissertation and several articles from renown journals which she included in chapter one and two.

Research Method

This study used qualitative methods. Creswell (2012) defined qualitative research in his book, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, and in his 1998 edition as "An inquiry process of understanding based in distinct methodological traditions of inquiry from a social or human problem perspective created by individuals as they interacted with the world" (p. 15). Qualitative research is a means to understand, in a richly described way, how individuals experience their world (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003). Qualitative research falls into three general perspectives: interpretive, critical, and post-modern (Boote, & Beile, 2005; Merriam, 2009). This study took an interpretive social science approach. It looked closely at the lived experience of Latina students as they experienced a remote rural two-year community college.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted, "That qualitative research involved the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as personal experiences, introspective [reflections], life stories, and other details that described routine and problematic moments and meaning in individual" lives (p. 17). These meanings, or interpretations of reality, were unique to the individuals experiencing them and unique to the time and place of the experience. This included how Latinas thought about their rural college-going experiences as they elaborated on their positive and negative interpretations of these experiences.

A narrative approach was used. This method looked at personal experience, personal perspectives, and personal thoughts. The reactions, emotions, beliefs, and values were very important in this approach which provided the means to look deeper than what appeared on the surface (Anderson, 2017). Narrative design methods are considered subjective and tend to focus on details, in which categories of thoughts are thematically analyzed. This design fit well with

the philosophical framework in this study because the narrative design in this qualitative study allowed the participants' voice to authenticate their college-going experiences by speaking their truth. Truth is the participant's reality which was socially constructed. Each person experienced social and physical reality in a unique way. As people come together and interact with one another, we gain multiple perspectives. Therefore, a narrative design allowed for Latina students to tell their stories as to how they navigated their cultural values, needs, challenges, and coping mechanisms as they sought a college education in a rural area.

Philosophical Approach

This research is based on a social constructivist perspective. Social constructivism is a sociological theory of knowledge in which human development is conditioned or taught, and knowledge or beliefs are constructed through interactions with others. Constructivism asserts that reality is constructed by giving voice to participants as they assign meaning to the world around them. From a constructivist perspective, meaning is created as individuals interact with and interpret what is being said (Merriam, 2009). According to scholars, in qualitative studies participants' multiple perspectives make up their reality (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998). Each of their perspectives is as "true" as the other, and, because the perspectives derive from personal experience, they are subjective and unique to each individual. Therefore, the data and analysis were co-constructed in the interaction between the viewer and the viewed, the researcher and the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Participants

Latinas attending a rural community college were purposively sampled. Patton (2002) discussed two types of sampling: random and purposeful. Purposeful sampling is known as judgmental, selective, or subjective, as opposed to random sampling which takes a random

subset of participants from a population of interest. The researcher wanted to gather a specific

group of participants – Latina students at a rural community college; so, purposeful sampling

was utilized in this research. Patton (2002) stated, "There are no rules for sample size in

qualitative inquiry" (p. 244). A total of 14 participants were interviewed. Saturation occurs when

most responses offer similar insights or themes (Bowen, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009);

saturation was accomplished by the 14 participants. In using field notes and transcriptions over

the course of multiple interviews, the researcher was able to review the data collected and

continued to gather new data to determine saturation.

For the duration of the interview and analysis, the participants were assigned pseudonym

names and name abbreviations. The participants named in this study were Latina females who

self-identified as either Latina, Mexican, Hispanic, Chilean and Chicana or a combination of

these and who have ancestry from Mexico and Chile. Participants needed to meet specific

criteria in order to be involved in the study; such criteria included: minimum age of 18 years old,

female, full-time or part-time students, completed at least one term of enrollment at a rural

community college, and be of Latina origin (see Appendix B for the eligibility form). A

demographic questionnaire was utilized with each participant as outlined in Appendix D.

Interview Protocol

Using the literature review as a guide, interview questions were created. The interview

questions asked the participants to describe what they felt was important and discussed factors

that supported or detracted from their retention. Two highly regarded research theorists, Strauss

and Corbin (1998), and other scholars (Creswell, 2012; McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003),

suggested the use of open-ended questions to elicit richer qualitative responses. In keeping with

the semi-structured open-ended question format, each student received the same set of questions

with small variations taking place if the researcher required follow-up or pursued the response

more deeply for clarification or informational purposes. All 14 participants were asked the same

questions in the order as it appears on the Interview Guide (Appendix E). Some questions did

not reveal relevant participant responses and information about retention. For example, the

question was asked: *Can you tell me what you think Feminism is*?

In addition, this question was asked: *What elements in your culture could the college*

include to increase the retention rate of Latinas? This last question revealed substantial

information regarding retention. In some cases, the questions were reframed to help the student

understand if a comprehension issue arose. For example, a question was asked to the

participants if they felt the staff valued their culture. Many participants responded with, "What

do you mean?" "Can you explain?" Further explanation and examples were provided for

clarification purposes.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using an interview transcription guide/template.

A demographic table was also used to ensure the participants qualified for the study and to gather

additional information (see Table 4.1). Another measurement instrument to consider was the

interviewer. The interviewer was well rehearsed, prepared, timely, considerate, and attentive.

The interviewer played a major role in the trustworthiness of the results.

Procedures

Access to the sample of participants was gained through a rural community college

faculty member, who in turn contacted several potential participants in order to obtain oral or

written permission for the student researcher to contact them. The rural college faculty was not

privy to selected participants involved in the study. The participants contacted the researcher

directly via email, and the appropriate sample size was obtained in this way. The researcher

conducted and abided by CITI training in social/behavioral research protection of human subject

stipulations, one of which indicated in the consent form that, if for any reason the participant

wanted to end the study, she may do so at any time in the course of the interview.

Interviews were conducted at a place chosen by the participant. The participants chose a

variety of comfortable settings, such as local coffee shops, parks, or restaurants. Each location

offered a private area, in which the participants felt at ease. The interviews were conducted

during spring and summer terms of 2017. Additionally the follow-up interviews were conducted

during spring term of 2018 (see Appendix E). Due to the complexity of participant schedules,

flexibility was offered when selecting meeting times and locations. The time of day interviews

were conducted varied from 7:00am to 9:00pm.

Prior to the beginning of data collection, approval to proceed with this research study was

granted by Oregon State's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix F). The student

researcher and the major advisor/principal investigator completed CITI training and certification.

In keeping with Oregon State University's guidelines, a human subject is defined as a living

individual about how an investigator conducting research obtains data through interactions with

the individual. The IRB review process guidelines went on to state that interaction be defined as

"Communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject."

Qualitative research experts (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kval, 1995) noted

the importance of following a systematic approach to gathering data. Based on their

recommendations, participating students first received an eligibility form by the recruitment

sponsor via email. In addition, the researcher emailed the form prior to the interviews, which

contained information regarding details of the study and confidentiality issues. When the

participants agreed and contacted the researcher, they were emailed a consent form, and an

eligibility form that included information regarding a description of the research project and the purpose of the study. A consent form was signed just prior to the in-person interview if the researcher did not receive the consent form in her email box. Students were requested to read the consent form (see Appendix C) and call or email the researcher prior to the interviews if they had further questions about the research.

Prior to a given interview the researcher read the consent form to participants to make sure thet understood the interview process and that it was completely voluntary. Participants filled out a demographic questionnaire and then were advised before the interview process that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed. The researcher provided clarity to the participants stating the interviewees were to remain confidential, and no real names would be used; this allowed privacy protection for the participants. Field notes were kept as part of the data gathering process. In addition, in some cases, follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify responses for any insights, and field notes of those interviews were kept accordingly.

The participant's identity was not made available to anyone except the student researcher and the principal investigator; the consent forms were held in a locked drawer by the major advisor and principal investigator to abide by IRB stipulations of complete confidentiality and privacy. Each subject was given the opportunity to add additional comments or views that they personally felt important to the process at the end of the interview. The researcher requested permission to contact them if needed for member checking purposes or to offer participants any additional insights that they might add to the study and thanked them for their participation.

Analysis

Narrative analysis entailed an emphasis on experience and interpretation (Merriam, 2009); the participants named their own experiences and affirmed what they knew to be true in

the testimonial narratives regarding their college-going experiences. The researcher decided to transcribe the interview responses based on a narrative analysis transcription protocol adapted from research by McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003), Merriam (2009), and Smith and Osborn (2007). Formatting was standardized to include information on participants who were identified by pseudo names, interview location, and date. After reviewing each interview and transcription notes, the researcher opted to use a smooth verbatim method of transcription. Thus, extraneous utterances such as "um," repetitive words, and "ah" were omitted, and poor grammar was edited as suggested by scholars (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Though the researcher paid attention to word analysis, the researcher was also interested in the thematic content of the responses.

In addition, field notes and debriefing were used to enhance the reliability of the analysis and subsequent findings. This provided an understanding of Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory of retention and student departure and its role in retention of the data collected during the interviews. Audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were retained in a secure location. In order to interpret data, as noted by Smith and Osborn (2007), transcripts were read a number of times; the margins were used to annotate what was interesting or significant about what each respondent said. It was important in the first stage of the analysis to read and reread the transcript, create field notes, and listen to the recordings closely in order to become as familiar as possible with the accounts (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The researcher commented on similarities and differences, echoed these, and identified amplifications and contradictions in what each participant said. This process was continued for the whole of the first transcript. Next, the researcher returned to the beginning of the transcript, and the margins were used to document emerging comparative theme titles. On the right-hand margins, next to each transcribed unit, the

researcher made notes of themes of similarities or differences that each participant noted. Any identifying information whereby a student could have been potentially identified was deleted in the transcript, such as names of family members, friends, and faculty.

The answers to the interview questions were coded into what the participants identified as their college-going experiences at a rural community college. This was done by highlighting repetitive words or phrases for significance. Based on this highlighted text, the researcher developed clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2012), and codes, categories, and themes were noted (see Appendix G). The qualitative data were aggregated by reading and listening to the transcripts and categorizing responses into cluster codes, categories, and themes. According to author Jonny Saldana's book, *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2009), coding involves assigning labels to data (interview transcripts and field notes). A code is a word, phrase, or sentence that represents aspects of data. It is reducing data, capturing the significant ideas, and understanding phenomena. Coding also involves developing categories and themes (Saldana, 2009). It comprises coding, sorting, synthesizing, theorizing, by labeling codes, categories, themes and then theorizing (see Appendix G). At times, coding categories were labeled with the students' own words ("in vivo" coding), for example, "I wanted to be a role model for my family," "I love to help people," and "I lacked the courage to ask for help."

Descriptive and narrative coding of data was organized into nine codes and then analyzed into 115 categories in which seven themes emerged. The nine codes consisted of significant interview questions; the 115 categories consisted of the aggregated elements of the participant responses; and lastly the seven themes emerged from consistent or repeated participant comparisons among the categories (see Appendix G for codes, categories and themes). Inductive coding was also used due to the fact the codes were not predetermined. Inductive coding simply

refers to a type of qualitative data organization in which the analysis states without any

predetermined idea about which codes will be used in the process.

The MAXQDA coding software was helpful in sorting categories. After two cycles of

coding, a data reduction process was used in which codes that were not conceptually salient were

eliminated. For example, from the responses to the questions, nine relevant codes emerged. This

process distilled the codes to emerging categories and then themes that occurred across the data

sources and were shared by many participants. These themes, in turn, were grouped by topic and

are expanded upon in chapter four. From the 115 categories the researcher also verified with her

principal investigator the grouping of the categories into seven major themes (see Appendix G

for codes, categories, and themes) which were: (a) career goal, (b) parental-family

expectations/support, (c) financial support, (d) learning and instruction, (e) student services

support, (f) peer and teacher support, and (g) cultural barriers (Appendix G).

Trustworthiness

Silverman (1993) and Kval (1995) suggested using a comparison with the existing

literature to provide the means of ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings, as well as

searching for potential new themes that may emerge. The comparison with the literature

provided some useful insights. For example, this research was consistent with the literature

review of Hurtado and Carter (1997) proposed social support systems whether internal or

external to the college culture were positive components for Latina retention. In this research,

there were more participant responses who stated they experienced more social support from

their families than from peers and faculty. In addition, the cultural barrier theme, especially

language barriers in this research, was consistent with research elsewhere that found faculties in

rural colleges have often lacked the linguistic, cultural, and gendered responsive-pedagogy and

curricula innovation (Gandara, 1982; Orbe, 2008; Obera & Wall, 2008; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

In addition, triangulation was adopted by the researcher. Creswell (2012) noted that data triangulation, "…corroborates evidence from different individuals, and types of data" (p. 259). Rocco (2003) noted that triangulation as the cross-verification process helped ensure reliability of research. A narrative picture provides rich data. In this case, triangulation was undertaken through two sources—the literature review and individual participant interviews, including the follow-up interviews. Information from the literature review confirmed participant response data which provided confirmation of trustworthiness. But, it must be noted that participant responses do not necessarily need such corroboration, since these data represented their personal truth and lived experience.

Follow-ups with participants were used to provide further evidence of trustworthiness, through member-checking (see Interview and Follow-up Interview Guide, Appendix E). This method has been identified as appropriate for qualitative research studies (Merriam, 2009). In this current study, the researcher sought clarification during the interview follow-up process, this was done in person. During these follow-up interviews, the researcher asked if participants could expound more on the themes that were identified in their first interview. The participants were offered the opportunity to review the finished transcripts and to add to the interview anything they felt was important to the study. In addition, the participants were allowed to check the transcripts for accuracy. Though new data emerged, there was not enough consensus to call out new themes.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this type of data collection and analysis. These included the small number of participants in a limited geographical area and the procuring of participant information from only one institution. Other limitations of this study were that it did not include participants of other races/ethnicities, or males, and the study focused only on Latinas. Including other ethnicities facing similar challenges would have improved the generalizability of the results and might have solidified the connection of Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory of retention to minorities. Longitudinal studies of a university or community college experience with successful completion (i.e., transfer, graduation, or certificate completion) can be of benefit, as these would give more quantitative information on factors of retention and matriculation experiences.

Other limitations included the qualitative approach itself; interviews may produce anxiety and provoke defense mechanisms from participants, resulting in faulty information. Hammersley (1992) noted that just observing and asking questions can affect a setting, resulting in unreliable data and invalid findings. Due to the study not being double-blind, a limitation or source of possible error is interviewer bias. The interviewer previously was employed at a rural community college and worked closely with Latina students, which may have caused unconscious biases.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to find the factors that support and those that hindered Latinas in achieving their educational goals as they pursued a rural college-going experience. To address this purpose, a qualitative design was used. This fit with the researcher's philosophical approach, which was a narrative approach. A narrative approach was used to gather and analyze

interviews with Latinas who had completed at least one term of credit-bearing enrollment at a rural community college. This process employed many elements: designing, interviewing, thematising, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. Data collection involved categorizing responses into cluster codes, categories, and themes with 14 Latinas from a rural community college. The researcher did a comparison of each item and noted which items were negative and which items were positive college-going factors. After collecting the interview, the researcher transcribed the interviews, analyzed the data and arrived at seven themes which are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings

The intent of this study was to understand the experiences of Latina students enrolled in credit-bearing courses at a rural community college. The researcher was specifically interested in the perceptions Latinas have of their college-going experience in this pedagogical structure. To that end, she interviewed 14 students who either attended, or were still attending a rural remote community college in the Pacific Northwest. This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section gave a brief overview of the research context including the college, the students, and a brief sampling of the demographic profiles of the 14 participating students. The second section included findings on how students felt about their rural community college-going experiences. This section also presents the themes which emerged from the narrative data analysis.

Section One: Overview of Research Context

The following subsections provided an overview of the research context including a description of the college and the participants. This research was conducted at a small rural community college in the Pacific Northwest. The county had an approximate population size of 26,000; the town where the college was located had approximately 4,000 people. The college was located in a rural community with strong ties to the lumber, fishing, dairy, and agriculture industries. The college had a growing Latinx and older adult population and served a population that had a high percentage of employed adults without a high school degree, and many had their GEDs. Poverty was high, and the largest percentage of workers was found in minimum wage retail or entry level food processing positions. Generally speaking, the Latinx community did not have a career college-bound culture. The college at the time the present research took place

offered eight associate degree programs, including community and continuing education, workforce training, career and technical certificates, and degree partnership programs.

According to a 2016 Degree Qualifying Profile (DQP), the college annually enrolled approximately 2,325 degree-seeking and continuing education students with full-time student equivalency (FTE) of approximately 550 students. The college employed nine full-time instructors and over 30 part-time instructors. In 2017-2018, 395 students enrolled at the college with the goal of earning a degree or certificate. Of these, 75% were working toward an associate degree in order to transfer to a university, and 25% were enrolled in Career/Technical programs to build skills to move into the workforce (Integrated Postsecondary Education System [IPEDS], 2019).

According to 2017-2018 data, the college awarded 96 certificates and degrees to 49 students in 2017-2018 (many students earn more than one certificate or degree). Five percent of these were awarded in Career Technical Education, with the remainder being two-year associate's degrees. While many may assume that the college students are in the 18 to 22 age range, in fact more than half were 22 or older, which is common at community colleges across the state (IPEDS, 2019). The following lists the breakdown of ages at the college: ages were between 18-21 were 40 percent; ages between 22-29 were 29 percent; ages between 30-39 were 17 percent; ages 40 years and older were 14 percent. The student population at the college continues to diversify, as does the county's population as a whole. Sixty-eight percent of the students identified as White, 20% were Latinx, and 12% identified as other races including African American and Native American. Sixty percent of the students were women and 40 percent were men.

Participants

Of the 14 Latina participants, seven were traditional-aged students, defined as students aged between 18-24 years (see Demographic Table 4.1). Two participants were between the ages of 25-29, one between the ages of 30-34, and four over the age of 35. Seven participants were married, three were divorced, and four were single. Among the participants, nine earned a GED and five earned a high school diploma. Of the 14 participants, 10 completed two years of community college or transferred to another college or were still retained in college, and four had dropped out. Of the students who earned GEDs, five went on to complete an associate degree or transfer to another institution or were retained in college, while four dropped out. The range of high school student GPA was between 2.5 to 3.49 with the majority in the 2.5 to 2.99 range (see Demographic Table 4.1).

Eleven of the participants were born in the United States. All identified Spanish as their first language, and their ties to their parents' homeland and culture were still strong. The participants named in this study were Latina females who self-identified as either Latina, Mexican, Hispanic, or Chicana or Chilean or a combination of these and who have ancestry from Mexico and Chile. All but one identified as a first-generation college students. One of the participants, Erina, was born in Chile to parents who attended college, with one parent being a college teacher. Four participants had no children, while 10 of the students had children. All of the students except two worked outside the home at the time they were attending college. Four participants either worked 40 or more hours a week while attending college. Two worked 30 hours; five students worked between 20-25 hours; one worked less than 20 hours; and two students did not work outside the home. Six participants' households earned less than $19,000

annually, seven made between $20,000 and $39,000, and one made over $39,000. Household

size ranged from 2-6 (see Demographic Table 4.1).

The demographics information (Table 4.1) does not do justice to the remarkable diversity

in experiences and backgrounds of these students. The participant profiles below provided a

glimpse into this diversity. The stories Latina students have told the researcher about being in

college, stories of struggle and determination, have propelled the researcher to look deeper into

their experiences. For example, Marie, Liz and Vicky's sample profiles provided a brief look

into their varied backgrounds.

Marie: The researcher conducted Marie's interview at a combination plant

nursery/coffee shop on the outskirts of town as this place was close to her home and she

suggested the location. Marie looked to be in her 40's. She was pretty, slim built, and

fashionably dressed. At the time of the interview she reported five people in her household, with

an annual income between $20,000 and $39,000. Both her parents had less than a high school

education. I would never have known she had three children (in middle and high school)

because she looked so young. Marie seemed very eager to tell her story. She was friendly,

warm, and enthusiastic. When I asked her about the obstacles she had to overcome in order to

attend college she said:

> At the time I was attending college, I was in a very abusive relationship with my boyfriend.
> He left, and I raised my kids on my own. It was so hard to get my GED; but I knew once
> I got my GED I could continue to go further. I had a son who dropped out of high school;
> so I wanted to be a role model for him and the rest of the kids. I wanted to show them (the
> children) we can do anything we want once we set our minds to it. I had to work up to
> three jobs. I worked over 40 hours a week and overtime. I had no child support, no welfare,
> no public assistance. But I still didn't give up. I had to send money back home to Mexico
> to help a relative.

When asked why she wanted to attend college or what motivated her to attend she had this to say, "I really wanted to go into the medical field. I love helping people. I am a first responder at work. It felt good being in a learning environment. I really wanted to be there." After two terms in college Marie eventually dropped out. The stress of juggling family needs and college demands were too difficult for her to continue with her studies.

Liz: Liz is a middle-aged married woman who had one son living at home. She seemed shy and reserved. She was polite and soft-spoken and carefully framed her words before she spoke. She is one of two participants in the study who did not work outside the home. She was the only participant whose annual household income exceeded $39,000. Her husband was a manager for a large dairy. She was born in Mexico in a large family and grew up poor. She shared:

> My parents couldn't afford anything extra, there were so many of us kids. My father worked hard. I didn't finish high school because we couldn't afford it. But when I came to the United States, I did get my GED here at the local college. It was always a dream of mine to go to college and make something bigger of myself.

Vicky: Vicky was about five feet tall, over 35 years of age, divorced woman who identified as being both Mexican and Latina. She immigrated from Mexico in the 1980s and bore two sons in the U.S. She received her GED while in the U.S. She was the owner of a Mexican restaurant and worked as a Head Start teaching assistant. At the time of the first interview she had her restaurant leased out, and was working for Head Start, but during the follow-up interview she was running the restaurant herself. At the time of the first interview she was making less than $19,000 a year. When asked about her college-going experiences she had this to say:

> Nothing was easy for me, when I was going to college the first time trying to get my GED my oldest son Pedro had cancer, so I was always checking in on him. I was

driving home during breaks to see if he was ok. I had no help from his father who lived in the same town. At that time, I was working too at Head Start, and I still couldn't afford to pay all the bills. I had a little one who I had to care for besides Pedro. It was crazy. I didn't get much sleep. I was working a job, working many hours, and I was working taking care of children and going to classes.

The researcher mentioned: "Sounds like you have a lot on your plate": "What do you mean,"

Vicky said. The researcher said, "You had a lot going on in your life." Vicky continued:

When my son Pedro died, I wanted to die, but I had another son I had to take care of. I thought if I went to college, I could make more money and move up at Head Start. That was a joke. I got paid the same, no raises. I just kept working as hard as ever, as an assistant. When I finally got my Associates [degree] I thought I would make more money, but not really. I never moved up. I don't think the manager liked me.

Section Two: Findings

The purpose of the study was to uncover the factors that support and those that hinder Latinas in achieving their educational goals as they pursue a rural college-going experience. Furthermore, the major themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis were compared with those appearing in Tinto's (1993) framework of student departure and retention. Tinto explained the value of social and academic engagement dynamics as factors in student retention and departure. This theory provided a holistic accounting of many of the key factors that come into play to shape what students were prepared to do when they got to college and influenced the meanings they made of their experiences (Manski, 1989; Pascarella, 1985; Tinto, 1993). Tinto's (1975) model explained the nuances of student persistence as a function of dynamic relationships between the individual and other actors within the college and their home communities. These relationships affected college persistence and withdrawal (Pascarella et al., 1986). Tinto's theory articulated reasons for student retention and departure and helped us understand how Latinas responded to the unique challenges they faced while attending a rural community college. Participant experiences were categorized in themes to determine whether

they conformed to or contradicted Tinto's (1993) theory of retention and student departure; specifically, what factors/experiences do Latina women self-report as contributing positively or negatively toward retention while attending a remote rural community college?

The main questions analyzed whether or not the research found evidence to support Tinto's (1993) theory of retention and withdrawal. The researcher highlighted certain components that supported the theory, while others contradicted the theory. The sample participant responses to the interview questions were depicted in this section from interviews conducted on all 14 participants.

Themes

In this section, first there was an introductory paragraph under each theme and then the word-for-word respondent results from the interview questions depicted. Elements of participant responses were categorized under each of the seven themes: Career goal, parental-family expectations/support, financial support, learning and instruction, student services support, peer and teacher support, and cultural barriers. The researcher first asked participants the same questions from the interview guide (interview questions are depicted in the interview guide in italics) then probed deeper by asking clarification questions (not in italics).

Theme 1: Career Goals. The analysis of this section revealed that Latina students identified career goals as one of their aspirations for going to college and staying in college. Previous research noted low levels of formal schooling have placed the Latinx population in low skilled jobs (Provasnik et al., 2007; Planty, Provasnik, & Hussar, 2007; Rural Policy Research Institute, 1999; Saenz, 2008; Swail, 2004; United States Census Bureau, 2017). Therefore, many Latina parents were stuck doing jobs that did not pay well. Among this sample of 14 students, 13 Latina participants had parents with less than a high school education, which qualified them

for first-generation status. In addition, in rural areas, there are more low-wage jobs than in urban

areas (Ast, 2014; Biswas, 2005; Farrigan, 2017). Thus, the Latina participants were motivated

by wanting a career that offered satisfaction and achieving financial stability. Factors that

motivated them were a mixture of a desire to help others, a desire to go into the medical field, a

desire for a better lifestyle not experienced by their parents, parental expectations, and family

pride. For example, Danny said, "I always wanted to be in the medical field. My brother had a

bleeding disorder." It must be noted many participants responded to multiple questions with

similar answers. Ten Latina participants noted that the reason for attending college was the

aspiration for a better career. Four participants specifically noted that they had a desire to help

people; and identified they wanted to go into the medical field. In addition, they aspired to levels

of education not achieved by their parents. Thus, two mentioned that they wanted to go further in

life than their parents.

Respondent answers regarding this theme were based on the interview guide questions:

Why are you going to college? What (in your culture) motivated you to attend college? Having a

career goal was a positive motivating factor for 10 participants. As mentioned above some

respondents expressed the desire to study in the medical field, because they enjoyed helping

people. For example, the researcher's question: *What (in your culture) motivated you to attend

college?* Dulce stated, "I wanted to become a doctor in order to help others." Danny said, "I

always wanted to be in the medical field. My brother had a bleeding disorder. I wanted to be

able to help people that were sick, so I wanted to become a nurse." Some participants also noted

that they wanted to choose a career based on its pay value. Many participants enthusiastically

commented that it was their dream to attend college.

Most Latina participants described that they desired a particular career because they wanted a better future than their parents, and a better future was tied to the earning potential of particular careers. For example, in response to the researcher's question: *Why are you going to college?* Donita said, "I wanted to buy things and to get a good paying job so I don't have to make minimum wage."

The following paragraphs give some details on selected interviewees. Also, a portion of the interviews for these women is provided.

Liz: Liz was a middle-aged married woman, born in Mexico, who had one son living at home. She is one of two participants who did not work outside the home. Liz's voice and body language expressed frustration. She was upset that the culinary program was cut before she could finish. She dropped out of college before she could finish with a certificate or degree. Researcher: *Why are you going to college?* Liz: It was always a life-long dream of mine to go to college. I had big plans for myself. Researcher: So I'm hearing you say, you wanted to make a career from your education, can you talk more about that? Liz: I love learning. I was thinking of two options-the professional options, and an option to earn a quick certificate. I want to get a job fast such as becoming a beautician-and get the short-term certificate. Or I wanted to be a pastry chef. Researcher: It looks like you were thinking about a couple options? Liz: Yes, these were my goals, I want to work on my goals. Researcher: Did you achieve your goals? Liz: As it turned out they [the college] cut the culinary arts program so I couldn't finish even if I wanted to. Researcher: I'm so sorry that happened to you.

Angel: The researcher's first impression of Angel was that of a reserved, quiet, soft-spoken woman. Her body language seemed tense. Once she realized my interview was based on non-judgmental questions, and that I was genuinely interested in her lived-authentic college-

going experiences, and that college personnel can help Latinas succeed if they learned about their experiences, she relaxed more and offered more information freely. Angel was married, was between 30 and 34 years of age and had two children. Angel told me she was a forest fire-fighter in the summer, but she did not want to continue doing that. She did not like it for two reasons: her husband did not like her being away from home during the summer; and secondly, she was in charge of a group of young fire-fighters who failed to listen to her.

Angel: I don't want to be responsible if something bad happens to the other fire-fighters; they don't always listen to me. My husband hates it when I'm away from home. I wanted to do something different with my life, that's why I went to college. Researcher: *Why are you going to college? What (in your culture) motivated you to attend college?* Angel: I wanted a career to fulfill my dreams. I want to do what I like and make more money. Researcher: What are your dreams? Can you tell me more about them? Angel: I want to be a professional bookkeeper or some type of accountant. I love working with numbers.

Theme Summary. Angel dropped out of college. Though she clearly had career goals she did not have the full backing of her husband which adversely affected her retention. Liz, on the other hand, dropped out due to the college discontinuing her culinary program. Career goals with a combination of other motivating factors helped with the retention efforts for 10 Latinas. Danny was retained, she had career aspirations of going into the medical field. Danny's brother suffered from a bleeding disorder and therefore her career goal was to go into the medical field to help people who also suffer.

Theme 2: Parental-Family Expectations/Support. The analysis of this section revealed parental-family expectations/support that motivated the participants to stay in college. Tinto (1993) and Garza and Bowden (2014) postulated that in order for students to be successful

they must separate from the group with which they were formerly associated, such as family members, and undergo a period of transition during which the student begins to interact in new ways with the members of the new group into which membership is sought. However, some scholars did not agree with Tinto (1993) completely (Martin & Meyer, 2010; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Conversely, scholars (Cejda et al., 2002; Nora & Crisp, 2010a; Saenz et al., 2018; Zell, 2010) noted that forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships including one's parents on and off campus were critical to Latina student retention. Researchers have shown that Latina students possessed strength assets and life experiences that helped them persist (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014). In addition, Hurtado and Carter (1997) proposed social support systems, whether internal or external to the college culture, were positive components for Latina retention.

Respondent answers to theme two were based on the interview guide questions: *What (in your culture) motivated you to attend college? Tell me your family's role in your decision to attend college? Did you feel supported by your family when you decided to attend college?*

Though there were 14 participants who responded to interview questions some responses included a mixture of receiving support and wanting parents to be proud of them. Parental and/or family expectation was a positive motivating factor for attending the community college for six participant responses. Three participants indicated that they went to college to support their family. Some parental expectations were implied while others were more deliberately stated. Of the 10 participants receiving family emotional support, four noted support came from their mothers. Parents expected that college was a way out of poverty and hardship. Though these goals were achieved through the support of community and family, four participants did

not meet their goals due to dropping out of college. Thus, among the 14 participants four dropped out while 10 were retained.

Expectations. Parental and/or family expectation was a positive motivating factor for attending the community college for four participant responses. The following provides relevant participants' statements.

Dulce: Dulce was an 18-24-year-old single woman with no children still living with her parents at the time of the interview. She was one of two participants who did not work outside the home. She revealed that her parents did not graduate from high school when they lived in Mexico and had to work hard to make a living. There were five people living in her household; her parent's total annual income was below $40,000. She said, "I saw them struggle all their life to raise us kids and if I didn't go to college, they would see it as a slap in their face. It's the least I can do for them after all they have done for me." Researcher: *What motivated you to attend college?* Dulce: My parents expected me to attend college, and I wanted to better myself.

Researcher: Why did they expect you to go to college? Can you tell me more about that?

Dulce: They had to struggle all their life to make a living and they saw college as a possible way to success in life.

Erina: Erina was divorced and over 35 years-of-age at the time of the interview. She came to the U.S. from Chile leaving her parents behind. My first impression of Erina was her ease at conversing with me and her strong self-confidence. Erina had no recognizable English accent though she was born in Chile. Her parent's role modeling was a strong motivating factor for her attending college. Through their role modeling it was implied that she would also attend college. She also wanted to be a role model for her son. She transferred to a four-year college because she wanted to be a teacher like her parents. She was the only participant who was not a

first-generation college student. Researcher: *What motivated you to attend college?* Erina: My parents motivated me to go to college, because they are teachers. I also wanted to be a role model for my children. Researcher: Are you saying that through your parent's role modeling, they motivated you? Can you tell me more about that? Erina: Yes, they were good role models. They are teachers in Chile and my mom teaches at the university. They are professional people, and I felt that I should go to college just like they did. They were my role models.

    Clarissa: Clarissa was a married woman with a child still at home. She also worked 40 hours a week. She received her GED and had completed four terms at the community college at the time of the interview. Researcher: *What (in your culture) motivated you to attend college?* Clarissa: I wanted to go further than my parents did, I find it…it's a lot easier if you have an education to not get stuck at a bunch of minimum wage jobs. Researcher: Did your parents put pressure on you to attend college? Clarissa: Not really, but I had other family like my aunt who tried to talk me into going to college when I was in high school. My parents didn't finish school. They had to help their family financially, they both came from big families. Mexico doesn't really offer much support for education.

    Support. Ten Latinas made mention of receiving some aspect of support, whether it was from a husband, mother or a family member. Of the seven participants who were married, only three felt supported by their husbands. Four participants mentioned they did not feel supported by family.

    Adie: Adie was a single woman between 18-24 years of age, with no children, and still living at home with her parents and extended family. She had completed two terms at the time of the first interview. The researcher interviewed Adie in a quiet space in a local coffee shop. She had a strong accent, and she seemed shy. Adie wanted to go into the medical field. She

answered many interview questions with yes or no answers or short statements. It was difficult

to get Adie to carry the conversation. When asked if she received support from her family she

said, "Yes". But then after, when the researcher asked for more clarification, she noted she

received support only 50% of the time. Researcher: *Did you feel supported by your family when*

you decided to attend college? Adie: Yes. Researcher: How were they supportive? Adie: They

were supportive 50% of the time, but they didn't understand the stress I was under because they

didn't go to college. Researcher: So your parents were supportive of you while going to college?

Adie: It was really hard to find the time to study, but I felt support from my mom.

 Adel: Adel and the researcher met at the place of Adel's choosing which was at a coffee

shop. Upon meeting me, Adel showed some anxiety in her face by the wrinkling of her

forehead. I tried to be as warm as possible. We both bought coffee and walked back to the back

of the coffee shop where there was a comfortable sofa. Upon explaining why, I am conducting

research and how this information will help the college better serve the needs of Latinas, she

seemed to relax. Adel is single and still lived at home. She had five family members living with

her (excluding herself) during the time of the interview. She worked 20 hours a week to help

pay for her studies and help contribute to the financial well-being of her family. The total family

annual income in her household was under $19,000. Researcher: *Did you feel supported by your*

family when you decided to attend college? Adel: Like what do you mean? Researcher: Were

your family members supportive of you or was glad for you and helped you in some way to

succeed in college? Adel: I think my mom was, but they didn't go to college. Researcher: Were

you the first in your family to go to college? Adel: In my family nobody went to college. My

parents worked so hard for us. If I didn't go to college it would be like throwing the opportunity

away.

Researcher: Can you tell me more about that? Adel: I had to work. The income wasn't there. We are attached as a family. It was hard leaving parents to go to school. We do everything together. I am the oldest. I had to take care of and raise my siblings. I couldn't go out as much as I wanted or do sports or go out with my friends. My brother has all those opportunities. I had to take care of the house. *Familia* is different in Mexico than in American families. Mexican families don't think the children need to move out when they turn 18. There is no pressure to move out of the home. Researcher: So am I hearing you say you didn't have much time to study? It looks like from your demographical information, in addition to working inside your home, helping with chores and other domestic duties, you worked outside the home at least 15 hours per week.

Danny: Danny was 22 years of age, married, living with her husband and extended family members. She appeared self-confident to the researcher. The researcher soon realized Danny's English-speaking skills were excellent; she was a motivated, compassionate person with empathy for others. At the time of the interview she had completed six terms at the college and transferred to another college to pursue the field of nursing, but still lived in the same area where she started college. Researcher: *Why did you want to go to college?* Danny: I always wanted my parents to be proud of me. I always wanted to be in the medical field. My brother had a bleeding disorder, and I wanted to be able help people that were sick, so I wanted to become a nurse. Researcher: *Did you feel supported by your family when you decided to attend college?* Danny: My husband was supportive. Researcher: How was he supportive? Danny: He paid for it (my college). He helped with my son and he encouraged me; he told me to keep it up and good job.

Researcher: What about your parents, were they supportive? Danny: My parents were very

supportive; they watched my child. They also helped financially. Thus, Danny was well

supported both from her husband and her parents.

Jessie: Jessie was 24 years of age, married and received her GED. Jessie was a

motivated student though she had many obstacles. She was a teen-mom, having a child while in

high school. There were seven self-reported people living in her immediate household.

Sometimes she took her daughter with her to classes. She said her mother emotionally supported

her while taking classes but felt no support from her husband or her father. At the time of the

interview she had received notification of being accepted into the nursing program.

Researcher: *Did you feel supported by your family when you decided to attend college?*

Jessie: What do you mean? Researcher: *Tell me your family's role in your decision to attend*

college? Jessie: Oh that kind of support, I felt emotionally supported by my mom.

Researcher: Are you married? Jessie: Yes. Researcher: Did you feel supported by your

husband? Jessie: My husband said he supported me to go to college, but he didn't help with the

kids. I was on my own. My mom would encourage me, but she couldn't help due to the other

children in the family. It was difficult doing homework because of my kids. I was juggling

being a mom and a student. My college didn't offer childcare. I was a young mom. I'm the

oldest of three sisters. I also had to help take care of them even though I was a young parent.

Vicky: Researcher: *Did you feel supported by your family when you decided to attend*

college? Vickie: My parents live in Mexico. Researcher: Are you married? Or were you married

when you attended college? Vickie: Part of the time. Researcher: What do you mean?

Vickie: For the first term or so, I went to college I was married, but now I'm divorced.

Researcher: *Was your husband supportive of you when you went to college?* Vickie: Are you

crazy? He never supported me! Researcher: I'm sorry to hear that.

   Theme summary. Parental-family expectations/support was a strong motivating factor

for most of the participants to stay in college. Many respondents stated they received more

support from their mothers than from their fathers or husbands. Though some responders

expressed having familial expectations such as housework, translating for family members,

taking care of children, or other family members, cooking, etc., and claimed to have various

expectations that interfered with their ability to commit fully to school, most participants were

retained. Many participants also mentioned that their parents expected them to attend college.

Therefore, family pride positively influenced participant's retention.

   Theme 3: Financial Support. The analysis of theme three revealed that lack of financial

support was one of the biggest obstacles for Latina completion. Securing a better financial

position in life was one of the main reasons for the participant's enrollment in college. These

participants desired to secure a living wage job. According to research, financial backing was

found to be a positive factor toward Latina retention (Braxton et al., 2004; Musu-Gillette, de

Brey, McFarland, Hussar, Sonnenberg, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2017; Yaqub, 2010). A few

participants noted receiving financial support was one reason they attended college. Coming

from a low SES and the desire to alleviate poverty were significant motivating factors for

participants attending college. Many respondents also noted that, due to the hardship of the lack

of finances, they had to work in addition to attending classes in order to make ends meet. Seven

students received scholarships or grants; three of those felt it was enough money while four of

the students receiving scholarships/grants mentioned they still struggled financially. But when

asked the questions, "*What do you not like about your college experience?*" "*What obstacles did*

you have to overcome to attend college?" Ten participants noted a negative aspect of their college-going experience was the lack of finances. Eleven participants noted the desire for a better income potential as a motivating factor for attending college.

Respondent answers to the third theme, financial support, was based on the answers from the following interview guide questions: *Tell me what motivated you to attend college? What do you like about your college experience?* Lack of financial support responses were based on answers to the following questions, *What do you not like about your college experience? Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college? What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?*

Vicky: Researcher's question: *Tell me what motivated you to attend college?* Vickie: To get out of poverty. Researcher: Can you talk more about that? Vicky: I already told you earlier. I didn't want to make minimum wage all my life, so I got the idea to study early childhood education. I worked at Head Start and still couldn't pay all my bills. I'm glad I have a college education, but I don't know if it is doing any good, I'm still broke.

Donita: Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience?* Donita: I got some college for free. Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?* Donita: The college could have found more money for me to attend.

Jessie: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?* Jessie: Financially it was so hard. Even though I got grant money, it didn't cover everything. Researcher: So you had to pay out-of-pocket? Jessie: Yeah, the grant money didn't cover the textbooks I needed which were so expensive; and there were other expenses too.

Angel: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?*

Angel: It was expensive. The money was hard to find. I wish there were more scholarship opportunities. Researcher: *Tell me what (other) obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?* Angel: Finding childcare was hard and financially I couldn't afford childcare. My husband was working so he couldn't watch the kids. Researcher: Did you miss classes because you didn't have childcare? Angel: Yes, I was so frustrated, eventually I had to drop out. Researcher: I'm sorry that happened to you.

Tamie: Tamie's marital status was single. She lived at home. There were a total of five people living with her at the time the interview took place. She dropped out of high schools and received her GED. In addition to her domestic responsibilities, she worked 30 hours a week outside her home during the time the interview took place. Researcher: *What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?* Tamie: What do you mean? Researcher: *What could the college have done to help you be more successful?* Tamie: Provide more scholarships. Researcher: Are you saying if the college provided more resources you would have been more successful? Tamie: Definitely. I switched to a part-time job instead of full-time to focus on my studies, but then I was making lower wages. So, the financial aspects were hard. I had to manage my money differently. There were things I wanted but I couldn't afford.

Theme summary. All the students experienced low SES; therefore, the desire to secure a better financial future was a significant motivating factor for participants to attend college. To achieve that future, many participants worked in addition to attending classes. Many respondents noted they struggled financially even though some of them received scholarships and grants.

Theme 4: Learning and Instruction. Learning and instruction represented a theme that emerged from participant responses. Tinto (1993) postulated retention is positively affected, if

students are socially and academically integrated with their college learning experience. But rural community college institutions have generally been limited in providing opportunity for multicultural learning to students which affected academic integration (Demi, Coleman-Jensen, & Synder, 2010; Maltzan, 2006). Furthermore, rural colleges have tended to have fewer course offerings and fewer financial scholarships than four-year institutions (McPhail, 2011). Nevertheless, many participants noted that they loved learning new things. For example, Belinda noted, "I love learning, I feel happy when I'm learning new things."

Some mentioned that they liked the small class size as it led to a more comfortable, personal learning environment. Social and academic integration for 11 participants were more easily accomplished by the small class and college size. Of the 14 participant responses to class and college size, 11 participants gave a positive response to the small size of the college and small classes. Eleven participants identified a positive experience with the college environment overall. However, three participants said the classes and or college were too small. Some participants wished that they had more tutorial help and stated that they felt intimidated and felt they did not belong at the college.

Seven respondents described that they love learning new things. For example, the responses from these five participants-Angel, Liz, Clarissa, Marie, and Belinda described their positive experience about class size and learning new things.

The learning and instruction theme were based on participant response and analysis founded on answers from the following interview guide questions: *What do you like about your college experience? What do you not like about your college experience? Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college? What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?*

Belinda: Belinda noted that she loved the small class size which made learning more personal. She was a 27-year-old, married woman with young children at the time of the interview. She worked 20 hours a week. Belinda faced many obstacles in her life that interfered with her college success. Sometimes she worked two jobs. She lacked adequate support and had few resources. But she loved the small learning environment of a small rural college; however, at the same time had spells when she felt intimidated. Unfortunately, after completing two terms of college she dropped out. The researcher conducted her interview at a place of Belinda's choosing, in the back area of one of the local Mexican Restaurants. She came to the interview with one of her children. Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience?* Belinda: I love learning. I feel happy when I'm learning new things. Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?* Belinda: In class, they spoke really fast. I felt like I was just there. I felt inferior. Researcher: Do you feel like you could have benefited from English language support? Belinda: Definitely. Researcher: Is there anything else you want me to know about your college-going experiences during this study? Belinda: I had to drop out. I had no support. I didn't feel welcome at the college. Researcher's response: I am so sorry that happened.

Marie: Researcher*: What do you not like about your college experience?* Marie: Not like? Researcher: *Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?* Marie: I didn't get the help I was hoping for. I didn't get any tutorial help. I didn't like the computer tests. Researcher: Did you ask for help? Marie: I felt stupid for asking, because I'm shy and I felt intimidated by all the smart people. Researcher: *Were there things you liked about your college experience?* Marie: The personal fulfillment about learning in general. Researcher: What do you like about your college-going experience?

Clarissa: I like the small size of the college. I get more attention and get the resources. I know a lot of the people there too, so not everything is a huge change. So, if I go to a university it will be a better transition. I like the help I have gotten so far. At first, I didn't know how to navigate the online stuff so I would ask the librarian. I would ask tutors from the learning center and proof-read my writing. When I write it doesn't come out how I want it to sometimes.

Theme summary. Belinda and Marie eventually dropped out of college though they expressed pleasure about the learning experiences. These women had many challenges that eventually became barriers to their retention. These women received their GED instead of graduating from high school. They were married, had children to care for, and worked at jobs outside their homes. Both participant's parents had less than a high school education, which classified the Latina participants as first-generation college students. Their lack of support and their lack of resources needed in and out of the college clearly were deciding factors in their lack of retention. Clarissa was single. Both parents had less than a high school education. She had a positive experience with learning and instruction especially the small class sizes and tutorial support. She received her GED but was retained at least more than one term.

Theme 5: Student Services Support. Receiving adequate student services support or experiencing a lack of such support was a theme that emerged in the analysis based on participant responses to interview questions. Scholars have found dynamic relationships existed between the individual and other actors within the college which affected student persistence and withdrawal (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Valencia & Black, 2002). Likewise, Tinto (1993) noted that, if students were socially and academically integrated with their college-going experience then retention was more likely. But unfortunately, according to Demi et al., (2010)

and other scholars (Biswas, 2005; Gross et al., 2006; Huber & Malagon, 2007) support structures for Latina students have been generally lacking in rural communities and community colleges. For example, there tended to be fewer campus activities, fewer resources such as childcare options fewer transportation options which can lead to higher dropout rates for Latinas.

In addition to the importance of maintaining interpersonal and academically related relationships, if the college provided Latina students with access to outreach programming and services and facilitated connections to campus and community resources, the students would have a more positive college-going experience leading to retention. Research has shown this aspect is critical to student success (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Martinez, 2004).

Complicating these issues, colleges have been woefully lacking with limited curriculum, limited resources, and an inability to retain culturally competent student services and teaching staff which has contributed to rural community college challenges (Hicks & Jones, 2011; Maltzan, 2006; Mather & Pollard, 2007). These challenges have added to rural college dilemmas of failing to meet the complex needs of Latina students (Hicks & Jones, 2011; Saenz, 2008).

The lack of student service support was a theme that emerged in the analysis based on participant responses to the following questions: *What do you like about your college experience*? *What do you not like about your college experience? Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college? What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?*

Many of the responses regarding this theme were negative, even though student services conducted assessments with 11 of the participants and seven mentioned that they received advising help. Four of the participants responded that they did not feel supported by student

services, while seven specifically noted that they lacked guidance. One participant indicated that

she was confused as suggested by her statement, "What do those people do in there?" Three

participants claimed that college personnel lacked advisory competence. For example, some

Latina students stated that they took classes they did not need. In addition, eight participants felt

that there were not enough class offerings and course time openings that fit their needs. For

some participants the lack of transportation and childcare issues remained as challenging factors

affecting whether or not they were able to attend classes. Eight respondents noted that finding

childcare was difficult and they wished that the college offered this. Four interviewees wished

that the college offered more scholarships, activities, and clubs. Four participants said that they,

"lacked the courage to ask [student services] for help." Some participants did not know how

student services could help them.

Clarissa: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience*?

Clarissa: Some of the classes they offer were in the evening. I didn't have a ride, so the options

didn't always fit me. The public transport didn't go by my house. Some classes didn't fit into

my schedule.

Dulce: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?*

Dulce: What do you mean? Researcher: *Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend*

college? Dulce: There were not enough classes offered. I took classes that didn't transfer, and I

didn't learn anything because it wasn't interesting. Researcher: The classes that didn't transfer,

were they credit classes? Dulce: Yes, I thought they were. I would have never taken those

classes if I knew they wouldn't transfer toward my degree. Researcher: Did you have an

advisor? Dulce: Yes, but she didn't help me.

*Danny***:** Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience*?

Danny: The advisor really helped me.

Tamie: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?*

Tamie: I didn't know what I wanted to study yet as a career. There were limited career options.

Researcher: *Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?*

Tamie*:* The advising was not good.

Liz: Researcher: *Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?*

Liz: The class offerings were a problem. The culinary program was cancelled, so I couldn't continue. For people who cannot afford the tuition, they need more technical career class options. I don't think I need math and other classes like that, that have nothing to do with culinary classes. I think it isn't fair to spend so much money for just one track that might pay me $12 an hour. The return on investment doesn't seem to fit the degree. Researcher: Are you saying you thought it was a waste of your time and resources to take unnecessary classes that perhaps have nothing to do with your program or degree scheme? Liz: Yes. I don't think all that math and extra classes are necessary.

Angel: Angel was another dissatisfied student with the lack of adequate support from student services. She said she was first put in an ESL class that she said she did not need. She felt that the college staff did not listen to her or properly test her before placing her in the appropriate classes. She eventually dropped out of college after one term of credit-bearing classes.

Angel: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience? Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?* Angel: They put me in English speaking classes. I think it's called ELL or ESL, something like that, which I didn't need. They didn't

listen. They just thought because I got my GED and that I was Hispanic that I should be in ESL

classes. When I finally got out of there, I took two terms of real classes and then dropped-out.

Researcher: Why did you drop out? Angel: Lots of reasons, I think the advising was bad. I had

no money and I was frustrated. I didn't have anyone to watch my son. No one in advising or

anywhere else knew Spanish so it was hard to talk to people who might be able to help me. I

didn't know who to talk to fix all this. Researcher: I'm sorry to hear about your challenges.

Adie: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience? Tell me what*

obstacles you had to overcome to attend college? Adie: There were limited career options in the

catalog. Researcher: What did you want to study? Adie: I wanted to help people, like go into

nursing something like that. But everything is limited here at this college. I went to X college in

the valley and they had so many more classes, and more help.

Theme summary. Many of the respondents spoke of feelings of frustration with student

services, even though assessments and advising services were provided to most of them. As

first-generation students, some respondents noted feeling confused about the registration process,

registering online, and filling out various English forms. They mentioned taking classes that

they did not need and that there were not enough class offerings. In addition, the lack of

transportation and the desire for more scholarships, activities, and clubs presented more

challenges that made attending college difficult for the participants. The lack of childcare was an

issue for most of the students who had children, and this was a significant challenging factor

whether or not they were able to attend classes.

Theme 6: Peer and Teacher Support. Peer and teacher support emerged as a combined

theme. Some scholars measured social integration in college as a composite of peer-to-peer

interactions and faculty-student interactions as positive factors leading to retention (Kuh, Kinzie,

Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; McKay & Kuh, 1994). Tinto (1975; 1993) duly noted that

retention success depended upon students entering a social system in which peer group

interactions and staff interactions fostered social integration. Tinto further postulated that both

types of integration worked together to influence the decision of students to remain or leave

college. Scholars have found that having allies or friends that shared the same ancestral

homeland and/or shared similar cultural aspects, such as language while attending community

colleges, offered a feeling of safety and social-sense of belonging (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012;

Iturbide et al., 2009; Joaquina-Villasenor et al., 2013).

Faculty support whether formal or informal can offset the challenges Latinas face

especially if they encounter micro-aggressions, discrimination or stereotype threat. However,

often faculties in rural colleges have lacked the linguistic, cultural, and gendered responsive-

pedagogy and curricula innovation (Gandara, 1982; Obera & Wall, 2008; Orbe, 2008; The Latina

Feminist Group, 2001). Some rural colleges have experienced the inability to retain culturally

competent teaching staff as excellent faculty tend to move to urban areas where universities and

colleges can offer higher wages. Specifically, some rural colleges lacked Latinx teachers which

can offset rural college challenges of ineffectively meeting the complex needs of Latina students

(Hicks & Jones, 2011; Maltzan, 2006; Mather & Pollard, 2007).

Many participants' responses were positive overall with the quality of support that they

received from their instructors. Many said that the "teachers cared and were helpful," although

four noted that they felt a lack of support from their teachers. For example, some respondents

stated that they needed more tutorial, mentoring, and academic help from their teachers than

what they received. Six participants indicated that they felt supported from their teachers, and

six felt supported from their peers. The interview questions that revealed the significance of this

theme of Instructor/Peer Support were the following: *What do you like about your college experience? What do you not like about your college experience? What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?*

  Jessie: Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience?*

Jessie: "I had a math teacher who was really supportive."

  Clarissa: Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience?*

Clarissa: I like the help I have gotten so far. At first, I didn't know how to do the online stuff, so I asked the librarian. I asked the tutors from the learning center to help me. She would proof-read my writing. When I write it doesn't come out the way I want it. Researcher: It seems like you want to say something else? Clarissa: There were four girls in my first writing class. We would do group study.

  Liz: Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience?*

Liz: I thought some teachers were helpful, which helped to give me confidence. Although the class I took was confusing, the teacher wasn't helpful in explaining, I expected better explanations. Researcher: Can you tell me how they were helpful? Liz: Some of the teachers were easy to talk to like after class, or in the hallway and if I had a question about the homework, stuff like that.

  Tamie: Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience*?

Tamie: I like the staff members they were so willing to help out, most of the teachers are easy to talk to.

  Jessie: Researcher: *What do you like about your college experience?*

Jessie: I had a math teacher that was really supportive. Also, another guy was awesome. When I was working at Burger King, he used to come there and he would ask me questions about why I should go to college—he was a big support.

Dulce: Researcher: *What do you not like about your college experience?*

Dulce: I lacked the courage to ask for help and I felt some teachers didn't care. Researcher: How did they show they didn't care? Dulce: I don't know, I think they should have asked me if I need help or if I understand whatever it was we were discussing. I am shy so it is hard for me to ask for help.

Theme summary. Many respondents were positive overall with the instructional support that they received from their instructors. In addition, the same number of participants noted that they felt supported from their teachers as felt supported from their peers. Unfortunately, there were a few respondents who mentioned a lack of support in the areas of tutorial, mentoring, and academic help.

Theme 7: Cultural Barrier. Cultural barriers emerged as a theme in this research based on participant responses to interview questions: *What do you not like about your college experience? Have you had negative experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity? What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?*

Some Latina college students have encountered racial disparities in college (Farrigan, 2017; Maduena, 2012; Rivas-Drake & Mooney 2009). But, faculty, peer, institutional, parental and staff support can offset the challenges Latinas faced especially as they encountered confusion with navigating the community college system (Herrera, Hernandez-Chapar, & Sanchez, 2017) and racial disparities. Some participants implied they felt misunderstood or that

they did not belong to the college academic or social learning environments. Many participants

noted they felt their culture wasn't valued. Tovar (2015) noted that Latinx interaction

opportunities with institutional agents such as a strong mentoring role of faculty, counselors, and

support programs which led to the students' motivation to persist and commitment to attend. If

Latinx college students did not receive institutional support from agents, this led to lower

persistence rates (Valencia & Black, 2002). Minorities often experienced lower levels of

academic integration than White students partly due to institutional neglect. Along with this,

some Latina community college students experienced limited academic expectations from

faculty and staff, and therefore limited academic integration (Joaquina-Villasenor et al., 2013;

Tovar, 2015).

Among first-generation students, Latinx students were most heavily represented as

having lower levels of academic integration than their White counterparts (NCES, 2011, 2016;

Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Rodriguez et at., 2000; Schultz, 2004). One reason for lower

levels of academic integration for ethnic minority groups included lack of college-going culture

within their families which have led to student confusion navigating the college culture.

Families have tended to pass on advantages or social capital of their social positions to their

children; an idea consistent with retention theories and literature on first-generation students

(Fadel, 2012; NCES, 2011). These social advantages tended to help upper middle classes and

have not benefitted minorities (Yosso, 2005). Finally, as Latinx students applied resilience and

self-efficacy, and accepted their ethnic identity, scholars (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007) postulated

that Latinx student have managed to persist against great odds.

Participant answers that informed this theme were in response to the following interview

guide questions: *What do you not like about your college experience? Have you had negative*

experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity? What elements of your

culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?

When asked the questions, "*What did you not like about your college-going experience?*"
and "*Have you had negative experience while going to college?*" The participants responded that
the biggest challenge was the language barrier. Eight respondents stated that the main cultural
barrier was the challenge of the English language. Of these eight, some noted that the process of
switching back and forth from two languages was difficult. They described the difficulties and
the time involved in translating from English to Spanish and Spanish to English in order to
understand what was being communicated both by the teacher and by the textbooks.

Three participants said they "felt their culture wasn't valued." Five participants said,
"nobody spoke Spanish." Thirteen noted that at times they "felt a lack of belonging." In
addition, many participants felt self-conscious due to their accent. Seven respondents stated that
the college needed Spanish speaking staff and teachers. Many participants suggested that student
services could have made their college-going experience more successful if all the forms that
they had to fill out were simpler and in a bilingual format and if there were Spanish-speaking
staff. Seven noted that, at times, they felt like they did not fit in. Two participants stated they
felt they were stereotyped by their ethnicity.

Tamie: Researcher: *Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?*
Tamie: There is no one person who spoke Spanish and all the information was in English.
Researcher*: What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention*
rate of Latinas? Tamie: They need to look more into the Mexican culture. They need to know
each of us that attend college come from a different place, and we may have a different view.

Researcher*: What do you not like about your college experience, and have you had negative experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity?* Tamie: In one situation I felt like my culture wasn't valued. We had a teacher for Writing 115. There was another Spanish speaking girl with me. We talked in Spanish. The teacher said, "stop talking in Spanish" because it was for our own good. It made me feel uncomfortable. It happened right before class started. When I was learning about Western civilization, we learned a little about the Aztecs; that's it. There was nothing more about my culture. Researcher: *What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?* Tamie: If more teachers and staff spoke Spanish that would be helpful.

Vicky*:* Researcher*: What do you not like about your college experience? or Have you had negative experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity?*

Vicky: Teachers didn't understand my accent. It was a challenge. The teachers and staff did not have a lot of patience. Researcher: Can you talk about that some more? What do you mean they didn't have patience? Vicky: I felt my culture didn't matter. They told me I don't belong here if I didn't know English. Nobody spoke Spanish. Researcher: I can hear the frustration in your voice. That must have been difficult for you. Vicky: First you had to learn English. Then translate it in Spanish in my head in order to understand. And then I had to try to figure out the [American] culture [context] at the college so I could understand. Researcher: *What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?* Vicky: The forms should be simpler. I needed help filling out the forms. The staff and teachers need more patience because of the language barrier.

Jessie: Researcher*: What do you not like about your college experience, and have you had negative experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity?*

Jessie: I struggled not only being Latina but also female. The women in my culture does everything.

 Erina: Researcher*: What do you not like about your college experience? Or have you had negative experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity?*

Erina: I felt like I had to work harder than anyone. I had to process what I was learning whether reading or lectures, first in Spanish then in English. I felt like my teachers didn't give me feedback and didn't show an interest in me or give me help with my essays. I felt my ethnicity being Latina was stereotyped, I felt judged. I felt some teachers and students made assumptions that weren't true such as all Latinas share the same culture. The language barrier made learning difficult.

 Theme summary. Most respondents identified that the major cultural barrier was the challenge of understanding the complexities of the English language. The participants explained how much time it took translating between two languages. Also, feeling self-conscious due to their accent, lack of belonging, self-doubt, lack of forms and course schedules being in Spanish added to the respondents' college-going barriers. In addition, the lack of Spanish-speaking staff and faculty added to their challenges.

Summary

Four themes that proved to be the strongest positive motivating factors for most of the participants' college retention were (a) Career Goals-theme one; (b) Parental-Family Expectations/Support-theme two; (c) Learning and Instruction Support-theme four; and (d) Peer and Teacher Support-theme six. Most respondents noted that having career goals provided a significant motivating factor in their retention. Likewise, most respondents stated receiving support from parents, husbands, and mothers helped them to stay in college. Though a few

respondents wished that they had more tutorial help, overall, most participants described a positive experience with the college environment which included the small college and class sizes. Overall, Peer and Teacher Support-theme six emerged as a combined theme and as a positive factor toward retention for most respondents. Social and academic integration from peer-to-peer and faculty-student interactions for most participants was more easily accomplished through the small classes and the small college size.

Conversely, negative college-going experiences were noted by most respondents in the following themes: (a) Financial Support-theme three; (b) Student Services Support-theme four; and (c) Cultural Barrier-theme seven. These are discussed below.

One of the biggest challenges for participants was the language barrier. There were more interview responses by respondents in this area than any other theme. Most respondents noted that the main cultural barrier was the challenge of the English language. Most respondents emphasized the difficulties and the time involved in translating between two languages in order to understand what was being communicated, both by the teacher and by the textbooks. Such translation difficulties represented one of the biggest barriers they faced.

The Financial Support theme revealed, the low SES of all the participants coupled with the desire to alleviate poverty were significant positive motivating factors for participants to attend college. The lack of adequate finances was a significant barrier to retention. But because of this barrier, most respondents either had to work part-time or full-time in order to mitigate the financial challenges of their college-going experiences. Nevertheless, all but four participants were retained.

Lastly, regarding the Student Services Support theme, most respondents emphasized frustrations with Student Services. One of the biggest challenges toward retention for more than

half of the responders was the lack of childcare resources at the college. Some responders

wished that the college offered more class offerings, with more course time options, and more

scholarships, activities, and clubs.

Table 4.1

Demographic Information on Participants

Name	Age	Marital Status	Ethnicity	Household Members	Mothers Education	Fathers Education	High School	# of Terms In College	Hours Worked	Income
VV Vicky	>35	D	Mexican Latina	3	<HS	<HS	GED	6	40	<$19K
LL Liz	>35	M	Hispanic	3	<HS	<HS	GED	1	N/A	>$39K
TA Tamie	18-24	S	Mexican	5	<HS	<HS	GED	5	30	$20K-$39K
JJ Jessie	18-24	M	Mexican Hispanic	7	<HS	<HS	GED	6	20-25	$20K-$39K
DU Dulce	18-24	S	Mexican	5	<HS	<HS	2.5-2.99	3	N/A	$20K-$39K
CL Clarisa	18-24	M	Hispanic	2	<HS	<HS	GED	4	40	<$19K
ET Erina	>35	D	Latina	3	College	College	GED	8	30	<$19K
DA Danny	18-24	M	Hispanic	6	<HS	HS	3.0-3.49	6	40	$20K-$39K
ANG Angel	30-34	M	Mexican Hispanic	4	<HS	<HS	GED	1	20	$20K-$39K

AA Adel	25- 29	S	Mexican Hispanic	5	<HS	<HS	2.5- 2.99	3	20	<$19K
DD Donita	18- 24	D	Latina	5	<HS	<HS	2.5- 2.99	7	20	<$19K
AD Adie	18- 24	S	Hispanic	4	<HS	<HS	2.5- 2.99	2	15	$20K- $39K
MA Marie	>35	M	Mexican	5	<HS	<HS	GED	2	40+	$20K- $39K
BR Belind a	25- 29	M	Hispanic	4	<HS	<HS	GED	2	20	<$19K

Note Marital Status: S=Single, M=Married, D=Divorced

Chapter Five: Discussion

The preceding chapter outlined the influences of retention and departure of Latina students during their college-going progression at a rural community college. This final chapter provides an overview and discussion of the findings of this research. Next, I discuss the limitations of the present study. Based on those limitations, I offer several suggestions for future research. I also share my ideas for how findings may be used to inform the practice of community college leaders, staff, and faculty who are dedicated to supporting Latinx students.

Discussion of Findings

Positive factors: RQ1. There were seven themes identified in the present study, and these were discussed in chapter four. Of those seven themes, four themes were identified as positively contributing toward Latina retention, these included: (a) career goals, (b) parental/family expectations, (c) learning and instruction, and (d) peer and teacher support. These were compared with the positive factors that led to retention as suggested by Tinto (1975; 1993). Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory suggested multiple positive factors contributed to student retention, and the factors fell under three categories: academic integration, social integration, and preparedness. The text below considered each of Tinto's (1975; 1993) three categories within the context of the seven themes discussed and compared them with the findings from the present study.

Academic integration: Career goal. This theme-Career Goal was one of the strongest positive motivating factors that Latina's noted which led to retention. Their reasons for attending college were the aspiration for a better career, the possibility to go further in life than their parents, and the desire to help people.

Academic integration: Learning and instruction. Learning new things was a positive

motivating factor for many Latinas. In addition, there were many positive responses to Latina

experiences with the small classes and small rural community college.

Academic engagement and integration: Peer/teacher support. Positive responses to

academic engagement factors in the present study included the following: classroom

engagement, teacher and peer interaction, and tutorial access. The social and academic

engagement with teaching staff positively related to Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory of retention for

some participants. Tinto (1975; 1993) postulated social and academic integration led to student

retention.

Academic integration: Motivation factors to attend college. Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory

included the idea that students entered higher education with specific beliefs to stay in college

and to finish. This was made clear in the following four themes: (a) Theme-one, career goal

aspirations; (b) Theme-two, parental-family expectations/support; (c) Theme-four, learning and

instruction; and (d) Theme-six teacher/peer support. Participant motivation to persist was made

evident in these four themes: *Academic integration: Learning and instruction; Academic*

engagement and integration Peer/teacher support; Academic integration: Motivation factors to

attend college; and Social integration: Peer and teacher support.

Social integration*: Peer and teacher support*. Tinto (1975; 1993) suggested as part of

social integration that faculty interaction was invaluable to student retention. Social integration

represented the extent to which students found the institution's social environment to be

congenial with his or her preferences, which were shaped by the student's background (Tinto,

1975; 1993). Scholars measured some aspects of social integration as a composite of peer-to-

peer interactions and faculty-student interactions (Kuh et al., 1994; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley,

Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Tinto, 2015). This present study found that many interviewees noted positive responses with faculty, peers, and the college environment.

The researcher found that the present research showed a consistency with Tinto's (1975; 1993) idea of social integration, that faculty and peer interaction was invaluable to student retention. Almost half of the interviewees experienced positive social integration in the form of faculty and peer interaction, and 10 of the 14 participants were retained. However, it cannot be underestimated that Latinx cultural wealth also played a key part in their persistence.

On the other hand, 14 participants provided examples of negative experiences, and 11 said that, at times, they felt like an outsider or they did not belong in the college. This showed that there were times when they did not fully socially integrate into the college environment.

As for involvement, Tinto (1975; 1993) hypothesized that students are more likely to stay in schools that involve them as valued members of the institution. Of the 14 participants interviewed, most felt they had positive experiences with caring teachers, peer support, and the college environment overall. According to Gandara (1982), Gloria and Castellanos (2012), and Tinto (1975; 1993), faculty and peer encouragement played a strong positive role toward retention, which showed a parallel with this present research in that most students who experienced positive aspects of social integration were retained.

Social integration: Parental family/expectations. Tinto (1993) and others (NPEC, 2006) postulated that students first must separate from the group with which they were formerly associated, such as family members. After this separation, they undergo a period of transition during which the student begins to interact in new ways with the members of the new group into which membership was sought. Furthermore, according to Tinto (1993), if separation does not occur, students were more likely to leave the university.

Most interviewees reported being supported by family members (*familial* support-mother, father, husband, and family). They noted having a high degree of social integration with family life, support, and expectations. Mothers tended to be more supportive, while husbands and fathers were less supportive. Adie noted, "It was really hard to find the time to study, but I felt support from my mom." Clarissa felt supported by her aunt. Family and community commitments was an asset of Latinx cultural heritage and cultural wealth which scholars (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007) showed led to retention for Latinx students.

Thus, the data in this research showed a negative relationship to Tinto's (1993) theory of retention and departure. He stated separation from the family must happen (to a certain extent) in order to form new relationships while going to college. This was not the case with the majority of these students. Therefore, the data showed family support as a positive experience for Latina students, which appeared to negate Tinto's (1993) separation theory.

Preparedness. Tinto (1975) suggested that students with proper academic preparedness were more likely to be retained, while those lacking academic preparedness experienced decreased retention. In this present study, academic preparedness was measured by three factors: (a) high school GPA and GED, (b) first-generation status, and (c) English-language competence.

Scholars were not consistent as to whether or not GED holders were more prepared to enter college than high school graduates. Sanders (2007) found that, in a study of over 4,000 students between the years 2003 and 2005, 50% of GED holders persisted into their second term in Oregon community colleges. The GED diploma recipients may miss out on developing basic academic and life skills, but research is not conclusive as whether or not they are as prepared as high school graduates. Blue (2014) suggested GED recipients required more remedial coursework than high school graduates. Blue further noted that graduation rates for the 2003

cohort was 11% with GED holders. Nevertheless, nine participants in this present study had

received a GED, five of those were retained, completed, or transferred, while four dropped out.

Thus, in the present study, the GED diploma did not appear to be an important factor hindering

retention.

According to Tinto (1993), and others (Fadel, 2012; NCES, 2011; Yosso 2005) student

departure was higher among first-generation students than for students who had parents with

college degrees. My research showed that all but one respondent was a first-generation student.

Thus, the respondents lacked the dominant White cultural capital and college navigational skills

passed down from parents, which left them at a disadvantage. However, of the respondents who

were first-generation students, all but four were retained, completed, or transferred. My research

did not support Tinto (1993), or other research data that postulated student departure was higher

among first-generation students than those students who had parents with college education

(Fadel, 2012; NCES, 2011; Yosso 2005).

Tinto (1993) reported that first-generation students and students living in poverty were at

substantial risk for dropping out of college (increased departure). Tinto also reported that first-

generation students were reluctant to ask for help, which indicated a negative experience leading

to increased departure. The latter was true for half of the participants who reported that they

lacked the courage to ask for help from teachers or tutors and saw this as a major obstacle. All

but one of the interviewees was a first-generation student, and the narratives showed the struggle

with language and also the struggle with asking for help.

At the same time, this present research showed that many participants identified that they

experienced challenges with navigating two languages. This was identified as a barrier and yet

most participants were retained. The data here suggested a potential inconsistency with Tinto's

theory on student retention and departure since these "less prepared" students, due to language difficulties, were nevertheless retained. Equally important, Castellanos and Gloria (2007) noted Latinx core values (e.g., *familismo, comunidad, personalismo*), strength-based practices of family and ethnic consciousness, led to retention. Many participants in the present study exhibited these traits in addition to strong motivational factors, resilience, and the sheer self-determination to succeed. Dulce noted, "My parents expected me to attend college, and I wanted to better myself."

Bernal et al. (2006) and other scholars (Cuadraz, 1996; Gandara, 1982; Obera & Wall, 2008; Orbe, 2008; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001) postulated that language difficulty can lead to student departure. Again, the present study did not substantiate that same finding.

Summary of positive factors. According to Tinto (1993) students who were academically integrated, socially integrated, and prepared were more likely to be retained in college. Positive responses to academic integration factors appeared in the present study and included the following: classroom engagement, teacher and peer interaction, and tutorial access.

Tinto (1975; 1993) postulated that person-centered motivational factors led to retention. Narratives of the participants who were retained indicated that they were positively motivated to attend and stay in college.

Tinto (1993) suggested as part of social integration that faculty interaction was invaluable to student retention. Most interviewees felt they had positive experiences with caring teachers, peer support, and the college environment overall. At the same time, most mentioned that, at times, they felt like an outsider or they did not belong. This showed that there were other areas or times when they did not fully socially integrate.

Negative factors: RQ 2. "What are the negative factors/experiences that Latina women self-report as detracting toward retention while attending a remote rural community college?" The negative factors affecting the women in this present study were lack of student services support, lack of financial support, and cultural barriers. These were compared with Tinto's social integration theory which include student services barriers, financial barriers, and cultural barriers.

Student services barriers. Another component of Tinto's (1993) social integration theory was the importance of student activity involvement. Tinto (1993) suggested that if integration included involvement in clubs, sports, and extracurricular programs, students experiencing such integration would be more likely to persist. Therefore, he hypothesized that limited or no involvement leads to increased departure.

Most of the participants in the present study either worked part-time or full-time and had family and domestic responsibilities at the same time that they conducted their studies. As a result, most of these students were not involved with a social club or activity. This present study's results do not demonstrate an association with this aspect of Tinto's theory or other scholar's hypothesis (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lacy, 1978), that indicated that providing various college activities increased retention. Lack of extracurricular programs was not a retention barrier for most participants. Even though most participants worked either part-time or full-time, indeed, most participants completed, transferred, or were retained in their program, despite their lack of involvement in extracurricular programs.

Not all college experiences are the same for all student groups. Crisp, Taggart, and Nora, (2015) found that although involvement in political organizations was positively related to Latinx grades, participation in co-ethnic groups or intramural sports were found to negatively

affect Latina's grades. Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009) found if Latinx students perceived they were in non-supportive educational environments that this adversely affected retention. Kuh and Love (2000) postulated that the ability for the institution to understand the culture of minorities, and the ability of the minority students to understand and become involved in the campus culture were critical for persistence for minority students. Finally, Braxton et al. (2004) found that academic advising, contributed to students' perceptions of institutional efforts placed on student growth and development.

  Financial barriers. External to student motivation were the role finances played in retention. Research has shown that some rural colleges tend to have fewer scholarship opportunities, but if students can access such scholarships, retention was more likely (NCES, 2003; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Sy & Romero, 2008). In the present study, financial barriers were voiced as a deterrent to participant college-going success in multiple interview questions. Lack of economic resources and finances were significantly mentioned complaints amongst participants. Over half of the participants polled specified their lack of finances as a negative factor detracting from retention. Nevertheless, most of the participants who had no or little financial support from the college, completed, transferred or remained enrolled in college. Despite lack of financial support being a negative experience for most participants, completion rates were not of considerable difference between those with or without financial burden.

  Though researchers stated that without financial support from family, scholarships or financial aid, students tend toward departure (Bordes-Edgar, Arrendo, Robinson-Kurpius, & Rund, 2011; Espinosa, 2011; Lacy, 1978; Martin & Meyer, 2010). Andrieu and St. John, (1993) went one step further and postulated that lack of intuitional financial support for students was a lack of institutional commitment, especially for minority and undocumented students (Abrica &

Martinez, 2016). But, surprisingly, most participants in this present research exhibited sheer determination and resilience to stay in college in spite of financial hardships. They held jobs outside the home while going to school. Of those holding jobs more than half were retained, completed or transferred. Crisp and Nora's (2010b) systematic study of community college Hispanic students found that strong financial support was a significant positive factor leading to student retention. This is critical if students are going to attend college full-time without having to work.

Cultural barriers. According to Tinto (1993), students who felt like they did not belong at an institution were less likely to persist through school. If they were isolated and lacked the ability to interact with other students or faculty, they were less likely to continue in school. Many participants indicated that at times they felt like an outsider, lacked belonging, and did not know how to ask for help, or felt inferior or too shy to ask for help.

There were more than half negative responses that linked participants' ethnic background, particularly language/cultural difficulties as reasons for feeling inferior, not fitting in, or feeling their culture was not valued. Some participants indicated difficulties in the classroom or with instructors.

Even though many respondents indicated that they "did not fit in" or "felt like an outsider," most completed, transferred, or were retained. Tinto (1993) regarded perceived lack of belonging as a negative factor leading to dropping out. However, results of the present research indicated that participants exhibited traits of robust motivation skills which led to positive retention. Most participants showed resilience as they applied their own cultural wealth as most were retained. Thus, these data did not appear to corroborate this aspect of Tinto's (1993) theory. Research from Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009) found that variables such as

cultural and social isolation, and negative stereotypes, affected Latinx academic performance and persistence decisions. For example, low self-esteem can be the result of negative stereotypes others hold of individuals or the groups to which they belong, as is sometimes the case for students from underrepresented groups. Even brief reminders of those stereotypes can undermine goal attainment (Herrera et al., 2017).

Most participants noted that they felt supported by their families, but more from their mother's than from their husbands or fathers, and this support was found to be essential for their college-going success. Jessie noted, "I felt emotionally supported by my mom." The *familial*, social support system and 'ganas'/perseverance, which researchers (Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014) confirmed were examples of Latinx cultural wealth-ethnic consciousness and pluriversal assets needed for their success.

Notably, many participants mentioned a barrier to their college-going experience was the language difficulty due to the lack of Spanish speaking teachers and staff. This in itself can cause a barrier from receiving available financial opportunities offered to Latina students but also limited understanding in figuring out the college-going culture. Other negative experiences and obstacles that influenced the participant's college-going experiences included lack of childcare, domestic responsibilities at home, translating for parents and family, lack of scholarship opportunities, and lack of additional class offerings.

Summary of negative factors.   The negative factors that affected the women in this present study were lack of financial support, lack of student services support, and cultural barriers. Lack of finances was one of the most mentioned complaints amongst participants. Most respondents mentioned this as a negative aspect of their college-going experience.

Nevertheless, most participants exhibited the resilience to stay in college in spite of financial hardships.

Tinto (1975; 1993) noted that social integration was critical to student retention. This included involvement in clubs, sports, and extracurricular programs. If students were involved it would be more likely that students would persist. Therefore, he hypothesized that negative experiences with student activities or limited involvement would lead to increased departure. Many interviewees wished that the college offered such student activities. Although most were not involved with a social club or activity, they completed, transferred, or were retained in their program. These data do not demonstrate a consistency with this aspect of Tinto's (1993) theory. Lack of extracurricular programs was not a retention barrier to most participants.

According to Tinto (1993) students who felt like they did not belong at an institution were less likely to persist in school. There were many negative responses that linked participants' ethnic background, particularly language/cultural difficulties as reasons for feeling inferior, not fitting in, or feeling their culture was not being valued. Many participants felt like they did not belong to the college environment. However most participants exhibited cultural wealth in that they possessed strengths and life experiences that were evident by their *familial*, commitments, resistance to quitting, perseverance, and resilience. As a result they were retained. Thus, these data did not appear to corroborate this aspect of Tinto's theory. A critique of Tinto's (1993) Theory was that he did not consider the cultural wealth that minority students brought to their college-going experiences.

Limitations

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors/experiences that Latina women self-reported as contributing positively and negatively toward retention while attending a remote rural

community college. The literature was first reviewed. Then a selection of eligible participants who met study criteria were interviewed and audio-recorded. Data analysis took place using initial coding to identify themes, followed up by a secondary coding of the themes, which led to a final coding. Despite the richness of the data, this qualitative study was limited and these limitations were addressed in the following sections: limitations of researcher bias; limitation of Tinto's Theory; site selection limitation; limitations of the population sample; limitations of the instrument; limitations of the design; and literature review limitations.

Limitations due to researcher bias. Though the researcher tried to conduct her qualitative study objectively and impartially, but the fact she is a White female, and comes from a privileged frame of reference, there was bound to be hidden biases. Upon reflection, she noticed she held assumed biases such as Latinas should have accents, dark hair, brown eyes and dark skin. She began conducting her literature review from a deficit model. After consultation with authorities she included in her literature review studies on minority students that depicted a more positive nuanced frame of reference. In other words, she included studies that depicted the cultural wealth and coping styles that minorities bring with them in their college-going experiences, especially as they attended community colleges.

Limitation of Tinto's Theory. Tinto's (1975; 1993) model failed to address factors external to the institution's immediate environment such as economic factors-finances (Andrieu & St. John, 1993). Another significant limitation of Tinto's (1993) model was the insufficient consideration of differences in the educational experiences of students from various backgrounds such as minority students (Braxton et al., 2004; Kuh & Love, 2000). Minority student's cultural background predisposes them to how much they understand about the dominant White culture, especially the college culture environment.

Site selection limitation. The rural community college where the research took place was located in a remote rural Oregon county. The researcher did not work at the rural community college at the time the interviews were conducted and was not acquainted with the participants. The researcher conducted 14 interviews, which reached saturation and all students were from one rural community college. This produced a limited sample, causing a possible location-specific bias given the geographical location was limited. The results may have differed if colleges of different sizes, whether two-year or four-year colleges and universities throughout Oregon were compared. The same would hold true for colleges in different states. To ensure accurate and consistent results, future research at multiple rural institutions might reveal more insight.

Limited sample. This study collected data during 14 interviews at one community college, which produced only a small dataset. The research did not involve a random sampling of Latina students so, the experiences may not be generalizable – even to all Latinas at the particular college where this research took place. A related limitation in the research is the need for more representative sampling, whether within the same college where the research took place or within other colleges in Oregon. One could then analyze similarities and differences within the Latina rural community college students and urban Latina students. The same approach and analysis could be done with rural and urban four-year universities to examine the similarities and differences. Also, similarities and differences can be analyzed comparing Latinx students and other racial/ethnic groups.

The self-reported data were received directly from students. A limitation to this type of data is the inability for it to be independently verified. Another limitation to this method involved selective memory. This included not remembering experiences accurately and thus

causing participants to infer experiences. Attribution is another limitation. This is the act of attributing positive events and outcomes to one's own agency but attributing negative events and outcomes to outside forces. Even though some participants had a language accent, it appeared they all had an adequate command of the English language. Nevertheless, one cannot assume that every word spoken by the researcher was completely understood in a culturally seamless context. Exaggeration and minimization could have been limitation factors. This included embellishing events to make them more significant or minimizing events to make them less noteworthy.

Limitations of the instrument. The main measurement used in this research was a pre-constructed interview of closed and open-ended questions. After interpreting the data, it was clear that the interview questions could have been worded differently or combined for better clarity and more targeted toward the theoretical framework of retention. In the course of data collection, the researcher found a few questions to be of no value due to repetition in relation to the research questions. However, there were seven themes that emerged from the responses to the interview questions. A follow-up interview was then conducted which focused on asking the same questions while focusing on the seven themes that emerged from the first interview (see Appendix E). There was no new emerging information from the follow-up interviews. This may represent either a limitation or a strength. The limitation would arise from using the same questions. On the other hand, a strength would be that the original findings would remain stable over time.

Limitations of the design. The design model used was a narrative design. This model looks at how personal experience can lead to personal perspectives and how people think. The reactions, emotions, beliefs, and values were very important in this model providing the means to

look deeper than what appeared on the surface (Anderson, 2017). Narrative design methods were considered subjective and tended to focus on details, in which categories of thoughts were thematically analyzed. This design fit well with the philosophical framework and methods in this study because the narrative design in this qualitative study allowed the participants' voice to authenticate their college-going experiences as they spoke their truth. As such, the study sought understanding rather than the ability to generalize the findings widely.

Limited literature review. Another constraint included the small amount of literature that was available from data base searches describing the effects of rural remote community college-going experiences of Latina students. Without a plethora of research data from available literature it was difficult to determine precisely what was known about positive and negative factors which affected Latina retention in rural small community colleges. The date of the literature review articles, chapters and books can also have an effect on research analysis. Can one assume that an article that is 10 years old or more will have the same relevancy as one that is recent? Can the information from urban four-year institutions be generalizable to present trends in small rural community colleges?

Another limitation was the plethora of articles, monographs and reports that used a cultural deficit model when reporting on minority experiences in colleges and universities. More research on minorities using models depicting their own cultural wealth would provide more relevant information on the positive coping styles they brought to their academic experiences.

Limitation of institution type. Latina academic outcomes may not be equitable to other institutions on the whole. When possible, institution types need to be reported in the research data. Can the information from urban four-year institutions be generalizable to

present trends in small rural two-year community colleges? The literature review indicated there were differences in retention and graduation rates between institutions and institutional types. For example, some public and private four-year institutions successfully graduate less than a third of Latinx students within six academic years; other institutions were graduating well over two thirds of Latinx students. One institutional type primed for research was the Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS). There was a need for more empirical research to better understand the role of HSIs in promoting or hindering Latinx retention outcomes (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015).

Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations in the previous sections can be resolved many different ways. As mentioned above, the study was undertaken at one rural community college in Oregon, with a small sample of Latina participants. Future studies could replicate the present research at additional rural colleges, not only in Oregon but in other states. Such replications would allow for comparisons of the results across the different settings. In addition to the focus on community colleges, the same type of study could be undertaken at four-year colleges and universities. Comparisons of the present results with these other institutions would reveal whether similar or different results emerge.

The present study took place at one point in time. It may be that some of the participants who left the college later returned. A longitudinal study of the same Latina participants would determine if their experiences extended from the community college through to the four-year college and beyond. It would also enable an examination as to the effects of completing or dropping out for these women.

Research has shown that there were gender gaps in college retention. A study with just Latinos might reveal whether the same or different factors emerged in the college-going experience. Further, such a study might suggest factors regarding gender gaps (Morris, 2012).

The present study focused on a qualitative approach, namely a narrative method. Another extension of this present study would be to conduct quantitative surveys on Latina college-going experiences, which would provide numerical data. This type of research method would quantify behaviors, opinions, attitudes, and other variables in order to make generalizations from a larger population of Latina students. In addition, a quantitative study using a Likert type scale would expand the research to multiple entities and increase the number of participants, which a qualitative study is unable to do. The thought here with the need for quantitative research is to understand more precisely the relationship between independent and dependent variables within the Latina population as it relates to their rural college-going experiences.

The use of a narrative approach allows meaning to be found through the shared experiences of the respondents, but it is unable to be compared or generalized to other communities or cultures. Therefore, the use of a survey with a random sampling of the population could provide both quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, such an approach would allow generalizability as well as comparisons to be made with different ethnicities, geographical locations, and other demographic variabilities.

Implications for Practice

Those who can benefit from this study include secondary school teachers, high school counselors, student affairs professionals, rural community leaders, parents, college administrators, professors, the Latinx community, and all other constituents involved in

education who may access this study. Based on the literature and the present findings, the

researcher offers several suggestions for improving the rural student experience that include: (a)

increase intentional belonging through structured intentional mentorship by building student

learning communities involving first-year students, (b) increase institutional cultural competence

with all staff, (c) simplify the navigation process through student services and instructor

awareness, (d) provide opportunities for more scholarships, and lastly (e) partner with

community resources to provide childcare assistance.

Increase intentional belonging through mentorship and build student learning

communities. To assist rural Latina students in successful retention in higher education, the

author suggests that implementing intentional mentorship through building learning communities

is one effective way to increase student's sense of belonging. Many participants noted they felt

like, at times, they did not belong to the college environment. Peer mentorship, especially for

first-year students, through learning communities (Tinto, 1999) is an effective strategy to provide

students with the resources and support needed to attain a college degree; mentors provide

information on college life as well as encouragement to enroll (National College Access

Network, 2011; Oseguera et al., 2009). Kuh et al. (2005) indicated that student engagement

includes the effort students put towards college activities as well as the way an institution

allocates resources to encourage student participation in such activities. Therefore, it is

imperative that student affairs professionals intentionally create opportunities for rural college

student engagement. There are several learning and developmental practices, such as Latinx

clubs, first-year experience courses, and living-learning communities which have been shown to

be highly effective in improving student retention, academics, and sense of student connection to

the college (Gomez-Cervantes, 2010; Kuh et al. 2005). Specific to rural populations, this study

highlighted that instructor-to-student and peer-to-peer mentoring programs offer the social connection which is a key area that warrants improvement in the first-year rural student experience.

Increase institutional cultural competence. This study highlighted aspects of cultural incompetence by student services and instructors. To alleviate these concerns, student affairs professionals should create a simplified one stop approach to their services. They should also simplify forms and processes and include bilingual formats which would help rural Latina student success. As students enter college, they should be flagged as being from an at-risk community and then given more manageable processes and forms to encourage participation, alleviate feelings of anxiety, and provide intentional creation of successful pathways into college by highlighting clear student involvement plans (Reeder, 2017). In an advising setting, a discussion of career options might even include internships or job shadowing with various community business partners in which students can participate.

Simplify navigation through student services and instructor awareness. Many participants in this study suggested that language was a barrier both in navigating student services and in understanding instructors. Instructors need to realize that first-generation students often lacked the courage to ask for help. Instructors can increase student success through their intentional awareness and by offering assistance (Swartz, 2001).

Many community college student affairs offices and instructors value multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice, and they try to instill these values into first-year students. But these professionals should be sensitive to the needs of rural Latinx students as institutional agents tend to have access to resources that would help Latinas be successful (Ast, 2013; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

Provide opportunities for scholarships. As indicated in the literature review, some rural colleges tend to offer fewer scholarship opportunities. However, if students can access these resources, they are more able to be retained in school (NCES, 2003; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Sy & Romero, 2008). Financial barriers were brought up in multiple interview responses.   Most participants noted they needed access to financial assistance through scholarships. With so much attention paid to the nation's largest cities, it is easy to forget that a significant portion of the population, particularly among the Latinx population, lives in rural areas. Thankfully, students in these rural regions have increased opportunities to scholarship but are sometimes overlooked.

Partner with community resources to provide childcare. Finally, this research and recommendations for Latina success would not be complete without highlighting a significant barrier to Latina retention. Ten of the participants in this study had children to care for. Many of these participants noted that childcare challenges and financial challenges were a couple of their biggest hurdles toward retention. Because rural areas are limited in resources due to small population density many rural community colleges do not have the resources to offer childcare services. Therefore, small rural community colleges can partner with local community agencies such as the YMCA and community churches in order to provide childcare for student mothers. These recommendations would help Latina retention as they seek positive rural college-going experiences.

Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of the present study was to find the factors that supported and those that hindered Latinas in achieving their educational goals as they pursued a rural college-going experience. Tinto's (1975; 1993) model of student departure and retention provided a theoretical

explanatory lens. This present qualitative research, provided the rich and robust human voices from Latina students as they lived their rural college-going experiences. The findings in this research suggested what factors helped and what factors hindered Latina retention. Therefore, these factors must be understood by college personnel and the appropriate policy implemented in order to help increase rural community college Latina student retention. Rural community college personnel should understand the additional cultural wealth resource assets Latinas need and honor what the students bring to higher education: their cultural heritage (*Celebracion deExcelencia*, 2015; Rasca-Hidalgo, 2001, Rendon, 2006).

The 21st Century learning environment is becoming more of a multicultural society; the purpose of the academy is to serve students. If the retention of rural community college Latina students is to increase, rural community college professionals must embrace a change in the academy. This must include the ethics of serving students' needs, for example, expressed in intentional opportunities for academic and social engagement, better access to financial and childcare resources (Bell, 2002; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000) and removing as many barriers to student success as possible.

Although many of the themes described in this research are not unique to Latina rural community college students, the research in this present study validated a rich understanding of their lived experiences; this project became a developmental activity for the participants themselves. This research addressed the multiple layers of stressors and identified the safety or protective factors, and the role of strong peer/teacher support and familial support system played in the college-going experience for Latina students.

This research showcased participants' interpersonal validation of their rural community college-going experiences. The research showed that diversity brings with it elements that create

change and enhance retention that leads to greater academic success. The Latina population

brings with it a unique cultural-specific blend of college-going experiences that help in retention.

It is my hope that their voices from their narratives will be heard and rural college constituents

will make the necessary policy changes needed for Latina retention. Finally, it is my hope that

college student affairs personnel, faculties, administrators, students and other constituents may

be influenced by this research and be called upon to further support future Latina rural student

populations.

Although this study focused on Latina rural community college students, it does advance

our understanding of the role culture plays as a whole in retention. As our nation becomes ever

more diverse the necessity for further study into integrating diverse cultural wealth will be

needed in order to create and sustain the educational and economic strength of our communities.

> The increase in the Latino population in the US is predicted to tip the balance to a majority-minority nation. The US continues to become an even more diverse nation and it behooves us to understand that diversity in order to increase the retention and ultimate success of all of our citizens (Reeder, 2017, p. 72).

Though there were valid critiques of Tinto's (1975; 1993) model of retention, this present study

demonstrated that the role of positive factors of rural community college-going Latina students

was significant in the retention of Latinas in rural community colleges. As the participants

indicated, Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student retention and departure was a useful model

that richly informed this study.

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APPENDIX A

Faculty Recruitment Email

Dear Faculty,

As a student researcher at Oregon State University's College of Education, I'm contacting you, the faculty, because I am conducting a study involving retention in Latina student credit bearing community college experiences. I hope that some of your students may be willing to participate in an individual study. Can you as the sponsor forward the participant recruitment letter via email to potential participants and direct interested parties to contact the student researcher?

Study Title: The Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural Two-Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies)

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to understand the college-going experiences, practices, culture, and value of Latina retention according to participants in order to establish recommendations for future retention programs for multi-cultural *students.* This project will be used to complete the student researcher's dissertation.

Time. The interviews will take no more than 90 minutes.

Benefits. Through reflecting on the program, the student participates in, she may have a greater awareness of her college-going experiences and a clearer focus for her work in the future. It is hoped that through her participation, the research will assist policy makers as they seek to empower minority students and institutions by funding instructional, student services and administrative reforms that seek to identify and celebrate those cultural assets in the Latina culture that can enhance their probability of successful retention.

Questions about the research: Contact information. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact Theresa Neimann (503) 812-0191 trrneimann@yahoo.com

You may also contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board at 1-541-737-8008 or IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Thank you,

Theresa Neimann

PhD Candidate

Oregon State University

APPENDIX B

Eligibility Form

In order to participate in this study potential participants must be self-identified as Latina students, (definition of Latina-A female of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (NCES, 2016). The participants named in this study are females who have ancestry from either of these countries, 18 yrs of age or older, involved in at least one term of credit bearing classes, and participating in a college sponsored program that includes a focus on serving Latina students and their communities.

Please circle Yes or No as indicated and check your age range from the list

provided to determine if you are eligible to participate in this study

Would you identify yourself as a Latina   YES   NO

Have you completed at least one term of credit bearing classes YES NO

Are you over the age of 18? Yes   No

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher or Major Advisor: To volunteer for the study, please contact the researcher.

Researcher: Theresa (Terri) Neimann

Phone: (503) 812-0191

trrneimann@yahoo.com

Major Advisor: Darlene F. Russ-Eft, Ph.D.

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Oregon State University

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Consent Form for Follow-up Interview

As a student researcher at Oregon State University's College of Education, I am re-contacting you as part of a study of the experiences of Latina students in the community college.

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to understand the college-going experiences, practices, culture, and values of Latina students attending a rural community college. The researcher is interested in Latina retention what keeps these students in college and why they drop out. This research hinges on participant responses in order to establish recommendations for future retention programs for multi-cultural students. This project will be used to complete the student researcher's dissertation.

Activities. You will be asked to respond to questions related to your participation in your college-going experience. Your voice will be recorded. The audio recordings will be required for participation of the study. Your name will only be on the consent form and study records which will be stored in a safe place under the PI supervision. Do you give the researcher Theresa Neimann permission to contact you by phone in order to clarify any information?"

Time. The in-person interview will take no more than 90 minutes.

Risks. There is a risk of breach of confidentiality due to small sample size associated with the proposed project.

Benefits. Through reflecting on the program, you may have a greater awareness of your college-going experiences. It is hoped that through your participation, the research will assist policy makers and administrators as they seek to empower students like you.

Payment. There will be no compensation for your participation with this study

Confidentiality. The student researcher will need to collect contact information from participants in order to schedule interviews. All information will be kept confidential; your name will not be included in publications or presentations. Data will not be used or distributed or for future research. All research related materials will be secured until destroyed. There is a possibility that you may be identified because of the small sample but the researcher will take all necessary steps to keep your responses confidential.

Voluntariness. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose to leave the study at any time. You will incur no penalty for not participating. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Questions about the research: Contact information. You should contact the Institutional Review Board at Oregon State University if you have questions about your rights or welfare as research participants. OSU Institutional Review Board at IRB@oregonstate.edu or 541-737-8008.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you can contact the student researcher, Theresa Neimann (503) 812-0191, neimannt@oregonstate.edu; OR the principal investigator, Dr. Darlene Russ-Eft (541) 737-9737.

Signature of Participant_____

Date Signed (participant): _____

Signature of Investigator_____

Date Signed: _____

APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire

Study Title: The Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural Two-

Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies)

Principal Investigator: Dr. Darlene Russ-Eft, Ph.D., Community College Leadership

Faculty; Student Researcher: Theresa Neimann, Community College Leadership Faculty

Graduate Student

To assist with the facilitation of this study, please indicate your response in writing to the following questions. You may decline to state your answer to any of the following questions without penalty.

1. Is your age over 18?

2. What is your marital status?
___Single, never married
___Married or domestic partnership
___Widowed
___Divorced
___Separated

3. What is your gender? _____ (fill in the blank)

4. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply
___Hispanic___ Latina___Mexican___Chicana___
___Mixed Ethnicity or Biracial
___Other (please indicate)

5. What is your religious affiliation, if applicable?
___Protestant Christian
___Roman Catholic
___Evangelical Christian
___Jewish
___Muslim
___Hindu
___Buddhist
___Other (please indicate)

6. What is the highest level of education your parent(s) have completed?

Mother:
___Less than high school
___High school/GED
___Some college
___Associate's degree
___Bachelor's degree
___Master's degree or above
___N/A
Father:
___Less than high school
___High school/GED
___Some college
___Associate's degree
___Bachelor's degree
___Master's degree or above
___N/A

7. What was your final high school grade point average?
___Below 2.49
___2.5-2.99
___3.0-3.49
___3.5-3.99
___4.0 or above
___GED

8. What is your family's annual household income?
___Less than $19,999
___$20,000-$39,999
___$40,000-$59,999
___$60,000-$79,999
___More than $80,000

Your place of birth_____

Number of terms in college_____Do you have children?_____How many?_____

What is your employment?_____

How many hours a week do you work at your job? _____Language spoken at home___

Do you live with your extended family?_____

If so how many family members do you live with? _____What is your parents' race

or ethnicity?_____

Parent's place of birth:

Mother_____Father_____

What is your parent's first language?

Mother_____Father_____

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

Study Title: The Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural Two-Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies). Principal Investigator: Dr Darlene Russ-Eft, Ph.D., Community College Leadership Faculty Student Researcher: Theresa Neimann, Community College Leadership Faculty Graduate Student

The following questions will be used to guide semi-structured interviews for this study. It is important to note that these questions provide a list of possible areas of semi-structured interview questions. Follow-up interviews might be needed but only restricted to clarify previous responses to interview questions.

The order of questions may change depending on the flow of the conversation. This interview is meant to be more conversational than structured, as the words and experiences of the participants from their personal lens are important.

Interview Dialogue:

The following dialogue describes the general flow of the interview conversation. Phrases may not be stated verbatim, but the Interview Guide will be followed in a manner that ensures consistency among participants.

Student researcher: Hello, thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study and understand that your time is very valuable. We are about to start an interview where I will ask you a few questions about your rural community college experiences. As the researcher I am interested in finding out about your daily lived experiences as you experience college-going culture in a rural community: this includes what you really think about your college-going experience and how your home life, college

environment, or small community helps you or hinders you or does both as you attempt to get an education. This may include your feelings, beliefs, values, how you are perceived as being treated, how you feel about yourself, and your culture. These questions are important as the answers are elements you take with you as part of your journey into college. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. I hope that this structure provides a way for us to have an in-depth conversation about your experiences adjusting to a new college setting. This interview should take anywhere from one hour to 90 minutes to complete, you will be tape recorded. Before we begin, do you have any remaining questions?

General questions:

The following questions have been placed in the order that the student researcher plans to address them. Depending on the flow of the conversation, questions may be reordered to facilitate a more effective dialogue.

Ideal position questions

1. Why are you going to college?
2. Why did you pick this particular community college?
3. What would be some elements that an ideal community college situated in a rural environment should have or focus on in order to help Latina students succeed

Interpretive questions

4. What do you like about your college-going experience? (The intention of this question is to tease out positive going experiences from a general perspective)

5. What do you not like about your college experience? (The intention of this question is to tease out negative experiences from a general perspective)

6. Have you had negative experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity?

7. Have you had positive experiences while going to college based on your gender/ethnicity?

8. Tell me what, in your culture, motivated you to attend college?

9. Tell me what obstacles you had to overcome to attend college?

10. Tell me your family's role in your decision to attend college?

11. Tell me what aspects of your culture helped you continue in college?

12. What elements of your culture could the college include to increase the retention rate of Latinas?

13. How did your community support your educational goals?

14. How could your family have done better to support your education?

15. What would an effective retention program at your College include? How does the College show they value your culture?

16. Tell me what you think feminism is?

    a. Can you talk about what your identity as a Latina/Hispanic/Chicana means to you?

    b. Do you consider yourself a Latina or Chicana feminist? Or not a feminist?

    c. Do you think your gender is treated in the same way as the Latino gender? Can you explain? *(The intention of this question is to tease out experiences from an identity gender-related perspective, and cultural self-esteem).*

17. Is there anything else you want me to know about your college-going experiences during this interview?

Closed ended questions-which have potential for being open ended

1. Did you feel supported by your family when you decided to attend college?

2. Can you discuss what your responsibilities are while you are at home? Can you explain? *(The intent of this question is to tease out experiences related to financial, familismo, marianismo, machismo, or job obligation perspective.)*

Follow-up Interview: General Questions

The following questions have been placed in the order that the student researcher plans to address them in the interviews.

1. What do/did you like about your college-going experience? How has that changed since we last spoke?

2. What do/did you not like about your college experience? How has that changed since we last spoke?

3. What negative experiences have you had at the college since we talked earlier?

4. What positive experiences have you had at the college since we talked before?

5. In the first interview you said that career goals and the chance to make more money motivated you to go to college. How has that changed?

6. You mentioned earlier that finances were a barrier, how has that changed?

7. You mentioned earlier that lack of student services support was a barrier, how has that changed**?**

8. You mentioned earlier that there were cultural barriers to your success, how has that changed**?**

9. You mentioned earlier that parental/family expectation were barriers and/or motivators. Can you elaborate more on that? What other obstacles or barriers have you had to overcome?

10. Some of you enjoyed peer and teacher support can you tell me more about that? How was this a help to you?

11. Most of you mentioned earlier that there were cultural barriers that interfered to your success, can you tell me more about this?

12. Most of you mentioned earlier that learning and instruction was a positive aspect to your college-going experience, though a few said it could have been better. Do you want to say any more about that?

13. What else can you tell me about your college-going experiences during this study?

14. Do you give the researcher Theresa Neimann permission to contact you by phone in order to clarify any information?

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Version date: 04/22/2018

Protocol Title: The Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural

Two-Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies)

PERSONNEL

1. Principal Investigator: Darlene Russ-Eft

2. Student Researcher(s): Theresa Neimann

3. Investigator Qualifications

Darlene Russ-Eft has a PhD, has completed IRB trainings, and has the experience necessary to guide the student researcher through the IRB process.

Theresa Neimann, student researcher, has completed IRB trainings. She is obtaining a PhD in education and has a background (Master's Degree) in feminist theology.

4. Training and Oversight

There are no foreseen PI absences. The PI and student researcher will be in touch via phone and email; and if needed, in-person meetings will take place. We plan to be in touch bi-weekly. The PI and student researcher will refer to the approved protocol provided by the IRB office.

In addition, the student researcher will send each Consent Form to the PI immediately following the interview. The student researcher will also forward the

transcript of each interview upon completion. These will be delivered in person to the PI's office.

Additions to the Deviation Report:

a. to verify that only data that has IRB approval is used for analysis,
Student Researcher will only be analyzing the interviews from 8 pilot subjects and the 12 study subjects, totaling the 20 approved by the IRB.

b. to provide confirmation that no additional subjects are being recruited to the study,
No additional subjects are being recruited to the study

c. to provide a plan for data security and computer storage since the PI is in Corvallis and the student researcher is in China.

The student researcher will put the research data in a USB and lock the USB storage device and the audio recording device, field notes and any other documents in a safe storage box with the place of storage to be approved by researcher's PI. This will be done prior to leaving the country at any time.

5. There are no conflicts of interest. No members of the study team, or any of their immediate family members, have a financial or other business interest in the source(s) of funding, materials, equipment, data, research subjects, or site of research related to this research study.

FUNDING

- This study is unfunded.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

6. Description of Research

This study is a dissertation that tests applications of theory developed in previous research. By establishing the effectiveness of indigenous strategies (Latina students) of experiencing and attending community college, the study creates possibilities for intentional integration of underrepresented indigenous practices into U.S. community colleges. To accomplish this, interview documents generated by Latinas who have completed one term of credit bearing classes have been interpreted in order to ground theory that may be either confirmed or rejected according to experiences of Latina community college participants. While the indigenous practices explored in this study may prove to be effective for other populations (not exclusive to Latina students), the need for studies specifically investigating strategies for Latina community college-going experiences (*Excelencia*, 2015; Gildersleeve, Rumann, & Mondragon, 2010; Santiago & Callen, 2010), along with the identity-based tie between many Latina students and indigenous Latin American cultures (Anzaldúa, 1999; Freire, 2001, 2005), has created an important inroad for exploration in this study. The study team is requesting a signature of informed consent from each participant prior to the interview.

7. Background Justification

This study compares shared themes from indigenous Latina community college-going experiences in order to develop insights into retention dynamics that empower Latinas through a process of mutual understanding and support identified by Tinto's Theory of retention and departure. The resulting understanding of values and strategies that are present within indigenous cultures may then be used to identify a set of considerations that may be applied to future student retention programs in the United State focused on serving Latina students on a situational basis (Merriam, 2009). One important way to determine that validity

of this theory is to investigate the presence of these themes and values within the context and success of the U.S. community college setting. By asking participants of this study to discuss their own experiences by answering the interview questionnaire presented by the researcher, this study seeks to validate the legitimacy of successful Latina community college-going practices as foundations for educational innovation in the United States and opens up pathways for more community college retention development that serves minority populations.

As a rural community college instructor for English language learners, the student researcher has sought to establish a context for retention development that facilitates mutual understanding and meets holistic student needs on a theory-driven basis. Broadly, effective theory and practice-based considerations for Latina retention are needed to help colleges engage, motivate, and serve Latina students. Understanding gained from interpretive and comparative analyses involved in this study provides educators with the theoretically and empirically-derived foundation necessary to build and collaborate in post-colonialist methods of community empowerment and sustainable social development in Latina communities.

8. External Research or Recruitment Site(s)

   a. The student researcher will use email to contact faculty member. The program sponsor will be asked to identify Latina students who match the participant criteria of this study and ask them if they are interested in participating in the proposed study to contact the student researcher. The sponsor will not be privy to the identity of the participants who contact the student researcher. Data for this study will be collected from the rural Tillamook Community College (TBCC). This location serves as a representative of minority attendance and will elicit data that identifies the research thesis: The

Experiences Latinas Encounter While Attending a Remote Rural Two-Year Community College: The Confluence of Identity (ies), and this study seeks to validate the legitimacy of successful Latina community college-going practices as foundations for educational innovation in the United States and opens up pathways for more community college retention development that serves minority populations.

b. Name of each recruitment site: Tillamook Bay Community College

c. The student researcher will select. The inquiry as to availability will be sent via email. (See recruitment document attached.)

9. Subject Population

- A description of participant characteristics: The study targets community college Latina students involved in credit bearing classes. Students must be self-identified as Latina students as the research does depend on Latina subjects in order to ensure applicability of educational practices for this specific population. Definition of Latina- A female of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (NCES, 2016). The participants named in this study are females who have ancestry from either of these countries.

  a. Total target enrollment number: The total number of subjects who may be involved in the selected service learning program would not exceed 20. Screening process will be used.

- Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Criteria for enrollment will include being at least 18 years of age and having participated for any length of time and completed at least one term credit bearing class selected for the study. The students selected will be from a community college-sponsored program that includes a focus on serving Latina students and their communities.

- Recruitment:

    Faculty sponsor will be asked to forward the recruitment information provided

in the letter to the faculty sponsor via email to potential participant. The sponsor will

not be privy to the identity of the participants who contact the student researcher.

Research done by the student investigator will identify prospective subjects based on

the criteria listed above. After a program and its organizer/faculty sponsor have been

identified, the prospective participants will contact the student researcher and inquire

about availability for participation (see attached email). No names will be collected in

the analytical process. The researcher will travel to the campus to meet with the subjects

at their convenience or a place of participant's choosing. In addition, there will be no

compensation for participating in this research.

10. Consent Process

    The study team is requesting a signature of informed consent from each participant

prior to the interview. Participants will be offered a copy of the consent form. All notes

will pertain to program assessment. In addition, no identifying information will be recorded

with data; data will be considered collectively. Notes will be stored with no identifying

information. As such, an explanation of the voluntary nature of participation and the non-

disclosure of any identifying information will be sufficient to determine consent.

    See consent document attached. During the initial and follow-up in person

interviews the student researcher will obtain signed consent before proceeding with an

interview.

The study team will provide a copy of the consent form to the participant and will go through each section together prior to the participant signing.

11. Methods and Procedures

- Program facilitator will forward recruitment materials to potential participants on behalf of the student researcher and interested parties can then contact student researcher directly regarding study participation. I will not be collecting interview data from the program facilitator faculty sponsor."

- There will be an eligibility screening process and signed consent will be obtained prior to the collection of information about the participant, including eligibility information. As the protocol indicates, the consent process and interviews will be conducted in person.

- There will be in-person interviews with participants, participants will be told that researcher will require voice recorder during the interview and then take notes based on the content provided, similar to observation notes.

- There will be a demographic questionnaire for the participants to fill out or the researcher will assist participants in filling out the form.

- Following initial analysis of the interview data researchers will contact participants to ask permission to conduct a follow-up interview. Follow-up interviews will be audio-recorded. These participants will be the same individuals who previously signed a consent form and will sign a consent form for the follow-up interviews.

- Collected notes will be organized into an analytical chart based on themes identified in previous research in order to illuminate their relationship to these themes and to

discover any confirmation or elucidation on the potential of the themes for application in future Latina retention strategies.

- The results of this analysis will be identified as a subjective interpretation of the researcher and written up with no identifying information (other than "a small rural Northwest community college" and pertinent program characteristic information) being included.

- The total time commitment for student participants is 180 minutes, (including time spent responding to questions and contacting students).

12. Compensation

There will be no compensation to participants of this study.

13. Costs

None

14. Anonymity or Confidentiality

Tapes used to voice record interviews will be retained by the Principal Investigator in a locked drawer for a period of three years. PI will store original data, recordings of interviews for three years. PI will have the responsibility to store Signed consent documents. Principal data to be analyzed will be the researcher's, field notes/ participants' responses to the study questions. These will not include any identifying information regarding individuals. Information will be treated in aggregate form, with possible mention of specific roles performed by individuals, but no identifying information attached to this information. Researcher notes and analytical charts and recordings will be also retained by the PI for a

period of at least three years after completion of the study. Because of the small sample, there is a minor chance that the student participant may be identified. Only the student researcher will do the transcribing of audio recordings. This project will be used to complete the student researcher's dissertation. The data will not leave the country. Student researcher will be in the U.S. to conduct research. When on vacation to other countries or states in the U.S. research data will not leave the country. Student researcher will put all information regarding research on a USB and give it to PI. The student researcher will transfer all identifying information to the PI once data collection is complete.

Storage Security: At post-study termination data will be stored in electronic format on a password protected document for three years. PI will store original data, recordings of interviews for three years. PI will have the responsibility to store Signed consent documents. All participants and the name of the college will remain confidential to the extent permitted by law. Participants'' names and institutional affiliation will be known only to the researchers (Dr. Russ-Eft), Principle Investigator (P.I.), and Theresa Neimann, Student Researcher. The identity of the participants in this study will not be made public in any published account of this project. Pseudonyms will be used to protect each participant. Data, will be stored in electronic format on a password protected document for three years post-study termination by the P.I. and the student researcher. Signed Consent forms will be saved with the original data. The security and confidentiality of the information collected and stored on paper, or through electronic means, cannot be guaranteed. There is the possibility that the information collected and stored can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late, or incomplete, or contain viruses. There is a chance that we could accidently disclose information that identifies the participant. The computer used for this study has a fully patched operating system and applications and current

antivirus software with current virus definitions. There will be no cloud storage of any data associated with this study.

All participants and names of colleges with which they are associated will remain confidential to the extent permitted by law. Participants' names and institutional affiliation will be known only to the researchers (Dr. Russ-Eft, P.I., and Theresa Neimann researcher). The identity of the participants in this study will not be made public in any published account of this project.

15. Risks: There is a risk of breach of confidentiality due to small sample size associated with the proposed project.

Benefits: Through reflecting on the program, they have participated in, participants may have a greater awareness of how they or others have learned regarding their college-going experiences and a clearer focus for their instructional work in the future. Representation of participants' assessment of the college experience in question will allow for future educational innovation in future programs with greater awareness of multicultural issues, program efficacy, and optimal retention program dynamics.

16. Assessment of the risks and benefits.

Benefits entirely outweigh risks, which are minimal if they exist at all.

Questionnaire and Questions are included See Appendix E:

APPENDIX G

Codes, Categories & Themes

CODES	CATEGORIES (115)	THEMES
Why do you want to attend college?	1. Good paying job 2. Parental expectations 3. Role model for family 4. Fulfill career goal 5. Get in medical field 6. Helping people 7. Go further than parents 8. Better income	1. Career goal 2. Parental-family expectations/support 3. Financial support or lack 4. Learning and instruction 5. Student services support or lack 6. Peer and teacher support or lack 7. Cultural barriers
What motivated you to attend college?	1.Better income 2.Parents 3.Example to family 4.Better career 5.help people 6.My child/ren 7.Better opportunities than parents 8.Other Hispanic inspiration	
What did you like about the college experience?	1.Learning new things 2.Scholarships 3.Small classes 4.Peer support 5.Teacher support 6.Mentors 7.personalfulfillment 8.Tutorial support 9.Student service support 10.Advisor 11.College environment 12.Access to classes	
What did you not like about college experience?	1.Outsider in community 2.Lack of Latina teachers 3.Lack of Resources 4.College too small 5.Limited career resources 6.Felt culture wasn't valued 7.Nobody spoke Spanish	

	8.Expensive 9.Transportation lack of 10.Lack of belonging 11. Language barrier 12.Lack of academic support 13.Lack of student services 14.Lack of tutorial support 15.Sterotyped by ethnicity 16.Teacher incompetence 17.Course program cancelled 18. advising not good	
What obstacles did you have?	1.Husband not supportive 2.Father not supportive 3.Language barrier 4.Finances 5.Lack of family support 6.Missing time with son 7.Work 8.Chilcare 9.Courage to ask for help 10.Homework 11.Transportation 12.Helped out family 13.Pay out of pocket 14.Self-doubt 15.Unsupportive teachers 16.Writing 17.Ethnicity not valued	
What could the college have done to help you be successful?	1.Scholarships 2.Provide Hispanic group activities 3.More activities and clubs 4.Spanish speaking staff 5.Financial help 6.Peer tutoring 7.Provide mentoring 8.Provide childcare 9.Better advising 10.More teacher support 11.Diverse class offerings 12.Disability accommodations 13.Diverity in student population	

Tell me a time when you felt you fit in to college environment?	1.During lecture 2.Working with peers 3.Good grades 4.College activities 5.Teacher showing cultural competence 6.Student services support 7.One-on-one support 8.Helping Latina friends 9.College environment 10.Helping people	
Tell me a time you didn't fit in to the college environment?	1.Trying to find resources 2.With my ethnicity 3.Felt inferior 4.Outside responsibility 5. Language barrier 6.Teacher insensitive to my culture 7.Small classes 8.Writing 9.Lack of Hispanic population 10.Couldn't pass timed exams 11.Lack of communication/feedback	
What would be elements a rural college should have to help Latina Students succeed?	1.Help with Latina participation 2.More teacher competence with language 3.More class offerings 4.Flexibility with schedule 5.Childcare 6.More Hispanic students 7.free classes for parents 8.Scholarships 9.Tutorial services 10.Understanding vocabulary 11.Financial aid 12.College activities 13.Better placement exams 14.Guidance 15. Parent support group 16.Technology 17.Book rentals	

	18.Student services	