Revealing community cultural wealth through counterstories:
A narrative analysis of first-generation mujeres in a predominantly white-serving institution

by

Graciela Berumen

B.S., Kansas State University, 2014
M.S., Kansas State University, 2017

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

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Abstract

Utilizing a Critical Race Theory foundation, a Latino Critical Race Theory focus, and a Community Cultural Wealth lens, this assets-based qualitative study examined the counterstories of four first-generation women (mujeres) attending a predominantly white-serving institution in the Midwest. The increasing number of first-generation students pursuing higher education provides an opportunity to assess systems in place for recruiting, retaining, and serving first-generation students. This study presents the need to shift from a deficit perspective when working with first-generation students to an assets-based perspective that centers and values the voices of historically-excluded students, seeing the importance of their experiential knowledge. Interviews and journal entries were used to collect counterstories that focused on the six forms of capital outlined in community cultural wealth: aspirational capital (hopes and dreams), linguistic capital (intellectual and social skills), familial capital (cultural knowledge), social capital (networks of people and community resources), navigational capital (maneuvering through social institutions), and resistant capital (knowledge and skills forged through oppositional behavior). The data collected supported the six priori themes based on the six forms of capital in community cultural wealth, additional themes identified supported the link between representation and validation of historically-excluded populations as a path towards graduation.

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Acknowledgements

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the children of immigrants—

Don't let man-made borders define your worth.

We don't come from quitters.

 Keep fighting, keep dreaming, and keep going.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

"Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter." - African proverb

> College campuses are changing
>
> From 1996 to 2016, [the number of] Hispanic students enrolled in schools from nursery school to college went from 8.8 million to 17.9 million. Hispanics now make up 22.7 percent of all students in the United States…making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or racial minority. (Nasser, 2019)

With change comes the opportunity to assess and improve. These figures suggest a need to reevaluate the systems in place in higher education for recruiting, retaining, and serving students of color. The need to reassess and improve the first-generation college experience proves especially true for traditionally white-serving institutions that historically have not adequately served students of color in a way that supports their academic and economic growth (Moll & Ruiz, 2009).

In the words of Anzaldua (2000), "In this country the frame of reference is white, Euro-American…All our education, all of our ideas come from this frame of reference" (p. 254). Although there is a growing number of students of color, currently about half of the student population (Planty et al., 2009) is situated in an academic system with predominantly white teachers (National Education Association [NEA], 2010). Without a shift in perspectives and actions that value the experiences of first-generation students and students of color, the retention rate across U.S. campuses will continue to drop (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010). However, institutions and educators can begin to shift towards a "view [that] emphasizes the qualities and experience that incoming first-generation student[s] share with all beginning college students and therefore [begin to] integrate them into campus culture and procedure"

(Ilett, 2019, p. 187). This study intends to focus on the rich experiences and assets that students

of color, specifically first-generation mujeres (women), bring to campus in an effort to meet their

academic needs. Currently, over 33% of U. S. college campuses consist of first-generation

college students (Cataldi et al., 2018). First-generation college students are defined as those

whose parents do not have a four-year college degree (U.S. Department of Education,

1998). This research provides a glimpse of four first-generation mujeres (women), as they

reveal their Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and its impact on how they navigate their

academic journey in a predominantly white-serving institution. This study also aims to address

the need for valuing and centering the voice of historically-excluded students in order to truly

create an inclusive and equitable campus.

Rationale and Significance for This Study

Recruitment and retention are common topics of discussion on college campuses. At the

time of this study, the retention rate for "...first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began

seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year granting institutions...was 63 percent

(Irwin, 2021). Discussing retention of students of color is especially important considering

that the statistical dropout rate for Hispanic students was 8.0 percent compared to 4.2 percent for

white students (NCES, 2018). More importantly, "Although Latinas/os account for the largest

ethnic minority group in the United States and they reside in every state, accounting for 1 in 5

school children, their academic needs as a group continue to be unmet" (Sherry, 2012, p. 260).

As the demographics and stories of students on college campuses changes, there is an increased

need to reevaluate policies and procedures in order to continue working towards "institutional

practices and spaces that welcome all identities and foster a culture that values

differences…colleges can model the fundamental importance of inclusion and equity" (Dotter,

2019, p. 46). College campuses should make the need for inclusion more than an inclusivity statement that is said but a statement that is lived. To help colleges meet this goal, this study focuses on first-generation students and their journeys and assets. With this approach, college campuses can truly create an inclusive and equitable campus that caters to students' academic success, particularly when Latinos are one of the largest underserved demographic groups college campuses across the United States (Aragon, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to create a space for first-generation mujeres to reveal their community cultural wealth (CCW) through counterstories. Counterstories are data collection tools that provide a deeper understanding of the empowering effects of providing students of color a space to find their voice and share their stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). Students' counterstories empowered and validated first-generation journeys, as students were provided with opportunities to share their perspectives and experiences to acquire a clearer understanding of how they describe their CCW and how it has impacted their academic journey as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution. Additionally, creating this space also aimed to shift the view of first-generation counterstories as a guide for the assessment of current student success initiatives. The following research questions helped guide this study:

Research Questions

1) How do first-generation mujeres describe and use community cultural wealth as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution?

2) How can first-generation counterstories that focus on community cultural wealth inform first-generation programs and initiatives in higher education?

The research questions were intended to reveal not only how first-generation students describe and use their community cultural wealth but also how institutions of higher learning can use their data-rich counterstories as tools that can help improve and create programs to support them. Higher education is an important predictor of future success; therefore, in order to create more equitable communities, there is a need to create systems that will support the success of all students (Tate et al., 2015).

Theoretical Basis for the Study

Critical Race Theory Foundation

The theoretical basis for this study involves the use of critical race theory (CRT), Latino critical race theory (LatCrit), and counterstories and community cultural wealth (CCW). CRT acknowledges systemic oppression, bringing to light how institutions can shift deficits-based thinking of students of color—specifically first-generation students—and creates assets-based initiatives (Yosso, 2013). To adequately address the recruitment and retention of students in higher education, there is a need challenge their systemic oppressions. CRT demands an acknowledgment of how power and race dynamics affect historically-excluded students. Through a CRT lens, the equity of traditionally accepted systems can begin to be questioned.

Latino Critical Race Theory Focus

The students addressed in this study are first-generation, bilingual women (mujeres) of Latin American decent. Given their specific experiences and needs, employing an identity-specific subset of CRT, Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) will facilitate understanding the first-generation journey of students with a Latin American background.

> LatCrit Theory calls attention to the way [in] which conventional, and even critical, approaches to race and civil rights ignore the problems and special situations of Latino

4

people—including bilingualism, immigration reform, the binary black/white structure of existing race remedies law, and much more. (Stefancic, 1997, p. 24)

Meeting the unique needs, struggles, and strengths of first-generation students from Latin American decent can be better understood through this lens. Using a CRT foundation focused by LatCrit paves the way for educators to "…contest the premises that inform the development of programs, policies, and practices designed to enhance the educational experiences of Latinos" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 45).

Counterstories

Recognizing the power of first-generation students and creating a space for them to share their counterstories can also help institutions understand both strengths and challenges in order to properly help facilitate their academic journey (Yosso, 2005). Counterstories are data collection tools that provide a deeper understanding of the empowering effects of providing students of color a space to find their voice and share their stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b). First-generation counterstories provide educators with a glimpse of "…the agency, volatility, and strength that Latino college students have demonstrated just to get to college, let alone to persist, excel, and graduate from an alienating educational system" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 46). The use of counterstories that go against the majoritarian stories of the dominant group provides examples of the prevalence of racism while highlighting and giving voice to those who resist racism (Yosso, 2013).

Counterstories play a significant role in empowering first-generation mujeres because they question the deficit perspectives that are typically associated with first-generation journeys (Yosso, 2005). Creating a space for students to share their counterstories creates an opportunity to reflect, share, and look at their background, not as something shameful holding them back

but rather as a fountain of knowledge and proof of the resilience they carry within themselves. Finding resilience in counterstories shifts from a deficit perspective to an assets-based perspective of the first-generation college journey.

Community Cultural Wealth

CCW outlines the following forms of capital: aspirational capital (hopes and dreams), linguistic capital (intellectual and social skills), familial capital (cultural knowledge), social capital (networks of people and community resources), navigational capital (maneuvering through social institutions), and resistant capital (knowledge and skills forged through oppositional behavior; Yosso, 2005). By utilizing CCW, we are not only identifying the challenges faced by students of color but the strengths they use to overcome these challenges.

To summarize, CRT, LatCrit, and CCW emphasize the need for a shift in perspective on our college campuses. These frameworks will also provide the foundation needed to bring light to the impact deficit models have when they describe "first-generation students as a problem… differentiate them from traditional students, who serve as an implicit standard of success, and consequently to judge first-generation students as lacking" (Ilett, 2019, p. 183).

Operationalization of Constructs

The following operational constructs were used throughout this study. Their definitions are presented below to ensure the correct interpretation of the work presented.

Critical Race Theory: Framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge how race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact practices and discourses regarding social constructs (Yosso, 2005).

Familial Capital: Familial capital encompasses not only close family but those in the community that help carry on tradition, history, and the identity of the community (Yosso, 2005).

First-Generation College Student: Student whose parents do not have a four-year college degree.

Funds of Knowledge: funds of knowledge represent the knowledge and experiences collected by students of color and their families from generation through generation in order to navigate familiar and unfamiliar situations in life (Moll et al., 1992).

Heritage Language Speakers: people who have a family background in which a non-English language is, or was, spoken and learned in the home (Valdés, 2005).

Hispanic: People born in Spanish-speaking countries (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Latina: Female with Latin American ancestry (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Latino Critical Race Theory: Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) is a branch of CRT used "…to account for the contradictions and inconsistencies that have guided and continue to guide the development of practices that affect educational equality" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 48).

Linguistic Capital: Linguistic capital celebrates the various forms of communication communities use to exchange knowledge (Yosso, 2005).

Mujeres: The Spanish word for women was used to describe participants because they did not identify as Latina, Hispanic, or Chicana. All participants were born in the United States with parents from Mexico. They were also all bilingual. Spanish was their first language, spoken in the home, and English was later learned in school, so the term mujeres (women) seemed an appropriate way to celebrate their bilingualism and biculturalism.

Navigational Capital: Navigational capital is the ability people of color have to excel and function in spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005).

Social Capital: Social capital focuses on the valuable resources social networks provide as students and families navigate academia and everyday life (Yosso, 2005).

Resistant Capital: Resistant capital relates to the daily fight for equity by historically-excluded people of color (Yosso, 2005).

Conclusion

First-generation students (e.g., students whose parents do not have four-year college degrees) have a unique college journey, but the first-generation identity is often defined by perceived deficits, rather than strengths. Shifting from a deficit perspective to an assets-based perspective when speaking about first-generation students pushes against "negative statistics [that] may predispose readers to view first-generation students as deficient and problematic" (Ilett, 2019, p. 184). This perspective does not consider the cultural wealth of communities of color, limiting the scope of what experiences and knowledge are considered useful and valuable (Yosso, 2002). Funds of knowledge and strengths of first-generation students are often overlooked; therefore, counterstories viewed through a community cultural wealth lens set the stage for a deeper conversation and understanding necessary to evaluate and implement policies, programs, and resources that recruit, retain, and graduate students of color. Shifting to an assets-based approach in the collection and interpretation of data concerning students of color allows institutions of higher education to begin discovering, celebrating, and validating first-generation counterstories by placing value on funds of knowledge.

Collecting first-generation counterstories is necessary to implement and improve relevant student support services. After all, "if we do not create these institutions, we certainly perpetuate them through our inadvertent support" (Anzaldua, 2000. p. 48). Not actively working towards inclusion is purposefully supporting an oppressive system that is not serving all students. Creating an inclusive learning community requires a conscious attempt to get to know all students, specifically historically-excluded students, and make them a part of the journey to

create inclusive spaces. First-generation counterstories offer a unique opportunity for institutions to recognize the validity and importance of first-generation journeys. Additionally, they can be used to assess the effectiveness of current programs and the creation of new ones to meet the needs of the growing population of historically-excluded students pursuing higher education (Villalpando, 2004). There is a need to actively include first-generation voices in the strategic conversations towards institutional change.

Providing a space to share, celebrate, and promote the lived experiences of first-generation mujeres can also provide valuable insight to help assess and improve the services, initiatives, and programs already in place to serve first-generation students. Collecting, sharing, and validating first-generation counterstories from a CRT foundation with a LatCrit focus through a CCW lens provides the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the needs and strengths of the fastest-growing demographic on college campuses in the United States (Planty et al., 2009).

Organization of Dissertation

The dissertation is presented in five chapters. Each chapter will address the following:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the problem, rationale of the proposed solution, and the theoretical basis that supports it and its purpose.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature surrounding first-generation students, Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory, Counterstories, and Community Cultural Wealth. It also provides an overview of how these concepts have specifically informed the college journey of first-generation women.

Chapter 3 describes how data tools and narrative inquiry guided this study. This chapter also provides insight on the setting, participants, and process of the study.

Chapter 4 provides insight on the different forms of capital participants identified and used throughout their college journey. Major themes and a participant's overview are also presented.

Chapter 5 reviews major findings and implications. It also presents ideas for future research and conclusions.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the literature surrounding first-generation college students, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), counterstories and Community Cultural Wealth (CCW). The literature review below will provide a deeper understanding of why CRT, LatCrit, counterstories and CCW were chosen for this study. The structure of this chapter begins with dialogue surrounding first-generation students, and the assumptions, policies, and programs used when working with these students. Then a brief look at CRT and LatCrit will establish the foundation of the systemic changes that have historically-excluded students of color. Counterstories are an important part of CRT and LatCrit and therefore the use of counterstories in this study will be explained. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of CCW and its role in the process of understanding the assets first-generation students bring to predominantly white spaces. Reviewing critical theories, like CRT and LatCrit, along with information about CCW and counterstories provides a deeper understanding of not only first-generation journeys, but the role institutions play in the outcome of those journeys.

First-Generation Students

Efforts to diversify college campuses have increased the number of first-generation students pursuing higher education (Kuh et al., 2006). First-Generation college students are defined as students whose parents do not have a four-year college degree (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). First-generation students represent about 20 to 40 percent of the students enrolled in U.S. college campuses (Choy, 2001). As this number continues to increase (Strayhorn, 2006), the need to understand the college journeys, assets, and needs

of these students also continue to grow. Many first-generation students are students of color (Richardson & Skinner, 1992). Being a student of color can be an added barrier in institutions that fail to assess the needs of historically-excluded students (Stoops, 2004). Ignoring the needs of students of color and the impact that neutral, color-blind approaches have on their academic success only continues to perpetuate the use of oppressive practices in education (Hudson, 2017).

Discussions about first-generation students primarily revolve around their perceived deficits like "lack of knowledge of time management, college finances and budget management, and the bureaucratic operations; lack of adequate academic preparation, and lack of family support." (Thayer, 2000). Furthermore, negative notions stereotype first-generation students as lacking not only the financial and experiential means to navigate higher education but additionally lacking the cognitive abilities necessary to succeed (Terenzini et al., 1996). Continuing to focus only on what first-generation students seem to be missing is a dangerous perspective because it can create a negative stereotype and culture across campus of what it means to be first-generation (Ward et al., 2012). One of the most consistent findings concerning first-generation research is the inadequate college preparation historically-excluded students have received (Warburton et al., 2001); therefore, there is a clear need to reassess the preparation, education, access, equity, and rigor of the curriculum and services available to this demographic. Perhaps, shifting the focus from what first-generation students are missing towards what they have been denied will help institutions of higher education create programs that will more adequately meet their academic needs. A study by Warburton et al. (2001) illustrated that only half of the first-generation students who received less rigorous high school curriculum completed bachelor's degrees. In contrast, over 80% of students who received a rigorous high school curriculum were able to successfully complete a bachelor's degree. A study conducted

by Ishitani (2006) demonstrated that the quality of high school academic rigor first-generation students received can be used as an indicator of college completion. Therefore, lack of preparation rather than lack of motivation is the biggest barrier first-generation students must overcome (Warburton et al., 2001). In fact, Rowan-Keyon (2007) stated that the lack of preparation first-generation students receive not only leaves them less prepared for higher education but discourages them from enrolling in college all together. Research shows that, despite challenges, first-generation students attain the same growth as non-first-generation students (Pascarella et al., 2004).

In order to move past the deficit perspective surrounding first-generation students on college campuses (Murillo, 2010) institutions need to reevaluate to what extent they contribute to the support of current inequities in the education system (Ilett, 2019). The need for an intentional and consistent assessment of the procedures in place that serve first-generation students is especially true for institutions that do not traditionally serve first-generation students of color (Ward et al., 2012). A study by Thayer (2000) reported that institutions that are committed to supporting and retaining first-generation students make a commitment to reevaluate and change support services and the overall culture on campus. Ishitani (2003) found that over 70 percent of first-generation students were at risk of not earning their college degree; more alarmingly a lack of inclusion on campus was rated as the main reason for dropping out (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

First-generation students are a diverse population with different experiences, goals, ages, and backgrounds (London, 1996), and their lived experiences present an opportunity for change. Focusing on the wealth of knowledge that first-generation students bring, rather than on what they are missing, can help create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity

and encourage inclusion. Valuing first-generation student input and fostering a campus culture that sees the significance of the funds of knowledge historically-excluded students bring to campus promotes a learning community that "values the skills and knowledge that students bring with them to college as the foundation for further, collaborative learning" (Ilett, 2019, p. 189). The need to reassess and improve the first-generation college experience proves especially true for traditionally white-serving institutions that historically have not adequately-served students of color in a way that supports their academic and economic growth (Moll & Ruiz, 2009).

Institutions that are truly vested in creating inclusive change are just as dedicated to ongoing, honest, rigorous assessment of campus-wide initiatives for student success (Hossler et al., 2009). Creating a safe space that fosters student involvement has shown to be a successful retention tool for students of color (Fisher, 2007). Creating a culture of collaboration across campus with the common goal of first-generation support can also help guide the discussions, procedures, and assessments surrounding first-generation success (Keeling, 2006). A positive campus-wide shift will likely require the collaboration of various groups on campus, necessitating a need to implement open and frequent discussions amongst faculty, staff, and students. The work of Ward et al. (2012) suggested that institutions implement: "... 1) a holistic view of student learning; 2) shared responsibility and accountability for the design, implementation, and assessment of support and programming for students; and 3) shared perspectives among faculty and staff on educational goals and methods" (pg. 119). Campus culture is an important aspect of the recruitment and retention of first-generation students (Thayer, 2000). Therefore, failing to acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and strengths of first-generation students only continues to uphold a system that has historically underserved them.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

This study uses a Critical Race Theory (CRT) foundation to analyze the "Eurocentric epistemology that is based on white privilege and still dominates university campuses today" (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). CRT looks beyond the inequalities students of color face in higher education and focuses on how the educational system as a whole has inadequately prepared them for success (Solórzano et al., 2005). To adequately address the recruitment and retention of historically-excluded students in higher education, there is a need to go beyond what has been traditionally accepted. CRT an acknowledgment of how power and race dynamics affect historically-excluded students. The need to utilize CRT in education stems from the need to think about the current education system, how it oppresses students of color, and the roles educators and administrators play in maintaining this system. CRT is seen as foundational in the struggle to shift deficits-based perspectives and focuses instead on the idea of social capital (Yosso, 2005). Acknowledging funds of knowledge, which represent the knowledge and experiences collected by students of color and their families from generation through generation in order to navigate familiar and unfamiliar situations in life (Moll et al., 1992), allows for a deeper understanding of the needs and strengths of people of color.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is seen as foundational to the struggle to shift from deficits-based perspectives, that focus on what students are missing, to assets-based models that focus on the wealth of knowledge students bring to communities of learning (Yosso, 2005). CRT originated in the 1970s by scholars of color to challenge the way race and power contributed to the culture in legal systems (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Some of its early scholars were Derick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado. After an initial CRT conference, other notable

scholars, like Kimberle Crenshaw, Mari Masuda, and Patricia Williams followed (Delgado et al., 2012). In the words of West (1992) CRT scholarship remains relevant and important because race still matters. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated, CRT attempts to "theorize race and use it as an analytic tool for understanding school inequity" (pg. 48).

The drive to utilize CRT in education emerged from attempts to understand the impact of the law on the education system. Taking law into practice is how the theoretical foundations of CRT began to expand beyond law and into the examination of other systems, including education. The need to apply CRT to education is clear, considering two of the foundational interests of CRT are to change and understand how racism has oppressed people of color in the United States and to empower social justice and change (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The CRT movement originated from a desire to provide a space for voices of people of color to be heard. Derrick Bell (2007), one of CRT's most prominent pioneers, warned that the exclusion of voices of color in an education system that underserves the success of students of color, should be of concern to higher education because "todays school children are tomorrows college students:" (pg. 18). Similarly, Zambrana and Zoppi (2002) agreed that the challenges students of color face in higher education can be traced to the lack of adequate education and support since kindergarten.

CRT serves as a historical foundation for "helping us recognize patterns, practices, and policies of racial inequality that continue to exist" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 41). CRT allows for the examination of systems of power and the ways they do or do not serve people of color. Moving forward, this foundation will highlight the issues surrounding ideologies of power that are still very relevant in everyday life (Crenshaw et al., 1995). This is especially true when discussing education. Employing a CRT foundation forces the examination of services

that prevent students of color from receiving an adequate education (Villalpando, 2004). These elements of CRT allow for a conscious and purposeful assessment of campus climate and the accessibility and equity of services provided (Yosso et al., 2009).

This theoretical framework also encourages, addresses, and facilitates discussions with students, educators, and administrators that help "confront the racist, sexist, and otherwise bigoted histories that limit opportunities for some, privilege the advancement of others, and inhibit relationships among people with different backgrounds" (Dotter, 2019, p. 46). Utilizing this framework allows for not only a reevaluation of unjust education systems but also brings to light the varying factors that have historically oppressed people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Once a CRT lens is used to access education, it is clear that changes only occur once the dominant culture benefits from those changes. Bell (1980) described this concept as "interest-convergence" (pg. 94). The work of

Marvin Lynn, Tara Yosso, Daniel Solórzano, and Laurence Parker (2002) continues" to be explicit about the nature of race and racism in educational research and practice (pg. 4).

Latino Critical Race Theory

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) is a branch of CRT that is used in an "attempt to account for the contradictions and inconsistencies that have guided and continue to guide the development of practices that affect educational equality" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 48), specifically when working with students of color with a Latin American background. As Iglesias (1997) stated, LatCrit should be viewed as a necessary expansion of CRT that emphasizes the unique needs and challenges faced by the Latin American community. The use of a CRT foundation with a LatCrit focus goes beyond a holistic approach towards students and their unique needs. Through these theoretical frameworks, administrators and educators have the research-based

tools necessary to reevaluate the processes and programs in place to ensure equity and access for all students (Villalpando, 2004). Establishing a culture of care by examining policies, practices, and programs through a social justice lens is a good starting point for equitable campus change, but it is not enough. The goal should be to use what is learned to undo the effects of racism in our education system and campus. In addition, validating the experience of students of color allows a deeper understanding of the rich foundation of knowledge students bring to campus and how the focus should be on changing the institution and not the student (Villalpando, 2004).

Although LatCrit is a more suitable theoretical lens to explore the perspectives, unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and shared academic experiences of students of color with a Latin American background (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a; Villalpando, 2004), it is not as widely used as CRT (Fernández, 2002). Institutions implicitly and explicitly support "notions of meritocracy and race neutrality in the college admissions process [that] benefit majority white students while harming Latinos" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 44). Given that "…the U.S. educational system is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world, and students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 30), students cannot be held accountable for being part of an education system that has failed to prepare them for higher education. One of the most dangerous outcomes of prescribing to a deficit perspective when working with students is that it establishes the assumptions that everyone on campus benefited from the same resources throughout their academic career (Gorski, 2016). The view that students of Latin American descent have a perceived lack of preparation is the result of insufficient academic resources and not due to their personal efforts (Villalpando, 2004). Furthermore, "Many schools serving low-income and minority students do not even offer the math and science courses needed for college, and they provide lower-quality

teaching in the classes they do offer" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 28). These inequities, current policies, programs, and resources need to be reevaluated. Rather than focusing on what students are lacking, the focus should be on improving the education system to support all students.

Racism still exists in education and needs to be addressed in order to change oppressive systems and truly support and celebrate the resilience, strengths, and assets of students of color (Villalpaldo, 2004). LatCrit can provide faculty and staff members with a lens through which to address institutional policies and programs that may seem equal but are not equitable (Villalpando, 2004).

> Research has found that both students and teachers are tracked: that is, the most expert teachers teach the most demanding courses to the most advantaged students, while lower-track students assigned to less able teachers receive lower-quality teaching and less demanding material. (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 29)

By utilizing a conceptual, theoretical framework like LatCrit, faculty and staff members, who are dedicated to creating inclusive spaces for students of color have the opportunity to present research-based approaches as they advocate for necessary changes. Failing to acknowledge the obstacles in place for students of color and labeling them from a deficit perspective shifts the focus from supporting students and creating needed resources to attempting to "fix" a problem or perceived deficiency that is not there (Gorski, 2016). Perpetuation of deficit-based assumptions that focus students' attention on perceived inadequacies does not help encourage and empower their academic journey. The voice of students of color needs to be validated and celebrated. On the foundation of CRT and LatCrit, it is necessary to go beyond discussing inequitable practices in education and focus on changing them (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Viewing students from a deficit perspective is not only harmful but counterproductive. In the mission of creating inclusive

and equitable campuses, decisions should be guided by theoretical frameworks that help create

spaces where the value of experiential knowledge can be appreciated

and validated through counterstories.

Counterstories

To push back on dominant narratives and bring to light the important role stories have played

in the endurance of historically- excluded people, Richard Delgado (1989) introduced a

process he called counterstorytelling. Both CRT and LatCrit scholars agree that the "stories by

people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism"

(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58) and therefore not only bring to light oppressive systems

but begin to change them. To begin to question the systems in place and the efficacy of programs

and initiatives currently addressing historically-excluded students, CRT

uses counterstories. Counterstories are used as a way to address racism today and to record how

and whom it has historically and currently affected (Yosso, 2013), coming together and

exchanging experiences informs and unites communities of color (Barnes, 1990). In her

book, *Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicano/Chicana Educational*

Pipeline, Tara Yosso (2013) presented how CRT counterstories have provided an opportunity for

students of color to address the obstacles they encounter in the education system.

Counterstories also play an important role in unifying students of color by challenging what is

considered the norm, providing insight into students' experiences, helping shape more inclusive

spaces, and providing a clearer understanding of the lives and goals of historically-excluded

students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Finally, counterstories help to illustrate, through a CRT

lens, the connection between "… the historical result of such forces as racism, sexism, and

economic injustice." (Ilett, 2019, p. 190) and why students of color do not always attend or

succeed in college.

Conterstories bring many benefits to the field of education: (1) they can bring groups that share the stories together; (2) the dominant perspective can be brought into question; (3) they not only highlight the experiences of people of color but also their potential; (4) they serve an educational function that creates a space of possibility beyond the norm; (5) stories create a space for understanding that encourages change (Delgado, 1989). If the stories of students of color are not part of the academic narrative, then they will never be considered relevant in those spaces (Saavedra & Perez, 2012). If they are not considered relevant, then they will not be discussed or considered when establishing new policies, adopting new programs, or establishing new student resources. Counterstories play an important role in the mission to create inclusive and equitable spaces. They "have the potential to move a watered-down diversity or multicultural curriculum away from simply celebrating difference and food, and fiestas to a curriculum that actively names and challenges racism and other forms of injustice" (Murillo, 2010, p. 71). Stories play an important role in helping to create and unify diverse learning communities (Benmayor, 2002). Many times, life experiences are shared through oral histories, and validation can result from sharing stories (Pennebaker & Francis, 1996). Taking time to self-reflect and share lived experiences "…creates spaces that foster…collective healing" (Saavedra & Perez, 2012, p. 430). This healing process provides opportunities for growth that can bring to light new perspectives. Many times, "…critical lessons happen in nontraditional spaces and, unfortunately, are not deemed or recognized as theoretical locations." (Saavedra & Perez, 2012, p. 433)

Scholars who do not agree with counterstories question their validity, objectivity, and whether they are used to push hidden agendas (Farber & Sherry, 1995). Fernández (2002) argued

that in qualitative research "...such questions are irrelevant and counterproductive...all research is subjective" (pg. 49). Although counterstories may bring to light what might be perceived as negative experiences, Solórzano and Villalpando explain how they also provide "rich sources of information used to empower or transform those at the social margins...the margins can and should be viewed as both sites of oppression and sites of resistance, empowerment, and transformation" (pg. 215). Therefore, what might be perceived as an oppressive narrative pushing a political agenda for some, can provide for others an example of strength, endurance, and perseverance.

Too often, first-generation students feel pressured to assimilate because the strengths of their unique academic journeys are not seen as valuable by the institution they are attending (Locke et al., 2016). The use of counterstories provides the first-generation perspective and serves as a constant reminder of the need to look past what knowledges are traditionally accepted as useful on college campuses and move towards the realization of the need to uplift the counter-narratives of historically-excluded students in order to address inequities and begin a shift towards true equitable change.

Counterstories are a crucial starting point in order to change the narrative in higher education because they force administrators and educators to take responsibility for creating and evaluating inclusive spaces even if their creation breaks away from what is already readily accepted (Yosso, 2002). The use of counterstories that go against majoritarian stories, and which are told by groups living in the margins of society, not only provide examples of the prevalence of racism but also highlight and give voice to those who resist racism (Yosso, 2013). By collecting, validating, and analyzing stories of students of color, academic institutions can consciously, continually, and successfully recruit and retain diverse students (Carnaje,

2016). After all, "...stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present, and assist us to envision our future" (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017). By focusing on assets, the focus is shifted to the capabilities, potential, and possibilities towards success in higher education. Acknowledging and including historically-excluded students in the process of creating an inclusive learning community will ensure that the time, money, planning, and initiatives put in place will truly be effective, relevant, and adequate.

Community Cultural Wealth

The idea of social and cultural capital first introduced by Pierre Bourdieu established the assets of rich, white, educated populations as the norm that all other social groups must aspire to achieve (Bordieu, 1986). This perspective does not consider the cultural wealth of communities of color, limiting the scope of what experiences and knowledge are considered useful and valuable (Yosso, 2002). The use of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), can begin to address, defend, highlight, and uplift an assets-based perspective regarding the many forms of capital students of color bring to college campuses (Huber, 2009). A deficit model of education "focuses on what first-generation students lack instead of what they have" (Ilett, 2019, p. 177). Using CCW, this study aims to shift the focus towards the strengths that first-generation students bring to campus. By utilizing CCW, we are not only identifying the challenges faced by historically-excluded students, but the strengths they use to overcome these challenges.

The focus of this study is to validate and center first-generation counterstories and analyze them through a community cultural wealth (CCW) lens. Focusing on the strengths rather than the deficits of students of color allows for the opportunity to assess the equity of previously implemented programs, processes, and practices in higher education. Deficit thinking is the belief "that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance

because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). Focusing on CCW when serving students of color acknowledges the expertise and strengths of students of color and their families. Value is placed on the lived experiences of historically-excluded students and how these experiences have been a useful tool for navigating higher education (Yosso, 2005). CCW encourages educators to see how "…students, families, and communities develop a breadth of knowledge and skills, enabling members to function in networks of support and exchange" (Ilett, 2019, p. 181) therefore shifting the view that their unique experiences and backgrounds are a source of knowledge rather than a challenge. Embracing the use of CCW wealth will not only create partnerships amongst educators, students, and their families but also help encourage and promote academic success (Locke et al., 2016).

CCW outlines the following forms of capital: aspirational capital (hopes and dreams), linguistic capital (intellectual and social skills), familial capital (cultural knowledge), social capital (networks of people and community resources), navigational capital (maneuvering through social institutions), and resistant capital (knowledge and skills forged through oppositional behavior; Yosso, 2005). Below is a brief description of the forms of the six forms of capital found in CCW.

- o **Aspirational Capital.** Aspirational capital makes future dreams and goals possible for students and their families despite current barriers (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital encourages students to work towards goals that go beyond what their families have accomplished.

- **Linguistic Capital.** Linguistic capital celebrates the various forms of communication communities use to exchange knowledge (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital values not only written forms of communication but also verbal or bilingual.

- **Familial Capital**. Familial capital encompasses not only close family but those in the community who help carry on tradition, history, and the identity of the community (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital includes all the customs that help unite communities and families.

- **Social Capital**. Social capital focuses on the valuable resources social networks provide as students and families navigate academia and everyday life (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital sees people as resources used to navigate unfamiliar systems and circumstances.

- **Navigational Capital.** Navigational capital is the ability people of color have to excel and function in spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital highlights the resilience of historically-excluded students and their families as they quickly learn to make their way through unfamiliar systems.

- **Resistant Capital.** Resistant capital relates to the daily fight for equity by historically-excluded people of color (Yosso, 2005). Resistant capital describes the ability students and families have to pursue an education and better future despite negative statistics and narratives.

Focusing on the strengths of students and families of color creates equitable and inclusive learning spaces (Locke et al., 2016). Acknowledging the strengths of students of color helps bring to light the shortcomings of the current education system and the students it is and is not benefiting (Villalpando, 2004). In order to change a system that underserves historically-excluded students, institutions must be willing to address the impact deficit perspectives have on

their access to services (Locke et al., 2016). Willingness to recognize the CCW of students of color will greatly transform the services and education they receive (Saathoff, 2015). Acknowledging the various networks, strengths, and funds of knowledge that first-generation students contribute to institutions of higher education can help position them as active members and co-creators of knowledge that contribute to the direction of campus.

Chapter Summary

Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory, and Community Cultural Wealth all emphasize the need for a shift in perspective in our current education system. At their core, these frameworks aims to empower educators towards providing a more equitable education system for all students (Villalpando, 2004). The use of counterstories facilitates the creation of spaces in which the narratives, experiences, and forms of knowledge of students of color are seen not only as strengths but as guides to more effectively understand and more adequately meet their academic needs. Counterstories are essential because they provide a counter-narrative from the perspective of students of color (Locke et al., 2016). In this study, counterstories helped address the oppression and disparities that play a role in the perceived deficits of first-generation students, but more importantly, helped highlight their strengths. These theoretical frameworks provide a clear understanding of the inequitable experiences of students of color (Yosso, 2013) and provide a research-based platform to reassess traditionally-accepted practices in institutions of higher learning (Villalpando, 2004).

This study had two goals: the first aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the assets first-generation students bring to campus and how they use these strengths as they navigate higher education. The second aimed to not only validate first-generation counterstories but also highlight the untapped potential of these stories as institutions assess students' services. Focusing

on diversity is important, but it is not enough. Although institutions are becoming more diverse, that does not necessarily mean they are becoming more inclusive.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative study centers on the academic journeys of four first-generation mujeres attending a predominantly white-serving institution in the Midwest with the goal of understanding their experiences, perspectives, and community cultural wealth in order to understand and serve their academic needs. The need to normalize and include diverse perspectives and experiences to the higher education narrative needs to be addressed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b). Guided by a CRT foundation, LatCrit focus, and community cultural wealth lens, first-generation counterstories were collected. In order to capture the unique lived experiences of first-generation mujeres, this qualitative study was guided by following research questions:

1) How do first-generation mujeres describe and use community cultural wealth as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution?

2) How can first-generation counterstories that focus on community cultural wealth inform first-generation programs and initiatives in higher education?

The emphasis CRT places on counterstories makes it a critical, adequate, and necessary approach for this study. The need to examine institutional practices from a social justice lens and provide students of color with a safe space to share their counterstories is what makes CRT a foundational theoretical framework for this study. Given the background of the participants, four bilingual, first-generation American women with parents from Mexico, the theoretical lens for this study needed to be further focused. Therefore, CRT is used as the foundational theoretical framework that branches out to the more focused and specific theoretical framework needed to address and understand the journeys and challenges of the participants, Latino Critical Race

Theory (LatCrit). In order to address these questions and to take a deeper look at the academic journey of the four participants, the data collection for the study consisted of one initial interview, six journal entries based on six deductive themes described in community cultural wealth, and one final interview.

The research questions, along with the use of CRT, LatCrit, CCW, and counterstories, contributed to the creation of a space where first-generation experiences were discussed, shared, and validated. Narrative analysis was used to identify information that supported the six priori themes.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry empowers students to become active members of the construction and narration of their stories. Embracing institutional change guided by these frameworks allows administrators, educators, and student life professionals to advocate, justify, and create equitable institutional change (Villalpando, 2004). This change begins with an assets-based approach in the collection and interpretation of first-generation counterstories. Rather than being presented as mere numbers and statistics, students have the chance to share the large array of dimensions that make up who they are, along with the rich experiences that have shaped their identities.

The goal of this study was to provide a space for first-generation mujeres to share their counterstories. Researchers have seen the value of qualitative methods in the process of collecting first-generation stories (Rodriguez, 2003) given that "narrative research methodologies place the individual voices and understanding of their experiences at the center of research findings and do so within a sociohistorical context" (Ilett, 2019, p. 191). Additionally, they supply research guidelines that honor each student's unique journey while addressing the social context surrounding it. Narrative inquiry facilitated a clearer understanding of participants'

experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Although some researchers believe narrative must follow a strict timeline (Labov & Walezky, 1967), others challenge this notion and argue that it limits the expression of diverse cultural preferences (Riessman, 1993). Narrative research provides flexibility in delivery and length (Chase, 2005). By focusing on the participants, their stories, and their experiences in higher education, a variety of perspectives were captured. Narrative inquiry provides the researcher with a clearer understanding of participants' journeys and helps guide and inform participants as they reflect and share their stories (Riessman, 1993). These stories provided rich data for narrative analysis. CRT and LatCrit literature see the lived experiences of students of color as an asset that supplies strength and guidance during their academic journey (Murillo, 2010). Sharing lived experiences provides an opportunity to find connections that bring learning communities closer (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017).

One of the ways rapport was built during the study was through open and honest communication from the beginning. Participants were always informed and reminded about their right to ask questions and reach out to the chair of the study to discuss the research or the researcher. Participants were also reminded of their right to stop taking part in the study at any time. The participants were also encouraged and given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions throughout the interview and journaling process. Through conversations throughout the study, connections were made and trust was established. The use of theoretical frameworks that focus on the unique experiences of first-generation students with Latin American backgrounds also served as a constant guide that honored each student's voice and story (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010).

Given that the foundational theories for this study are CRT and LatCrit, the questions during the interviews were created with those theoretical frameworks in mind to encourage discussion around power dynamics in education. These discussions inspired deeper conversations that tried to "examine issues of…power relations to explore the research questions" (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017, p. 55). During the interview and journaling process, conversations that challenged "Eurocentric epistemologies and dominant ideologies such as meritocracy, objectivity, and neutrality" (Murillo, 2010) emerged and were further explored. Stories played an important role in this study as "narrative is a vital human activity that structures experience and gives it meaning" (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017, p. 104). This study, therefore, provided not only an opportunity for first-generation mujeres to share their stories but also for them to attribute meaning to their experiences and consider the ways these experiences and their Community Cultural Wealth impact their academic journeys and life. As Villalpando (2004) argued, "students' experiential knowledge can come from various sources and be demonstrated through different means, but often the best way to recognize this knowledge is by simply asking the students about their experiences" (p. 46).

Setting

The study was conducted at a nationally-recognized, publicly-funded university in the Midwest region of the United States. The student population in this institution consists of about 6,000 students, who are "57.6% white and 10.7% Hispanic, 61.6% women" (NCES, 2020). This Midwest university is a predominantly white-serving institution with a growing, diverse student population. On average, freshmen are 19 at the time of enrollment; however, the non-traditional student population has been growing. Because of its size, the university is considered a commuter campus. Emphasis is placed on student services and programs during the first year of

enrollment. As part of these initiatives during the first year of enrollment, students are supported by peer role models that they can reach out to and consider mentors. These peer role models provide first-generation students with information that will increase their probabilities for success. Some of the topics covered are study skills,

mental health, and information literacy. Discussions about expanding focused services to the second year of enrollment have taken place but at the time of the study none had been implemented.

During the time of the study, about 40% of the students enrolled were considered first-generation college students. Discussions about becoming a Hispanic Institution were also taking place as the campus was about 12% Hispanic at the time of the study. Because of the rise of first-generation college student enrollment, the increase of diversity on campus, and the location of the university, conversations about recruitment and retention of historically-excluded students and how to better serve first-generation students, as well as discussions about campus inclusion, equity, and diversity, were common.

Participants

The term mujeres, Spanish for women, was used instead of Latina, Chicana, or Hispanic because participants did not identify with any of those terms. The participants in this study experienced what Du Bois (2008) called "double consciousness...two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (pg. 5). Therefore, the term participants identified with the most was Mexican American. Because many first-generation students are also women (Inman & Mayers, 1999), and from Hispanic backgrounds (Saenz & Barrera, 2007; Terenzini et al., 1996), female participants were the focus of this study. To honor participants' preferences and celebrate their bilingualism, the term mujeres (women) was agreed upon. All participants were first-generation,

bilingual mujeres, who spoke Spanish and English and had a Latin American background. All

participants attended the same predominantly white-serving institution in the Midwestern United

States. Participants had all completed at least one semester of college to ensure

they had acquired significant experiences they could reflect upon during the interview and

journaling process. A review of literature on key considerations related to the selection of first-

generation students for this study is provided in Chapter 2.

Data Collection

The original timeline indicated the study would be conducted in ten weeks, as shown

in Table 3.1 below. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and unforeseen challenges and

changes in participants' schedules, it was necessary to extend the research

timeline. The anticipated ten weeks of data collection extended to 16 weeks.

Table 3.1. Data Collection Timeline

Data Collection Timeline		Extended Data Collection Timeline	
Week 1	**Participant Outreach** • Sent out initial e-mail • Explained study • Provided contact information	Week 1	**Participant Outreach** • Sent out initial e-mail • Explained study • Provided contact information

Week 2	**Initial Interview**
	
	• Explained study
	
	• Participants signed consent
	
	  forms
		Week 2	**Initial Interview**
			
			• Explained study
			
			• Participants signed consent
			
			  forms

	• Demographic interview completed • Journal Prompts explained		• Demographic interview completed • Journal Prompts explained
Week 3	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number One** • Sent journal prompt for Aspirational Capital • Transcribed initial interviews	Week 3 & 4	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number One** • Sent journal prompt for Aspirational Capital • Transcribed initial interviews
Week 4	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Two** • Sent journal prompt for Linguistic Capital • Transcribed initial interviews	Week 5 & 6	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Two** • Sent journal prompt for Linguistic Capital • Transcribed initial interviews
Week 5	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Three** • Sent journal prompt for Familial Capital • Transcribed initial interviews	Week 7 & 8	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Three** • Sent journal prompt for Familial Capital • Transcribed initial interviews
Week 6	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Four** • Sent journal prompt for Social Capital • Transcribed initial interviews	Week 9 & 10	**Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Four** • Sent journal prompt for Social Capital • Transcribed initial interviews

Week 7	Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Five	Week 11 & 12	Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Five
	• Sent journal prompt for Navigational Capital • Transcribed initial interviews		• Sent journal prompt for Navigational Capital • Transcribed initial interviews
Week 8	Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Six	Week 13 & 14	Community Cultural Wealth Journal Prompt Number Six
	• Sent journal prompt for Resistant Capital • Transcribed initial interviews		• Sent journal prompt for Resistant Capital • Transcribed initial interviews
Week 9	Transcription, Themes and Follow Up Questions	Week 15	Transcription, Themes and Follow Up Questions
	• Analyzed journal entries • Analyzed initial interviews • Identified follow up-questions • Began identifying themes		• Analyzed journal entries • Analyzed initial interviews • Identified follow-up questions • Began identifying themes
Week 10	Final Interview	Week 16	Final Interview
	• Followed-up for clarification with questions based on journal entries and initial interview • Thanked participants and distributed gift cards		• Followed-up for clarification with questions based on journal entries and initial interview • Thanked participants and distributed gift cards

Once Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was given, participants were recruited via e-mail. Recruitment e-mails were sent out to previous students who had taken the researcher's college 101 class. Participants were selected from classes previously taught by the researcher; these participants were readily available; therefore convenience sampling was used (Bradshaw et al., 2017). During the time of the study, none of the participants were current students in the researcher's class. The number of participants for this qualitative study was chosen following the belief that "fewer participants interviewed in greater depth usually generates the kinds of understandings qualitative research seeks" (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2017, p. 61). The decision of only focusing on four first-generation participants enabled a deeper glimpse and understanding of their CCW and how it played a role as they navigated higher education through their counterstories.

During the initial email recruitment attempt, there were no responses. The lack of responses from possible participants may have been due to the fact that students did not want to take on added work and responsibilities during a global pandemic and they were dealing with the shift to online classes. After several weeks, a second participant recruitment e-mail was sent. The same group that met the characteristics for participants for this study were invited to participate. The second recruitment email included a message informing participants of a $25 gift card incentive, it was made clear in the e-mail that all participants that agreed to participate in the study would receive the $25 gift card regardless of completion of the study.

 Once students responded to the recruitment email and it was established that they met all the characteristics necessary for the study (first-generation, bilingual students with parents from a Latin American background), a time and date were set for the initial interview and completion

of the demographic questionnaire. The initial interview and demographic questionnaire (see

Appendix B) consisted of 15 baseline questions that provided general information about the

participants and their families. Because the initial interview was conducted via Zoom, the semi-

structured questions were put on screen during the interview and read aloud by

the researcher. Ideally all interviews would have been conducted in person to assist the

interviewer in being aware of non-verbal cues and to build rapport. However, due to the COVID-

19 pandemic lockdown, participants did not feel comfortable meeting in person for the first

interview. The interviews were recorded, and the participants responded to the questions verbally

and were encouraged to ask questions or add additional information throughout the

interview. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss the goals and purpose of

the study in order to make an informed decision about their involvement. During the first

interview, participants were supplied with the IRB consent form via e-mail, which allowed the

recording and transcription of their interviews and the narrative analysis of their journal

entries. Great effort was placed in creating a space where participants could not only share their

stories but feel comfortable to question, explore, and further reflect on their counterstories and

academic journeys. Aside from baseline demographic information, the initial interview

also provided an opportunity to discuss with participants next steps for the study. The timeline of

the study was explained, and participants were reminded of their

rights as study participants. Given the language fluency and comfort level of both researcher and

participants, initial interviews were conducted both in Spanish and English. Students were also

encouraged to express themselves and their counterstories throughout the study and journal

reflections in whatever language they felt most comfortable using. Semi-structured questions

were utilized for consistency throughout the interviews. Table 3.2 below provides information about the time, duration and number of interview pages transcribed for the initial interviews.

Table 3.2. Initial Interview Time, Duration, and Pages Transcribed

Participant	Date of Interview	Time	Duration (minutes & seconds)	Pages Transcribed
Norte	01/09/2020	3:00 pm	30:03	8
Oeste	01/05/2020	9:00 am	59:22	17
Este	01/06/2020	2:30 pm	43:08	13
Sur	01/06/2020	10:00 am	39:03	11
Total			171.36	49

After the initial interview, all the interviews were transcribed, and participants began receiving one journal entry prompt per week. There were six journal entries (see Appendix E) in total and the theme of each weekly journal entry was one of the six forms of capital explained in community cultural wealth. The journal entries were delivered via e-mail in the form of a slide presentation where the researcher read aloud the journal prompt and the journal prompt was written and displayed on the presentation slide. This provided the participants with both visual and audio directions, information, and the writing prompt. All journal entries followed that same structure: definition, prompt that encouraged reflection about a time or event where the form of capital that was the topic of the week was used, and questions asking participants to describe if the form of capital played a role as they navigated higher education. The purpose for following a journaling structure was consistency and to provide participants with clear step-by-step instructions to guide them as they reflected each week. Journal entries, rather than

interviews, were used in order to provide participants with more time to reflect on their

experience and the forms of capital that were the focus of the journal entry that

week. The weekly journal prompt presentation also included contact information for the

researcher and the study chair. This contact information was provided to participants weekly to

ensure that it was readily available to them in case they had questions or concerns about the

study or the researcher. The weekly journal prompts also provided participants with a reminder

of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time and without any penalties. Participants had

a week to complete each journal entry. Journal entries were submitted by participants every

week via e-mail, participants were not given a word count or page limit and were encouraged to

write as much as they felt comfortable sharing. When journal entries

were submitted by participants, they were coded and categories for the pre-

determined themes were identified. Once the six priori themes, categories, and

codes were identified, additional questions for the final interview were created for clarification

and further inquiry.

   After all the final semi-structured questions were created for the

final interview, an e-mail was sent out to participants to set up a final interview date and time.

Participants were once again given the option to meet either via Zoom or face-to-face. Given that

COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted on the campus the participants and researcher

attended, all participants felt comfortable meeting face-to-face. The final interviews were

individually conducted face-to-face, in the library of the

campus the participants and researcher were attending. The final interview (see Appendix

F) followed a semi-structured format that allowed for varied conversations. During the final

interviews, participants were asked to share more about their experiences and

reflections throughout the study. Participants also had the opportunity to ask questions

and provide input on the clarity and ease of the data collection process. The researcher asked

clarifying questions to establish a common interpretation of the perspectives and insights

provided in the journal entries. Given the comfort level of the participants and the researcher,

the final interviews were conducted both in Spanish and English. The average length of

the initial and final interviews ranged from 30 to 59 minutes. Once the final interviews ended,

participants were once again thanked for their commitment and contribution to the study. Next

steps were explained, and participants received a $25 gift card as a token of appreciation for their

time, participation, and commitment to the study, interviews, and journal

entries. Table 3.3 below provides information about the time, duration, and interview pages that

were transcribed for the final interviews.

Table 3.3. Final Interview Time, Duration, and Pages Transcribed

Participant	Date of Interview	Time	Duration (minutes & seconds)	Pages Transcribed
Norte	04/16/2021	1:00 pm	35:35	10
Oeste	04/23/2021	11:30 am	56:28	16
Este	04/22/2021	2:30 pm	29:48	9
Sur	04/22/2021	3:30 pm	42:35	12
Total			163.46	47

Data Analysis

Narrative work can be interpreted in many ways (Riessman,1993) and does not follow

one set of guidelines (Elliot, 2005). This provides flexibility and calls for the awareness of

subjectivity throughout the process (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). The goal of

interpreting stories should be to highlight the forms of knowledge students of color bring to their understanding of their past experiences and current situations (Rina, 2001). Qualitative research was selected for this study because it provides a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of participants (Patton, 2002). Data collection methodologies, stories, questionnaires, and journal entries can pave the way for campus initiatives that bring a more focused awareness to the personal academic experiences of historically-excluded students. Methodologies that allow for the co-construction of knowledge can provide a closer look in the lives of participants, giving educators a glimpse of how "students use information in their everyday lives, in contexts unrelated to either coursework or college content, [and] could uncover funds of knowledge among first-generation students" (Ilett, 2019, p. 190).

After the initial interview was conducted virtually through Zoom, all interviews were transcribed. During this first step the researcher transcribed the interviews while listening to the recording several times. As the interviews were being transcribed, initial themes about possible connections and similar variables amongst participants were identified. The same process was used while reading and listening to the demographic questionnaire responses. Notes were taken as the demographic questionnaire was reviewed many times to acquire a deeper understanding of participants, their families, and backgrounds. Eight interviews in total were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in order to identify priori themes or themes that have been previously determined. The priori themes based on the six forms of capital in CCW, categories, and codes throughout the four participants' first-generation coutnerstories were identified.

Journal entries were analyzed for common themes and follow-up questions to raise during the final interviews. As is typical for case studies, data was analyzed through

a holistic lens to identify common themes and categories (Bhattacharya, 2017). Participants completed journal entries weekly based on determined themes that followed the six forms of capital described in community cultural wealth. Once journal entries were received and reviewed, codes from the predetermined themes were identified through line-by-line analysis of responses from the journal entries and semi-structured interviews. Interviews and qualitative research aim to see the world from participants' perspective (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and facilitate reflection and feedback from participants throughout the study process. This data provided the information necessary to find connections between participants and to identify overarching themes and implications for future research. A deductive coding process was followed as data was reviewed within the background of community cultural wealth. While reviewing the data, codes or labels were assigned to ideas related to the research questions guiding the study (Braun & Clark, 2006). A foundation for the themes was established early on and the six forms of capital in community cultural wealth were revisited often in order to identify them in the participants' interview responses and journal entries. The codes in the data collected were identified through hand coding to determine how they aligned with the six priori themes. Different colors were assigned as forms of codes that fit the themes when identified. The same coding process was followed for all eight interviews and 24 journal entries. As the major themes guided by community cultural wealth were identified, categories were created.

Positionality Statement

As an educator of color and activist for historically-excluded students, I understand the importance of identifying the issues and challenges students face on campus. In fact, I consider it my obligation to help them change the systems that have, for generations, made the academic

journeys of students of color so difficult. As a first-generation mujer myself and proud daughter of immigrants, I know that I cannot completely separate the similarities in my own academic journey from the participants counterstories. As I listen to their triumphs and challenges, I relive those moments in my own story. To prevent my own voice and experiences from overshadowing theirs, I have attempted to dig deeper, ask follow-up questions, seek clarification, and reflect. I do this in an attempt to share their unique counterstories rather than repeating my own.

As a daughter of immigrants, my parents valued education and encouraged me to pursue a degree, but they had little to no advice to offer on where to go and who to talk to when it came time to attempt to reach my academic dreams. In fact, my family's running joke is that "I see a line, I get in it, and I then ask what the line is for" to explain how I found my way into higher education. That part of my academic journey, being lost and without a compass, has benefited me as an educator and as I worked with first-generation college students. My experiences and struggles have helped me empathize with their struggles and understand, advocate, and give voice to the idea that all of us, regardless of our background, have a valuable place in higher education. Working with first-generation students, and this study, also reminded me of the importance of being an academic mentor and compass for other first-generation students who, like myself, navigated the unfamiliar, confusing, and sometimes unforgiving life of academia.

There were times in my own academic journey where I did not feel represented or heard. These experiences of inequality and exclusion, along with the numerous divisions in our communities, have fueled my drive as a community activist. I tried to put my activism and individual perspective aside when analyzing how institutions serve people of color, first-

generation students, and the participants in this study. To ensure my own ideas and perceptions did not shape the narratives of the participants, I made a conscious and purposeful effort to discuss the counterstories that were shared and supplied examples during interviews to ensure the counterstories recorded in this dissertation were that of the participants and not my own. As an educator, mother, and daughter of immigrants, my hope is that with time, the use of critical frameworks will facilitate students' openness to themselves and their journeys as they understand and appreciate the empowering gift of their counterstories.

Limitations

Some of the limitations identified in this study were that it only looked at the first-generaiton counterstories of four female students of Latin American decent in a predominantly white-serving institution. Although the limited number of participants provided rich narrative data, it would be interesting to continue gathering more diverse first-generation counterstories. Another limitation is that this study only focused on Mexican American women for a short amount of time. The limited time and scope provided a glimpse of participants' academic journey and community cultural wealth, but a future longitudinal study could provide a deeper contextual long-term understanding.

One more possible limitation of this study could be that the participants in this study were all my previous students. Although I made them aware of their rights as voluntary participants, and even though they were no longer enrolled in any of my classes at the time of the study, I cannot ignore the possibility of "social desirability…the tendency to provide answers that put one in a good light" (Dillman, 2007, p. 99) during the interview and journaling data collection process. This study is not meant to be generalized and applied to all first-generation students of color but rather to be used to demonstrate the need for and importance of creating

spaces and opportunities to get to know, listen, and co-construct collaborative learning communities with first-generation students. Finally, the themes for this study were previously determined based on the six forms of capital in community cultural wealth. This can present a limitation because it can narrow the scope of the researcher and information shared in the counterstories collected as data is analyzed.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the data collection plan that guided this study. The primary sources of data collection were two interviews and six journal entries per participant. There were six theory-driven forms of capital that guided the participants' counterstories. The methodology, data collection, and analysis were conducted in a confidential and respectful manner. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the interviews and journal entries by theme. The findings and analysis discussion will be presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the community cultural wealth of first-generation mujeres and how they use it to navigate higher education. Six deductive themes, based on community cultural wealth, emerged from eight interviews and 24 journal entries completed, collected, transcribed, and analyzed for this study. Aside from the wealth of knowledge derived from the lived experiences shared by participants, this study aimed to encourage the celebration of students of color, who brave an academic system that has traditionally only focused on their perceived deficits (Yosso, 2005). This chapter aims to provide insight on first-generation counterstories from an assets-based perspective. Focusing on assets is a purposeful way to adapt campus policies that help historically-excluded students succeed (Oropeza et al., 2010).

The information in this chapter is presented in four sections. The first section provides an overview of the participants of this study and the demographic information collected from the first interview and demographic questionnaire. The second section presents the six deductive themes based on community cultural wealth that participants reflected on during their weekly journal entries and an additional theme that emerged from their counterstories. Finally, a summary of the findings will serve as a foreword for Chapter 5.

Participant Overview

Participants for this qualitative study consisted of four bilingual, heritage language, first-generation mujeres, who shared similar backgrounds and attended a predominantly white-serving university in the Midwest. Their first language, and the language primarily spoken at home was Spanish. Participants learned English once they were old enough to attend school, and

it was mostly only used outside the home. All of the participants' parents immigrated from Mexico, but all of the participants were born in the United States. The ages of the participants ranged from 19–21 years old. They had all graduated from high schools in the city where the university they attended was located and continued to live in their parents' home. A brief description of each participant is available below. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms, Norte, Oeste, Este, and Sur, in order to respect their agreed-upon involvement, their families, and their privacy. The pseudonyms represent the four cardinal points and seemed proper for this study as a sense of direction and understanding is attempted through the counterstories of these first-generation mujeres.

Norte

Norte was a 19-year-old first-year student with good academic standing, who was working towards a degree in engineering. She was a bilingual first-generation college student, who was able to take some advanced placement and college-level classes in high school. She was born in the United States to parents who were born in Mexico and has lived in the same house, in the same city for her whole life with her father, mother and four brothers. The highest level of education her father received in Mexico was high school. Her mother was only able to complete elementary school in Mexico. Spanish was Norte's first language; she did not learn English until she began attending grade school. Spanish continues to be spoken at home. Norte understood Spanish more than she could speak it and was able to read and write it as well.

Oeste

Oeste was a 20-year-old sophomore with good academic standing who was working towards a degree in dentistry. She was a bilingual first-generation college student who was able to take some college-level classes in high school. She was born in the United States to parents

who were born in Mexico and lived in the same house in the same city most of her life with her father, mother, and sister. The highest level of education her father received was middle school in Mexico. Her mother was able to obtain a computer science certificate at a technical college in Mexico. Spanish was Oeste's first language; she did not learn English until she began attending grade school. Spanish continued to be spoken in the participants home at the time of the study and she could understand, speak, read, and write at an equal level in both Spanish and English.

Este

Este was a 20-year-old junior with good academic standing who was working towards a career as a dental hygienist. She was a bilingual first-generation college student, and a member of a sorority. Este was able to take some college-level classes in high school and also study abroad in Spain. She was born in the United States to parents who were born in Mexico and, at the time of the study, lived in the same house in the same city most of her life. She lived in a single-parent home with her mother, brother, and grandmother. The highest level of education her mother received in Mexico was a technical degree in typing and accounting. Her grandmother only finished elementary school in Mexico. Spanish is Este's first language; she did not learn English until she began attending grade school. Spanish continues to be the main language spoken at home. Este feels like she understands and speaks Spanish better than she can read or write it. She also noted that she feels more comfortable speaking everyday Spanish and feels more self-conscious with academic Spanish.

Sur

Sur is a 21-year-old sophomore with a good academic standing who is working towards a degree in social work. She is a bilingual, first-generation college student who was not aware she

could take college-level classes in high school. She was born in the United States to parents who were born in Mexico. She moved around a lot and even lived in Mexico for some time. She lives with her mother and is an only child. The highest level of education her mother received was some college in Mexico. Spanish is Sur's first language. She did not learn English until she began attending grade school. Spanish continues to be spoken at home. Sur can speak Spanish fluently but feels less confident when she reads and writes in Spanish.

Although participants share many variables and characteristics, each of their first-generation counterstories highlights their unique journeys, experiences, and strengths. A summary of the information collected from the interviews and journal entries is summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1. Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Norte	Oeste	Este	Sur
Age	19	20	20	21
Born	U.S.A	U.S.A	U.S.A	U.S.A
Years in College	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Sophomore
Academic Standing	Good	Good	Good	Good
Major	Engineering	Dentistry	Dental Hygienist	Social Work
Bilingual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First Language	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Second Language	English	English	English	English
High School Advance Placement Courses	Yes	No	No	No

High School College Credit	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Study Abroad	No	No	Yes	No
Family Unit	Mother Father 4 brothers	Mother Father Sister	Mother Brother Grandmother	Mother
Parents' Place of Birth	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
Lives with Parents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Language Spoken at Home	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Parents Education	Father-High School Mother-Elementary	Father-Middle School Mother-Technical School Degree	Mother-Technical School Degree Grandmother-Grade School	Mother-Some College

First-Generation Mujeres Realizing their Community Cultural Wealth

The section below presents the specific data collected from interviews and journal entries guided by the six forms of capital described in community cultural wealth. In an attempt to move away from the deficit perspectives that many times take over conversations surrounding first-generation students, the goal of this study was to provide a space where first-generation mujeres were able to share their counterstories. The majority of the literature surrounding historically-excluded students focuses solely on the challenges they face (Oropeza et al., 2010). Although the conversations and reflections in this study did include some discussions

about barriers and challenges, the intended focus was always aimed towards celebrating, reflecting, discovering, and identifying the strengths that first-generation students bring to campus and that have helped them navigate higher education.

This qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1) How do first-generation mujeres describe and use community cultural wealth as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution?

2) How can first-generation counterstories that focus on community cultural wealth inform first-generation programs and initiatives in higher education?

With this in mind, the interviews and journal entries were designed to encourage participants to reflect on the six forms of capital identified by Yosso (2005) in community cultural wealth. The journal entries focused on one form of capital a week in order to provide time for participants to reflect, and the interviews were designed to guide a deeper discussion in understanding participants' first-generation counterstories. Below is the data collected from interviews and journal entries related to the six forms of capital. Tables are provided after each section related to the six priori themes, categories, and codes identified. Two additional themes were identified, and the findings are also presented below.

Theme 1: Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital makes future dreams and goals possible for students and their families despite current barriers (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital encourages students to work towards goals that go beyond what their families have accomplished. The journal prompt for the first week asked participants to reflect on what drove their desire to achieve more than what those around them were able to achieve and to identify one of the driving forces guiding

participants through higher education. Participants' responses revealed the importance of encouragement, financial challenges/benefits, financial stability, and family.

Participants shared that the encouragement to dream of achieving more than those around them have been able to achieve started at a very young age. Even though their parents were not familiar with the higher education system, it was clear to participants that receiving a college degree was important. As Este shared,

Ever since I was a little girl, my mom said that I have to get an education. She told me that I needed to get my degree to defend myself in life. In other words, telling me that I wouldn't need to rely on people to live when I'm older since I had my degree, I would be independent.

Growing up in a single-parent home with a mother who did not speak English and has worked as a waitress her whole life was never a deterrent for Este and her mother to dream of a brighter future. Despite many challenges, her mother encouraged her to dream about obtaining a higher education degree and to find a way to have more opportunities than she ever did. What might seem like an impossible accomplishment for some was the driving force that kept the dream and motivation to attend college alive for Este and her mother. Like Este, other participants shared similar words of encouragement to look beyond what their families and those closest to them had accomplished and dream bigger by taking advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Along with aspirations and hopes for the future, and despite hardships, participants also shared that those around them were very honest about financial difficulties and barriers. Family and friends shared many stories about struggles and difficulties, however, the stories they shared with the participants were not to serve as a deterrent. On the contrary, stories

about difficulties in this case were shared in the hopes that they would somehow inspire first-generation students to try harder and not give up their dreams. Sur shares a conversation with a family member that encouraged her and reminded her of the benefits of remaining in school and how it could change her life: "One of the things a family member said to me is: you're in school in four years, (when you graduate) you will be making the same salary I'm earning after 10 years of working." This dose of reality was intended as motivation to continue pursuing academic goals by focusing on the financial gain once a college degree was obtained instead of the emotional and financial challenges during the college journey. By highlighting the employment opportunities that come from receiving a college degree, the family member in Sur's story hoped they could encourage her to look past the current financial obstacles and focus on the final promise of financial security.

This desire to achieve financial stability through a college education can also be seen in one of Norte's journal entries, "My hopes and dreams for the future involve having a steady career and being able to give back to those I love. I don't want to struggle with finances. I want to have more peace of mind. "

Although aspiring for financial stability and accomplishing more than those around them was a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews and journal entries of all participants, another goal and dream that motivated these first-generation mujeres was the desire to give back and be a role model for those around them. Sur, a participant who had struggled with poverty all her life and had been recently homeless at the time of the study shared:

> I want to be an example to someone else that no matter what the situation you are in, no matter what the financial situation you are in, you can do it. So, that's my motivation to be better for myself, but not just for myself but for everyone else in the future.

Sur never wavered in her desire to stay in school, despite being homeless with her mother, she was determined to find a way to stay on track and continue working towards graduation. The collective ability to dream despite challenging situations and barriers is a strength that has encouraged first-generation mujeres to try what others might consider impossible.

The tight-knit relationships between participants, their families, and communities created a support group that not only cared for and surrounded participants through difficult times but celebrated their accomplishments as if they were their own. In a way, the accomplishments of one family or community member become everyone's accomplishments. These accomplishments continue to be shared as a collective triumph that continues to fuel the aspirational soul of their families and communities. Oeste shared how her academic accomplishments inspire her family and community to continue dreaming and hoping:

It's like if I can do all those things that they couldn't do, is a way for me to help them feel some sort of experience with me. They are always motivating me to do what's best for me now and in the long run, which is helpful because I know I have support now and in the future.

The ability to look past the perceived deficits associated with first-generation families, students, and communities stems from a collective ability to look past challenges, negative stereotypes, and unpromising statistics and continue looking past what is and focusing on what could be.

Table 4.2. Findings Related to Aspirational Capital

Theme 1: Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital makes future dreams and goals possible to students and their families despite current barriers (Yosso, 2005).	
Participant	**Aspirational Capital Quote from Interviews and Journals**
Norte	"My hopes and dreams for the future involve having a steady career and being able to give back to those I love. I don't want to struggle with finances. I want to have more peace of mind."
Oeste	"It's like if I can do all those things that they couldn't do, is a way for me to help them feel some sort of experience with me. They are always motivating me to do what's best for me now and in the long run, which is helpful because I know I have support now and in the future."
Este	"Ever since I was a little girl, my mom said that I have to get an education. She told me that I needed to get my degree to defend myself in life. In other words, telling me that I wouldn't need to rely on people to live when I'm older since I had my degree, I would be independent."
Sur	"One of the things a family member said to me is: you're in school in four years, (when you graduate) you will be making the same salary I'm earning after 10 years of working". "I want to be an example to someone else that no matter what the situation you are in, no matter what the financial situation you are in, you can do it. So, that's my motivation to be better for myself, but not just for myself but for everyone else in the future."

Theme 2: Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital celebrates the various forms of communication communities use to exchange knowledge (Yosso, 2005). The second week of journal entries explained to participants that this form of capital values not only written forms of communication but also verbal and bilingual forms of expression. Participant responses indicated pride, cultural identity, translating skills, and empowerment as results of having linguistic capital.

The acknowledgement and pride of being bilingual is excitingly expressed by Sur as she shares:

> Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of. Family and college have taught me that is being who I am: Is amazing and the way my brain is development to switch into two different language and cultures.

All the participants in this study were bilingual and spoke Spanish and English. Spanish was the first language participants learned and continued to speak at home. Spanish was also a language participants continued to use with their families at home because their parents did not speak very much English. The participants' ability to communicate, and at times write and read, in more than one language helped create a bilingual space during the study where stories, thoughts, opinions, experiences, and humor could be shared holistically in whatever language, Spanish or English, both the participants and the researcher felt comfortable using.

English was learned when participants enrolled in school, but the importance of maintaining their first language was a common message that participants received, remembered, and valued from an early age. Este recalls how her family described the importance of their language and how it connected them to their ancestors, culture, and

family: "My mom and grandma always told me to not lose my Spanish tongue because it had something to do with my roots."

Many times, participants shared how the linguistic connections were maintained through stories that helped motivate and encourage them in their academic journey. Oeste shares, in her Linguistic Capital journal entry, how family stories have motivated her: "I would say when my aunt or parents tell me stories of their childhood, their dreams, their goals, what they want as their ambitions is what motivates me."

Linguistic capital is not only used to connect heritage and roots but also to motivate and inspire as participants navigated not only academia but life in general. Exploring past events provides an opportunity for self-reflection and helps guide future directions and thought processes (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Being bilingual in a home with immigrant parents many times meant that participants were expected to take on the role of family interpreter and translator. Although, participants shared that it was not always easy to translate and interpret legal and medical documents, they shared how they have all grown to appreciate and see the value of those experiences. Este reflects on her childhood and the lessons she learned:

> When I was a kid, I was my mother's resource. She did not speak English, and I helped her because of the language. I appreciate her for letting me help her even though my English was not fully developed yet. It taught me life isn't easy or free. I must work hard to be someone in life and make my own path.

Seeing their parents' linguistic challenges and difficulty communicating in a country with a language they could not speak or understand, inspired participants and forced them to find their voice and realize what an asset being bilingual was for them, their families, and their

communities. Sur shares some experiences and pride in her linguistic ability and how she used it to help others: "Being a translator is critical position whenever I am supplying my help to stranger or close friends: I enjoy showing the ability to be able to [do] what I do."

The translating and interpreting experiences that caused stress for participants when they were young, over time became a rich source of strength and empowerment. Este reflects on how her linguistic experiences have shaped her and prepared her to find and use her voice:

> When I was younger, I would be quiet, taking anything people threw at me. Now, I am straight up and don't take anything from anyone. I shouldn't have to because last time I checked, they don't pay my bills or rent. I always think about these lessons in any moment of my life. Which includes schoolwork and just going to the store.

The strengths of bilingualism go past translating and interpreting. For these first-generation mujeres, bilingualism has also helped shape their leadership, confidence, and ability to step out of their comfort zone and pursue and achieve their dreams. They saw their bilingualism as a part of their identity and their linguistic capital became an important tool as they navigated through life both inside and outside the classroom.

The focus of this study was always aimed towards the assets first-generation students contributed to college campuses. Despite the assets-based focus throughout the study, it should be noted that any time a participant mentioned instances of feelings of inadequacy or shame towards their native language, it was because of microaggressions they experienced in the classroom or on campus. Microaggressions are consistent, apparently small, and harmless actions aimed at people of color that continuously remind them of the oppressive and racist systems they must navigate on a daily basis (Pierce, 1969). The negative impact of microaggressions causes an overwhelming amount of stress and feelings of inadequacy in the lives of people of color

(Yosso et al., 2009). Sur shared that despite her pride in being bilingual and having two cultures, she often experienced microaggressions while attending a class in a predominantly white-serving institution: "I had a discomfort with my accent…being questioned and mentioned I felt overwhelmed by not presenting the language skills as a 'normal' American speaker."

Aside from being a source of empowerment, and at times challenges, the power of the words and stories that were passed from generation to generation and shared with the first-generation mujeres who participated in this study continued to have a long-lasting impact in their life. Norte shared how the words of her family have continued to provide her with hope and comfort along her college journey, "I am very believing in the way words can live beyond being spoken. Encouragement in one moment can be re-lived by the receiver far longer than those few seconds." The words of encouragement first-generation mujeres heard from those around them continued to help them achieve their dreams of attending and graduating from college. Not only did participants' linguistic capital guide them as they reached higher education but as Norte shared: "Encouragement in one moment can be re-lived by the receiver far longer than those few seconds."

Table 4.3. Findings Related to Linguistic Capital

Theme 2: Linguistic Capital
Linguistic capital celebrates the various forms of communication communities use to exchange knowledge (Yosso, 2005).

Participant	Linguistic Capital Quote from Interviews and Journals
Norte	"Having to relearn things from one language to another and helping my parents has helped me going through school as well. I became more independent and

	seasoned. I learned to distinguish between cultures and relate it to my academic process. In a way, I was given more material to study from." "I am very believing in the way words can live beyond being spoken. Encouragement in one moment can be re-lived by the receiver far longer than those few seconds."
Oeste	"I would say when my aunt or parents tell me stories of their childhood, their dreams, their goals, what they want as their ambitions is what motivates me."
Este	"My mom and grandma always told me to not lose my Spanish tongue because it had something to do with my roots." "When I was a kid, I was my mother's resource. She did not speak English, and I helped her because of the language. I appreciate her for letting me help her even though my English was not fully developed yet. It taught me life isn't easy or free. I must work hard to be someone in life and make my own path." "When I was younger, I would be quiet taking anything people threw at me. Now, I am straight up and don't take anything from anyone. I shouldn't have to because last time I checked, they don't pay my bills or rent. I always think about these lessons in any moment of my life, which includes schoolwork and just going to the store."
Sur	"Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of. Family and college have taught me that is being who I am: Is amazing and

| | the way my brain is development to switch into two different language and cultures."

"Being a translator is critical position whenever I am supplying my help to stranger or close friends; I enjoy showing the ability to be able to [do] what I do." |
|---|---|

Theme 3: Familial Capital

Familial capital encompasses close family and those in the community who help carry on tradition, history, and the identity of the community (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital includes all the customs that help unite communities and families of color. For the week three journal reflection participants were asked to think of the ways these connections and strengths are recognized. Participants' responses highlighted the power of family, overcoming hardships, pride, and family support. Norte shares as she reflects on her familial capital that this recognition happened from a very early age: "From birth, I have always found myself surrounded by uncles, aunts, cousins, and every other relative imaginable. My family has inflicted on me the values of connection and love."

The deep family connection and history shared above has similarly inspired Este and her cousins as they pursue higher education,

> I would say my culture plays a big part of my academic journey because my family came to this country for a better life for my cousins and I. Therefore, the least we can do is give them a degree in my opinion. I have always locked this into my head, and it's the way I strive to do my very best for my mom.

The challenging immigration journey Este's family endured to give her and her cousins a better life served to inspire her and fuel her academic goals. The hardships and limited opportunities that her family endured from being undocumented made her appreciate her ability to pursue an education. This collective identity and unity, along with the realization of the privileges and opportunities they enjoyed also comforted and motivated other participants. When asked to reflect on the role familial capital played in her academic journey Norte shared how her family, near and far, continued to comfort and motivate her:

> I would say one of the main reasons I stay in college is my parents and my family [back] in Mexico. None of them were able to get an education. The family bond we have has given me a lot of silent support and encouragement.

Although many times the support first-generation families offer first-generation students is called into question, current research supports the fact that first-generation families offer a wealth of knowledge, support, and resources that continually encourage first-generation students towards graduation (Ilett, 2019). Based on the participants' counterstories, it was clear that first-generation families, their histories, journeys, and identities offered them a sense of pride rather than an added challenge. Sur shared some of the words of encouragement that were often heard in her home growing up: "My mom taught me to esteem my culture and language, never to forget where I came from. Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of."

Along with the collective stories of familial support, participants shared there were also many lessons and values that represented their families and that they considered important. Este shared one of those lessons below:

My mom taught me that in this world, nothing is easy or hand-given. You must work for

something you want. Meaning everything in this life is not easy. You always have to put

some sort of work for it because, if you don't, is it even worth it?

The unbreakable support and encouragement first-generation families provide their

students as they pursue their dreams in an educational system they do not completely

understand provides a sense of unity for first-generation students and their families. Although the

barriers faced by immigrant parents starting over in an unfamiliar country may be

considered very different from the barriers faced by first-generation students navigating an

unfamiliar academic system, Oeste shares how her parents were a constant sense of comfort

despite their unfamiliarity with the education system. "They're always insightful, helpful, and

knowing I have their support makes me feel so comfortable and strong. Knowing I can always

get advice and feedback on anything is so helpful. They have such a huge impact in my life."

The counterstories shared by all participants go against the myths that describe first-

generation families as unsupportive and uninvested in higher education. As Oeste

shared: "Knowing I can always get advice and feedback on anything is so helpful. They

have such a huge impact in my life."

First-generation families continue to be an untapped resource of support and

encouragement that can greatly impact how institutions can recruit and retain more first-

generation students.

Table 4.4. Findings Related to Familial Capital

Theme 3: Familial Capital
Familial capital encompasses not only close family but those in the community who help carry on tradition, history, and the identity of the community (Yosso, 2005).

Participant	Familial Capital Quote from Interviews and Journals
Norte	"I would say one of the main reasons I stay in college is my parents and my family in Mexico. None of them were able to get an education. The family bond we have has given me a lot of silent support and encouragement." "From birth, I have always found myself surrounded by uncles, aunts, cousins, and every other relative imaginable. My family has inflicted on me the values of connection and love."
Oeste	"They're always insightful, helpful, and knowing I having their support makes me feel so comfortable and strong. Knowing I can always get advice and feedback on anything is so helpful. They have such a huge impact in my life."
Este	"My mom taught me that in this world, nothing is easy or hand-given. You must work for something you want. Meaning everything in this life is not easy, you always have to put some sort of work for it because, if you don't, is it even worth it?" "I would say my culture plays a big part of my academic journey because my family came to this country for a better life for my cousins and I. Therefore, the least we can do is give them a degree, in my opinion. I have always locked this into my head, and it's the way I strive to do my very best for my mom."
Sur	"My mom taught me to esteem my culture and language, never to forget where I came from. Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of."

Theme 4: Social Capital

Social capital focuses on the valuable resources social networks provide as students and families navigate academia and everyday life (Yosso, 2005). As study participants reflected on their week four journaling prompt over social capital, they shared memories of how social networks played an important guiding role in their decisions from an early age. Key points shared by participants when it came to social capital included: community, resources, giving back, caring educators, and emotional support. Norte recalled how her parents modeled how to seek out support in their community:

> My parents reach out to family. When they don't know something, they'll ask relatives who speak Spanish and English to help translate or answer questions. I have also witnessed my mother reach out to bilingual people who work at places we frequent, such as dentists or health offices. Her lack of English is something that makes her keep track of the workers who can help her.

Norte's parents modeled how to navigate a system that was not designed for them. The social networks first-generation mujeres learned to build from an early age went beyond their home and into the community.

Just like Norte, Este also recalled receiving advice on how to navigate school and use her resources from her mother:

> From the day I started school, my mom has always told me to be aware of my resources as a student. I would very much encourage others to reach out because it's a way to learn, and you will never learn unless you do.

Despite the years, Este explained how this advice has continued to shape her academic success and ability to easily ask for help and navigate difficult conversations:

Some experiences I drew from my friends. One example is not knowing how to fill out a

scholarship application, and I had to ask my sorority sister for help. She kindly explained

how it was structured and what it was asking. I knew I could rely on her because she was

older and had already gone through this experience. When my younger brother goes to

college, I'll be his role model for anything.

As with aspirational capital, the driving force for all participants was to one day

help those around them achieve their academic goals with greater ease. Este shares with

excitement how she plans to pay it forward and help her sibling once they enter college: "When

my younger brother goes to college, I'll be his role model for anything."

Norte shared how this sense of commitment to give back and make

others journeys easier went beyond her immediate family and the impact it played when making

decisions:

I feel a sense of community with my brothers and cousins because we all appreciate some

of the same things. We try our best to make good decisions for ourselves and each other.

The values we were exposed to influenced us together and helped us become closer.

Social networks were seen by participants as resources that shaped how their decisions were

made by the impact they would have on those around them.

Social capital in the academic journey of first-generation mujeres many times

included educators. The role educators played in the lives of participants was very impactful,

and Norte shared how despite the years that have passed, many educators and their

advice, continue to be a source of support:

I have had some very notable teachers…who showed me how to be more comfortable with

myself and reminded me how much potential I have. One of my teachers always reminded

me when I walked into his room that I was one of his most bravest and outstanding students and that I could do anything I set my mind to. Although I did not believe it sometimes, the way he constantly said those types of compliments got through to me.

Social networks and the spaces that were created along with the messages that were spoken made a significant impact on participants persistence in education. Although families tend to be the first information resource for first-generation students, reaching out to the community and others outside their immediate family was also a behavior that was modeled by their family. Sur reflected below on the important role social networks and people in the community and school played in her ability to succeed:

> People who are not from sangre (blood) sometimes teach way more than family does. They could even be staff, coworkers, and professors. They teach us part of what we are and who we are. My values come from opportunities, challenges, and beliefs. They are the blessings and motivation that makes me appreciate what I have been through.

The social capital shared by the first-generation mujeres in this study showed their understanding of its importance. These counterstories have proven first-generation students are capable and willing to seek help from those around them. Norte shared the impact social capital has on her and others in her community: "We try our best to make good decisions for ourselves and each other. The values we were exposed to influenced us together and helped us become closer."

The significant emotional support that social networks provided was expressed by Oeste as she shared:

I do encourage others to reach out, it's not good to bottle your emotions/problems...it

is helpful to have persons you can count on for help, or having at least someone you can

vent to. It's a way to keep yourself grounded and controlled.

Norte, Oeste, Este, and Sur have provided insight on the deep understanding first-generation

students have of the importance of social networks. They all expressed their willingness to use

social networks and ask for help. Based on their counterstories, being open to relying on people

around them for information and help has been something that has been modeled to them

from an early age by those around them.

Table 4.5. Findings Related to Social Capital

Theme 4: Social Capital
Social capital focuses on the valuable resources social networks provided as students and families navigate academia and everyday life (Yosso, 2005).

Participant	Social Capital Quote from Interviews and Journals
Norte	"My parents reach out to family. When they don't know something, they'll ask relatives who speak Spanish and English to help translate or answer questions. I have also witnessed my mother reach out to bilingual people who work at places we frequent, such as dentists or health offices. Her lack of English is something that makes her keep track of the workers who can help her." "I feel a sense of community with my brothers and cousins because we all appreciate some of the same things. We try our best to make good decisions for ourselves and each other. The values we were exposed to influenced us together and helped us become closer."

	"I have had some very notable teachers…who showed me how to be more comfortable with myself and reminded me how much potential I have. One of my teachers always reminded me when I walked into his room that I was one of his most bravest and outstanding students and that I could do anything I set my mind to. Although I did not believe it sometimes, the way he constantly said those types of compliments got through to me."
Oeste	"I do encourage others to reach out, it's not good to bottle your emotions/problems...it is helpful to have persons you can count on for help, or having at least someone you can vent to. It's a way to keep yourself grounded and controlled."
Este	"From the day I started school, my mom has always told me to be aware of my resources as a student. I would very much encourage others to reach out because it's a way to learn, and you will never learn unless you do." "Some experiences I drew from my friends. One example is not knowing how to fill out a scholarship application, and I had to ask my sorority sister for help. She kindly explained how it was structured and what it was asking. I knew I could rely on her because she was older and already gone through this experience. When my younger brother goes to college, I'll be his role model for anything."

Sur	"People who are not from sangre (blood) sometimes teach way more than family does. They could even be staff, coworkers, and professors. They teach us part of what we are and who we are. My values come from opportunities, challenges, and beliefs. They are the blessings and motivation that makes me appreciate what I have been through."

Theme 5: Resistant Capital

Resistant capital relates to the daily fight for equity by historically-excluded people of color (Yosso, 2005). Resistant capital describes the ability students and families have to pursue an education and better future despite negative statistics and narratives. Participants' responses emphasized the importance of challenging deficit perspectives and resilience.

When asked during week five to reflect on ways she had resisted the deficit narrative that typically surrounds first-generation college students, Norte wrote,

My motivation comes from a lot of places other than supportive people I've met. Spite and competition have played a role in growing up. I feel like the unspoken rule to do better than each other growing up has had a significant impact in the way I treat education and others.

Aside from spite, competition, and the desire to prove people wrong, family and community have helped and motivated first-generation mujeres. This generational resilience was consistently passed on as is demonstrated in the advice Este recalled that was given to her by her grandmother:

My grandma is a person who really shaped me into the way I'm right now. She

always taught me to never settle for anything and make sure to never give up. She told

me as a woman, I should always value myself before anything and love myself.

While family support and advice have played a role in helping participants resist the urge

to give up on their academic goals, the desire to pay it forward and inspire others also proved

motivating. While reflecting on her resilience through the years, Oeste shared: "My little cousins

said they look up to me. So, like, hearing that sometimes I'm like - don't give up. That helps me

stay in college and then obviously to be a good role model for my sister." This understanding of

the impact of their academic success and the message it sends to those around them motivated

these participants to look beyond the challenges as they continued pursuing

their academic studies.

While family and community have inspired participants to not give up and continue

achieving their academic goals, Sur's reflections drew from the historical resilience of her

ancestors, family, and community:

The bravery of my race reminds me I come from hard workers and splendid

traditions. The ability to move to the United States to build a better future for their kids

reminds me that I'm proud of who I'm and what I can do.

Regardless of where the advice, inspiration, and motivation stems from, all

participants in this study shared Este's conclusion when it comes to achieving their academic

goals: "Struggling and crying is done but, giving up is not an option." The resiliency of first-

generation mujeres, and the stories they share prove that they are willing, capable, and unafraid

to pursue higher education.

"I feel like the unspoken rule to do better than each other growing up has had a

significant impact in the way I treat education and others." This unspoken but heartfelt

rule identified above from Norte's counterstory provided a glimpse of the shift between

resistance from others to resistance from within. This resistance from others and resistance from

within in turn fueled in participants a resistance for others. As Oeste shared: "My little cousins

said they look up to me. So, like, hearing that sometimes I'm like don't give up."

Their counterstories voice their unflinching desire to

succeed. Institutions of higher learning need to step up to that challenge and match their desire to

succeed in order to better serve them through their academic journey.

Table 4.6. Findings Related to Resistant Capital

Theme 5: Resistant Capital Resistant capital relates to the daily fight for equity by historically-excluded people of color (Yosso, 2005).	
Participant	**Resistant Capital Quote from Interviews and Journals**
Norte	"My motivation comes from a lot of places other than supportive people I've met. Spite and competition have played a role in growing up. I feel like the unspoken rule to do better than each other growing up has had a significant impact in the way I treat education and others."
Oeste	"My little cousins said they look up to me. So, like, hearing that sometimes I'm like don't give up. That helps me stay in college and then obviously to be a good role model for my sister."
Este	"My grandma is a person who really shaped me into the way I'm right now. She always taught me to never settle for anything and make sure to never give

	up. She told me as a woman, I should always value myself before anything and love myself."
Sur	"The bravery of my race reminds me I come from hard workers and splendid traditions. The ability to move to the United States to build a better future for their kids reminds me that I'm proud of who I'm and what I can do."

Theme 6: Navigational Capital

The final journal prompt on week six asked participants to reflect on navigational capital. Navigational capital is the ability people of color have to excel and function in spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005). Participants reflected on how past experiences have helped pave the way for them to navigate higher education.

One of the many spaces people of color must learn to navigate are institutions of higher learning. Although the experience of being the first to go to college was intimidating, exciting, and, at times, scary for the participants in this study, Sur shared some of the obstacles she faced and how she was able to navigate them: "My first year in college, I was prepared to get thru school some buildings were 'hidden' but, whenever I was in that situation was people who were there or [I] asked the ...library"

When asked how they navigate higher education; participants shared how they utilized their past experiences and how they drew from different forms of capital. Este shared:

> I am the oldest of my siblings, and I had to become responsible at a very young age. I had to know when my doctors' appointments were, and when my mom needed a specific form from me at school, I had to ask for it.

The need to help their parents and community and learn to navigate social institutions from an early age also taught participants the skills and tools necessary to be successful on their own. Norte shared how she was able to navigate the unfamiliar and, at times, unpredictable world of academia:

> One of the ways I navigate through situations where I don't know what to do is by reaching out for help. I've watched the ways my family gets by on helping each other and lending hands so I've become accustomed to reaching out just the same. It may be hard to do sometimes but I remind myself of what's important to myself and what I want.

In addition to utilizing her navigational, social, and familial capital, Norte also reflected on the assets, resilience, and navigational ability she gained from her linguistic journey below:

> Having to relearn things from one language to another and helping my parents has helped me going through school as well. I became more independent and seasoned. I learned to distinguish between cultures and relate it to my academic process. In a way, I was given more material to study from.

The strengths that first-generation students bring to campus are unique, varied, and take on different forms. Oeste shared one of the strengths she learned from a very young age as she was managing her father's rental houses. She shared that, "Since I was eight, I help my dad with his rental properties. People don't understand that as first-generation students we are not that clueless. We know things." This navigational strength is worth highlighting, not only because of the very transferable skills that Oeste has used in her business and math classes but as a reminder of the many strengths that first-generation students bring to campus that are overseen when institutions only focus on perceived, imagined, or assumed deficits. Although Oeste's strengths might not fit the qualities traditionally associated with

college success, all the unique experiences and funds of knowledge that she and other first-generation students bring to campus are useful and valid. They are a testament of resilience, strength, and knowledge. Proof of this navigational capital that stems from others example is shared by Norte:

I've watched the ways my family gets by on helping each other and lending hands, so I've become accustomed to reaching out just the same. It may be hard to do sometimes, but I remind myself of what's important to myself and what I want.

Sur states, how these navigational insights and experiences continue to guide her: "Experiences showed me to be responsible and how important it is to be on time and research a place or a location you are going into, being prepared beforehand is important."

Norte clearly states this connection in her journal entry: "Having to relearn things from one language to another and helping my parents has helped me going through school as well."

Taking time to listen to first-generation voices and learn about their stories, experiences, and journeys will help institutions be aware of the funds of knowledge they bring to campus and how they can be used to facilitate rather than complicate their college journey.

Table 4.7. Findings Related to Navigational Capital

Theme 6: Navigational Capital	
Navigational capital is the ability people of color have to excel and function is spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005).	
Participant	Navigational Capital Quote from Interviews and Journals
Norte	"One of the ways I navigate through situations where I don't know what to do is by reaching out for help. I've watched the ways my family gets by on helping each other and lending hands, so I've become accustomed to reaching out just

	the same. It may be hard to do sometimes, but I remind myself of what's important to myself and what I want." "Having to relearn things from one language to another and helping my parents has helped me going through school as well. I became more independent and seasoned. I learned to distinguish between cultures and relate it to my academic process. In a way, I was given more material to study from."
Oeste	"Since I was eight, I help my dad with his rental properties. People don't understand that as first-generation students we are not that clueless. We know things."
Este	"I am the oldest of my siblings, and I had to become responsible at a very young age. I had to know when my doctors' appointments were, and when my mom needed a specific form from me at school, I had to ask for it."
Sur	"My first year in college, I was prepared to get thru school some buildings were 'hidden' but, whenever I was in that situation was people who were there or [I] aske the ...library" "Experiences showed me to be responsible and how important it is to be on time and research a place or a location you are going into, being prepared beforehand is important."

Additional Themes

Theme 7: Representation

An additional theme that emerged from this study was the impact representation had on the academic journey of first-generation students. Representation or lack of representation can greatly impact the creation of inclusive spaces for first-generation students. Este shares how she felt navigating a predominantly white campus: "I went to such a white school. They just made me feel completely different. It made me feel like I was the alien on earth because there barely was any other Hispanics or just minorities, period."

Not actively, consistently, and purposefully working towards achieving an inclusive campus that represents students of color perpetuates first-generation students' feelings of inadequacy and exclusion. Sur shares below her frustration as she attends a predominantly-white institution that speaks about its goals for equity and inclusion without taking the necessary steps to create a campus culture that reflects those goals.

> They are not really open when they say, 'oh yeah, we are open, we accept you,' but they
> are not really open to change for someone else. I had a feeling like I was a rare human in
> a place that I was not welcomed. I am American, but it changes because of my ethnicity,
> Mexican. My thought was: I don't belong here? But I was born in the United States. I
> have the same priorities [rights] as them [classmates]; I am no different. Just because of
> my accent, the color of my hair and skin would change anything.

A bigger sense of urgency needs to be place on taking an honest look at whether or not the faculty, staff, students, and administrators represent the historically-excluded students universities claim to advocate for. Norte recalls the lasting impact a professor that shared her background, culture, and language continued to have, "Although the exact words

have faded, I still recall her feelings of telling me not to let myself get overtaken with things because I am far too good to not follow what I want to do." This feeling of support, inclusion, and hope was echoed by other participants who recognize the positive impact a diverse and inclusive campus with faculty, staff and students that represented them could have on their academic journey. As can be seen through these first-generation counterstories, representation, or the lack of it, has a great impact on the college journey of historically-excluded students.

Theme 8: Validation

Regardless of how uncomfortable and difficult conversations about inequalities can be, they do not compare to the microaggressions students are experiencing because institutions choose to ignore their voice and turn the other way. Discussions surrounding first-generation students many times revolve around their lack of sense of belonging on college campuses. Although this is a common topic when discussing first-generation students, the conversation typically is presented as a deficit on the part of the first-generation student rather than a result of the deficit of the campus climate they are attempting to navigate. As Sur shares, a closer look should be placed on the lack of inclusion within campus spaces,

> I always felt I did not belong, using someone's seat or someone who would have the capacity to succeed more than I would be. I have that feeling because I felt lost and lonely around white people. I would get excited if someone else from a different ethnic group was in the same course.

Providing students with faculty and staff they can relate with fosters deep and meaningful campus connections (Jimenez, 2019).

Conclusion

The intent of this qualitative study was to focus on the assets, previous knowledge, and strengths first-generation mujeres bring to campus. This qualitative study aimed to create a space where first-generation mujeres could share their counterstories. This chapter presented the themes that emerged from the six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, resistant, and navigational in community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) in hopes of understanding how they help participants navigate higher education and how first-generation mujeres not only recognize but use community cultural wealth. Six predetermined themes were discussed along with two additional themes that emerged from the data collected. The data presented was collected through interviews and journals that encouraged discussions and reflections. The data provided evidence that first-generation students rely on community cultural wealth and its different forms of capital as a source of perseverance and guidance. The data also revealed the impact representation and validation has on creating an inclusive campus. Chapter 5 will provide an opportunity to discuss the study findings, along with implications and recommendations for future research

Chapter 5 - Findings, Implications, Limitations, and Conclusions

"Stories matter.... many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity." -Chimamanda N. Adichie (2009)

This chapter provides a summary of the study, its implications for future research, along with the limitations given the national and global events surrounding the entire duration of the study. Conclusions and final thoughts will provide insight into the direction of future research surrounding first-generation students. Despite the perceived deficits typically employed to describe first-generation college students, this study aimed to focus on the strengths and wealth of knowledge that helps them navigate higher education by focusing on the rich insight provided in their counterstories. While we cannot deny the presence of obstacles in the lives of first-generation mujeres, the goal is that by sharing their aspirations despite challenges, institutions can celebrate and support their resilience by creating equitable services, policies, and campuses that support their unique academic journey.

Summary of Study

Interviews and journal entries were utilized as the main source of data collection to understand how first-generation mujeres navigated higher education. The initial interview was conducted via Zoom, and the final interview was conducted face to face. Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed and reviewed several times in order to identify the six deductive themes based on Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth. The counterstories collected supplied rich data and insight for this qualitative study's narrative analysis. Eight semi-structured qualitative interviews and 24 journal entries

were collected. With a CRT foundation, LatCrit focus, and a CCW lens as a guide, the following research questions served as the core of this study:

1) How do first-generation mujeres describe and use community cultural wealth as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution?

2) How can first-generation counterstories that focus on community cultural wealth inform first-generation programs and initiatives in higher education?

This study provides relevant insight on first-generation counterstories and how these first-generation students utilized community cultural wealth to navigate higher education. This research also serves as an invitation to begin utilizing theoretical frameworks like critical race theory, Latino critical race theory, and community cultural wealth to begin questioning and reimagining what has been considered the norm in institutions and why (Iverson, 2007; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Major findings, implications, and conclusions, along with limitations surrounding the global events taking place at the time of the study, are addressed below.

Discussion of Findings

CCW outlines the following forms of capital: aspirational capital (hopes and dreams), linguistic capital (intellectual and social skills), familial capital (cultural knowledge), social capital (networks of people and community resources), resistant capital (knowledge and skills forged through oppositional behavior), and navigational capital (maneuvering through social institutions; Yosso, 2005). By addressing each of the forms of capital outlined by CCW, educators can empower first-generation students and help them recognize and celebrate the strengths and funds of knowledge they bring to campus. The data presented in this study are a reminder that "race still matters" (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The way this study aligned first-

generation students, assets-based perspectives, community cultural wealth,

and counterstories and how they can be used to reshape the future of students of color in higher education is explained below.

How do first-generation mujeres describe and use community cultural wealth as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution?

In order to answer research question number one that focuses on the way first-generation mujeres describe and use community cultural wealth as they navigate a predominantly white-serving institution, it was important to provide first-generation students a space to share their counterstories. The participants in this study voiced how reflecting on their experiences continues to help them navigate higher education today,

> Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of. Family and college have taught me that is being who I am: Is amazing and the way my brain is development to switch into two different language and cultures.

> Like Sur's statement above, the other mujeres expressed the pride of their stories and

how even the challenges they faced have provided transferable skills as they pursue their college degrees. Recognizing the power of first-generation students and creating a space for them to share their counterstories can help institutions understand both strengths and challenges in order to properly help facilitate their academic journey (Yosso, 2005). Understanding the strong sense of community, the power of family support, and the impact personal experiences have on college choice, enrollment, and graduation are present in the counterstories presented and can continue to provide valuable, first-hand insight on the successful recruitment and retention of students of color. Norte shared the strong sense of community she shares with her family and those around her:

I feel a sense of community with my brothers and cousins because we all appreciate some

of the same things. We try our best to make good decisions for ourselves and each other.

The values we were exposed to influenced us together and helped us become closer.

Other participants others shared about their commitment, support, and desire to

help others:

 I do encourage others to reach out, it's not good to bottle your emotions/problems...it is

helpful to have persons you can count on for help or having at least someone you can

vent to. It's a way to keep yourself grounded and controlled.

Despite the experiences, lessons, and reasons to move forward and pursue a college

education, the vital role our stories play is evident. Our reality and way of life is the result of

personal stories shared from generation to generation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). By

welcoming, encouraging, modeling, and naming the experiences that have shaped first-

generation students through the celebration of their counterstories, deficit perspectives are

challenged, and asset mindsets are created.

Theme 1: Aspirational Capital

This study provided rich narratives that demonstrate the participants' ability to look past

the perceived deficits associated with first-generation students. It provided clear examples of

how, in spite of negative stereotypes and unpromising statistics, first-generation students are able

to look past challenges and use them as a form of inspiration and strength. Aspirational capital

makes future dreams and goals possible for students and their families despite current barriers

(Yosso, 2005). Aspirational capital was observed as students shared their counterstories in the

form of hard truths and advice and becoming an academic altruist.

Hard Truths and Advice

In terms of hard truths participants shared how difficult their lives and the lives of their families were. Families did not shelter participants from the difficulties but rather used those teachable moments as motivation to encourage them to reach their own academic goals.

Sur's family member, like many of the parents in this study, worked hard labor jobs either in factories or in restaurants as waitresses. Despite their lack of opportunity, they made sure to motivate the participants to look past their current reality and dream about what their future could be. These hard truths made it clear to participants that education can break the cycle and that obtaining a college degree would ensure that the participant's life would be easier than that of their parents. What could be perceived by others as a weakness, stories of hardships, poverty, lack of access to education, was utilized to drive participants and give them a reason to focus on their future and pursue higher education. As the hard truths and advice were shared by participants, it was evident that, as stated by Perez and Taylor (2016), it was possible that different forms of capital were being utilized at the same time. Many of the participants' journal entries about aspirational capital also mentioned the stories of hardships (linguistic capital) shared by their family and the unbreakable spirit that encouraged them through those hardships (resistant capital).

As a result of the hard truths and advice participants received, a desire for financial stability and a better future was born. All the participants voiced a desire to struggle less and have more financially than their parents and the adults around them. Despite all the obstacles in their lives and the lives of those around them, they were able to stay motivated as they took the steps necessary to attend college. The support that surrounds first-generation students, like the participants in this study, allows them to aspire for more as they work past the day-to-day

challenges of their reality (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007). Eventually the aspirational goals shared by families despite present obstacles become the goals of the students as well (Yosso, 2005).

Taking an assets-based approach when working with first-generation students provides an opportunity to see strengths in their struggles. Utilizing CCW and counterstories encourages students to dream out loud and provides faculty and administrators the opportunity to better support their journey.

Becoming an Academic Altruist

The counterstories collected for this study gave participants an opportunity to share their own hopes and dreams. The journaling process also provided them with an opportunity to share the stories, advice, and hard strengths that have provided them with inspiration to continue their college education. Through the counterstories in this study, participants also voiced their desire to become what I call an academic altruist, or someone who intentionally seeks to help others in need of academic direction and whose only goal is to help make the academic journey of those around them easier than their own. CRT, LatCrit, and CCW provided the theoretical frameworks necessary to not only realize the systemic barriers participants and other students of color must face but at the same time focus on the assets they already bring to white spaces that are commonly overlooked. All of the participants voiced their desire to pay it forward and to somehow give back to their families and communities for their support. Helping and encouraging others to dream about higher education to reach those academic dreams while at the same time using their voice to address their unique journey became a natural part of their counterstories. The counterstories in this study provide further proof that the hopes and dreams shared by students and their families not only serve to uplift and guide them as they reach their academic goals, but they also position

first-generation students to see themselves as academic altruist for the first-generation students that follow.

Table 5.1. Aspirational Capital: Categories and Code Sample Statements

Theme
Aspirational Capital
Aspirational capital makes future dreams and goals possible to students and their families despite current barriers (Yosso, 2005).

Categories	
Hard Truths and Advice	Becoming an Academic Altruist

Code Sample Statements	
"Ever since I was a little girl, my mom said that I have to get an education. She told me that I needed to get my degree to defend myself in life. In other words, telling me that I wouldn't need to rely on people to live when I'm older since I had my degree, I would be independent."	"I want to be an example to someone else that no matter what the situation you are in, no matter what the financial situation you are in, you can do it. So, that's my motivation to be better for myself, but not just for myself but for everyone else in the future."
"One of the things a family member said to me is: you're in school in four years, (when you graduate) you will be making the same salary I'm earning after 10 years of working".	"It's like if I can do all those things that they couldn't do, is a way for me to help them feel some sort of experience with me."

"They are always motivating me to do what's best for me now and in the long run, which is helpful because I know I have support now and in the future."	"My hopes and dreams for the future involve having a steady career and being able to give back to those I love. I don't want to struggle with finances. I want to have more peace of mind."

Theme 2: Linguistic Capital

The counterstories in this study provided a clear and strong connection between language and heritage and the important resource it is in everyday life as it continues to inspire hope. Linguistic capital celebrates the various forms of communication communities use to exchange knowledge (Yosso, 2005). All the participants in this study, like the participants in previous studies by Rendon et al. (2014) saw their bilingualism as a strength and the ability to help and communicate with a wider range of people as an asset.

Language as Heritage

Aside from the linguistic benefit of being bilingual, participants stated how they saw their heritage languages as a resource that connected them to their heritage and gave them hope. This message informed participants that their heritage language was a bridge not only to their past but also their future. Language connected them to their ancestors, their stories, words and customs, and also gave them opportunities in the future. All participants mentioned the importance of not only remembering where you came from but finding pride in who they have become and the advantage of having two cultures, two languages, and the benefit of a bilingual brain. Participants came to realize through their own counterstories that their linguistic capital set for them a solid foundation where they could not only communicate with more people but potentially earn better paying jobs.

Language as a Resource

Aside from the connections to the past and future, linguistic capital presented itself as a resource for the present. In their counterstories participants shared how the process of learning two languages and serving as a linguistic resource for those around them provided them with experiences and lessons that went beyond communication. Similar to a study by Garcia et al. (2018), the participants in this study found that their linguistic capital provided not only the opportunity to learn how to communicate but how to navigate various spaces. Being bilingual, interpreting, and translating from a young age provided participants with the experiences necessary to learn to advocate for and speak up for themselves. Linguistic capital also provided participants with a sense of pride as they utilized their languages and skills learned academically and in the community.

Language as Hope

Language played an important role in maintaining hope as participants navigated higher education. The words of family members, their stories, and the advice of teachers resonated throughout participants' counterstories. Participants shared how the words and stories of those around them continued to be a source of hope. By acknowledging the importance of language and the connection, motivation, resilience and hope it can inspire, first-generation programs can attempt to intentionally represent the students and languages on campus. Connection and creating a sense of belonging are important factors in student retention and being aware of the significant role language plays can facilitate student and family engagement on campus. The reflections and experiences the participants shared can serve as a reminder and an invitation to recognize the value that languages and experiences of students of color supply to predominantly

white spaces while also endeavoring to join the chorus of voices that elevates, rather than discourages, the strengths and abilities of first-generation students.

Table 5.2. Linguistic Capital: Categories and Code Sample Statements

Theme		
Linguistic Capital Linguistic capital celebrates the various forms of communication communities use to exchange knowledge (Yosso, 2005).		
Categories		
Language as Heritage	**Language as a Resource**	**Language as Hope**
Code Sample Statements		
"My mom and grandma always told me to not lose my Spanish tongue because it had something to do with my roots." "Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of. Family and college have taught me that is being who I am: Is amazing and the way my brain is development to switch into two different language and cultures."	"Having to relearn things from one language to another and helping my parents has helped me going through school as well. I became more independent and seasoned. I learned to distinguish between cultures and relate it to my academic process. In a way, I was given more material to study from."	"I am very believing in the way words can live beyond being spoken. Encouragement in one moment can be re-lived by the receiver far longer than those few seconds." "I would say when my aunt or parents tell me stories of their childhood, their dreams, their goals, what they want as their ambitions is what motivates me."

| | "When I was a kid, I was my mother's resource. She did not speak English, and I helped her because of the language. I appreciate her for letting me help her even though my English was not fully developed yet. It taught me life isn't easy or free. I must work hard to be someone in life and make my own path."

"When I was younger, I would be quiet taking anything people threw at me. Now, I am straight up and don't take anything from anyone. I shouldn't have to because last time I checked, they don't pay my bills or rent. I always think about these lessons in any moment of my life, which includes schoolwork and just going to the store." | |

	"Being a translator is critical position whenever I am supplying my help to stranger or close friends; I enjoy showing the ability to be able to [do] what I do."	

Theme 3: Familial Capital

Familial capital encompasses not only close family but those in the community that help carry on tradition, history, and the identity of the community (Yosso, 2005). One of the biggest myths surrounding discussions about first-generation families is that they do not support first-generation students (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). The counterstories provided in these counter narratives provide valuable insight on not only participants' familial capital but also their support. From the data collected from this study three familial capital categories were identified: family immigration as education motivation, family pride and love, family advice and support.

Family Immigration as Education Motivation

All of the participants' parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Despite the fact that these first-generation families were not familiar with the education system in the United States, they encouraged first-generation students to pursue a college degree. Not only did they vocalize their unwavering support, they used their family immigration story as a source of family pride. The rich family history, journey to this country, and love became a source of

resilience and motivation as participants also crossed their own educational borders and dared to enter the unfamiliar world of academia as first-generation college students.

Family Pride and Love

All of the participants shared how their family's pride, love, advice, and support were constant sources of motivation to begin and persevere in higher education. From an early age, participants were reminded of the importance of education and the positive impact it would have on their lives and future. The unconditional support and motivation first-generation students receive from their families is proof of the love and support first-generation parents have for their children. The strong familial capital evident throughout the participants counterstories aligns with the work of Matos (2015) that found that despite challenges or the unfamiliarity of the situations faced, families of color find a way to support each other.

Family Advice and Support

Family advice and support were constant and provided participants with familiar comfort. The unity first-generation families have toward their students and the connection first-generation students have with their families is proof of their dedication and mutual support towards education (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). Not only did the counterstories in this study provide examples of family advice, they also demonstrated the relief first-generation mujeres had knowing that they could always return to their families when needed.

In their counterstories, all participants stated how the support first-generation families provided them, both motivational and emotional, were a significant resource during participant's academic journey. These findings are important because the erroneous assumption surrounding first-generation families is that they provide little to no support for first-generation students. Through a CCW lens, and by viewing first-

generation counterstories as invaluable tools to help institutions understand how to better serve these students, there can begin to be a shift in the way first-generation families are viewed. This study provides evidence of the urgent need for family engagement in order to successfully serve historically-excluded students.

Table 5.3. Familial Capital: Categories and Code Sample Statements

Theme

Familial Capital
Familial capital encompasses not only close family but those in the community that help carry on tradition, history and the identity of the community (Yosso, 2005).

Categories

Family Immigration as Education Motivation	Family Pride and Love	Family Advise and Support

Code Sample Statements		
"I would say one of the main reasons I stay in college is my parents and my family in Mexico. None of them were able to get an education. The family bond we have has given me a lot of silent support and encouragement."	"From birth, I have always found myself surrounded by uncles, aunts, cousins, and every other relative imaginable. My family has inflicted on me the values of connection and love." "My mom taught me to esteem my culture and language, never	"They're always insightful, helpful, and knowing I having their support makes me feel so comfortable and strong. Knowing I can always get advice and feedback on anything is so helpful. They have such a huge impact in my life."

"I would say my culture plays a big part of my academic journey because my family came to this country for a better life for my cousins and I. Therefore, the least we can do is give them a degree, in my opinion. I have always locked this into my head, and it's the way I strive to do my very best for my mom."	to forget where I came from. Being bilingual and having two nationalities is something to be proud of."	"My mom taught me that in this world, nothing is easy or hand-given. You must work for something you want. Meaning everything in this life is not easy, you always have to put some sort of work for it because, if you don't, is it even worth it?"

Theme 4: Social Capital

Social capital focuses on the valuable resources social networks provide as students and families navigate academia and everyday life (Yosso, 2005). The behavior of reaching out to those around them when they needed help was modeled to participants by their parents and community. This is important because social connections build a sense of belonging both on and off campus that in the long run helps first-generation students succeed (Museus et al., 2017).

Being Encouraged

Being encouraged to use social networks, encouraging others to use social networks, and seeing their society as a resource was a common thread through all the first-generation counterstories. Encouragement was provided by close family, members of the community, educators, and community and religious leaders. Not only were participants

encouraged and willing to seek help and advice, they had also been encouraged by their parents, teachers, and communities to never take no for an answer and keep looking for the person who was able to help.

The social capital participants received came in many forms and their knowledge and value of these social networks stemmed from the way participants were encouraged to use their resources. Participants shared how their parents' example and their community continued to be a valuable resource as they navigated everyday life.

Encouraging Others

Similar to the desire of becoming an academic altruist, participants' first-generation counterstories provided examples of how, after receiving societal encouragement, participants also became a source of social capital for others. The help participants received from those around them developed in them a desire to pay it forward and motivated first-generation students in their social networks as they navigated higher education.

Society as a Resource

The values, experiences, backgrounds and stories first-generation students share with their communities encouraged them in their day-to-day college life. Many of the counterstories shared focused on the important roles teachers or members to the community played in participants' academic journey. These mentors, parents, teachers, family, and friends made an important impact and motivated participants as they enrolled in and attended higher education. The importance of this finding stems from the realization that despite the background of first-generation students, faculty, staff, and administrators can get to know them, build relationships, and become a part of their social capital networks. Building meaningful relationships with first-generation students plays an

important role in their success in higher education (Tate et al., 2015). Furthermore, in order to begin to address necessary changes in inequitable systems a strong foundation of trust, communication, and collaboration needs to be created (Green et al., 2016).

Table 5.4. Social Capital: Categories and Code Sample Statements

Theme
Social Capital
Social capital focuses on the valuable resources social networks provided as students and families navigate academia and everyday life (Yosso, 2005)

Categories		
Being Encouraged	**Encouraging Others**	**Society as a Resource**

Code Sample Statements		
"My parents reach out to family. When they don't know something, they'll ask relatives who speak Spanish and English to help translate or answer questions. I have also witnessed my mother reach out to bilingual people who work at places we frequent, such as dentists or health offices. Her lack of English is something that makes her keep	"From the day I started school, my mom has always told me to be aware of my resources as a student. I would very much encourage others to reach out because it's a way to learn, and you will never learn unless you do." "I do encourage others to reach out, it's not good to bottle your emotions/problems...it is	"I feel a sense of community with my brothers and cousins because we all appreciate some of the same things. We try our best to make good decisions for ourselves and each other. The values we were exposed to influenced us together and helped us become closer." "I have had some very notable teachers…who showed me how

track of the workers who can help her."	helpful to have persons you can count on for help, or having at least someone you can vent to. It's a way to keep yourself grounded and controlled."	to be more comfortable with myself and reminded me how much potential I have. One of my teachers always reminded me when I walked into his room that I was one of his most bravest and outstanding students and that I could do anything I set my mind to. Although I did not believe it sometimes, the way he constantly said those types of compliments got through to me."
"People who are not from sangre (blood) sometimes teach way more than family does. They could even be staff, coworkers, and professors. They teach us part of what we are and who we are. My values come from opportunities, challenges, and beliefs. They are the blessings and motivation that makes me appreciate what I have been through."	"Some experiences I drew from my friends. One example is not knowing how to fill out a scholarship application, and I had to ask my sorority sister for help. She kindly explained how it was structured and what it was asking. I knew I could rely on her because she was older and already gone through this experience. When my younger brother goes to college, I'll be his role model for anything."	

Theme 5: Resistant Capital

Resistant capital relates to the daily fight for equity by historically-excluded people of color (Yosso, 2005). Resistant capital can be seen in the daily challenges of questioning what has been traditionally accepted and refusing to believe conscious or unconscious messages that oppress students of color (Yosso, 2005; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016).

Resiliency from Others

This resiliency and refusal to shrink into the deficit stereotypes many times associated with first-generation students and their families was challenged in the form of messages of resiliency participants received from those around them. The main inspiration and motivation to never give up came from immediate family and community. The experiences of the participants and the challenges their families have historically faced were all messages of resilience mentioned in the participants' first-generation counterstories. The connection and overlap between different forms of capital, in this case resistant, aspirational, and familial, were evident as participants shared how their family's immigration story was a source of pride and a proof that obstacles and challenges can be overcome.

Resiliency from Within

The examples and stories of resistance participants witnessed from those around them instilled in them a sense of confidence that fueled their own will to resist. As situations became difficult and participants felt unmotivated, the resiliency of their family provided the motivation they needed to keep going. Similar results were stated by Rendon et al. (2014), who found that as situations became challenging, students leaned on examples of resilience that were shared by their family. The collective familial, social, and aspirational capital participants have experienced helped create a source of resistance from within. Based on the experiences they

have shared, participants voiced a clear understanding of the past and present impact
of resistance.

Resiliency for Others

Just like the messages of resistance students heard from others helped them find
resistance in themselves, this resistance in turn was used to think of the impact their journey
would have on building up the resistance of those around them. They realized that just how the
participants viewed the resistance of those around them as motivation to continue reaching their
goals, others began to view them as sources of resistant capital. Counterstories became an
important tool that served as an example of resistant capital and how they could use their
voices to question the status quo (Collins, 2000). The participants themselves,
their counterstories, and their academic journeys helped them become an embodiment of the
resistance of their community.

Table 5.5. Resistant Capital: Categories and Code Sample Statements

Theme

Resistant Capital
Resistant capital relates to the daily fight for equity by historically-excluded people of color (Yosso, 2005).

Categories		

Resiliency From Others	Resiliency From Within	Resiliency For Others

Code Sample Statements		

"My grandma is a person who really shaped me into the way I'm right now. She always	"My motivation comes from a lot of places other than supportive people I've met.	"My little cousins said they look up to me. So, like, hearing that

taught me to never settle for anything and make sure to never give up. She told me as a woman, I should always value myself before anything and love myself." "The bravery of my race reminds me I come from hard workers and splendid traditions. The ability to move to the United States to build a better future for their kids reminds me that I'm proud of who I'm and what I can do."	Spite and competition have played a role in growing up. I feel like the unspoken rule to do better than each other growing up has had a significant impact in the way I treat education and others."	sometimes I'm like don't give up. That helps me stay in college and then obviously to be a good role model for my sister."

Theme 6: Navigational Capital

Navigational capital is the ability people of color have to excel and function in spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005). There were many ways participants felt they used their navigational capital in college. This form of capital helped guide them by example and experience.

Guided by Example

Participants' families and the navigational example they set taught participants not only how to use their navigational capital but also how to reach out to their social networks and utilize their social capital. Although it is true that many first-generation students are unaware of student services and programs (Ramirez, 2017), their parents and community example gave participants the exposure necessary to reach out and ask for help. Although first-generation families might not have familiarity with the education system in the United States, their navigational example helped guide participants as they navigated their own experiences.

Guided by Experience

Participants mentioned the important and transferable skills learning two languages and being the family translator had on their ability to navigate difficult and unfamiliar situations. Being their parents' voice when they could not navigate a linguistic landscape that was very different from their own helped participants learn how to speak up despite difficulties in order to find their way through their college.

This navigational independence and confidence also translated to a sense of pride and responsibility towards all the situations they successfully navigated. This pride in the lessons they learned and the abilities they acquired are something these first-generation mujeres wanted others to understand. The counterstories shared challenge the idea that first-generation students enter as empty containers that need to be filled with information from those that are considered professionals on campus. This study helps highlight that just because the navigational capital and skills of first-generation students might be considered different than what is traditionally seen as useful, that does not mean that they do not have strengths worth recognizing and navigational skills worth celebrating. Understanding the navigational strengths of first-generation students can serve as a way to empower them and

encourage them to see and use their valuable funds of knowledge rather than get the impression that they must leave themselves and their strengths behind in order to succeed in higher education.

Table 5.6. Navigational Capital: Categories and Code Sample Statement

Theme
Navigational Capital
Navigational capital is the ability people of color have to excel and function is spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005)

Categories	
Guided by Example	**Guided by Experience**

Code Sample Statements	
"One of the ways I navigate through situations where I don't know what to do is by reaching out for help. I've watched the ways my family gets by on helping each other and lending hands, so I've become accustomed to reaching out just the same. It may be hard to do sometimes, but I remind myself of what's important to myself and what I want." "Experiences showed me to be responsible and how important it is to be on time and research a	"Having to relearn things from one language to another and helping my parents has helped me going through school as well. I became more independent and seasoned. I learned to distinguish between cultures and relate it to my academic process. In a way, I was given more material to study from." "My first year in college, I was prepared to get thru school some buildings were 'hidden' but, whenever I was in that situation was people who were there or [I] ask the ...library"

place or a location you are going into, being prepared beforehand is important." "Since I was eight, I help my dad with his rental properties. People don't understand that as first-generation students we are not that clueless. We know things."	"I am the oldest of my siblings, and I had to become responsible at a very young age. I had to know when my doctors' appointments were, and when my mom needed a specific form from me at school, I had to ask for it."

Summary

This dissertation focused on two overall goals. The first was to help first-generation mujeres reveal their community cultural wealth and the impact it had on their academic journey. The second was the hope that those who work with first-generation students begin to understand the value of the first-generation counterstory and see it as a tool that can better inform how to support first-generation students' academic success. There is a need to shift from the idea that first-generation students need to assimilate to the campus culture already established and focus more on how the diverse backgrounds of these students of color can enrich and help create truly inclusive and equitable spaces. The risk of not acknowledging and not including students of color is that they will "see themselves as the oppressor sees them, and needs to see them, and needs to have them see themselves as incompetent, lazy, prodigal, and so on" (Crotty, 1998, p. 155). The importance of creating opportunities for first-generation students to reflect on their community cultural wealth can be the beginning of creating a campus shift that sees being first-generation as a gift and opportunity to enrich the campus experience.

How can first-generation counterstories that focus on community cultural wealth inform first-generation programs and initiatives in higher education?

Deficit perspectives focus on what students seem to lack. For educators and administrators to become knowledgeable advocates for students of color and their success, they need to focus on what the *systems* in place are lacking, not the *students* (Gorski, 2016). CCW provides a shift away from deficits-based perspectives and models that only focus on what students are missing, rather than focusing on the many strengths that students, families, and communities of color bring to shared spaces in communities and institutions (Luna & Martinez, 2013). The counterstories of first-generation mujeres provided an insight not only into the many forms of capital they possess but how they utilize these forms of capital as they navigate predominantly white-serving institutions.

Studies show that creating safe spaces for historically-excluded students to share their stories creates connections amongst students, faculty, staff, and campus (Jehangir, 2009). Rather than focusing on how the college experience of first-generation students is different, all the participants pointed out the benefits they see from bringing new perspectives to traditionally white spaces. Appreciating the value and strengths in the journey and background of first-generation students of color will not only motivate their academic journey but ensure their academic success (Villalpando, 2004). Providing first-generation students spaces where they can provide input will give them the encouragement and preparation necessary to counter deficit perspectives and advocate for the validity of their experiences and counter narratives (Jimenez, 2019). Oeste explained how her unique journey enriches her classroom and institution: "Being from a different culture than the United States, I bring a lot of openness to different cultures, different languages, and different environments."

Counterstories played a significant role in empowering first-generation mujeres because they question the deficit perspectives that are typically associated with first-generation journeys (Yosso, 2005). Counterstories are valuable tools that help portray experiences and shared themes of oppression and resilience (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Institutions can focus on the resilience and value of first-generation counterstories and see the opportunities counterstories provide to shift from deficit perspectives to assets-based perspectives of the first-generation college journey. Uplifting first-generation counterstories also provides the opportunity to create spaces for student empowerment and collaboration in order to validate the voices and journeys of first-generation students. Creating opportunities and safe spaces that amplify the voices of first-generation students allows these students the opportunity to explain, understand, and improve their academic journey. The rich insight in first-generation counterstories can help create learning environments in which every voice is heard and celebrated. The funds of knowledge and strengths of first-generation students are many times overlooked; therefore, developing a focus on the use of counterstories viewed through a community cultural wealth lens can set the stage for a deeper conversation and understanding necessary to evaluate and implement policies, programs, and resources that recruit, retain, and graduate students of color.

Implications for Practice

"I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough. We must do."-Leonardo Da Vinci

Representation as Validation for a Road Towards Graduation

Unwillingness to embrace diversity and change only perpetuates college campuses that continue to underserve and isolate students of color through systemic marginalization (Locke et

al., 2016). Lack of educational access and representation should not be viewed as a result of deficits in students of color and their families (Locke et al., 2016). Too much focus is placed on changing first-generation students without focusing on changing the institutions they attend in order to meet their needs. Creating campus spaces that empower and celebrate the unique academic journeys and perspectives of first-generation mujeres can serve as a guide to help institutions meet the needs of the largest demographic on college campuses: first-generation women of color (Planty et al., 2009).

Representation

Along with the need to involve and get to know first-generation students in order to create an inclusive campus comes the need to recruit and retain faculty, staff, and administrators of color. Lack of representation amongst faculty, staff, and students of color on campuses continues to hinder the success of students of color. The same oppressive and deficit-based perspectives that creates barriers to the recruitment and retention of students of color have resulted in their lack of representation amongst faculty and staff (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Although students of color represent more than half of the students in the United States education system (Feistritzer, 2011), faculty, staff, and administrators of color represent less than half of the professionals in those positions (United States Department of Education, 2016). More value needs to be placed on the work and impact representation of color has on bringing to light policies and procedures that are underserving students of color and on the transformational impact their work has on creating inclusive campuses (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018).

Institutions should be open to evaluating current practices in order to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff of color and create a campus climate that respects and supports them as they discover and embrace the wealth of knowledge in their lived experiences.

The importance of faculty, staff, and administration that students and communities of color can relate to at a deeper cultural and linguistic level are a source of strength that help create inclusive spaces on campus (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Working towards diverse and inclusive campuses encourages and empowers students to ask questions and change unsatisfactory practices. It also calls for a collaborative understanding between students and instructors towards finding solutions (Freire, 1970). Employing this approach guarantees that first-generation students will be heard, empowered, and treated as experts in their unique educational journey.

Utilizing these frameworks, CRT, LatCrit, and CCW, along with counterstories, brings to light the strengths and unique journeys that shape the college journey of students of color (Aragon, 2017). The students and families that attend campus visits and events, along with the diversity of students, faculty, and staff on campus, supply physical proof of the campus climate that is being fostered and sends a strong and clear message about who is welcomed and catered to on campus. Therefore, a key factor in the creation of inclusive spaces is the need for representation amongst students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Not addressing the role of implicit bias that results in lack of representation in higher education continues to enforce an education system that celebrates those who were provided with exceptional educational opportunities and looks down upon the large number of students of color who have been denied them (Aragon, 2017; Gorski, 2016).

Validation

Inviting first-generation students to see their stories as valuable tools that can help inform future initiatives will not only empower and validate their journey but will also ensure that institutions are implementing the services and programs first-generation students need to be successful. First-generation students bring with them a wealth of experiences and strengths that

in no way diminish their ability to successfully attain a college education. In fact, their experience, narratives, and counterstories should be viewed as a valuable insight into their journeys, strengths, and struggles (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005). Validating and empowering counterstories serve as a way for people of color to share the often-unappreciated forms of capital that have not only helped them dream about a college education but also obtain one (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). It is important to not only validate counterstories but to also recognize their value as useful, necessary, and insightful tools used by students of color to navigate higher education (Villalpando, 2004).

A more productive and useful perspective when discussing first-generation students and their sense of belonging on campus would be to evaluate the campus environment and how it continues to enforce the feelings of exclusion that can ultimately drive historically-excluded students to drop out. Continuing to employ popular but erroneous, deficit perspectives towards first-generation students not only underserves first-generation students of color but continues to deflect the institutional responsibility necessary to take an honest look at oppressive policies and practices that need to be addressed in order to move forward and meet the needs of all students on campus. In order to truly begin to create equitable and inclusive spaces "the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system." (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Providing participants with the opportunity to reflect and share their voices throughout the study aimed to serve two purposes.

Creating a campus that situates, listens to, and validates voices of color ensures that those who have experienced oppressive practices firsthand have the opportunity to provide insight that will help guide future campus initiatives (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Furthermore, the idea that problems can be solved without the input of the populations being served will never bring us

closer to a solution (Crotty, 1998). Blindly continuing to utilize blanket approaches that do not take into consideration the diverse needs of students of color only perpetuates the oppressive system that meets the needs of a privileged few (Locke et al., 2016; Villalpando, 2004). A collective institutional effort aimed at discovering the strengths of first-generation students can begin to support not only their recruitment but their retention.

Graduate

By creating an inclusive campus climate that focuses on powerful insight of counterstories, institutions can begin to decentralize what is considered to be the norm, the white, middle-class, heterosexual college experience (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). A review of higher education and the way it has traditionally served first-generation students is needed and counterstories are seen as foundational to the struggle to shift from deficits-based perspectives that focuses on what students are missing to an assets-based model that focuses on the wealth of knowledge students bring to communities of learning (Yosso, 2005).

The campus community and administration should not only know about diversity and inclusion goals but uphold them for student success. Through a critical theoretical lens, we know that when institutions fail to talk about race and its impact on campus and choose instead to have a colorblind approach, nothing changes (Marx, 2006, 2009). In order to begin creating an inclusive and equitable higher education system, it is important to establish a campus culture that validates, normalizes, welcomes, and empowers the first-generation college journey. Encouraging and highlighting stories of resilience not only empowers the speaker but motivates the listener to see themselves as creators of change on campus (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010). The challenge for institutions is not only how they can encourage first-generation students

to seek their help but also how to communicate with first-generation students in order to provide the resources they need to be successful.

Because of their importance, counterstories are a common and important thread used by CRT, LatCrit, and CCW to empower and highlight the strengths and journeys of students of color (Yosso, 2005). If the counterstories of students of color are not part of the academic narrative, then they will never be considered relevant in those spaces (Saavedra & Perez, 2012). Similarly, if the voices of faculty and staff of color are not present, the perspectives of people of color are missing from the future and present plans of the institution.

The examples of microaggressions shared by participants, is a reminder that institutions of higher education have an obligation to their students of color to shift their campus environment towards one of inclusion. Not doing so forces students of color to attempt to succeed in an academic environment where they do not feel welcomed. Having difficult conversations can be the beginning of calling out bias behavior and calling in opportunities for solutions towards inclusive campus culture and change (Hurtado et al., 1998). Campus climates and deficit perspectives are added, unnecessary barriers to the academic success of people of color and first-generation students in higher education. The table below provides a visual representation of the desired effects of having a foundation that validates counterstories and represents historically-excluded students, faculty, and staff across campus can assist first-generation student as they navigate and graduate from higher education.

Table 5.7. Representation- Validation- Graduation

Representation as Validation for a Road Towards Graduation
Graduate

By taking into account first-generation coutnerstories and acting upon the lived experiences of historically-excluded populations institutions can assess current programs in order to fit their needs.	
Validate Focus on assets vs. deficits	Represent Historically-excluded students, faculty and staff need to have a presence on campus

Implications for Future Research

In order to address the issues that impede reaching first-generation students, specifically first-generation mujeres, institutions can begin by creating spaces for discussion and taking an honest look at institutional barriers and begin to change them. Unwillingness to address inequitable practices does not mean that first-generation students do not notice how college campuses are continuing to underserve them. The harmful perpetuation of a meritocracy philosophy for college success is harming our students of color and our ability to retain them (Gorski, 2016). The participants in this study shared what very clear message universities send when they do not support and retain faculty, staff, students, and administrators of color. Sur noted what she observed, "What I'm seeing and saying is that kinda the current system is not really good for everyone. It should be open to everyone, not just one group."

To create an education system that is open to everyone, institutions need to look past the assumed deficits of students and families of color and focus on correcting the deficits of the systems that have failed to prepare them for higher education (Villalpando, 2004). In order to begin dismantling the social structures and ideologies that have resulted in the low recruitment

and retention of first-generation students of color, educators, administrators, advisors, and allies must not shy away from discussions surrounding privilege, racism, inequality, and privilege in higher education.

Although CRT and LatCrit did not originate in the field of education, utilizing these theories as a foundation from which to evaluate current practices on campus can highlight what equitably serves and what oppresses the academic growth of students of color (Villalpando, 2004). CRT and LatCrit, along with Community Cultural Wealth, provide a guide that helps institutions focus on assets rather than deficits of students of color (Yosso, 2005). Future research should not be focused on what students seem to be lacking when they arrive on college campuses but rather on how the lack of student recruitment, retention, and graduation in institutions of higher education is the result of an inequitable education system and not the result of the lack of effort from students of color (Gorski, 2016). Taking time to self-reflect and share lived experiences "…create spaces that foster…collective healing" (Saavedra & Perez, 2012, p. 430). It is time for institutions to take the time, create the spaces, and begin a collective healing through the voices of first-generation college students and their valuable counterstories.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide first-generation mujeres with a space to voice their college experiences and share their counterstories. Although this was achieved, a longer study would have provided insight of their first-generation journey from start to finish. For future research it would be interesting to see if first-generation students' understanding of their community cultural wealth changed over time and how they viewed and used the six different forms of capital as they advanced in their academic journey. Due to the nature of qualitative studies, a small number of participants is preferred, therefore although the findings

were insightful, they cannot be generalized. In order to have a clearer understanding of first-generation success, there is a need to gain insight of their precollege experiences and conditions (Ishtani, 2006). Future research should also consider participants' academic journey from pre-school to higher education. A longer study could have possibly yielded much clearer understanding and much richer narratives.

Findings in this study cannot be generalized, but they can be of value to institutions of similar size with similar experiences and demographics (Patton, 2002). In place of perpetuating deficit perspectives, by employing theoretical frameworks like CRT and LatCrit, educators can begin to address the oppressive practices that dissuade students of color from pursuing higher education (Villalpando, 2004). By engaging in meaningful conversations, outreach initiatives, and practices that truly get to the core of first-generation students' stories, needs, and challenges, educators can begin to question how they, consciously or unconsciously, "reaffirm privileges and oppressions with… institutional practices" (Dotter, 2019, p. 48). Employing theoretical frameworks that stem from CRT, like LatCrit, help shift deficit perceptions of first-generation students to strengths-based perspectives that empower and bring to light the assets they bring to campus (Yosso, 2005). These conceptual frameworks serve as tools that advocate for historically-excluded students and question their assumed deficits when they are compared to white middle-class standards (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018).

As stated earlier, the historical events occurring throughout the duration of this study should be noted. This study was conducted during one of the most controversial presidential elections, the January 6, 2021, insurrection of the U.S. capital, and the Black Lives Matter Movement that resulted in rallies for social justice and to end police brutality across the United States. The participants, as well as the researcher, are people of color, and the intense,

controversial, and shocking events and rhetoric deeply impacted them and, as a result, were a common topic of discussion before and after interviews. During the first and final interviews, as well as during the data collection process, the participants and researcher were also attempting to survive, adjust to, and navigate a world pandemic, remote learning, and the COVID-19 lockdown. The extreme circumstances that were experienced during this study and their possible effects on the participants' mental and physical wellbeing, along with the effect they had on their college experience, should be kept in mind and taken into consideration when reviewing narratives and major findings. Despite the circumstances taking place during the time of the study, all participants were able to successfully complete the study and submit all necessary data. Discussed below are the conclusions and closing remarks.

Closing Remarks

CRT, LatCrit, and Community Cultural Wealth literature further address the role these theoretical frameworks can play in higher education and the power of sharing the stories of students of color. The use of counterstories that go against the majoritarian stories of the dominant group is not only to provide examples of the prevalence of racism but to highlight and give voice to those who resist racism (Yosso, 2013).

CRT is a tool that helps question colorblind approaches that claim to not see color. These approaches do not work and are damaging, counterproductive, and do not allow for honest discussions about the racist views and policies that have put students of color at a disadvantage from the beginning of their educational journey (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). To move past a colorblind approach, institutions must refuse colorblind practices that exclude and fail to serve students of color while serving a limited, privileged population of students (Villalpando, 2004). Hence the need to acknowledge, celebrate, and honestly discuss diverse journeys and move past

colorblindness. LatCrit provides the framework necessary to understand the unique journeys of students of color as "an asset, a form of community memory, and a source of empowerment and strength, and not as a deficit" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 46). This study calls attention to the benefits of habitually utilizing a LatCrit lens when working with students from Latin American backgrounds. Endeavoring to implement new procedures, services, and programs in higher education without attending to the foundational perspectives that limit the success and inclusion of students of color on college campuses is doomed to failure. It seems that students of color and students of low socioeconomic backgrounds are perceived as a problem that needs to be fixed (Gorski, 2016) rather than as survivors of a system that has oppressed them for a large part of their academic journey. The focus should be shifted towards creating an inclusive environment that encourages students to grow academically without having to hide, be ashamed of, or leave behind the knowledge, culture, and strengths they have learned along the way. It is necessary to reimagine the current education system to ensure that first-generation mujeres and students of color succeed with the resources they need to graduate. A CRT foundation, partnered with a Latino Critical Race Theory focus, provided this study with the research-based approach necessary to advocate for equitable change.

There is also an urgent need for institutions to address the changes necessary to serve all students, not just the ones who have traditionally enjoyed privileged pathways towards achieving higher education (Elmborg, 2006). Although campuses are becoming more diverse, there is not enough research that focuses on the academic journey of female students of color (Locke et al., 2016). Successfully meeting the needs of students of color on campus will require a campus-wide shift "… in our institutional practices that model successful collaboration across races, cultures, and disciplines for our students, ultimately leading the way to a more just university"

(Dotter, 2019, p. 45). Part of this shift includes validating and normalizing first-generation

academic journeys and realizing the importance of representation amongst faculty, staff,

students, and administrators. Making a habit of giving students of color a voice in the process of

creating services and programs to support their academic journey ensures that their needs will be

met (Villalpando, 2004). Creating a learning community that encourages collaborations

and facilitates communication can foster growth and understanding across campus.

To summarize, CRT, LatCrit, and CCW emphasize the need for a shift in perspective on

college campuses. These theories will help bring to light the impact deficit models have when

they describe "first-generation students as a problem… differentiate them from traditional

students, who serve as an implicit standard of success, and consequently to judge first-generation

students as lacking" (Ilett, 2019, p. 183). This study has aimed to highlight the community

cultural wealth of first-generation mujeres through their counterstories rather than their focus on

their perceived deficits as college students. All this is in hopes of shifting the current education

system's view that expects students of color to change in order to succeed on campus (Locke et

al., 2016). First-generation students bring a variety of perspectives, beliefs, cultures, and

personalities to classrooms. Their counterstories provide an opportunity to reimagine campus

culture. Shifting to an assets-based approach in the collection and interpretation of data

concerning students of color allows institutions of higher education to begin discovering,

celebrating, and validating first-generation counterstories by placing value on funds of

knowledge. Shifting from a deficit perspective to an assets-based perspective when speaking

about first-generation students pushes against "negative statistics [that] may predispose readers

to view first-generation students as deficient and problematic" (Ilett, 2019, p.

184). Understanding, celebrating, and serving diverse students can lead to improvement in

student support services and the creation of policies and initiatives that support a more inclusive campus and community (Saavedra & Perez, 2012). Greater urgency, focus, and intention needs to be placed on understanding first-generation students, their journeys, strengths, and needs in order to see them as collaborators in the creation of equitable and inclusive campuses rather than problems that need to be fixed in order to graduate.

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Appendix A - Your Appendix Title

Dear _____,

Education is very important to me and would like to ask you to join me in a study focused on first-generation women (mujeres). Your participation is voluntary and would only require two, one-hour interviews and some reflective journaling. The interviews will be face-to-face, and I will provide you prompts for the journals. If you are interested in participating or if you have any questions, please respond to this e-mail or give me a call: 785-925-1975.

Best always,

Graciela Berumen

Appendix B - Demographic Questionnaire

1. Name

2. Where were you born?

3. What city do you live in? With whom?

4. What other cities or states have you lived in?

5. Did you move around a lot as a kid? How many elementary schools? Middle schools? High schools? Post-secondary? (Transfer student)

6. Do you speak a second language? Can you read/write in this second language? Have you seen this as an asset?

7. Have you taken any college level courses in High School? Yes___ No___

8. Which courses did you take?

9. What is your area of concentration?

10. Expected graduation date?

11. What are your future academic plans? (Masters, doctorate)

12. Do you work? Where? How many hours?

13. What "funds of knowledge" do you feel you bring to our learning? This could be from home, school, community.

14. How might you use these "funds of knowledge" to support and/or enhance academic journey as you navigate thru higher education?

15. Are you first-generation?

16. What are some of the reasons, events, people that motivated you to come to college?

17. What are your parents' highest level of college?

Appendix C - Consenting to This Study

Revealing community cultural wealth through counterstories:

A narrative analysis of first-generation mujeres in a predominantly white-serving institution

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as

to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study,

there is a one-page consent form at the end of the study that you can sign to record your consent.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of four first-generation women

(mujeres) in higher education in a predominantly white Midwestern institution. You were

selected to be a possible participant because you meet the above criteria.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in a minimum of two one-

hour interviews and write about your experiences with the assistance of prompts provided by the

researcher. Your conversations will be audio taped. Journal entries supplied by you would be

analyzed for themes and patterns of your lived experiences.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There is no foreseeable risk for participating in this study. At any point, participants can exit the

study without a penalty.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

There is no direct benefit for participating in this study.

Do I have to participate?

Your participation is voluntary. You can exit the study anytime without any penalty.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

The data for this study will be kept confidential and stored securely. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published or presented.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Graciela Berumen at 785-925-1975, or at gracie3@ksu.edu or Dr. Spencer J. Clark at 785-532-5525 or at jspencerclark@ksu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Kansas State University.

Signature

If you agree to participate in this study, then please read the consent form on the following page, ask any questions you have about the study, and sign at the bottom to show understanding of your role in this study.

_____ _____ _____

Researcher   Signature   Date

_____ _____ _____

Participant   Signature   Date

Appendix D - Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in a study as part of a

doctoral dissertation by Graciela Berumen chaired by Dr. Spencer J. Clark from the Department

of Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University titled

Revealing community cultural wealth through counterstories:

A narrative analysis of first-generation mujeres in a predominantly white-serving institution

. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason,

and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed

from the research records, or destroyed. The reason for this study is designed so that the

researcher can gain some understanding of my perspectives as an undergraduate first-generation

student at a predominantly white institution.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

- Attend two one-hour interviews with the researcher.

- Clarify any follow-up questions the interviewer might have.

- Allow the interviewer to provide prompts for self-reflection journaling.

I understand that:

- The researcher will audiotape interviews.

- The data will be kept by the researcher.

- The researcher will analyze the data and keep it for no longer than one year.

- There is no direct benefit for me participating in the project.

- No risk is expected but, if I experience some discomfort or stress during
  observations or conversations, then I can choose to discontinue my participation in
  the study without any penalty.

- No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and need physician care) or if required by law.

- I will be assigned a pseudonym which will be used in interview transcript and all other data documents to ensure confidentiality.

- The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form, to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____ _____ _____

Researcher   Signature   Date

_____ _____ _____

Participant   Signature   Date

Appendix E - Community Cultural Health Journal Entries

Aspirational Capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This resiliency is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals.

- Step 1: Think about your hopes and dreams for the future.

- Step 2: Despite barriers and challenges …. What keeps you going? Where do you draw your strengths?

- Step 3: Think of people that have motivated you along the way. What did they say? What did they do? How did they give you the hope to continue trying to reach your goals?

Linguistic Capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style. Linguistic capital reflects the idea that students of color arrive at school with multiple language and communication skills. In addition, these children most often have been engaged participants in a storytelling tradition that may include listening to and recounting oral histories, parables, stories (*cuentos*), and proverbs (*dichos*). This repertoire of storytelling skills may include memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm, and rhyme. Linguistic capital also refers to the ability to communicate via visual art, music, or poetry. For example, bilingual children who are often called upon to translate for their parents or other adults finds that these youth gain multiple social tools of 'vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, "real-world" literacy skills, math skills, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility, [and] social maturity'.

- Step 1: Think about your languages and culture. Think about different experiences you have had, good or bad. People you communicate with, for in both languages.

- Step 2: Do you see being bilingual as a strength or a challenge? Can you give examples of situations when it was a good thing or maybe a not so good thing? What events, people, or comments helped you form this opinion?

- Step 3: How would you describe your cultural background? Do you see it as a strength or a challenge? Can you give examples? What events, people, or comments helped you form this opinion?

- Step 4: Do you think your language and culture have played a part of your academic journey? How has your language and culture been a part of your academic journey? Do you see it as a strength or a challenge? Can you please give examples? What events, people, or comments helped you form this opinion?

Familial Capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. This form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship. From these ties, we learn the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to our community and its resources. Our kin also model lessons of caring, coping, and providing (*educación*), which inform our emotional, moral, educational, and occupational consciousness.

- Step 1: Think about your family and the people around you that have helped shape your beliefs and values.

- Step 2: What lessons have these people shared with you? What impact did they have in your life? How did these lessons help you feel a sense of community?

- Step 3: Do you go back to these lessons often? Do you think they still impact you today? Do they help you navigate day to day life? School? Work? How?

Social Capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions.

- Step 1: Think about who you or your family reach out to when you have a question.

- Step 2: How did you become aware of this person or resource? How often do you use them? How did you find out about them?

- Step 3: Think of their role in who and where you are today? How did they help? Would you encourage others to reach out?

Navigational Capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Resilience has been recognized as 'a set of inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning.' Navigational capital thus acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools, the job market, and the health care and judicial systems.

- Step 1: Think about your academic journey.

- Step 2: How do you navigate through difficult situations? What experiences do you draw from?

- Step 3: How do did you learn to navigate through places and spaces? Can you think of a specific moment when became aware of social norms that you did not know about in the past?

Resistant Capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by communities of color.

- Step 1: Think about a time where you felt or witnessed injustice.

- Step 2: Describe what happened. What did you feel? What were you thinking? What did you do?

- Step 3: Think about people who took action during these times. Who were they? What did they do? Do you agree with what they did? Do you think it made an impact?

Appendix F - Final Interview Guide

- Follow up for clarification based on journal entries and initial interview

- Give participants a chance to explain their journey as they were journaling. What did they think? What did they feel? Was it difficult? Did learn anything new about themselves?

- In terms of community cultural wealth, what did they learn about themselves as they were reflecting on each form of capital?

- Thank you for participating