

DISSERTATION

A FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE STUDY ON THE COLLEGE PERSISTENCE EXPERIENCES  
OF FIRST YEAR LATINX STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE ASSISTANCE MIGRANT  
PROGRAM (CAMP)

Submitted by

Miriam L. Bocchetti

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2022

Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: Susana Muñoz

Ryan Barone  
Eric Ishiwata  
Jill Zarestky

Copyright by Miriam L. Bocchetti 2022

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### A FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE STUDY ON THE COLLEGE PERSISTENCE EXPERIENCES OF FIRST YEAR LATINX STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE ASSISTANCE MIGRANT PROGRAM (CAMP)

The increasing numbers of Latinx students enrolling in post-secondary education has resulted in a compelling need for colleges and universities to understand the complexities of the Latinx migrant student experience, with the hopes that understanding the nuances of the Latinx migrant student experience can assist educators in developing and enhancing initiatives to better support this population of students. It has been well documented that this marginalized and underserved student population historically encounters unique challenges as they navigate the oppressive systems of higher education. Using funds of knowledge as a theoretical lens, this phenomenological study explores the college persistence experiences of first-year, Latinx participants of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), a federally funded program designed to support migrant students in their first year of post-secondary education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“She had always wanted words, she loved them; grew up on them. Words gave her clarity, brought reason, shape.” -Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient*

I would like to thank my family, my colleagues, and my friends; specifically, my mom, Marisela Tejada Bocchetti, and my siblings, Aaron, Milena (Mila), Maeroise, and Monique, as well as the “in laws,” Carl and Laura, for being patient when I couldn’t join in all the reindeer games, because I was “dissertating.” I also want to thank my best friend and partner, Andrew (Andy) Dalton, who was always there, whether it was picking me up at DIA to drive me to Fort Collins, or to take my friends and I to get provisions for our stay, and of course talking me through all of my doubts about finishing. (And, also for watching approximately 4,000 SNL sketches on YouTube with me when I was at the height of my procrastination. (Papyrus, anyone? Buh-bye).

To Dr. Eddie, who once told me the best dissertation was a done one. To everyone from the HEP CAMP familiá, who truly believed in me and my abilities. Dr. Scott Willison, who is cited in my chapter two; we will miss you always. A huge gracias to Ofelia Gamez, who always accompanied me to Nordstrom Rack, when I needed a break from being a student and didn’t get mad that time that I made you walk all around South Beach looking for a clothing store that I remembered as being “just right over there.” Amas, Michelle, and Pat, you are like surrogate parents to me! I would be honored to be your daughter, but I will settle for being your friend.

I thank my best friend Leah Shelton, who championed me when I couldn’t quite manage to champion myself. *You win, you always do!* To Dr. Keith Champagne, for encouraging me to having no doubts in my ability to get a PhD; thank you! Dr. Jenna Hyatt, I appreciated your

advice, constant support, and editor reference. Dr. Aaron Brown, your continued support and flexibility meant a lot throughout this process.

I owe the utmost gratitude to Jon, Brianna and Charlie, whose group text thread got me through the really dark times, of which there were many. You are all the best and a true source of inspiration! To Ebony, Brandi, James, Tom, Adrienne, Christin, Katie, and all the members of Fat Tire Pump-Vanessa, Alan, Steve and Becky-the summer of 2015 was one of my absolute favorite memories, and I have you all to thank for that. And Dr. Linda Kuk, whose belief in me allowed me to embark on this wild and unpredictable journey. I still remember the acceptance call!

I also give thanks all the musician, actor, and comedian memoirs I consumed during this lengthy journey, in my pursuit to find the inspiration and motivation to be great, or at the very least, good. I may never be famous or even very adventurous, but I am certainly well read.

To my participants - Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, Flor, and Valeria - thank you for taking the time to be interviewed for this study. I quite literally could not have done this without you all. And finally, my committee: Dr. Jill Zarestky, Dr. Eric Ishiwata, Dr. Ryan Barone, and last, but certainly not least, Dra. Susana Muñoz, who kept telling me, “You are exactly where you need to be.” And you know what? I was, the entire time.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	3
Purpose of Study .....	4
Latinx Term Usage.....	5
Higher Education Trends of Latinx Students.....	6
The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) .....	7
Theoretical Frameworks .....	8
Research Questions .....	9
Conclusion .....	9
Chapter II: Review of the Literature.....	11
Funds of Knowledge .....	11
The History of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) .....	13
Farmworker Activist Movement.....	15
CAMP Program Research .....	16
Social Service or Social Change? .....	19
Latinx College Persistence.....	20
Community Cultural Wealth .....	23
Social and Academic Capital .....	23
Latinx Family Capital .....	24
The Impact of Mentoring and Role Models.....	26
Student Involvement and Peer Networks.....	27
Campus Racial Climate.....	27
Sense of Belonging .....	28
First-Year Belonging .....	31
Microaggressions .....	33
Conclusion .....	34
Chapter III: Methods.....	36
Researcher Positionality.....	36
Methodology .....	38
Critical Constructivism .....	39
Phenomenology.....	39
Trustworthiness .....	41
Methods.....	42
Setting .....	42
Participants.....	42
Beatriz.....	45
Aurora .....	45
Alejandro.....	45
Reynaldo .....	45
Flor.....	45

Valeria .....	46
Interview Process .....	47
Data Collection .....	50
Data Analysis .....	52
In Vivo Coding.....	53
Identifying Themes .....	53
Study Limitations.....	54
Length and Timing of Study .....	54
Language Fluency .....	55
Conclusion .....	55
Chapter IV: Data Findings .....	56
Interview Themes.....	56
It Takes a Village: The Support of <i>La Familia and Comunidad</i> .....	57
I am Latinx: First-Generation Latinx Identity and Pride .....	68
The Role of Cultural Capital in Overcoming Obstacles .....	77
CAMP: A Safe Place to Make Friends.....	85
Conclusion .....	90
Chapter V: Discussion.....	92
Problem Statement Revisited .....	92
Interpretation of the Findings.....	93
It Takes a Village: The Support of <i>La Familia and Comunidad</i> .....	93
I am Latinx: First-Generation Latinx Pride .....	99
The Role of Cultural Assets in Overcoming Obstacles .....	100
The CAMP Program: A Safe Place .....	103
Implications for Theory and Research .....	105
Funds of Knowledge and Latinx Migrant Students .....	105
Research Questions Revisited.....	106
Limitations and Strengths .....	109
My Research Journey: Personal Reflections.....	111
Implications for Practice .....	113
Migrant Systems and Higher Education .....	113
Recommendations for K-12 Migrant Educators .....	115
Recommendations for the CAMP Program .....	116
Recommendations for Higher Education Administrators .....	117
The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Workers.....	118
Conclusion .....	119
References.....	121
Appendix A: Email to CAMP Program Director/Principal Investigator .....	134
Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Prospective Study Participants.....	135
Appendix C: Follow up Email to Prospective Study Participants .....	136
Appendix D: Research Study Informed Consent Form .....	137
Appendix E: Official Interview Protocol.....	140
Appendix F: Interview Protocol Matrix.....	142
Appendix G: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter .....	145

## Chapter I: Introduction

It is important to recognize that migrant and seasonal farm workers are a necessary source of labor in the United States (Willison & Jang, 2009). Migrant workers are defined as individuals whose primary means of sustenance is agricultural work (Araujo, 2011; Zalaquett et al., 2007). Many migrant or agricultural workers have families. According to the Office of Migrant Education, there are over 850,000 migrant students identified in the U.S., the vast majority of whom are of Latinx descent<sup>1</sup> (Zarate et al., 2017). Quezada et al. (2017) provided a distinctive definition of migrant students: “children of migratory workers are federally recognized as ‘migrant students’ if they travel with a parent or guardian who is a seasonal worker or migrant worker with the intent to work in agriculture, fishing, forestry, and plant nursery industries” (p. 33).

An overwhelming majority of Latinx students are the first in their family to attend college; this is especially true for students from farmworker migrant families (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). It is also evident that migrant students are underrepresented in higher education due to the barriers they face that span demographic, cultural, schooling, and larger sociopolitical issues (Nuñez & Gildersleeve, 2014). We also know that there is limited research and literature specifically on migrant students attending colleges and universities (Zalaquett et al., 2007). The dream of attending college is out of reach for many migrant students, and there is little research addresses the factors that facilitate their college access (Nuñez, 2009). Even less surprising, we

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this study, I use the term *Latinx* to refer to individuals of Latino/Hispanic/Chicano/Mexican descent. However, when presenting direct quotes from the literature, I will maintain the use of the terminology presented; therefore, terms such as Chicano/a, Hispanic and Latino/a may appear throughout this study as well. Further historical context will be provided in a later section regarding this word choice.

do not know have information on migrant students' college completion. Few data exist regarding migrant students' college completion rates (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004).

The achievement disparity that exists between Latinx students and their White peers contributes to the continued underrepresentation of Latinx students in institutions of higher learning (Gonzalez, 2013). Recent college completion data show that Whites far outnumber Latinx people as college alumni (Villalpando, 2004). There is still equity work that needs to be done at institutions of higher education, which starts with understanding what Latinx students need. Researchers argue that in order "to improve Latina/o student graduation rates, universities must begin by assessing students' needs" (Mahaffy & Pantoja, 2012, p. 360). Barriers encountered by Latinx students include a lack of financial resources and knowledge (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). It is due to the inequity of resources and systematic structures that oppress marginalized student populations, that these populations often tend to underperform academically.

In addition, this population faces many challenges and barriers that impede educational attainment (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006). As Bejarano & Valverde (2012) explained, "Across the U.S., children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers often move frequently as a result of their parents' or their own employment, which greatly obstructs their access to consistent and concentrated formal education" (p. 23). Latinx students' college access is influenced by individual characteristics, as well as by economic, social, and schooling contexts (Nuñez & Kim, 2012). While balancing school, work, and home obligations, this demographic of students is often questioned by peers and faculty as to whether they have what it takes to pursue higher education (Castellanos & Garcia, 2007). This is evidence that educational systems are not prepared for this growth of the Latinx population, as Latinx students enroll in post-secondary

institutions at increasing rates, yet have high attrition and low graduation rates (Torres et al., 2019). It is also imperative to consider the barriers migrant students encounter throughout their educational journeys when discussing the extent to which Latinx migrant students are marginalized and underserved in the United States. It is recommended that “for higher education policymakers and practitioners to effectively serve increasingly diverse student populations with limited resources, they must better understand how to foster success among students of color” (Museus & Quaye, 2009, p. 68).

#### Statement of Problem

Researchers argue that migrant farmworker children are amongst the most educationally challenged students in school, and the ability of schools to adequately serve this population is impacted by their high mobility rates (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004, p. 10). A frequent obstacle of migrant students is their struggle to balance work and an education, as the desire to contribute to their family survival is prevalent amongst this population. Migrant students often miss school, as the nature of the work requires them to be mobile; because of this, it is not unusual for them to present as academically and socially behind their non-migrant peers (Gildersleeve, 2010).

Relocating throughout the academic year makes it difficult for migrant students to, among other things, create social networks and participate in extracurricular activities (Ream, 2005). Many migrant children carry very heavy responsibilities at home or hold after school jobs to help their families make ends meet (Gibson & Bejínez, 2002). As a result, students come to rely on institutional structures and support from staff to navigate the collegiate environment. Migrant families frequently labor six to seven days a week, ten or more hours a day, for minimum wage (Ramirez, 2012). In addition to hard work and low wages, there are other elements with which migrant families struggle; it is evidenced that the lives of migrant

farmworkers are marked by poverty, mobility, and low levels of education” (Gildersleeve, 2010, p. 17).

High school graduation rates of migrant youth are also relevant to enrollment patterns in higher education. One study revealed that “with migrant high school graduation rates being so low, it is not surprising that enrollment in higher education and completion of a degree program is equally, if not more problematic, for migrant youth” (Willison & Jang, 2009, pp. 249-250). Mejía and McCarthy (2010) assign migrant students as having higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Despite the efforts of migrant families resulting in the provision of much of the food that comes to our tables, they remain an understudied population. I was driven to explore the first-year college persistence experiences of Latinx migrant student participants the CAMP program because of how infrequently a studied population they are in terms of college persistence and completion, and because they are such an integral segment of our U.S population. Kim et al. (2014) posited that there “is a missed opportunity to better understand the strengths, richness of diversity, and added value that Latino college students bring to-and get from-the institutions they attend” (p. 246).

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to further understand the first-year college persistence experiences of Latinx migrant students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), a highly competitive grant program dedicated to increasing retention and promoting academic success of first-year migrant students (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Mendez & Bauman, 2018). *Fracturing Opportunity*, a book that follows closely the college-going literacy experience of a small group of migrant students suggested, “these students are, by all accounts, not expected to attend and in some ways, undesired, in higher education” (Gildersleeve, 2010, p.

7).

This notion of migrant students being viewed as undesirable, skill-deficient, and underprepared is what I refute throughout this study. Cranston-Gingras et al. (2004) presents evidence of a gap in the research: “Few data exist regarding college completion rates for youth from migrant farmworker families” (p. 10). Gibson & Bejínez (2002) also posited,

The children of Mexican migrant farmworkers are among the most educationally disadvantaged, yet there is little focused research on their school performance patterns or on the programs designed to assist them. Migrant students have special educational needs related to their families’ mobility. (p. 156).

Other discussion topics include migrant students’ decisions to pursue a college degree, the quality of their first-year college experience, and students’ views of their academic futures (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). It is critical to explore Latinx migrant perceptions of how they see themselves within the context of their own educational experiences and journeys.

### Latinx Term Usage

I use *Latinx* throughout this study as I want to identify a term that does not adhere to traditional binary notions of gender. As depicted throughout the literature, the use of the term *Latinx* in empirical studies is increasingly commonplace, as it allows for a greater inclusivity of diverse forms of gender identity and expression (Santos, 2017). However, the term *Latinx* may not be entirely unproblematic, as a recent study found that some scholarship uses *Latinx* without fully examining the term (Salinas, 2020). According to Salinas (2020), “There are various forms of understanding and (mis)using of the term Latinx, and there has been no published research on how Latinx/a/o students use, identify with, and understand the term” (p. 150). “The term Latinx has been used within the context of higher education and activist settings with the attempt to

provide a new perspective that disrupts traditional binary notions of gender” (Salinas, 2020, p. 152).

I am fully cognizant that this term is somewhat limiting and does not capture, universally, how all Latinx students may feel about this term. According to Salinas (2020), “The term Latinx will continue to evolve, and it may become more favorable among higher education and social activist spaces, but it will also have limited use” (p. 150). A summary of the trends of the Latinx migrant student population will provide some historical context to this study, as one researcher argued “to really comprehend the college experience of Latinxs in the U.S., it is imperative to understand this population’s characteristics and barriers that arise as a result of data trends” (Torres et al., 2019, p. 1).

#### Higher Education Trends of Latinx Students

It is well documented that the Latinx population in the United States (U.S.) is the fastest growing minority population (Lozano, 2010). The U.S. Hispanic population reached a record 59.9 million in 2018, up 1.2 million over the previous year, and up from 47.8 million in 2008, according to newly released U.S. Census Bureau population estimates (Pew Hispanic Center, 2019). While the migrant population is seemingly diverse, it is documented that the majority of migrant farmworkers are Hispanic. Therefore, information and data on higher education attainment pertaining to Hispanics is applicable to migrant students (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004).

Between 2010 and 2019, the Latinx U.S. population increased from 16% to 18%; Latinxs accounted for 52% of all U.S. population growth over this period (Pew Hispanic Center, 2019). Latinxs’ college enrollment rates, particularly in four-year institutions, have not kept pace with their population growth in the United States (Lozano, 2010; Nuñez & Kim, 2012). Despite this

documented growth, Latinx are still underrepresented on college campuses (Hurtado et al., 2018). More specifically, the Latinx population is still disproportionately more likely to attend less selective four-year colleges or community colleges, require developmental courses in college, and take longer to complete a degree than White students for a number of reasons (Nuñez et al., 2013). As the Latinx population increases, having access to the same educational opportunities as other ethnic groups is critical to the academic success of the Latinx population (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). This increase in Latinx enrollment has immediate and major implications for the current higher education landscape and warrants immediate attention.

For Latinx students, the navigation of college life may place them at disadvantage when compared to students from other backgrounds (Torres & Hernandez, 2009). One study revealed that Latinxs felt more underprepared about the college application process in comparison to their non-Latinx peers (Zalaquett, 2006). Latinx populations are too often viewed as not college-going, and therefore are not provided the same information and resources during the college preparation process (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2008). Lack of information regarding the college application process can impede a student's potential to succeed in higher education (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010). High school support systems and opportunities for college information and guidance have been increasingly important, as Latinx student transition into institutions of higher education (Hurtado et al., 2018).

#### The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)

Over the years, federal policies allowed for provisions that support migrant students. One promising initiative created to reduce the barriers migrant students face throughout current educational systems is the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), a government sponsored program that provides migrant students with services such as mentoring, tutoring,

financial and social support, with the goal of the successful completion of their first year of college (Cranston-Gingras & Rivera-Singletary, 2017).

High school migrant students have the lowest completion rates for any group in the nation; these students qualify for and receive services from several federal programs designed to support students considered to be at risk for failure (Cranston-Gingras & Rivera-Singletary, 2017). The various services that CAMP provides are specifically geared towards assisting this unique population with their transition into higher education (Araujo, 2011). Willison and Jang's (2009) study on the efficacy of the CAMP program found that more than 81% of CAMP students who complete their first year of post-secondary institution continue onto their second year). We know that migrant students' familial and work obligations often prevent them from reaching their academic potential; Cranston-Gingras et al. (2004) concluded, "As migrant students reach adolescence, the need and desire to work gradually outweighs the motivation to continue on an academic path" (p. 12). The creation of the CAMP program, across the nation, allows for much needed transitional support and resources to a population often silenced and forgotten.

### Theoretical Frameworks

Funds of knowledge (FK) is a relatively new concept used to document the wealth of resources in marginalized students' lives (Kiyama & Aguilar, 2018). Using a FK theoretical framework, this study explored the experiences of first-year Latinx migrant students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). Migrant students are often seen for what they lack rather than for what they can achieve (Willison & Jang, 2009). Throughout this study, I address the deficit approach that is often associated with migrant students, as well as discuss how FK can all be used as a lens in which to examine Latinx migrant students' experiences in higher education. Despite Latinx youth being a rapidly growing demographic, they are rarely studied

from a positive development perspective that focuses on the strengths of individual (Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2013).

### Research Questions

Throughout this study, my main goal was to explore the experiences of farmworker migrant students in higher education and provide a more in depth look at the inequity and educational disparity that exists amongst Latinx migrant students as they exist within the historically oppressive systems of higher education. According to Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012), “It is clear that Latina(o) students do not attend or graduate from college at the same rate as their peers” (p. 4). I also intended for this research study to document a need for higher education institutions to strive to be more inclusive and equitable. Therefore, this study answered the following research questions: (1) What are the college persistence experiences of Latinx CAMP students?; and (2) In what ways are the cultural assets of Latinx CAMP students acknowledged and valued within higher education? These questions allowed me to understand how Latinx migrant students in the CAMP program, a federally funded initiative intended to provide support resources to migrant students, navigate the systems of higher education. Mendez and Bauman (2018) declared it useful to examine how FK contributes to college outcomes for Latinx migrant students.

### Conclusion

Because of the growing Latinx population, there is utility in understanding those factors that facilitate the academic performance of Latinx students (Cavazos et al., 2010). Gildersleeve (2010) posited, “these students are, by all accounts, not expected to attend and in some ways, undesired, in higher education” (p. 7). It is imperative that institutions across the country begin to focus their efforts and prioritize their resources to directly impact Latinx students moving

through the higher education pipeline (Arciniega, 2012).

I used the theoretical framework FK to frame the college persistence experiences of first-year CAMP participants. Through a series of three one-on-one interviews with CAMP participants, I posed specific questions to determine how CAMP participants experienced their first year in post-secondary education, as well as identify the reasons they cited for their college persistence.

More detailed information about methodology will be presented in Chapter Three. The next chapter will detail the literature associated with the CAMP program, experiences of first year, Latinx, CAMP participants, and topics often associated with the first-year experience such as a family influence, sense of belonging, campus racial climate, peer interaction, and retention congruent support and resources.

## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

There is a notable lack of literature that explores migrant students in post-secondary education (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012). As I will present throughout this chapter, migrant students are often regarded in terms of needs and shortcomings, with less focus on the ever present inequitable educational structures. One study offered that “much of the literature on migrant education from the 60s, 70s, and 80s focused on identifying and remedying perceived educational needs and social deficiencies among this population” (Jasis & González, 2017, p. 50). This chapter will review the literature relevant to my study topic, the college persistence experiences of first year Latinx students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

In addition to referencing studies about CAMP, I also reviewed literature which focused on college persistence, sense of belonging, campus climate, microaggressions, retention initiatives, Latinx family influence, and funds of knowledge as a theoretical framework.

### Funds of Knowledge

The literature reveals how the blame for lack of academic success is often unjustly placed on the student; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama (2012), argued that “sadly, in many studies, one sees responsibility and blame placed on the Latina(o) student with no acknowledgment of the institutional barriers associated with college opportunity for this population” (p. 4).

Placing blame on the individual student and their families can be problematic and a barrier when acknowledging the cultural enrichment Latinx migrant students bring to college. “Cultural deficit thinking negates the contributions of families and communities of color

toward education and accuses these communities of lacking cultural capital” (Dagle-Matos, 2015, p. 43). According to Yosso (2005), this deficit thinking is a prevalent form of contemporary racism in U.S. schools.

FK can be utilized to examine lived experiences of specific populations (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2018). The conceptual framework of FK was developed in the 1990s in relation to scholarship documenting resources among working-class Mexican Americans (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2018). In one study on the use of FK in the college classroom, specifically to frame the experiences of first-generation college students (FGC), it was argued, “that to have a more nuanced view of FGC students’ learning experiences, we need to understand the personal and cultural attributes that they bring into college” (Delima, 2019, p. 206).

Throughout this study, I present empirical evidence that while farmworker migrant students may present as academically behind their non-migrant peers, it is rarely a result of the students’ actual abilities. FK considers student backgrounds and living conditions as sources of valuable knowledge rather than impediments to college-level learning (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2018). A deficit perspective was prevalent throughout my review of the literature on Latinx migrant students, and in fact, it is “rarely accounted for are the ways in which these students draw from their own prior experiences and knowledge as a way of informing their academic persistence and subject matter learning in the classroom” (Delima, 2019, p. 206).

However, it is also important to note that not all studies focused on the deficits of this population. McHatton et al. (2006) found that, despite the significant challenges this population faces, many students from migrant farmworker families persevere toward academic success. Liou et al. (2009) argued, “the ways in which educators think about students’ race and academic achievement plays a central role in the structure and cultural processes of schooling, and thus

improving schools requires changing deficit perceptions and attitudes among school practitioners” (pp. 537-538). FK can be used to examine issues related to college transition, persistence, and success (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018). Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2018) also examined the relationship between funds of knowledge and forms of knowledge.

While there are not many CAMP studies, there have been increasingly more generated over the years, as CAMP established itself as a noteworthy program. Although I described the basic tenets of CAMP program in Chapter One, I will provide a more in-depth analysis of its depiction throughout the literature.

#### The History of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)

Funded by the Department of Education in 1972, The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) is one of two programs formed under the Higher Education Authorization Act that provides educational opportunities to individuals from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds (Cranston-Gingras & Rivera-Singletary, 2017). The CAMP program was a direct response to a growing need to see more migrant students entering and succeeding in all pockets and levels of education.

Established by the Office of Economic Opportunity and championed as part of Johnson’s Administration’s War on Poverty, the CAMP program contributes to the educational growth of farmworker migrant students by providing academic support to first-year students with the goal of preparing them for further success in college (Araujo, 2011; Mendez & Bauman, 2018). The first four CAMP programs were funded in areas of heavy agricultural activity, at Adams State College in Alamos, Colorado, California State College in San Diego, California, Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas (now known as the University of Rio Grande Valley), and Saint Edward’s University in Austin, Texas.

In 1980, CAMP was transferred to the newly created U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). CAMP programs serve varying numbers of students, depending on the terms outlined in their grant proposals. Eligibility for CAMP does not specify ethnicity; anyone who performs agricultural work for the specific amount of time outlined in the regs, was eligible to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Because the majority of farmworkers in the U.S. identify as Latinx, the majority of CAMP participants are of Latinx descent.

In 1999, President Clinton submitted a budget proposing zero funding for CAMP. Migrant education advocates immediately expressed disdain for this decision and subsequently initiated a campaign to save the program's funding. As a result, Congress agreed that the programs were a critical investment in the future, and funds were appropriated for the 1996-1998 grant years. In 1999, CAMP was included as a part of the Clinton Administration's "Hispanic Education Action Plan."

Institutions of higher education are awarded CAMP programs, which operate according to a five-year funding cycle, through a competitive grant process (Cranston-Gingras & Riveras-Singletary, 2017). A uniquely designed retention program, CAMP provides an array of financial and academic support, including tutoring, mentoring, and career services to eligible participants (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Ramirez, 2012). CAMP relies on a cohort model to connect like individuals to highly qualified, invested staff and faculty.

Mendez and Bauman (2018) determined that CAMP plays a significant role in helping students achieving academic success through counseling, advising, tutoring, and social activities. One qualitative study conducted on five CAMP participants found that CAMP provided access to a community which fostered interactions among students, educators, and the community, which contributed to a sense of agency, knowledge, and empowerment for students (Reyes, 2016).

In summary, CAMP provides an opportunity for eligible students to access support and guidance from trained and knowledgeable staff, many of whom are CAMP alumni, to assist students with obstacles they face on an on-going basis (Willison & Jang, 2009). In addition to academic and financial support, CAMP celebrates pride in their participants' culture and heritage as documented in the literature. According to Bejarano & Valverde (2012), "Familial knowledge rooted in CAMP students leads to their culturally entrenched ways of celebrating culture and their pride in their farmworker families and backgrounds that make them more determined to graduate" (p. 27).

Before I dive into the literature surrounding the CAMP program, it is critical to understand the background of the movement that inspired the creation of unique government programs designed to support the migrant farmworker population.

### Farmworker Activist Movement

The historically significant movement known as farmworker activism started with a desire for equality in wages and treatment for those individuals responsible for getting the majority of Americans' food to the table. In 1970, Cesar Chavez, a name that would become synonymous with farmworker rights, facilitated the first collective bargaining agreements for farmworkers (Garcia, 2014). This was not technically the beginning of the farmworker activist movement, as there was substantial activity beginning as early as the 1930s. However, the activist efforts led by Chavez in the 1960's and 70's garnered the most attention and as a result are recognized as extremely significant and noteworthy contributions to the overall movement.

The United Farm Workers Union, founded in 1962, symbolized years of hard work and dedication to the cause of equitable wages and safe working conditions for field laborers (Garcia, 2014). However, the path to farmworker rights was not without struggle and many died along the

way for the cause. There were numerous *huelgas*, or strikes, to demand fairer wages, better treatment, led by the very laborers who performed the farmwork. Also noteworthy, the average life expectancy for farmworkers is 49, in comparison to the U.S. average of 77 years of age (Ishisaka, 2020). Chavez, with the assistance of many other noteworthy activists, organized farmworkers in a way that gave them a voice, a face and most importantly, a platform. The United Farm Workers Union was the result of a powerful collective of voices and will forever represent the tireless advocacy of individuals fiercely seeking what is now commonly referred to as food justice.

#### CAMP Program Research

Few studies examined the effects the CAMP program has on Latinx migrant students' college outcomes, school connectedness, and students' beliefs about academic capabilities and competencies (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). However, those studies found that CAMP is effective, and participants performed similarly or higher than other Latinos on campus (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). CAMP is dedicated to increasing retention and promoting academic success (Mendez & Bauman, 2018).

A recent study examined whether factors that predicted college outcomes for first-generation Latina/o students also predicted college outcomes for Latinx students from migrant farmworker backgrounds as well as tested whether CAMP involvement predicted college outcomes above and beyond those factors (Mendez & Bauman, 2018). In addition, this study examined the association between CAMP involvement and academic perceptions for Latinx migrant students. 245 current and former CAMP college students between the ages of 18-24 participated in this study. They were either currently attending or taking time off from the institution and had participated in the CAMP program for at least one semester their freshman

year. Using a multiple regression model to measure pre-college characteristics, resilience, school connectedness, and environmental factors to predict college outcomes, this study determined that students who took advantage of CAMP academic and financial services were more resilient when dealing with academic setbacks, challenges, or stress (Mendez & Bauman, 2018).

Cranston-Gingras et al. (2004) conducted a study to understand first-year CAMP participants' decisions to pursue a college degree, the quality of their first-year college experience, and students' views of their academic futures. The results of this study indicated that, along with encouragement from family members, the assistance of knowledgeable employees (in this case, a migrant advocate) contributed to participants' decisions to actively pursue higher education. Other important factors included availability of scholarships and other forms of support, and close proximity of the university to home (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). Ultimately, it cannot be without merit that the services CAMP provided, including mentoring, tutoring, and advising services, was vital to their transition to the university, ultimately easing their initial hesitation in leaving home.

A seven-year longitudinal study on several CAMP programs within the California State University (CSU) system concluded that the many academic-focused services and support CAMP provided had a positive impact on the persistence of migrant students (Ramirez, 2012). Another quantitative study used annual performance data submitted to the Department of Education to measure the overall effectiveness of CAMP programs (Willison & Jang, 2012). This study determined that, "migrant students without assistance are at a higher risk than other college freshmen of not being academically successful their freshman year" (Willison & Jang, 2012, p. 249). In addition to providing a supportive structure, further research may show that CAMP provides a sense of belonging (Willison & Jang, 2009).

A recent ethnographic study explored the academic identities of first-year and second-year CAMP alumni, and through regular participant observations and 11 semi-structured interviews, acknowledged and documented the unique challenges faced by migrant students and their families, specifically when navigating post-secondary education (O'Connor et al., 2020). The same study revealed that with support from educators and families, approximately 81% of CAMP students persist beyond the first year of college (O'Connor et al., 2020).

A study by Bejarano & Valverde (2012) relied on qualitative and quantitative data collected from 130 freshman CAMP students and utilized Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to explore factors contributing to students' entrance into the university and their persistence thereafter. This study found that CAMP's intentionality in recognizing and celebrating pride in their participants' culture and heritage contributed to a source of motivation to finish (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012). According to Bejarano & Valverde, "Familial knowledge rooted in CAMP students leads to their culturally entrenched ways of celebrating culture and their pride in their farmworker families and backgrounds that make them more determined to graduate" (p. 27).

The voices of CAMP participants were highlighted in two qualitative studies. The first study posited that migrant farmworker students have been underrepresented in research studies, in particular ones that feature the voices of these students (Araujo, 2011). This particular study took place at a southwestern university that operated a CAMP program for ten years (Araujo, 2011). The findings from this study revealed that CAMP was instrumental in providing the students with navigational and social capital to complete their first year of college successfully (Araujo, 2011).

The purpose of Araujo's (2016) second study was to examine the perceptions held by migrant farmworker students about the influences that enabled them to enroll in college. Through the use of counterstories, a tool to expose, analyze, and challenge the majoritarian stories of racial privilege, this study allowed for the voices of Latinx students to be heard (Araujo, 2016). "Many studies have focused on deficit thinking about Latinos or on problems faced by Latinos but have failed to include their own voices" (Araujo, 2016, p. 9). Araujo conducted interviews and focus groups with eight participants in the CAMP program who shared stories related to myths and stereotypes of the Latinx migrant population, as well as the reality of the grueling work performed by their migrant families (Araujo, 2016). Half of the study participants were immigrants and shared that at one point or another, they were confronted with the overwhelming stereotype that they had "stolen" jobs from non-immigrants.

In another study, McHatton et al. (2006) surveyed 57 students from migrant farmworker families, analyzing the perceptions of these students regarding factors that contributed to their academic success. A majority of participants conveyed that a support system was necessary to help them achieve success, as was their own self-motivation and determination. They also found that, despite dismal statistics, and other significant challenges, many students from migrant farmworker families persevere toward academic success (McHatton et al., 2006). In short, CAMP helped students reach their success potential. This study will attempt to uncover specifically what services and elements of support helped CAMP students to persist through their first year of post-secondary education.

### Social Service or Social Change?

It is vital to dissect the creation and existence of social programs like CAMP. In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: A Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Incite, 2012), the

central argument becomes whether these types of programs are creating a Band-Aid of sorts, covering up the problem, rather than getting to the root of, and treating the actual issues. One chapter uses the example of domestic violence and education for offenders to argue that these programs only deal with a small number of violent men and nothing to impact the systems which perpetuate male violence (Kivel, 2007). The author, Kivel, continued on to say that while some social service organizations are working towards social change, but some are not. This begs the question, does a social program mean social change? And if not, aren't these problems part of the problem? Kivel (2007) agreed that we need to provide services for those who need it; however, we need to work for social change to create an equitable and just society (p. 130). Kivel (2007) continued to argue that many of these social programs are unsupported and even undermined by wealth and power. CAMP provides resources to arguably, the most marginalized population of students in higher education.

But is it possible that CAMP, while providing supportive services to students, also allow for institutions of higher education to be “off the hook” when it comes to their Latinx migrant students. Using Kivel’s logic, these institutions should already be providing these services. Is the continued existence of CAMP problematic? These are all compelling questions, ones that this study may not answer with any absolution. However, it is noteworthy to continue to explore this distinct notion of social service and social change.

### Latinx College Persistence

This section will summarize the various programs, initiatives, and efforts that influence Latinx college persistence, with the understanding that literature specifically on migrant student persistence is severely lacking. Despite recent research, there remains much to learn about the many factors that impact Latinx student persistence (Gonzalez, 2002). We do know that Latinx

students have one of the highest dropout rates from high school, are unprepared by their prior educational experiences, and have limited access to college preparatory courses or information (Chesler et al., 2005). We also know that Latinx students persist at a much lower rate than their White peers (Gonzalez, 2002). But can we identify specific factors that influence Latinx student persistence? “Both an inclusive and welcoming institutional environment and the connection of students to that environment have been linked to persistence” (Carter, 2006, p. 40).

Hurtado et al. (2018) argued there is a pressing need to improve the rate at which Latinx students earn a degree (p. 12). There exists, of course, an abundance of persistence literature and theorists. Unfortunately, many of the theories surrounding student persistence do not consider the experiences of minority students or assume entering students must conform to the campus culture to be successful (Lozano, 2010). The theoretical models developed by Tinto (1993), often considered a pioneer on student persistence theory, do not always account for, or address the often-complicated Latinx student experience (Yosso et al., 2009). Over time, Tinto revised his models of student retention in response to criticism by other researchers who identified omissions in his model (Lozano, 2010). Many of the retention programs aimed specifically at minority students use a combination of academic and non-academic retention strategies. According to Lozano (2010), “An important piece of the retention puzzle is identifying and addressing environmental factors that promote or hinder college persistence for Latina/o students” (p. 8).

Gloria et al. (2005) utilized a series of scales to examine nearly 100 surveys from Latinx students regarding their nonpersistence decisions, arguing that “the extent to which perceived prejudice and discrimination affect Latina/o academic persistence decisions in higher education have not been specifically explored” (pp. 203-204). This study produced many compelling

findings, including that while family was a significant influence on Latinx student educational attainment, there needed to be additional research to determine the impact of familial support on their academic persistence (Gloria et al., 2005). However, this study did find that “the perception of university environment was the strongest predictor of academic nonpersistence decisions” (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 217). Additionally, access to Latinx staff and faculty as mentors, as well as perceived social support of friends and family, were both contributing factors to persistence decisions (Gloria et al., 2005).

Vega (2016) focused on understanding the college-going experiences of 10 high-achieving first-generation Latino college juniors and seniors at a Hispanic-Serving Institution in the southwest, acknowledges that “for Latino college students, a cultural factor related to enrollment and persistence challenges is familial obligations” (p. 309). There is pressure for the first generation Latinx student to remain at home, while others feel the need to work, often full time while enrolled in college (Vega, 2016; Gloria et al., 2005). Much of the research on college access and persistence of Latinx and migrant populations focuses on the educational level of their families, which is often lower than their non-migrant peers (Araujo, 2011; Maestas et al., 2007). Hurtado et al. (2018) recommends an asset-based approach to educating and developing the skills of Latinx students by focusing on their strengths.

Daigle-Matos (2015) conducted a study on the impact of cultural capital on Latina/o college engagement and persistence, determined that commonly used deficit models and misconceptions about Latinx parents’ interest in their students’ educational advancement, were wholly inaccurate. Daigle-Matos (2015) considered how six forms of cultural capital, (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, social) can be used by Latinx students to pursue a new form of capital, referred to as “finishing capital.” I will discuss culturally relevant

forms of capital in more detail in the following section.

### Community Cultural Wealth

Community cultural wealth, a concept introduced by Yosso (2005), shifts the view from a deficit perspective to the assets that communities of color acquire (Luna & Martinez, 2013). Keeping in mind that the cultural knowledge and ideologies that Latinx migrant students bring with them to post-secondary education are often discounted and disregarded, the notion of community cultural wealth is extremely relevant to this discourse. Latinos use Community cultural wealth survive the institutional neglect of the U.S. public school system that has all but failed them (Luna & Martinez, 2013).

One specific example I can offer from my nearly two decades as a higher education administrator, is the how bilingual students are regarded. Instead of being viewed as *more* competent than the average student, they are treated as inferior and uninformed; their skillset should be celebrated. Also, of significance to Latinx migrant students' experience are forms of capital – social, academic and cultural – and how they are often present and integrated in the college experiences of Latinx migrant students. The low college enrollment rates of Hispanics may be attributed to lower levels of access to the types of capital required for college enrollment (Saunders & Serna, 2004).

### Social and Academic Capital

Social capital refers to family and community networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Academic capital refers to the preparation and knowledge individuals have access to (Nuñez, 2012). Recent studies have begun to focus more on the role of social capital in college enrollment and persistence (Moschetti et al., 2017). “Through social capital, parents utilize social networks to obtain

resources needed for their children to experience positive educational outcomes” (Daigle-Matos, 2015, p. 439). Research studies showed how academic achievement and degree attainment are influenced by the ability to maintain or acquire capital in the college environment (Saunders & Serna, 2004). Latinx students may not always have ample access to resources to assist with the higher education process (Ream, 2005). The question remains: what can be done to ensure Latinx migrant students have the same access to college preparation resources as White students? Hurtado et al. (2018) suggests “educators incorporate both family and community cultural wealth dimensions into a more culturally responsive approach to higher education” (p. 18).

### **Latinx Family Capital**

Daigle-Matos (2015) used the term *familial capital* to refer to “the ways in which Latina/o students are able to care for each other and the manner by which they are able to cope with difficult situations” (p. 444). Familial capital is typically conveyed through support from blood related family members (Daigle-Matos, 2015). Many Latinx individuals are strongly rooted in family connectedness (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006). The importance of family unity, or *familismo*, is a core characteristic among the Latinx population; Latinx families tend to be larger in size and often consist of extended familial networks (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015; Daigle-Matos, 2015).

Parental support and encouragement are often indicators of student success (Gonzalez, 2013). Latinx parents often want to support the educational aspirations of their children, but providing academic help is a very challenging task for them. Many parents do not possess enough knowledge of the higher education system to assist their children (Zalaquett, 2006). Daigle-Matos (2015) argues that attitudes about Latina/o parents and students are based on a cultural deficit model that depicts them as disengaged from education. However, this study

determined that “the notions of the cultural deficit model that portray families of color as lacking aspiration and familial support, as being unmotivated and dysfunctional are in direct conflict with the findings from this study of successful Latina/o college students” (Daigle-Matos, 2015, p. 446).

Kimura-Walsh et al. (2008) found that family and parents were a strong source of motivation in shaping students’ college aspirations. Latinxs rely on family members and extended relatives for information on college planning (Perez & McDonough, 2008). Daigle-Matos (2015) concluded that direct academic parental involvement in higher education was dependent on whether or not parents had access to a college education. Another study on Latinx academic well being discovered that parental support had a stronger impact compared to support from school or peers (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006). A study that focused on successful Latinx students established that family occupied a central position in the education of Latinx students, and it was the strong family support that helped them succeed in high school and pursue a college education (Zalaquett, 2006).

The literature strongly suggests that developing programs and resources specifically for Latinx students’ parents can potentially enhance their knowledge of higher education systems and lead to overall student success. Torres (2004) explored the influence of family on college-going Latinxs and concluded that the role of family on college-going Latinxs needs further exploration. In another study, Hurtado et al. (2018) found that campus programs have begun to incorporate family to help promote opportunities and student success (Hurtado et al., 2018). According to DeGarmo & Martinez (2006), partnerships are needed between parents, schools, and practitioners, and a focus on the role of families must be taken into account (p. 276).

## **The Impact of Mentoring and Role Models**

Mentoring and role models are of value to all students, in particular populations of students who face obstacles, as they provide significant guidance and support. According to Gibson & Bejínez, 2002, “Migrant teachers can relate to the challenges that students face, and they also understand that they are important role models for the students, as persons who have experienced the same difficulties and who have ‘made it’ through high school and college” (p. 168). Torres & Hernandez (2009) argue that Latinx students are in need of mentors to guide them through their educational journey. Mentoring from school personnel is an important factor in helping Latinx students pursue and succeed in higher education (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010). A mentoring component provides an opportunity for students to connect with staff, faculty and senior peers who had faced similar challenges in adversity (Gonzalez, 2013).

A recent study by Moschetti et al. (2017) found that peer mentoring led to increased university integration (Moschetti et al., 2017). Peer mentoring programs provide an opportunity for like individuals to connect and cultivate a relationship of trust and support (Moschetti et al., 2017). Mentoring provides encouragement, which for many Latinx migrant students is lacking in their lives, as well as facilitates academic and social integration of Latinx students (Torres & Hernandez, 2009).

Research also indicated that both sponsorship and mentoring play an important role in the academic success of Latinx students (Gonzalez, 2013). According to Rios-Ellis et al. (2005), “Peer mentorship programs can provide a pathway through which underserved Latino students can receive assistance from high achieving peers who have undergone similar contextual experiences and understand first-hand the educational barriers one must overcome to achieve academic success” (p. 37).

## **Student Involvement and Peer Networks**

Latinx students, often guided by strong family values, seek these same communities when they choose to enroll in post-secondary education. Students often make sense of their environments through peer groups (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). The quality of student involvement opportunities has an impact on an ethnic minority students' involvement, and subsequently a student's sense of integration (Jones et al., 2002). Student involvement is an important factor in retaining students (Carter, 2006). Peer support is also of significance, especially with regards to Latinx migrant students. Peer support can provide guidance and advice regarding processes and strategies which parents of first-generation college students cannot provide (Dennis et al., 2005). Interaction with diverse student peers and with diverse faculty produced self-reported increases in students' critical thinking skills and writing ability (Carter, 2006). Dennis et al. (2005) found that many students reported that peer support was the most helpful strategy for dealing with academic problems.

### Campus Racial Climate

The topic of campus climate has received increasing attention by higher education administrators over the years. Campus climate, or culture, are the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions that shape the holistic collegiate environment, with a focus on both academic and non-academic spaces (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). According to a study conducted by Yosso et al., (2009), racial climate is defined as, "overall racial environment of the university" (p. 664). Multiples studies have determined an emerging correlation between the impact of a campus climate and Latino/a student success outcomes (Crisp et al., 2015).

With the increasing number of Latinx students enrolling in post-secondary institutions, it is critical to determine how Latinx migrant students are impacted by campus racial climate.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) hypothesized, “Latino students’ perceptions of a hostile climate directly affect the students’ sense of belonging in their colleges” (p. 330). Campus environment or climate was determined to be a significant factor on sense of belonging in prior studies (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). According to a study that synthesized over 15 years of research on racial climate, the ultimate goal of understanding this complicated topic is for institutional transformation Harper & Hurtado (2007). Another study by Jones et al. (2002) examined the ethnic minority student experience at predominantly White institutions and established a recurring theme of marginalized students experiencing campus as an unsafe environment, but not feeling empowered enough to speak out about it. Another study on migrant farmworker students found that school climate seemed to play an integral role in school achievement for these students (McHatton et al., 2006).

A key influence upon sense of belonging for Latinx students was their perception of supportive campus racial climates, which was determined to have a direct negative effect on the recruitment and retention of minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Conversely, this could indicate that a positive racial climate may result in higher rates of college persistence and graduation rates for Latinx students. Latinxs may enter college with less familiarity with a given college’s campus climate than do members of other racial/ethnic groups, because they are more likely to come from families with limited postsecondary experience (Nuñez, 2009).

### **Sense of Belonging**

Throughout this section, I will present literature focused on a sense of belonging and its relevance to college persistence. A sense of belonging can be defined as how included and welcomed students feel in, and to, a college community (Hoffman et al., 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). “A sense of belonging also considers students’ external influences, such as families and

communities of origin” (Nuñez, 2011, page #?). The way minority students experience belonging can be very different than how majority students experience it; students of color may experience less belonging than their White counterparts (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). A sense of belonging in the college environment is critical to developing social cohesion (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Strayhorn (2019) aimed to understand the relationship between academic and social experiences and Latinx students’ sense of belonging, and subsequently determined that White students and Latinx students experience belonging differently. Strayhorn (2019) argues that belonging, just like food and shelter, is critical to a person’s life experience and ultimate survival. “Encouraging peer interaction, connecting students with supportive faculty, and providing opportunities for student involvement help them to feel a sense of belonging” (Strayhorn, 2019, p. 22).

One study on belonging conducted at a highly diverse university setting, aimed to understand how perceptions of diversity impact a sense of belonging and have the potential to improve retention of all students (Maestas et al., 2007). Maestas et al. (2007) posited that sense of belonging is critical to the retaining of all students, but especially students of color. For students of color, the issue of belonging or feeling a part of a campus community is often a challenging one. Additionally, this study suggested establishing a correlation between a sense of belonging and retention may be the key to understanding attrition of specific student populations. This study referenced several relevant studies on sense of belonging, including one by the pioneers of sense of belonging, Hurtado and Carter (1997), that concluded a sense of belonging measures a student’s attachment to the university as a whole (Maestas et al., 2007).

Social cohesion often results in higher retention for marginalized student populations. This study also determined that participating in academic support programs and faculty interest

in a student's development increased a sense of belonging, indicating "when students perceive that their faculty take an interest in them, they have a greater sense of belonging" (Maestas et al., 2007). Feeling connected to the institution outside of classes and developing social networks are the keys to creating a sense of belonging (Maestas et al., 2007). Living on campus also increased a student's sense of belonging, as did socializing with different racial/ethnic groups than one's own (Maestas et al., 2007).

Another quantitative study (Nuñez, 2009) examined the effects of perceptions of campus climate, diversity-related experiences, and racial/ethnic stereotyping on second-year Latinx students' felt sense of belonging in the university. This study used a model of college transition and campus climate to determine what characteristics and experiences related to campus climate are associated with second-year Latino college students' sense of belonging (Nuñez, 2009). This study concluded that increased perceptions of a campus climate hostile to diversity, termed a hostile climate, would be directly and negatively associated with sense of belonging (Nuñez, 2009). However, this study also suggested that overt and subtle forms of exclusion in college can hinder their development of a sense of belonging to university communities (Nuñez, 2009). The study concluded that a sense of belonging is very nuanced and complex (Nuñez, 2009).

A study by Hoffman et al. (2002) used extensive focus groups to examine the impact that various retention/intervention strategies, such as freshman seminars and learning communities, have on their adjustment to college and to gain a better understanding of the frequently overlooked, "sense of belonging". The greater a student's "sense of belonging" to the university, the greater their satisfaction with the university and a higher likelihood that they remain in college (Hoffman et al., 2002). Gaining greater clarity regarding factors important to the development of "sense of belonging" can help institutional policy planners evaluate the

effectiveness of retention programs on their campuses, design more effective intervention strategies, and identify students at risk for departure (Hoffman et al., 2002). Sense of belonging is theorized to reflect students' integration into the college system (Hoffman et al., 2002).

Positive interactions with peers and faculty can influence students' sense of belonging by making them feel more supported (Johnson et al., 2007). Understanding Latinx students' sense of belonging is a way to explore the influence of connectedness on their college experience (Johnson et al., 2007). Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) found that positive interactions with diverse peers contributed to sense of belonging among Latinx students (Johnson et al., 2007). Latinxs who reported positive social interactions and participation in academic support programs indicated a higher sense of belonging, signifying the influences of both academic and non-academic involvement (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Maestras et al., 2007).

Despite support resources geared towards Latinx students, many continue to experience the university as an unwelcoming and often discriminatory learning setting (Castellanos & Garcia, 2007). It has also been found that courses that focus on ethnicity and that value the minority student experience are related to an increased sense of belonging among Latinx students (Nuñez, 2011). With the assistance of formalized support programs and resources, Latinx migrant students can potentially enhance both their academic and social development and experiences, specifically during their first year.

### **First-Year Belonging**

First-year students are an extremely worthwhile group to study. According to Tinto (1993), the first year is when most students will decide to depart. The first year is also a critical time for integration. Belonging can be dependent on elements such as positive peer interaction,

overall connectedness to the campus community, and established peer group. The first year is an especially crucial time for students to acclimate to the college environment (Hernandez, 2002). Latinx students may become disillusioned with their university experience, particularly in the first year (Hernandez, 2002). In one qualitative study, participants reflected on their experiences with first-year belonging, indicating that living on campus was easier as they had more access to resources and support (Hernandez, 2002). According to another study on first-year belonging, the greater a student's sense of belonging to the university, the greater their commitment to that institution, and the more likely they are to remain in college (Hoffman et al., 2002). Many institutions require first-year students to live on campus, which some confirm leads to higher retention rates. The primary objective of this study was to develop, test, and further refine a "sense of belonging" instrument that could be used to more fully understand why students persist in, or withdraw from, college (Hoffman et al., 2002).

In another study, Vaccaro and Newman (2016) compared the ways students from minoritized, and privileged social identity groups defined belonging as they made the first-year transition into a predominantly White, public university in the Northeast. Vaccaro and Newman (2016) employed a social constructivist approach combined with a grounded theory method to understand how minoritized and privileged students define belonging. They credited the various scholars' contributions that informed this qualitative study, notably Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Hoffman et al. (2002). Vaccaro and Newman (2016) posited that students of color may experience less belonging than do their White counterparts. This particular study, rooted in constructivist and grounded theory, focused on meaning making, a process through which an individual interprets a life event (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016).

Within this particular study, the model of belonging for privileged and minoritized

students included many of the same concepts (such as environment, relationships, involvement) found in prior literature (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). No prior literature connected all three factors to belonging, or noted the kinds of nuances in these three themes (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). In accordance with a constructivist grounded theory study, the data coalesced into a conceptual model of belonging that emerged directly from student narratives; all participants described how their perceptions of the campus environment shaped their sense of belonging (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016).

### **Microaggressions**

The presence of microaggressions across our learning environments are not to be ignored. Microaggressions are incessant, subtle, racial assaults and invalidate the presence of their targeted individuals and make the message clear that they are not welcome (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 660). Research on microaggressions, at best, skims the surface. Many Latinas/os experience racial microaggressions as a rejection of their efforts to become integrated on their university campus; however; there is little qualitative research on how racial microaggressions shape a negative campus climate (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 674). According to Pérez Huber & Solorzano (2014), “Racial microaggressions are a form of systemic, everyday racism used to keep those at the racial margins in their place” (p. 2). In addition, when victims of these assaults attempt to confront their assailants, they spend time and energy defending themselves against accusations they are “too sensitive” (Yosso et al., 2009).

Microaggressions are often delivered in a covert form, making it difficult to confront and hold the offenders accountable. Researchers Pérez Huber and Solorzano (2014) argue that, the concept of racial microaggressions is a useful ‘tool’ for research on race, racism and the everyday experiences of People of Color. It allows us to identify the often subtle acts

of racism that can emerge in schools, college campuses, classrooms and in everyday conversations and interactions. (p. 298)

“In response to these pervasive messages of rejection, Latinas/os foster academic and social counterspaces in which they build a culturally supportive community and develop skills to critically navigate between their worlds of school and home” (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 660). Often, students look to university staff to address concerns or issues, but there are simply not enough student services staff with the capacity to recognize or address racism that often targets this population (Villalpando, 2004).

Institutional microaggressions create barriers to building the community necessary for Latinx student retention (Yosso et al., 2009). The impacts of racism and racial microaggressions on students of color cannot be ignored as they affect various social, academic and psychological aspects of students’ lives” (Giraldo et al., 2018, p. 63). More research is recommended to better understand Latinx students’ specific experiences and responses to various forms of racism, including microaggressions (Crisp et al., 2015).

### Conclusion

There is a gap in the current literature as it relates to the cultural and educational background of Latinx migrant students. Understanding where Latinx students come from is critical in determining levels of support they require. In short, there is a long way to go to achieve the equity ultimately necessary for the academic success of Latinx students. The outcome of this research study will inform educators how to internally replicate externally funded supportive structures and frameworks.

Using both CRT and LatCRT to capture how CAMP participants function in an environment created both by, and for, majority groups, I explored higher education as an

oppressive space. The FK framework allowed me to present Latinx migrant students as a population that possesses a great deal of cultural assets. This next chapter will thoroughly detail the process of identifying the study setting, potential participants, the materials utilized throughout the study, as well as the data collection and analysis elements and procedures.

## Chapter III: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the first-year college persistence experiences of Latinx migrant participants in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), a federally funded program designed to provide academic, social, and financial support to eligible participants. This chapter contains the results of a phenomenological study conducted to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the college persistence experiences of Latinx CAMP students?; and (2) In what ways are the cultural assets of Latinx CAMP students acknowledged and valued within higher education?

### Researcher Positionality

I have worked with migrant students since 2004, when the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) program hired me as a graduate student to work part-time. Although CAMP does not require a participant to be any specific ethnicity, the majority of CAMP participants are of Latinx descent. Fast forward to the present year, and I have been the CAMP director for the past fourteen years. I credit this program with teaching me so much, not just about students, but about myself. It was during this ongoing period of self-reflection that I began to contemplate studying Latinx migrant students enrolled in the CAMP program, and the way they experience persistence during their first year of post-secondary education, as a potential research area. The CAMP, designed to provide services to eligible students, provides an environment of support throughout their first year of college.

In the past year or so, I have worked on developing and revising my research positionality, which is best described as a critical acknowledgment of the researcher's approach to research based on their own experiences: "When researchers are not mindful of the enormous

role of their own and others' racialized positionality and cultural ways of knowing, the results can be dangerous to communities and individuals of color" (Milner, 2007, p. 388). As a Latinx second-generation migrant worker, I feel that my connectedness to this population and study will allow me to present the stories of these individuals authentically and accurately. It is critical for all researchers to have a deeper awareness in conducting educational research (Milner, 2007). Compelling interests that lead to unsettled questions are typically related to our life experiences (Jones et al., 2013).

I decided to disclose my background to each participant to establish a shared appreciation for our heritage, and the hard work of the generation before us. Part of understanding one's own social identities is to reflect on the privileges that come with any one identity, and how that is perceived by others (Jones et al., 2013). It may seem inconceivable to some that race, for instance, still has such a profound influence on how people experience and live in the world (Milner, 2007). Through understanding my own privilege, I can begin to understand the lack of privilege of others (Jones et al., 2013).

Hearing stories of my mother's experiences working in the fields alongside her many siblings every summer ensures that I maintain awareness of my privilege, as well as understand its potential role in my interactions with participants. I fully acknowledge and understand the privilege I have as a second-generation migrant worker. While my maternal grandfather's main source of income was plumbing, he wanted his children to learn and adapt to the struggles many before him had faced. Living in a southern Texas border town, mere miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, my mother and her siblings spoke only Spanish until they enrolled in kindergarten. My grandfather insisted his children learn English, although he himself only spoke Spanish. The strict household rule was to never mix the two; they either spoke one or the other. To this day, my

mom's oldest sister will scold the nieces and nephews for speaking what she refers to as "Spanglish." Unfortunately, my mother married an Italian man who did not appreciate nor embrace the cultural knowledge and enrichment my mother brought to their union, essentially forbidding my mother from teaching their five children the Spanish language. He also did not allow her to speak to her family in Spanish, making it very difficult for her to maintain regular communication with her relatives. Thus, I did not learn Spanish until high school and in college.

Growing up, my mom's experiences in the field would often take the form of life lessons. We were not allowed to use terms commonly thrown around, especially by children, such as, "starving," or, "dying of thirst." If we did use those terms, she would respond that we had no idea what it was like to be either of these things. Having never performed farmwork myself, yet being surrounded daily by those who have, certainly compels me to hear and share the experiences of CAMP participants. In simplest terms, I desire to be a good researcher who conducts honest and meaningful studies.

### Methodology

This study's goal was to explore the first-year college persistence experiences of students in the CAMP program, in order to make meaning out of these experiences. "Qualitative research works within the context of human experiences and the ways in which meaning is made out of those experiences" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 6). I hope to inform and educate others on Latinx migrant students' first year college persistence experiences. One of the main purposes of qualitative research is to "illuminate and understand in depth the richness in the lives of human beings and the world in which we live" (Jones et al., 2013 p. 11). Because qualitative researchers are the instrument of analysis, especially in interpretive and constructivist designs, their interests, values, experiences, and purpose influence the analysis (Jones et al., 2013). All data collected

were analyzed according to both a critical constructivist paradigm and a phenomenological research design. I received approval to conduct this study from the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (Appendix G).

### **Critical Constructivism**

My priority throughout this study was to establish connections between myself and the social world I was studying (Saldaña, 2021). Critical constructivists ask how participants construct their views of educational reality (Steinberg, 2014). Constructivism is the understanding that people construct their own meanings based on their interactions with the world (Bhattacharya, 2017). A constructivist approach will allow me to fully engage and connect with my participants, while also focusing on the process of interactions among individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Critical constructivist researchers attempt to use their understanding of the social construction of reality to rethink and reconceptualize the types of questions we ask (Steinberg, 2014). According to a study on constructivism in the college classroom, “constructivism offers a more contemporary perspective that learning is an active process and that the learner is an active agent in the process of knowledge acquisition” (Mensah, 2015, p. 2). The next section will expand on the phenomenology methodology I used to frame my study.

### **Phenomenology**

As a complement to constructivism, I used a phenomenological research design to identify individuals with commonalities and capture the essence of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using this methodology, I sought to answer the overarching question, “What is the essence of Latinx students in the CAMP program?

Phenomenology is a philosophy introduced by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the twentieth century and intended to document first-hand the experiences of an individual or group of individuals (Giorgio & Giorgio, 2003). Phenomenology is a complex and nuanced methodology; however, when applied effectively to a research design, it can produce in depth insight and informed findings (Converse, 2012). According to Flood (2010), “Phenomenological knowledge reforms understanding and leads to more thoughtful action through constructivism” (p. 8). The phenomenological attitude is reflective, focusing not on the objects, but the processes and meanings (Wertz, 2011).

Reflection allows researchers an opportunity to establish connection between the experiences they are studying and their own experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) posited, “the aim is to determine what an experience means for the person who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). Through this description, the researcher extracts meaning. People construct meaning as they engage with the world that they are interpreting (Flood, 2010). Phenomenological scholars encourage an inquiry that investigates the meaning making of the structure of the phenomenological experience (Bhattacharya, 2017). Phenomenological research is inductive and descriptive (Flood, 2010). In phenomenological studies, amongst other things, the investigator derives findings that will provide the basis for future research and reflection (Moustakas, 1994).

In a phenomenological study, the researcher creates broad ideas and rich interpretations about how the ideas are linked (Jones et al., 2013). The goal of phenomenology research is to understand the meaning of an experience of a phenomenon (Flood, 2010). Phenomenological analysis attempts to discern the essence of the phenomenon (Giorgio & Giorgio, 2003). For the purposes of this study, I considered the first-year college persistence experiences of Latinx

migrant CAMP participants, as the “essence” of this particular study. “Phenomenological theory leads to an emphasis on exploring the meaning of people’s experiences in the context of their lives” (Seidman, 2019, p. 21). It is essential that participants have the experience of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology gives us insights into the meanings, or the essences, of experiences we may have been previously unaware of, but can recognize (Richards & Morse, 2012). With a phenomenological methodology framing this study, I intended to bring critical experiences, or the phenomena, many people may have been previously unaware of, to light. Creswell and Poth (2018) argued, “the important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (p. 161). Descriptions of the phenomenon are obtained from the participant by the researcher (Flood, 2010).

### **Trustworthiness**

Developing trust and rapport takes time, care, and attention throughout the research process (Jones et al., 2013). Early on I committed to being cognizant of the time it takes to build trust and rapport; therefore, I chose to inform the study participants that if they had concerns at any point or would like additional information about the research process, I was more than willing and available to address any inquiries. I felt I was attentive to each participant’s unique story and experiences, ensuring trustworthiness and integrity is maintained throughout the data analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following proper research protocol ensured ethics and integrity was maintained throughout the study (Israel, 2015).

I also engaged in member checking, which is the use of others, including research participants and peer or expert reviewers, to confirm findings (Jones et al., 2013). Member checking allows participants a voice and an opportunity to provide feedback, and as a result the

research is thought to be more credible (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). I was also open and available to address any concerns participants had during the member checking process as my goal was to present the participant voices as authentically as possible. In addition, I addressed this potential bias with participants by sharing my background, research positionality, and intention of the study. Unexpected biases lurk everywhere (Giorgio & Giorgio, 2003).

## Methods

### **Setting**

I gave much consideration to where I wanted to conduct my study. In a phenomenological study, participants may be located at a single site, although they need not be (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I gave the institution from which I identified my research subjects the pseudonym the *University of the Northwest*. Situated in a large, urban city, this institution has had a CAMP project since 2010. I made an intentional decision to not conduct the study in my own “backyard,” limiting potential bias, as I am well acquainted with the majority of the Latinx migrant students at my own institution. This institution also happened to be my undergraduate alma mater, and because I was initially planning to conduct the interviews in person, it seemed beneficial that I was familiar with campus.

### **Participants**

I employed purposive sampling to identify six participants who met the homogenous criteria of being Latinx, migrant, and enrolled as a full-time student and a participant of the CAMP program at the selected institution. This sampling ensured an “intentional sample of a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the designated research problem under examination” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148). Purposive sampling is synonymous with qualitative research (Palys, 2008).

I intentionally recruited students who had already completed their year with CAMP, so that they were able to reflect on their experiences from the entire year in the program. A CAMP student is considered a CAMP “completer” once they attain 36 credits at a quarter institution, or 24 credits at a semester school. Once they have completed this minimum number of credit hours, they are considered a former CAMP student or a CAMP alumnus. Different schools use varying terminology to identify the different stages of CAMP participants.

In order to initiate contact with potential participants for this research study, I contacted the “gatekeeper” at the institution, defined as an individual with insider status able to give access to the intended participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A gatekeeper is particularly important when gaining access to marginalized groups, due to the potential concerns regarding language, culture and trust (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this research study, the gatekeepers were the CAMP Principal Investigator (PI) and Program Director (PD) at the University of the Northwest (UN). I composed an initial email (See Appendix A), which included the title and a detailed description of this study and asked for them to please forward a formal recruitment email (See Appendix B) to their students who had participated for a full year in CAMP. Once prospective participants contacted me, I conducted a short secondary screening (See Appendix C), via phone, to ensure the students met the established criteria of being Latinx, and beyond their first year in the CAMP program. They would have already met the other CAMP eligibility, of being migrant.

I began receiving several emails from prospective study participants a few days after the initial recruitment email. I then confirmed each participants’ eligibility for the study and scheduled the first of the participant interviews. The informed consent form (See Appendix E) was sent to each participant prior to the first interview, with instructions to read, sign, initial and date. Interviews were scheduled according to the participants’ schedules and an email reminder

with the Zoom link was sent to them after confirming the dates and times. After each interview, I reconfirmed the next interview time and date, and let the participants know if they needed to cancel or reschedule, they could contact me to let me know. I did not want my study to be a burden on anyone and due to working remotely, was able to accommodate the students' schedules.

After conducting virtual interviews with four participants in mid- December 2020, a total of 11 interviews, I followed up with the UN CAMP project staff to seek additional participants. After a month or two, the former UN CAMP director was able to confirm two additional participants for me. I was then able to schedule and conduct those two additional interviews in late February and early March 2021. There were only two students who contacted me who were not eligible for the study as they had not been served by UN CAMP.

A total of six participants were identified as eligible and interviewed for this research study-Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, Flor, and Valeria. They were all between 21-25 years of age. Four of the six participants - Aurora, Beatriz, Flor, and Valeria -identified as female (67%), and two of the six participants - Alejandro and Reynaldo - identified as male (33%). The participants were from three different CAMP cohorts. Four of the six participants - Alejandro, Aurora, Beatriz, and Reynaldo - were in the CAMP program the same cohort year, while the two others, Flor and Valeria, were from two different cohorts.

Table 1 below provides critical details about each participant, including their pseudonym, gender, age, major, and year in CAMP; however, I have also included some basic background information about each participant in narrative form.

### ***Beatriz***

Beatriz was born in Mexico City and migrated to the US when she twelve. Both her parents graduated from high school. She applied to sixteen schools and got into nine of them. She chose the UN as it had the programs she wanted and was not that far from where her family resided, in another region of the state.

### ***Aurora***

Aurora was raised in a single parent household in an agriculturally rich region. Her mother immigrated from Mexico, attending school there until about the sixth grade. She was the first of her siblings to attend college. She described being very homesick her first year, almost leaving on several occasions.

### ***Alejandro***

Alejandro hails from the same community as Aurora and was also raised in a single parent household. His mom got to the third grade. Few of his friends applied to college and he spent most of senior year applying to various scholarships.

### ***Reynaldo***

Reynaldo is the oldest of three brothers; one who is currently in middle school and then the other one is in high school. He was raised in a small community, known for its various crops. His parents are from Mexico and identify as undocumented. They both completed middle school.

### ***Flor***

Flor came from a rural town of about 2,000 people, and has four siblings. Her older brother graduated with his BA. Flor got into several prestigious universities, but decided to go to the UN.

## **Valeria**

Valeria emigrated from Mexico about eight years ago and is the oldest of three kids. Her mother went to school in Mexico until the third grade and her dad finished middle school, also in Mexico, and enrolled in a technical program, which was considered high school.

Each participant described their hometown in similar terms, using words like “small” and “rural” and majority Latinx when detailing their communities. All six participants spoke about having roots in Mexico, and at several points during the interview process referred to family members who came from there or still reside there. As mentioned before, each participant met eligibility made references to the very challenging agricultural work their parents and they themselves, have performed throughout their lives. Table 1 below summarizes the characteristics of the participants.

*Table 1*

*Participant Characteristics*

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Year in School</i>	<i>Year in CAMP</i>
Alejandro	Male	23	Senior	2017-2018
Aurora	Female	22	Senior	2017-2018
Beatriz	Female	22	Senior	2017-2018
Reynaldo	Male	21	Senior	2017-2018
Flor	Female	25	Junior	2013-2014
Valeria	Female	21	Junior	2018-2019

Each study participant was assigned a pseudonym to maximize their comfort and set a tone of trustworthiness (Saven-Biden & Major, 2013). No two students could share the same pseudonym. To ensure the Zoom transcription was accurate, their screen name was changed,

before we began recording each interview, either by the participant or myself, so their only pseudonym appeared in the audio transcript. Any remaining mentions of their actual name were redacted in the “cleaning up” process of the transcripts. I dedicated sufficient time to this process to ensure transcripts were easy to sift through, during the data analysis process.

## **Interview Process**

In this section, I briefly summarize the logistics of the interview process of this research study, beginning with the development of the interview protocol. My interview protocol process was guided by an FK approach, which invites researchers to move away from fundamentalist deficit perspectives and shift the research focus to a more equity-based agenda (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2018).

I was also intentional in constructing an interview protocol (Appendix D) that was congruent with my research questions; it is critical for the research instrument to be congruent with the aims of the research, meaning the researchers’ interviews are anchored in the purpose of the study and the research questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

No additional questions were added during the interview process; questions were only clarified or further explained to study participants. I was able to tell quickly which of my interview questions was not worded in the most effective manner. I did often rephrase certain questions in a way that seemed easier to for the participants to comprehend.

I followed a four-step process in developing my protocol: Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions, Phase 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation, Phase 3: Receiving feedback on interview protocols; and Phase 4: Piloting the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I began with asking about the educational levels of the participants’ families, as it was significant for me to understand the process of the participants deciding to

seek post-secondary opportunities. I also asked about the support they received in their pursuit of higher education, whether it was from family, friends, community, secondary school staff, etc.

I was very conscious of positioning the interview questions in a way that did not precipitate specific answers from the participants. I wanted the participants to talk about their families, influences on their educational journeys, their identity, however, they wanted to define that, as well as significant interactions and experiences at the UN. I also created a matrix (Appendix E) in order to determine whether any gaps existed in what is being asked (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Due to the surge of the national COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure safety, all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. Zoom seemed to be the most universal platform and everyone had taken classes via Zoom, ensuring there would be fewer user issues involved. At the start of each of the first interviews, I thoroughly explained the informed consent document to each participant, which was signed by myself and each participant. Each interview was recorded so that the transcript can be downloaded after the interviews. Interview recordings and other notes were stored via OneDrive, to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

While I initially intended to use a three-interview approach for each participant, I was only able to schedule two interviews for two of the six participants due to scheduling conflicts. I asked a total of eighteen questions per participant; for four of the participants, this resulted in me asking six questions per interview, and nine questions per interview with two of the participants. I always asked every question in the same exact order. At the beginning of the first interview with each participant, I reviewed the consent form, in its entirety, and asked if the participants had any questions about the research study or interview process. I also let the participants know that they could ask me any questions throughout the interview process.

According to Seidman (2019), “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (p. 25). Thus, the interview process is what makes qualitative research meaningful and unique. Seidman (2019) posited that “a phenomenological approach to interviewing focuses on the lived experiences of participants and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 16). If the researcher’s goal is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing serves as a necessary avenue of inquiry (Seidman, 2019).

At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 2019). I followed, as best I could, Seidman’s (2019) “model of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each participant” (p. 21). This particular model, shared with Seidman (2019) in the 1970s by a third party, “allows for both the interviewer and participant to explore the participant’s experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning” (p. 21).

Each interview was scheduled for 90 minutes; the intention behind the approach is that each interview would have its own distinct focus: “The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience; the second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs; and the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them” (Seidman, 2019, p. 21). This in-depth interviewing approach allowed me to inquire about the participant’s lived experiences in stages.

Interviews that follow a semi-structured, open-ended interview format allow participants to deviate from the interview protocol, without affecting the overall outcome of the interviews (Jones et al., 2013). It was critical for me to utilize a semi-structured interview format as,

“standardized open-ended interviews are likely the most popular form of interviewing utilized in research studies because of the nature of the open-ended questions, allowing the participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences” (Turner, 2010, page #?). Therefore, if they veered off into a tangent, I did very little to reel them back in. This, of course, contributed to longer transcripts, but I didn’t feel like it was appropriate to cut them off. I will discuss the transcripts in more detail in the next section.

## **Data Collection**

The primary source of data was the sixteen interviews with Latinx migrant students who had participated for a full year in the UN CAMP program. Due to the virtual nature of the interviews, I was able to utilize the transcription services included in my Zoom license, which permitted me access to the interview transcriptions within 24-48 hours. They were saved to a secure drive and subsequently deleted off my Zoom account. The shortest transcript was thirty-six pages and the longest was eighty-five pages. In total, I ended up with 365 pages of transcripts. Some of the interviews were over rather quickly; I attributed this efficiency to the virtual element of the interviews. For the majority of the participants, we had three separate interviews; however, I found that the time I allotted for each interview (60-90 minutes) was far too long.

I immediately transferred each interview transcript I downloaded from Zoom into a Word document so I could use spell check to edit it and organize it in my study materials. Within a week or two of each of the final participant interviews, the entire Zoom-generated transcript was sent to each participant as a way to engage in member checking. Each participant was told they could review the transcript and contact me with any feedback, including questions, concerns, or

general follow up. I did not receive any further communication with regards to the transcripts, solely confirmation that participant received their transcript.

I also let the participants know I would be taking notes while they were talking. I took notes on Post-Its, so they could easily be moved around. During each interview, I engaged in jotting or analytic *memoing*, which allowed me to keep track of potential themes that began to emerge, which allowed for reflection on the process and participants (Saldaña, 2021). *Memoing* can help track development of ideas through the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process of *memoing* during interviews is also a form of bracketing, the concept of engaging in meaningful reflection during a qualitative study in attempts to mitigate potential bias and preconceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Given the close relationship between the researcher and research topic whether established prior or during a qualitative study, bracketing can be a method in which to protect the researcher from the effects exploring emotionally challenging material (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

After each interview, I put the notes on a whiteboard near my desk, adding to it after subsequent interviews. Many of the same topics came up more than once, and in that instance, I would make a notation next to that topic if it arose again, as that would be considered an emerging theme. The whiteboard allowed me to revise with ease.

I also listened to each interview several times and made spelling and grammar related edits to the transcripts. If there were terms in Spanish, I noted the English equivalent in brackets; any identifiable names of staff, faculty, cities, or specific institutions were also redacted. I left in references to “the city,” or “my hometown.” The interview protocol, in its entirety, can be found in Appendix E. Initially, I took the transcripts, which were quite lengthy, and put them into a more consumable version, making it easier to read them. I tried a few different ways to organize

the nearly 400 pages of transcripts, finally settling on a just a simple Word document. I knew I would be cutting and pasting, and Word seemed to be the most user friendly for that purpose.

Using this Word document, I created a chart that listed each of the themes that had emerged, as well as all the participants' names. I then copied and pasted the responses from the transcript into the appropriate theme category. I was able to utilize a simple color-coded process to indicate which of the themes certain responses were marked for, which helped immensely in being able to locate responses quickly and re-organize them, if necessary. Ultimately, after much organizing and contemplation, I identified a total of four themes. In the next chapter, I will describe my process as I determined what was considered a theme and why. Theming is most applicable to phenomenology (Miles & Huberman, 2020).

## **Data Analysis**

The process I followed to analyze transcripts from the 16 interviews and identify codes and themes is described in detail in this section. As mentioned earlier, the interview transcripts were analyzed in two phases, the first being the first four participants' interviews, and the second occurring after the second and final interviews were conducted. After the first four sets of participant interviews were conducted, 11 interviews in total, I engaged in the initial stage of the data analysis process, which consisted of me reviewing the transcripts for emerging themes and sub themes. Saldaña (2021) recommends to “start coding as you collect and format your data not after all fieldwork had been completed” (p. 21). This lull between the two sets of interviews allowed time for data analysis before moving on to two additional participants. I coded each batch and analyzed for categories or themes.

### ***In Vivo Coding***

The process of coding is essential to qualitative research and involves making sense of the text collected from interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to information compiled in a study (Miles & Huberman, 2020). I coded all of the interviews manually, using a method referred to as *In Vivo coding*. This coding method, intended to honor the participant's voice, is a method often used for beginners (Saldaña, 2021). Coding is time consuming and complex (Saldaña, 2021). I highlighted phrases and quotes that appeared to capture the participants' experiences. During each stage of data analysis, themes slowly emerged from the data. "In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or 'translates' data" (Vogt et al., 2014, p. 13).

During this process, I kept in mind that "phenomenology does not just aim for the clarification of meaning, it aims for meaning to become experienced as meaningful" (Manen, 2014, p. 373). Throughout the coding process, I adhered to the researchers Richards and Morse's (2007) ideal of, "if it moves, you code it" (p. 146). As I further analyzed the data, I also engaged in using inductive analysis, described as:

the process through which a qualitative researcher might look at all the raw data, chunk them into small analytical units of meaning for further analysis (usually called codes), cluster similar analytical units and label them as categories, and identify salient patterns after looking within and across categories (usually called themes). (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 150)

### ***Identifying Themes***

Identifying themes is essential during the data analysis process. "A theme is an "extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means*" (Miles &

Huberman, 2020, p. 73). During the analysis phase, I utilized Saldaña's (2021) method of "*themeing the data*," which is a search for themes throughout data; this technique allowed me to construct themes, or categories of belonging. The main goal was of *themeing the data* is to create statements that capture or summarize a major idea (Saldaña, 2021). I utilized basic categorization, which looks for how themes are similar and different, relationships among themes, and identifying theoretical constructs, which is a clustering sets of related themes and labeling each cluster with a "thematic category" (Saldaña, 2021). How the researcher formulates themes or codes vary (Turner, 2010). Throughout the interview process, I made a note of the most salient and more meaningful topics and those eventually became themes.

### **Study Limitations**

With any study, there are limitations, which I thought through and considered the overall impact of them. I do not believe that these limitations prevented me from conducting a thorough and unbiased study; however, I am mentioning them here for the purposes of transparency.

#### ***Length and Timing of Study***

One limitation was the time frame designated by this study. Several of the study participants were seniors, and I was asking them to reflect on a period of time that was at least four years, or more, ago. Ideally, I could have narrowed the eligibility criteria to prioritize participants in their second or third year so, that their memories of their first year were clearer in their minds. This notion of how long ago their first year of college was didn't really occur to me. However, difficult to know whether it would have been too narrow of eligibility criteria or would have enhanced the overall study.

### ***Language Fluency***

While I have a proficient grasp of the Spanish language, I do not consider myself to be fluent; however, one of the participants was more comfortable in speaking in Spanish. I, of course, did not discourage the students from speaking in their native language, and I did my best to translate their responses into English during the data analysis process.

### **Conclusion**

The intention of this research study was to focus on the cultural assets that Latinx migrant students bring with them to college, by rejecting the deficit language often associated with this population. In utilizing a phenomenological methodology, I was able to make meaning out of these experiences and ultimately understand the essence of what it meant to be a Latinx student in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

## Chapter IV: Data Findings

This chapter provides an in depth look at the findings of this research study. The main source of the findings were the transcriptions from participant interviews. The guiding research questions were: (1) What are the college persistence experiences of Latinx CAMP students and (2) In what ways are the cultural assets of Latinx CAMP students acknowledged and valued within higher education?

### Interview Themes

Over the course of the 16 total participant interviews I conducted, a variety of meaningful topics arose, from the participants' family backgrounds, high school experiences, and their decision-making processes to attend higher education, to subsequent encounters with campus climate and their peers, as well as the ways in which the CAMP program supported them throughout their first year of college.

I organized the findings into four main themes: (a) It takes a village: the support of *la familia and comunidad*, (b) I'm proud to be Mexicana: first generation Latinx identity and pride, (c) The role of cultural capital in overcoming obstacles, and (d) The CAMP program: a safe space to make friends and interact with people.

#### It Takes a Village: The Support of *La Familia and Comunidad*

During each of the 16 interviews I conducted, the varying levels of support from their family and community, defined as friends, peers, teachers, church members, etc., came up in some capacity or another for every one of the six participants. While it became very evident throughout the participant interviews that family, or *la familia*, fulfilled an important role in the students aspiring to attend college, it was also apparent that the *comunidad*, or community surrounding these students, whether it was school officials, peers and friends or community members, also played an important role in their educational journeys. An overwhelming majority of the references to family support were of a positive nature; in fact, most of the participants cited their family as one of the, if not the sole reason, main reasons they decided to pursue post-secondary education and ultimately persist to where they are now. However, in some instances, the parents' lack of experience with and understanding of the college-going process proved to be an obstacle, as was revealed by several of the participants.

Beatriz recalled that the decision to attend college was a goal of hers early on, due to the influence of, and role modeling by, her close family members. She attributed her decision to attend college to the motivation from her family members, referring to it as a “next step.”

I kind of always know that I was going to go to college. I had cousins that had gone to university and graduated with a bachelor's degree, and so I never considered not going to college. Two cousins that are older than me went on to the university to get a bachelor's

degree. So just seeing them was kind of like, “okay, so like that's like the next step,” after high school. My parents were definitely there to support me on whatever they could.

Beatriz truly felt supported by her family, despite them not being in a position to actively assist in the process of applying for college, financial aid, her major, etc. This was a common theme that occurred within the participant interviews. Their parents wanted them to attend college, yet did not necessarily have the tools to prepare them in the same manner that students whose parents did attend college may have:

They would listen to me because, I mean, my dad knows English, but my mom doesn't, so I had to translate. She was patient, even when I was like a little overwhelmed and would have to say, “I can't translate this right now because I'm stressed.” So just being there, you know, for support emotional support and also later on, financial, and just overall support for my college plans.

Aurora shared that it was actually *because* her siblings didn't go to college that she ultimately decided to attend UN and remain enrolled, despite experiencing some initial doubts about attending college. She did have other ideas, one of them being the military, which her mother put a stop to, thinking that it was too dangerous and far away for her. I found this to be a consistent pattern throughout the interviews; the family was supportive of their higher education pursuits, yet the support was not tangible. Raised by a single mom who immigrated from Mexico, Aurora felt it was expected for her to attend college, but it would be up to her to get herself there. Aurora found help in her sister, who assisted her with the FAFSA:

I kind of always thought that I would have to go to college, just because none of my other siblings went to college. I always had like good grades and all that. So, I felt like it was kind of expected for me to do college. I think it was in high school I didn't want to go to

college anymore. And then I kind of had the mindset of going to the military. And I was going to [enlist], but I was talking to my mom about it, but I don't know if it's just like a like a Latina like a Latin thing where she just didn't want me to go. She thought that I would die. I kind of just didn't want to put her through that. So I decided to start to start applying to colleges during my senior year. My family supported me to do it [attend college]. My sister, she's the oldest; she helped me do the FASFA.

Alejandro's main inspiration to attend college was to help distance or remove his family from the poverty he had grown up in, another common sentiment expressed throughout the interview process:

When I was in high school, I expressed interest to my mom that I wanted to go to college and she was supportive of me because I wanted to take my family out of poverty; I wanted to be the first one to make the jump to higher education, and not just have a high school diploma. My mom was really supportive, and I always made sure to remind myself I'm doing this, because I want to help the family. I wanted to be the first one to go to college and actually graduate with a bachelor's degree.

Alejandro's mom was supportive in his pursuit of higher education, believing that it would ultimately benefit the whole family for him to have a college degree:

I think, [there were] various factors, family, and just my motivation to finish the degree because there was just so little of us. I didn't want to become just another statistic. I guess for me there was, I kept thinking about my family. It's like I have a lot of my shoulder, and if I don't make it through here, who else is going to make it through here; my brother's not going to college. My sister is still in elementary school, and that's just a lot of pressure put on her and I always wanted to go to college, and I really wanted to

succeed. This is the percentage of people that didn't make it through the first year and I didn't want to be part of that.

In Latinx families, it is a commonly shared ideal that the actions of one person represent the entire family unit. This concept will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

Reynaldo, a son of undocumented Mexican immigrants, attributed his whole journey to his parents' sacrifice, which allowed and encouraged him to take advantage of opportunities to educate himself and ultimately succeed in life. Reynaldo, a self-reflective young man, began considering attending college as early as the eighth grade. Like the other participants, Reynaldo was inspired by his parents' journey to the US, in search of a more economically fulfilling life:

My parents' educational background did have a role in what I was doing in middle school, which led to high school and where I'm at now, at UN. Basically, my parents came to the United States give their children and their family, a better life, a better future than what we would have had in Mexico. I started getting into high school or it was eighth grade when the college talk started to come up and become more frequent and that's when I was talking with my parents and said I'm going to go to college and they were very supportive and they were like, "yeah, you know, that's great."

He continues on to share that his immigrant parents were a great source of motivation for him to enroll in college:

My parents just helped influence me by not really doing much other than encouraging me; they themselves didn't do a lot, but I would basically take time and reflect on not only my life, but their life and what they were currently doing for work because they still work in the fields and the orchards. They [my parents] would just tell me that, you know, we kind of expect you to further your education best high school. My parents are

undocumented and are immigrants, and they can't really support me with like college stuff. I thought it was an obstacle, because of like my parents just trying their best, which ended up being amazing like more than I could have thought for and I'm very thankful for that. And they were very, just like motivating, like they were always rooting for me and they're still rooting for me.

Reynaldo continued to express that he would be forever grateful to his parents for the sacrifices they made in order for him to attend college. However, another participant, Flor, wished her parents had shown more of an interest in what she was doing, explaining her decision to enroll in college was more of an expectation. Her parents were less involved in her college experience.

Like I said, I was always expected [to go to college]. They [my parents] didn't even drop me off at school. I wish they would have been like more excited to come and drop me off, and figure out like what's going on, or what class I was taking. I just drove my car over here with my best friend. Then my dad drove my car back.

I took the opportunity to share with Flor that this was quite similar to my own college experience; neither parent really never visited me at college. Like her experience, it wasn't so much a lack of support in my educational endeavors, it was more having parents who had jobs that were not flexible. Flor shared she did not hold this against her parents; she spoke about it in a very factual manner that did not reflect any bad feelings.

Valeria, a daughter of Mexican immigrants with family still living in Mexico, was initially motivated to attend college, by her dream of becoming a doctor. Valeria, now married and still living with her immediate family, had the support of her parents to attend college and pursue her dream of being a doctor:

My parents have always told us [children] that are going to support us as much as they could, but I knew it wasn't possible because our economic situation wasn't the best. I was like, "I'm going to be a doctor." My dream job was to be a doctor because I want to help people; they always told me that they were going to support my dream.

Earlier in the interview, Valeria shared that English was her second language. She later explained how she decided not to pursue a medical degree, and instead focuses on opening her own business and taking classes to become a Spanish teacher.

This responses to this set of questions made me ponder how the rural and agricultural communities these students hailed from were different from other communities, particularly when it came to the influence and support of the community members, whether from their school, church, or social groups. It is very likely that certain students, especially those first-generation, low-income students, came to rely more on school officials and friends/peers to inform them about college access opportunities, than students who had parents to guide them through the process.

In speaking with the study participants, it became increasingly clear that their high school experiences were critical elements of the college-going experience. For nearly all the participants, it was around the time of high school when the concept of attending college was first introduced or considered. I came to quickly understand that this was a meaningful time period on which I was asking them to reflect.

One participant who did feel supported by their school staff and faculty to attend college, or more specifically, a four-year institution was Beatriz:

I really don't think that my [high school] counselor helped me at all. I feel counselors are

there to offer information through the process. And I felt like my counselor did not [help me], especially in talking with other students in CAMP about how their counselors helped them and gave them information or opportunities and resources. I also felt like the school officials were pushing too much towards community college.

I did ask Beatriz if she felt the push to attend community college was due to her academic performance and she said she thought it was more about being a low-income student. She speculated that her school officials felt she would be burdened by the financial demands of a school like UN.

Interestingly, Aurora felt the opposite way than Beatriz, that there was *too* much of a push towards attending a four-year college or university. She expressed that she would have felt more comfortable starting at a community college, but didn't feel this was "acceptable" choice, at least not at her high school:

I also did cross country all four years; my coach was really pushing me towards attending a university, rather than joining the military or just doing technical school. I kind of wish there was more support for. I honestly wish that in high school, there wasn't such of a push to go to a university.

Aurora thought she would be letting people down by attending a community college, which was the main reason she applied to the UN and ultimately accepted the admissions offer. I contemplated this feeling of guilt of not be fulfilling her obligation of attending college, was enough to motivate Aurora to enroll. She also did not receive help from her counselor: "The whole application process, it was me, by myself and sometimes my sister and asking for help from [the college access person].

Alejandro grew up in a community where it wasn't as common for people to attend college. He was motivated to apply for college by his peers who were also applying, as well as by his advisor from a college access program designed to assist marginalized students in their college pursuits:

Deciding to attend college was uncharted territory, because I didn't have really anyone else ask for help. The person that really influenced me to actually pursue higher education was one of my advisors. She really inspired me to realize that my story had validity, that my dream wasn't too big. I could pursue higher education; just because my family hadn't reached it, doesn't mean that I couldn't reach it. It was really the biggest force; she's the one who encouraged me to take opportunities when they popped up. Because sometimes they [opportunities] would pop up and she would encourage me to take them, and it actually ended up being a really successful scholarship search; I got college acceptance letters because of her.

Alejandro believed if it wasn't for this program and this specific advisor, he would not have been accepted to college, or received any scholarships. According to the responses to questions about college access support, it is commonplace of first-generation students, particularly those who identify as Latinx and migrant, to rely on the support of support programs and staff to provide them with critical information.

Reynaldo also felt supported by members of his community, who he felt had a genuine and vested interest in him achieving success. These people, both teachers and church leaders, were there for Reynaldo during high school to ensure he was knowledgeable and informed about the various opportunities associated with the college application process:

My AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) teacher, Mrs. [redacted] was very supportive and always had the best intentions to help me, throughout college, or to get to college. Mrs. [redacted] played a huge part, although like I wasn't aware of that throughout high school because she was my teacher for all four years of high school and she was very supportive and very resourceful in helping us in whatever ways we needed help and teaching the skills that we essentially needed and the more I think about it, she played a huge part because she was always there, not only rooting for me, but for my fellow AVID classmates and friends.

Reynaldo also identifies another teacher who he felt was especially supportive:

I would say my science teacher also supported me; he taught three different classes. I actually joined Robotics in high school because of him. And then I stayed in Robotics after my sophomore year up until I graduated; he was also very helpful. I guess the key thing that I took away from all of the people that I've mentioned, is that they always made an effort to be like, "you can do it." They were very reassuring and that's like the biggest motivation for me to do what I'm doing now.

Reynaldo also connected with community members who were also employed at his high school, so he would encounter them in several places:

I was also very involved in my church. My family started going to this specific church, basically as soon as we got to [redacted], and I became really close with my youth pastors at the time. And one of them worked at the high school; she helped with the tests as a testing coordinator. Her husband was working at the bank at the time. I forgot what he does and stuff like that. His wife is still at the high school and with that being said, they

would always make an effort to let me know, “hey, like you’re doing good, and we expect big things from you.”

Reynaldo felt lucky to have this type of support, recognizing that these individuals truly believed in him and his educational journey. This is something commonly seen among marginalized students, depending on specific people they have known for a period of time, to relay critical information in the college-going process.

Flor received assistance in the financial aid process, a process we all know is not without its challenges: “I would definitely say, I felt very supported on what to do. The counselor helped me with financial aid and all of that.” Valeria discussed the significance of obtaining a letter of recommendation from a teacher:

Mainly, I was more worried about money and things that, but I got a lot of help here in my high school. I learned English, as best I could. I’ve always remembered my science teacher, Mrs. [redacted]; I remember I spoke with her about getting a letter of recommendation.

Valeria also encountered assistance in the form of teachers who took her and classmates to visit colleges:

Throughout my high school they [staff] took us over to many colleges and the last one that I went to was UN and [redacted]. So, I spoke with my advisors; they were always asking me if I wanted to go to college, and I told them that yes, I did want to go to college, but I don’t know where to start or where to go. I just told them that I didn’t know what to do next, and they supported me, taking me to many colleges and universities, so I received help.

In inquiring about the key players in their journey to college, friends and peers were mentioned on at least two occasions. Beatriz considered both friends and peers as a motivation to apply to college; specifically, it was seeing them apply made her feel as if that was what she was also supposed to be doing. Without her parents to guide them in the process of applying to college, Beatriz looked to her friends to guide her in the process:

With my friends, it was just going through the process with them. They were also applying to colleges and universities, so just kind of knowing and like talking about like, “how do you apply to this,” and “how do you apply to that,” and just the sharing of resources.

Beatriz continued onto to share that the college application process was an opportunity for her friend group to connect, share resources and motivate one another:

During my senior year, at the beginning when you have to apply to like the state universities, seeing my friends also kind of motivated me, like that's what I'm supposed to do, apply to colleges and scholarships and my peers were kind of doing the same thing, I think they, influenced and motivated me, that my close group of friends who were also doing the same thing and going through the same thing.

Flor recalled following in her best friend's steps regarding enrolling in college: “My best friend was a junior and she went to college, and it just seemed so cool and interesting, so I would say that was also an influence.”

Alejandro recalled his experience of being one of a few of his peers who was applying to college:

I think I was one of the few, if not the only one, that actually wanted to go to college. I do live in a marginalized community and college is expensive and not everybody received

scholarship funds, which are really competitive. I think I was the one trying to push to go to college out of my peers. There was, like, some people in my honors classes who I would talk to about college who motivated me to keep applying.

Alejandro was forging a path not taken by others who share his background and did what he could to learn about the necessary requirements in applying for college.

#### I am Latinx: First-Generation Latinx Identity and Pride

All six participants identified as first-generation college students, as none of their parents have college degrees. Being first-generation and pursuing college for the first time presents a unique set of obstacles. During much of the literature I encountered, the focus always seemed to be on how first-generation students grapple with this identity. It was compelling to understand how the participants were influenced by their Latinx identity as they developed other identities during their transition to college.

In a series of interview questions, I asked the participants to reflect on their Latinx identity, as I was interested particularly as to how and to what extent being Latinx influenced their interactions as first-generation college students. While I did not ask the participants to address pride directly, it came up in several of the interviews, with regards to identity; therefore, it became a prevailing theme.

What I really appreciated was the prideful way in which the participants spoke about being first-generation Latinx college students. There was no shame associated with their first-generation status; it was a prideful experience for Beatriz:

Both my parents went to high school and graduated from high school. And now I went all the way to a university; I'm a first generation (student)." She also detailed how her pride

of her Latinx heritage was prevalent in all facets of her identity: “I’m proud of being Latinx, when I was in these groups, I was a Latinx student in engineering.

Further, when asked to expound on this shaping or reshaping of her intersecting identities, she described it as always being Latinx, regardless of what other identities she cultivated, such as a Latinx woman in engineering. Based on what Beatriz shared, it was clear that the gains she was experiencing as a Latinx woman at the UN, were gains for the Latinx community as a whole.

Aurora expressed that not only did her parents not attend college, but “none of my [three] siblings went to college.” Similar to Beatriz, Aurora explained how her Latinx identity shaped her college-going experiences, but also provided specifics regarding the lack of female Latinx role models during her college transition, as well as concerns about she would be perceived as an educated woman:

Yeah, I kind of felt like identifying as Latina and migrant made me feel stronger about my people. I feel like sometimes I felt like I was like less Mexican, because now I was educated. I didn’t have any role models who went to college who look like me. Also, I didn’t really have any representation of that. I mean, the first teacher I had that was Latino was in the 11th grade. So, I didn’t think like I can do it. I had to be my own role model.

This is a powerful statement; one I did not want to be lost in the remainder of the interview. First, Aurora did not want to be seen as “too good,” for the friends and family left behind when she went to college. She had this happen before, when people who left to pursue a college education were seen as different. It was compelling that considering all the obstacles these students faced, the struggle of seen as different by their communities simply for being educated, was another layer for them to consider. Second, Aurora undertook the enormous lift of serving as her own role model. Not a lot of college students can say that, or even recognize the need to do so. Aurora

later on shared that despite having many doubts about her ability to succeed, she persisted, feeling that it was her duty and obligation to do so.

Like the other participants, Alejandro has also achieved the highest level of education in his family: “I think she [my mom] just made it up to less than elementary school. I think up to third grade. I graduated high school. I was, like, the highest of my family.” He continued on to describe how it was odd being seen as a “minority,” once he got to college, despite being born and raised in a predominantly Latinx community. He also struggled with feeling the responsibility of representing all Latinx:

I've always I was always surrounded by the Latinx community. So, until I came to UN, I never felt like a minority. I never knew what the word was as I had never been called that until I came here. I had also never heard of Latinx until I came here. So, this is uncharted territory; I have to represent my community and I think that was all I had. For me, I felt a little bit overwhelmed. At first it was a lot for me to process. Since there's so little Latinx around, I felt like I was always representing Latinx. Whenever I introduce myself, *I am Latinx*.

Alejandro did not feel as there was a way to *not* be Latinx; this was the way he was seen and therefore how he presented in all areas on campus. This idea of not feeling like a minority until getting to college was something brought up several times by several participants. They were surrounded by Latinx growing up; therefore, the label of minority did not seem to fit until they got to college and navigated the majority white campus community.

Reynaldo also shared some additional details about his parents’ educational background when discussing his experiences of a first-generation student:

Both of my parents came from Mexico; they're undocumented, and I don't think they

made it past middle school or elementary school. I'm the first person in my family to graduate from high school and go to college.

It was impossible not to hear the pride behind Reynaldo's statement about being the first person to graduate from high school and go to college. Reynaldo also explained how being Latinx not only empowered him, but also shaped the lens in how he viewed the world:

Being a person of color, like there's power there; my voice is very important. I've been empowered now. I guess coming here [to UN], being Latinx was very important to me. Being a son of immigrants is very important to me. It was not a complete shift, but I saw how those things could, in a sense, empower me. At first, I didn't pay much attention to my identity, or I guess I didn't know what power there is in one's identity. And now, or as time progressed, because I am a person of color, and I come from immigrant parents, because I am a person of color, I can bring this lens that has been shaped through all of my experiences. Because I was a minority, because I was Latinx, it has shaped the lens that I view the world.

Reynaldo had not yet fully comprehended all the ways in which his experiences were influenced by his Latinx identity and heritage. Once this became clear, his Latinx-ness became his lens in which to view the world. He was the only participant who really expressed how empowered he had become due to his Latinx identity.

Flor had a brother who had recently graduated, but did not know what grade her parents made it to: "It was maybe the second or fifth grade for both parents. And my older brother, he just graduated with his BA and that was probably the highest that any of us have gone so far." She also revealed that visiting her brother helped her to decide college was for her. Flor also

described interacting with non-Latinx people for the first time, and the subsequent confusion she experienced as she and her peers learned about one another's backgrounds:

A lot of times I got confused for something else, so like it [being Latinx] wasn't really noticeable like I guess unless someone had asked me. My Filipino friends all thought I was Filipino, and I thought *they* were Mexican. Because like that's all that was in my town. I started speaking Spanish to them and they're like, "Are you speaking Spanish?" and I was like, "Yeah. Oh, do you not speak Spanish?" And then I knew.

Flor went on to share that being a minority in general was something that she and her Filipino friends could relate to and share.

Valeria, who at times throughout her interviews spoke in Spanish, simply had this to say about her Latinx heritage, "I'm Mexicana and I'm proud to be Mexicana." Valeria was the first and only person from her family to go to college at all, from both sides of her family:

I'm the oldest one of three and I'm the first one to go to college, to a four-year university from both sides of my family. My mom did go to school in Mexico, but she only went until third grade. And then she stopped going; my dad went to middle school and high school, but it wasn't a "real" high school; it was a technical school.

Later on, Valeria elaborated more on her navigation through the campus environment as a Mexicana.

One could say it is impossible to discuss the first-year experiences of Latinx migrant students without addressing the impact of campus climate on these experiences. Campus climate described as the overall racial environment of the university, has been determined to have an influence on college persistence (Yosso et al., 2009). Beatriz had this to say about how she experienced being a Latinx migrant student her first year at UN:

I feel like when you're with other people of color, you don't have to explain your experiences as much as to somebody that you know who maybe doesn't know anything about that [being a person of color], and you almost have to explain yourself to them.

Aurora recalled living on campus and not encountering many Latinx people where she lived:

I was living in the dorms, my first year and just culturally, there were not many Latinx people. Which kind of like made me feel like it was my first time feeling like a minority since [my hometown] is like 50% Hispanic. So, it was my first time feeling like I was a minority. There's nobody here who looks like me. That did make me feel like I stood out, but now I didn't want to stand out; I just wanted to be any other person who's going to college.

Aurora continued on to share who she was comfortable around and who she was not:

It was easier for me to get along with other marginalized women. I still sometimes did feel like a little intimidated by white females. I don't know if that's bad to say, but at the time it was just because, I felt like I was judged, from my previous interactions with a lot of white women, especially at the university, in particular, with women who were involved in Greek row and stuff. It just felt safer [to be] around other people of color, especially women [of color].

Aurora had talked about her comfort level earlier in the interview process, so it was not necessarily a surprise to hear that she was not comfortable around white woman. It did not appear that she experienced anything specific to make her feel this way; this was just an internal bias she carried with her.

Alejandro found that the campus tended to be an unfriendly place, or at least less social than what he was used to, culturally:

When you are from a Latinx culture, you're very social with your family, very social with people like you say, what's up to strangers. You're respectful. But when you try doing that here, they just kind of look like, "why are you talking to me," or "what are you doing," so that really influenced my interactions, like I stopped, kind of trying to make friends, tried to stop interacting with people unless they interacted with me first; then I would open up. Because you don't want to be like looked at as weird. People didn't want to talk, are too busy or just not interested.

Alejandro was pleased with the number of events designed for people of color:

They [UN] have like a week dedicated to People of Color called Unity Week. Instead of like just Cinco de Mayo, it's a whole week dedicated to celebrating people's culture and I really liked that. I joined a Latinx frat, and on one of the days we sell tacos. It's like the biggest fundraiser of the year and I really like being part of that and that climate, just make me feel welcome, like there's enough of my people, students here that share my heritage that we could put events together and show other students here that may not be aware about our culture and about our cuisine and that we're here, we exist, and we need to realize, "hey, there's more of us."

Reynaldo, who like Alejandro was involved in Greek Life but in a traditional fraternity, explained that it didn't end up being the experience he had initially envisioned:

I got here [to UN], and I would be one of the only one or one of just a few just people of color in the class and it would just be very weird. So, I'm in this fraternity, and I had to have a lot of talks with my brothers on the Executive Board, because I was very involved [with the fraternity] my first two years. Once we became like recognized as a chapter, we had to start paying an insurance fee and dues, which led to me potentially not being able

to be a part of it. And then like trying to help some of my fraternity brothers realized that fraternities in general, when it comes to traditional roles and are not multicultural and really after people color is like, you know. And that is a whole conversation in itself that we had because, I can't just be paying all of this. And then it led to a disconnect and me potentially leaving the fraternity.

Because Reynaldo did not have access to the funds that his peers had, and could not pay his fraternity house “dues,” that were required, he ended up having to leave the fraternity. He explained how he eventually came to the understanding he just didn’t belong in the Greek system:

These fraternities, or this fraternity, and the way they have been set up, grounded [in whiteness] and founded on a bunch of privileged white people. I just kind of realized that these systems are in place to only benefit the privileged and keep in mind, I'm not as privileged. It's not meant for people like me; it's not meant to benefit me.

Flor spoke about encountering individuals who she considered to be different from the community of people she grew up with: “Everyone from my town is so nice, and then you meet some rude people out here. You're always going to meet rude people, I guess, it was just weird to finally experience that.” Valeria commended UN on their welcoming and inclusive environment:

I would say that the UN does a good job of keeping a positive attitude and a non-discriminatory attitude. Because they make an effort to basically see students for who they are, for who they identify as, because I was a loud Latinx and like I said, sometimes I'd be the only person of color in a classroom. There was no bias because of the color of my skin and because of my identity. I would say UN gave us a lot of opportunities as migrant students and as a Latinx person. And there is a lot of support, educational and

personal support, for our needs. Because I personally had a lot of help. That's what I love about UN; that we can be whoever we want to be. Sometimes it is hard, being a person people of color, but I didn't feel that. What I'm trying to say is that I feel like UN accepted us without criticizing who we are, or our backgrounds.

Valeria also felt that being Latinx allowed her more opportunities:

Being Latinx I had the opportunity to be part of the Ethnic Cultural Center. And basically, there are clubs, meetings, events that celebrate cultures and because of that, I got to know more about the Chinese culture and other cultures that I didn't know much about. I was able to just go there and meet more people from more cultures and help people know about my culture at the same time, so I feel like being Latinx and migrant and opened a lot of doors for me. I was in a class, an Urbanization class, I think it was called, I really liked this class and everything, and I was the only Mexican in there, or the only Latina or brown girl in that class.

However, despite being the only “brown girl,” in that class, Valeria considered the experience to be a positive one:

I felt really, really welcomed on behalf of my professor and my peers. I remember I was worried they wouldn't understand my English, because I didn't have anyone nearby that could help me. I just feel so awkward and disconnected from them [my classmates], but once I started meeting them, they welcomed me and were always really nice to me. They were always helping me on presentations and things that we had to do. They were always helping me, or they would say “oh, you're trying to say this or that,” so I felt it was a really great experience for me because it was my first year and my first class without any

Mexican people or Latinx people. It was really different from what I expected, because I was used to have Mexican people around or brown people around me.

Attending college is an incredible feat for these students when considering the obstacles and barriers they faced, yet this adversity did not prevent them from applying and being accepted to, enrolling and persisting at the UN. I cannot help but feel proud of these students I had never met until our first interview, and only virtually, for all of their academic achievements.

### The Role of Cultural Capital in Overcoming Obstacles

A critical element of this study was to understand and document the strengths that Latinx migrant students brought with them to college, in terms of cultural assets and values. The participants also shared prevalent aspects of college life that had a negative effect on their college persistence, that they were able to rely on their cultural strengths to overcome. The three most prevailing obstacles students grappled with as they adapted to a college environment were self-doubt, financial concerns, and imposter syndrome. It was compelling to understand how they relied on their cultural assets such as resiliency, work ethic and being empathetic towards others, to overcome these obstacles.

Self-doubt can simply be characterized as a lack of confidence about one's abilities. This can come from both internal and external factors and influences. Aurora described how she experienced doubts not only about attending college, but also graduating high school.

I think one of the biggest obstacles was self-doubt. I honestly I never saw myself going to college. I didn't even see myself even like graduating high school. I don't know why I just thought I'd never would. I was always like a good kid, too. But it's still never saw myself like graduating and then going, becoming the first one in my family to go to college. I sometimes I felt a lot of guilt when I felt like it was too hard. Because I mean, my mom

raised four kids on her own, with little to no income. I never saw her complain. And then here I am crying because I miss home and I just felt a lot more guilt, but it also helped me feel stronger that like I can do this, you know, people have gone through worse. And this isn't even that bad, so I can push through.

Aurora also spoke about resilience as an asset, or more specifically, the resilience she saw demonstrated by her mother, as well as her ability to communicate in several languages. She also addresses the feelings of guilt that would occasionally plague her:

I mean, my mom used to work in in the fields and I kind of thought like, man, if my mom can do that for twenty plus years, then I can go to college for four years and not complain about it. It did help me feel like I come from a strong, resilient background. Yet, I kind of feel, at times I feel like I didn't really bring anything. I am multilingual; I speak Spanish, English, I'm kind of like remembering now, some sign language. I know some Portuguese as well, so I guess I am multilingual. And also, I feel like being [multilingual] allowed my other bilingual peers to feel safe to speak their language.

Aurora's biggest asset was making others feel comfortable, which I thought was spoke a lot about her character. She also understood that pursuing a higher education would result in debt, but that didn't make it any less terrifying of an undertaking. She expressed her concerns regarding the financial burden of getting a higher education, before she had even applied to college:

I always thought that like I couldn't do it, that I would be so much in debt. I always hear people are like, "Oh, I'm \$100,000 dollars in debt because of college. And that's why I kind of wanted to join the military, because they kind of made it seem like I needed to go to the military in order to get free college, thinking that I couldn't afford it. I mean I'm

already poor and I grew up poor and then having to stay in debt for the rest of my life just didn't seem like it was a goal that I could accomplish.

Aurora used her self-doubt as motivation to persist through what many would have given up on. She also did not want to burden her mother, who raised four children, on her own with feelings of inadequacy. When her boyfriend relocated to Seattle, she felt a lot less homesick and knew she would be able to finish school.

As one can imagine, the dream of attending college, especially for Latinx migrant students, can be just that: a dream. In these cases, their reservations are attributed to the potential financial burden and constraints. Participants spoke about the financial challenges associated with attending college, including the filling out of the FAFSA, the debt they associated with higher education, and the uncertainty about what they wanted to study. Even the process of applying for scholarships is not an equitable process. Some scholarships require a certain amount of volunteer or leadership activities; however, some students do not have the privilege to work for free. Their households often depend on them to contribute financially, and this limits their ability to dedicate time to volunteer work.

Alejandro also saw his family's work ethic as a strength reflected in himself:

Definitely work ethic. We work a lot. I brought that with me, and also respect and communication and just taking the initiative. I think, various factors and family and just my motivation to finish the degree because there was just so few of us [with a degree].

Alejandro felt the pressure of finishing college, due to not many of his family members having a degree. As discussed earlier, this aligned with the notion that some students pursue a college education on behalf of their communities. Alejandro experienced doubts upon the realization that his past schooling had not adequately prepared him for post-secondary education.

My biggest doubt was just how competitive it [UN] was. I wasn't sure if my story and my academic history was going to be enough to attend such a competitive environment or even if I did get in, if I would ever fit in since I was from a marginalized community and none of my family had ever been to college. I was overwhelmed and when I talked to my other peers that are also Latinx and migrant, they also felt the same way. How we were so behind already; no one had told us about this. There's no way to prepare for it, because I guess we didn't know, and our schools didn't offer these classes and our families didn't have money to afford these private schools.

Alejandro also questioned whether he afford a degree, and was dependent on scholarships to fund his academic pursuits:

I thought about finances and how expensive college is, even if I did get into a college, how would I afford it? Like my family wouldn't be able to afford it and there's the good thing is there's a lot of scholarships, but now, everybody knows about the different scholarships.

This was something other participants had expressed, that their rural schooling had not provided an education equitable to other students who attended UN. These students had attended urban prep and private schools with large endowments and endless resources. In many of the school districts these participants came from, their counselors and college prep advisors weren't always full-time employees, and sometimes funded by external resources that were subject to change.

Reynaldo attributed his doubts to not being sure what he wanted to his major to be, as well as feeling overwhelmed in general. As a result of this uncertainty, he did not perform well in his classes his first two years, admitting that his doubts got the best of him:

Because I was an undeclared major up until basically the start of this year, it was very

scary. It was very, I guess, uncertain because of that uncertainty. I kept on doubting myself like, I wouldn't do the best in classes. I'm not even going to lie that my freshman and sophomore year grades were not that good. It was just really tough for me. And because I was feeling very overwhelmed. My grades weren't the best. But because of those doubts, because of the classes because of me just not searching out or asking for help, made me doubt myself just so much. I was like, "I'm just like I'm a brown person from a small town like what can I do, you know?"

I immediately wrote this last quote down. The idea that this is how millions of students feel about college is just devastating, especially for someone like me who has been working with this population for nearly two decades. As I spoke with Reynaldo, it was impossible not to detect that he no longer felt that way about himself and his capacity to be successful. However, this did not discount the fact that all over the world there are students who feel this same way and never manage to shift their perspective, for a variety of reasons.

Reynaldo also spoke about being his experiences with imposter syndrome, citing his previous schooling and not being accepted to his initial choice of a major as factors that influenced him feeling not as smart as his UN peers:

The thing that I struggled with up until getting into major that I realized a lot of other people struggle with is imposter syndrome. Because I come from a small town and low income [community], the education system is not the best. I was figuring out like my whole like studying system, or routine. All of that was just very tough; the imposter syndrome was just there. And it was there up until getting into my major because I had already applied once to my major and then they implemented a new rule that you had only two chances to apply. That just made me feel just very behind. But yeah, that whole

imposter thing, it always goes back to that. It just always made me feel like it's just like I'm not as smart; I'm not as good as the other students.

In the interviews with Reynaldo, he came across as motivated and articulate, yet he still felt that he was not as good as the other students. This was hard to hear as I also knew this was not a unique perspective. Many students have felt and continue to feel this way about themselves. It is a challenge to not compare yourself to others. Even I am guilty of this, and I know many colleagues and friends in various professions who regularly question their abilities and knowledge.

Reynaldo saw resilience in himself, and even in a larger sense; it shaped how he viewed the world. These qualities helped him thrive, despite his initial doubts:

Being resilient, being able to be motivated and being okay with things not being okay. It has shaped the lens that I view the world. And just like problem solving skills and a lot of just the ways that I communicate with people, [are other assets]. Also, I am a very compassionate and empathetic person because of being Latinx, because my parents were immigrants. I also learned that the degree doesn't make you; you make the degree.

“The degree doesn’t make you; you make the degree,” is a powerful statement and seemed to be Reynaldo’s takeaway that your experiences and heritage are what makes a college graduate and not the actual degree. This was a meaningful take on the college-going experience.

Flor responded to observing a lack of empathy once she got to college:

I would say empathy, like everyone is very, I guess, not full of themselves, but a little more selfish in a way. And I thought that was really weird, how they weren't more empathetic and sympathetic towards others...it's just really, really weird.

She continued on to describe the experience of being a fish out of water, not using that exact terminology but feeling different from others around her, and in the overall environment. She addressed how standardized testing played a role in her feeling out of place at UN:

I guess I didn't realize like how big of an influence, like an SAT score could be. I wish we had like programs, where we could like study for the SATs and tutors or something. Like I said I wish we had better, higher level classes, like, I really wanted to take a Calculus class, but I didn't have the opportunity. I feel like things like that would have really helped me have a stronger application.

We spoke about the price of ACT/SAT prep courses; how they often cost extra money and could only be done before and after school, when many students are helping their families or working. I recalled wishing I had access to these prep courses, but not having the means in which to do so. Like many students, I had a job as young as 16, working alongside my mother at a hotel as a housekeeper. However, I was not permitted to keep my money, instead turning the majority of it over my dad to pay for household expenses. I always wondered how successful I could have been had I been able to enroll in ACT/SAT prep courses.

Valeria, the owner of a small business that makes bows and other small things, cited her hard work as a strength, as well as being humble, something her parents instilled in her at an early age:

Being a hard worker; I'm a hard worker because I had to learn English when I got here, and I had to always help my siblings and my family. Being Latina and migrant, I've learned to work really hard for what I want, for my dreams and for everything nice. My mom and dad have always supported my needs, but if I want something extra I have to work really hard for it; I think that another thing that I am is humble. Because they [my

parents] always told me, not because we have money or a better situation now, to not act better than others.

Valeria shared the uncertainty around her language abilities and financial concerns:

When I was applying [to college] I was scared of not having enough knowledge of English, just because you know English is my second language, so I just was worried about not able to have friends or not being able to meet new people that could understand me. One of the other things was the financial situation. If I wasn't able to pay back my education or I didn't know what I wanted to study at first."

Her long-time dream of becoming a doctor did not align with the amount of time she wanted to be in school, and therefore changed her focus of study to teaching Spanish. Valeria shared a stark reality of her upbringing; how her family was often apart, due to her dad deportation on more than one occasion.

My dad used to come here [to the U.S], he came here two or three times illegally; for the first time, my mom and I were alone. And then the second time that my dad came, it was my mom, my brother and me, and the third time that he came he was the last time, because he couldn't cross anymore. He got caught by ICE [Immigration Customs Enforcement], three or four times and he decided to go back, because otherwise he wouldn't be able to get residency if, anytime he would be willing to.

I understood this to mean that obstacles she faced UN were nothing compared to what her family had experienced.

Beatriz brought up her resilient work ethic and how it influenced her college-going identity: "I think resilience, like hard work. Like, even though the going gets tough. I can always bounce back. I kind of always know that I was going to go to college."

However, this did not mean her journey was without concerns about the financial aid process, which is common amongst first-generation students.

I mean, it was definitely like the financial thing. Just like going into that was like so hard.

Trying to understand the whole process, I was like, I don't know if I get this. If I don't get help, I don't know about going to be able to afford it. I know that they're asking for this, and I need to fill this out, but I have no idea how and if I don't get these done correctly, then what's going to happen?

In every instance of a substantial obstacle, the participants were able to articulate a strengths or strengths, that helped them to overcome feeling underprepared, their concerns with the cost of higher education, how they would be perceived as Latinx and migrant at a predominantly white campus. In the next section, the participants speak to their experiences in the CAMP program.

#### CAMP: A Safe Place to Make Friends

I had a series of questions that inquired about the support services provided by the UN CAMP program and how these services impacted the college persistence experiences of the study participants. According to the responses, it was evident that the CAMP program staff and services had a positive and lasting impact on all six participants in the study. They detailed their interactions with CAMP during their first year of college, partly attributing their first-year success to the sense of belonging CAMP fostered amongst its participants, as well as the critical services they provided.

Alejandro expressed how CAMP was there to provide him with advising support, as well as guide him in his search for a community:

I was in a program [CAMP], of migrants and Latinx people, because there wasn't very many of us, so I guess. At first, I thought a little bit alone, I was like, "whoa, there's so

few of us." I guess my first year was I was really searching for a community. I had CAMP, but also it was only for one year. I wanted to have a lasting community, like a home away from home with people who could hear my native tongue and understand the sayings and enjoy the cuisine, so I don't feel too homesick. CAMP helped me go through the process of getting pointed to classes and trying to start a community and how to talk to professors, since I didn't know how to do any of that. The CAMP advisor was really useful in helping me register for classes, or just navigating different aspects of university life. I would have struggled a lot more my first year, but my CAMP advisor really helped me to navigate a lot of obstacles that first year. Yeah, he knew a lot of different programs that I didn't know about that I could take advantage of.

I found it to be extraordinary that Alejandro considered the CAMP program at UN to be a home away from home, thus prompting me to title the theme in the manner in which I did.

Beatriz expressed a similar sentiment to Alejandro, sharing that CAMP was especially helpful in connecting her with students such as herself, first-generation, Latinx, and migrant: Being a first-generation student, CAMP also helped a lot with just kind of understanding the whole university system and understanding how to use my resources available to me.

I think I've always felt very welcome. Being in the CAMP program and being able to see that there are more Latinx at UN, because I feel like if I wasn't in CAMP, I wouldn't be able to see or be in that community as easily. But I feel like CAMP really, really helped with that and forming that Latinx community that I wanted. And it made me feel at home.

Aurora shared that she struggled with homesickness and whether UN was the place for her. CAMP was able to ease her mind by supporting her in a variety of ways, and being one of the reasons that she decided to remain enrolled at UN:

Oh my god [CAMP] helped me so much. Honestly, I felt like that was one of the other big reasons why I decided to stay. I kind of I didn't really have anyone to ask about those questions until I got to CAMP, and it was more like [redacted] and [redacted], who helped me more, and like, what do you do when this happens and how do you not feel so homesick. And the ones who I will go to for like those like essential questions. I think, besides just like CAMP, there's not really much there. I just think like there were so many things that were incorporated in CAMP, for example, the whole CAMP class, even like just eating Mexican snacks or something. It was just like the it was just so jam packed with things that were valuable not just with academics, but also just life.

What struck me in Aurora's response was how something so small, like sharing Mexican snacks with the other CAMP students, was enough to help her feel less homesick. This makes me think that sometimes support programs go out of their way to create larger experiences for students, like trips and ceremonies, when simple gestures like snacks and food can be more than enough for some students. Aurora also recalled how the CAMP staff helped her to normalize feelings of imposter syndrome:

I would hear like comments, from people who were mad, who would say, "You only got into UN because you're Mexican, and they needed diversity." So, I always internalized that, and I had a lot of imposter syndrome. And it was CAMP staff telling me that it's fine to have doubts and imposter syndrome or even me feeling comfortable to go to staff and tell them, like I feel like I don't belong and them knowing what to tell me to tell me.

I shared with Aurora that even at the stage I was at, finishing a terminal degree, imposter syndrome did not just dissipate. In fact, it was even more present at times. I thought it was simply remarkable that the CAMP staff was able to normalize imposter syndrome amongst their

student participants. I wished everyone would freely acknowledge and discuss imposter syndrome. This would certainly put a great number of students at ease.

Reynaldo's appreciation of the benefits that CAMP provided centered around the overall resources they offered their participants, such as advising support:

Being able to have an advisor specifically for CAMP students was super huge because when I signed up for classes, the CAMP advisor was also there helping. I had never signed up for classes before; I wasn't sure what was going on. There was this whole advising session during orientation dedicated to signing up for classes and people were just signing up for whatever. But when I sat down with my CAMP advisor, we were able to talk a little bit about my interests, which was very important to the classes that I was taking. They [CAMP staff] were very supportive. They would make an effort to let us know, "Hey, we can be a resource to you. And if you get to know us, we can write like a letter of recommendation for you and we can do all these things for you." All you have to do is reach out, you know; they would make a really huge effort to let us know that it's just, like, we are here for resources, but we can also be here to just talk and be there. And another thing is that like CAMP sometimes provides scholarships funds for those students that really need it. And although I never got to the point that I needed them, thankfully that was a resource that if I ever needed it, if fellow students from the cohort needed it as well, it was there and it was an option.

Navigating a complex and nuanced general education curriculum is no easy feat; it can be overwhelming. Course registration can be contingent on elements like standardized tests and placement exam scores. Not everyone understands this process and I can appreciate how difficult students often find it to be.

Flor recalled her time in CAMP as being especially valuable, due to the friendships with like individuals she was able to cultivate:

CAMP is basically how I made, like all my friends. Being in CAMP and having similar backgrounds to the other students, it was nice to relate to them, so I guess it made it really a safe space to make friends and interact with people. The stipend helped a lot because, like I said I was like sending money to my parents; there is a financial need because it's also so new, handling my own expenses and whatnot. I don't know if it is CAMP specific, but the staff [was a positive]. I still talk to [redacted], to this day, yeah and so it's just really nice I don't know they just seemed really friendly and really welcoming.

Flor is talked about a stipend issued by the CAMP program to help offset costs associated with attending college. These stipends, typically issued monthly in the form of a check or direct deposit, are often the only “income” some students have their first year.

Valeria’s experience with CAMP helped her to adapt to her surroundings as she shared that she didn’t know campus or the area the university was located in. CAMP also connected Valeria to other helpful resources, as CAMP itself is only a first-year program.

From my experience, I would say UN gave us a lot of opportunities as a migrant student and a Latinx person. And I remember that when I got to UN, I was really scared because I didn't know anything about the UN campus, I didn't know the city or where to go or anything like that. I remember that when I got into CAMP I start talking to [redacted] and the other staff. And they were really helpful for me. I would say CAMP contributed a lot to what I was doing, my first-year experience and especially my academic success. I was always supported by them (CAMP). They helped me find my

classes, they taught me how to find each one of them and what kind of things I needed to do. They helped me to find requirements I needed for my major or my intended major. And learn what kind of things I should do to achieve academic success. The UN CAMP staff also helped me because they were always calling me to check on me how I was doing if I needed anything. If I needed anything, if my papers were getting done, if I was getting done what I needed to get done. They would always ask me how I was doing.

Valeria continues on to share how CAMP helped her to connect with other resources on campus:

And the other thing is that they opened doors to more resources. They knew that they weren't going to be able to help me all the time, so they introduced me to all these places that I could go to improve with my reading and writing. I was scared that after I had been in CAMP, I wasn't going to be able to survive on my own on campus.

Not only did Valeria survive on her own after CAMP, she was paired up with a Latinx advisor for her second year and she was able to establish a meaningful connection with that individual as well.

The only feedback for the CAMP program was shared by Alejandro:

I think the only thing I found lacking was just like there is times where I felt like, since it was just 50 students, that I didn't know all of them. And after the program was over, we never really got that sense of community. And I think the staff could have maybe started community building earlier because when they started doing, I thought that at times, it was already too late.

### Conclusion

The stories of the study participants, told in their own voices, was ultimately the focus of this phenomenological research study. Latinx migrant students are not proportionately

acknowledged in research. This was a significant reason behind why I chose to conduct this study. My main research goal was to learn about the complex experiences of Latinx migrant students as they transitioned into post-secondary education and navigated a college environment for the first time.

Over the course of sixteen interviews, the six participants shared their perceptions, beliefs, doubts, and impressions about their first year of college. These findings provided an in-depth look at what Latinx migrant students value in a college experience and what the main driving forces were behind their persistence. Much can be learned from this data and in the next chapter, I will discuss implications for future research and limitations of this study.

## Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the college persistence experiences of Latinx migrant student participants of the CAMP program as they navigated oppressive systems of higher education. Using funds of knowledge as a theoretical lens, this chapter provides a discussion of the findings as well as the study's guiding research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and strengths of the study, implications for research, and personal reflections by the researcher. The guiding research questions were: (1) What are the college persistence experiences of Latinx CAMP students? and (2) In what ways are the cultural assets of Latinx CAMP students acknowledged and valued within higher education?

### Problem Statement Revisited

In order to set the foundation for the discussion of this study, it is necessary to revisit the problem statement, which focused on and elevated the voices of a population often silenced, Latinx migrant students. More specifically, this study intended to explore their experiences in higher education, understanding their motivations, stressors, and reasons for persistence. While migrant students are given more than a cursory look in research, documented approaches to fostering academic success among this population falls short. One text on facilitating farmworker success reveals that “despite growing educational research on migrant farmworker students in the U.S., a comprehensive body of research providing pragmatic strategies for academic success among migrant farmworker students has yet to emerge” (Zarate et al., 2017, p. 1).

The ultimate goal for the information that we collect about this growing population is to inform current practices and ideally lead to enhanced supports at the secondary and college level,

thereby resulting in a more diverse workforce. “As more and more Latino/a students attend college, practitioners will need to understand both their personal and academic needs in order to serve the whole student” (Torres, 2004, p. 467).

### Interpretation of the Findings

The seven themes that emerged during the data analysis process were identified based on three main factors: how often the theme was brought up, how many of the participants brought it up, as well as the depth and quality of the conversation that accompanied each theme. This process will be discussed in detail in the next several sections.

#### *It Takes a Village: The Support of *La Familia* and *Comunidad**

Family has been established as an important aspect of Latinos’ identities and lived experiences (Martinez et al., 2012). It was determined early in the interview process that the role of *la familia*, or the family, also fulfilled a critical role during the college decision making process, as shared by all six participants. When the topic of family arose, the participants shared they all felt supported, in some capacity, by their respective familial units. However, it was also understood that the level of support the participants’ parents were able to offer was somewhat limited in terms of the support associated with the standard college preparation. One study on familial influences found “almost all of the students stated that their parents were supportive of them being in college, yet the majority also expressed that their parents did not understand what it was like for them to be college” (Torres, 2004, p. 463). Ultimately with these series of questions, I wanted to uncover whether these six participants received support from their *familia* (family) and *comunidad* (community), to what extent and in what capacity, this support was provided. The next two sections will provide more discussion around the roles of these role in the college-going process, as shared by the six study participants.

This sentiment about family support was expressed throughout the discussion about family. It wasn't so much that the participants' parents did not support them; it was more that the support was limited by the lack of information their parents had access to regarding higher education. By default, it became the students' responsibility to filter the correct information back to their parents. This can be a significant amount of pressure on first-generation students.

Mainly, what I gathered from speaking with the participants about familial engagement and involvement, was that the support that the participants described may have differed greatly from what other non-Latinx migrant students have access to, but it was more than enough for them. Parents of first-generation students can instill in their children the expectation of attending college and can provide encouragement and emotional support (Dennis et al., 2005). I want to stress that the support first-generation, students of color receive from their *familia* is not necessarily a lesser quality; rather the support is just different in nature. I also want to recall that this notion of *familia* does not just refer to immediate family, but extended networks (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015; Dagle-Matos, 2015).

One study found that despite their parents not having a formal education, it did not influence the moral support the student received from parents and extended family (Dagle-Matos, 2015). While one of the participants, Flor, felt that her parents were "not very interested" in her college experience, she did point out that her dad drove her to campus and then drove her car back home, as it was too cost-prohibitive to keep a car on campus. However, in this context, Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, and Valeria did not just speak to the support they received from their family, but also cited family as their *number one motivation* for attending college. They also felt that attending college and obtaining a degree was ultimately going to improve the lives of themselves and their family. It is evident in the research on first-generation Latinx

students that this notion of family as motivation is commonplace. I should note that because I have been working with this population for so many years, I did not find the students' perspectives on family to be especially unique or unusual; over the years I have come to understand that this ideal of *familia* means something different for Latinx students than for their non-Latinx peers.

This concept of *familia* made me think about the offerings at most colleges and universities, specifically at new student orientations held annually, and how the concept of family did not always align with the agenda of said event. As one staff member from my institution put it, "When Latinx students come to events, they bring the whole family." And this was true; it was very common to see a White student with one or both parents, (although if the student was accompanied by just one parent, it was typically the mother), but when Latinx CAMP students came to orientation, they would often be accompanied by both parents, sometimes grandparents, aunts or uncles, and several siblings. One study aptly described this notion in these terms:

When some students left for college, they literally brought their entire family with them, an entourage that consisted of grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and friends. Probing further as to what family members did on "move-in day," I was told that family members did everything from re-clean the dorm room with cleaning products from home to displaying a crucifix in the room. (Dagle-Matos, 2015, p. 443)

Occasionally at my institution, a CAMP student would be accompanied by one of their siblings, but more often, the entire family unit came, further demonstrating just how important family is within the Latinx community. This also meant that the CAMP students' families would have to take off time from their agricultural jobs to attend the orientation; therefore, they had to choose

between attending the orientation or not making any money those days, if they were even given the time off. Later on in this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between migrant systems and the pervasive structures of higher education.

The conventional structure and format of events like the new student orientations held in the summer at my institution pose a problem for many monolingual Spanish speakers, which the parents of first-generation Latinx migrant students often are. It quickly became problematic when the orientation programming prompted students to separate from their families. This was why the siblings came, to assist with translation. However, sometimes the younger siblings were too young to help translate the complicated terms often used in higher education. So, it came down to the student having to choose whether to escort their family to the various workshops on financial aid, campus safety, housing, and wellness, or go off on their own and attempt to exercise their independence and establish peer connections.

I remember thinking that this dynamic, while accepted by majority of folks, was problematic and wondered what steps colleges would take to address this blatant inequity. How could colleges and universities ensure all families feel not just welcomed but included? Can we, as educators, continue to maintain the expectation that every family unit functions in the exact same way and require their attendance at these events, which almost always take place during the summer harvest?

These are just some of the ways that higher education is not as welcoming and inclusive as it is often purports to be. Obviously, hiring more bilingual staff was going to be critical in this specific circumstance. But whose responsibility was this to make it happen and how soon would real change take place once action was taken? I will elaborate more on implementing necessary change in the recommendations for higher education administrators' section.

Most individuals received guidance in applying to college by someone other than a family member, whether from a friend or peer, a school counselor, teacher, or community member. Students need letters of recommendation, guidance in filling out college applications, scholarships, and the ever-important financial aid application; they often look to support within their community.

Unsurprisingly, most of the participants were assisted by their secondary school staff and faculty in some capacity, some more than others. Beatriz initially shared that felt her high school pushed her too much towards community college. She expressed that it was fine for her peers to enroll in the local community college, but she already knew wanted to go to a four-year university, specifically UN. However, her school officials continuing to nudge her towards community college. Beatriz had also mentioned that it was often a challenge for her to locate her guidance counselor and ask for help. Yet, somehow despite these challenges, Beatriz made it to the UN. Of course, I wondered, had Beatriz had not been as fiercely independent and determined, the outcome could have been much different. I would like to note that Beatriz's case was unique, at least with regards to this group of six students. Most of the other students fared quite well in their respective high school climates.

Aurora had an opposite experience to Beatriz; she felt her school focused too much on four-year institutions, yet she was also able to connect with a counselor from a support program that provided the much-needed guidance that Beatriz's experience lacked. Aurora attributed much of her success to this individual, stating that she would not have made it to college without the assistance of this person. Recalling the literature, mentoring provides encouragement, something many Latinx migrant students are lacking in their lives, as well as facilitates academic and social integration of Latinx students (Torres & Hernandez, 2009).

This notion of not being able to make it without “this person” or “that program” was shared amongst many of the participants. But as the participants elaborated more on their path to college, their success seemed to be a direct result of the steps they had taken and the decisions they had made. One study on ethnic minority first-generation students determined that the personal motivation of the student was a strong predictor of successful outcomes in college (Dennis et al., 2005).

I have had so many students over the years tell my staff and I that they could not have made it without our program support. About two years ago, I received an email message from a CAMP student who was graduating and wanted to tell me how grateful she was for our program’s services and staff support. I replied back that she was very welcome, but that her achievements were due to her own abilities. I would never take credit for the success of our CAMP students. We can assign them mentors, sign them up for individual tutoring, provide them with leadership development opportunities and financial support, but we cannot, of course, take their classes or do their work.

Reynaldo’s situation was unique in that he had support in multiple areas of his life. He connected not just with teachers from his school, but his church youth pastors, one of whom worked at the school. Ultimately, he received support from these individuals, and felt empowered that they actually believed both in him and his ability to succeed.

Valeria also expressed that a teacher encouraged her to attend a local community college, as again, it was their personal belief that it would be “better for her” to do so. However, Valeria shared this story, and many other stories, with an incredibly positive attitude. She also didn’t let these individuals change her mind in any way. She had decided on attending UN, and that’s what she ended up doing.

When peer influence, often referred to as peer pressure, is discussed, it is almost always perceived as negative, the convincing by others to drink, smoke, or to bully. However, when considering the support Latinx migrant students received from their family unit and school officials, I was intrigued as to whether the participants were also influenced by their peers and friends and peers to attend college.

While Beatriz, Alejandro, and Flor all shared that seeing friends and peers apply for college was motivation for them to apply as well, it did seem to help them observe similarly aged individuals forge the same path as them; it did not necessarily appear that the influence of friends and peers was a significant reason they chose to pursue post-secondary education.

#### I am Latinx: First-Generation Latinx Pride

When considering questions for the interview process, I was driven to understand how the participant's identity, specifically, how being Latinx and migrant influenced the participants interactions in college. Not wanting to reduce their identities to Latinx, migrant and first-generation, I did ask if they had any other intersecting identities they wanted to share, such as differently abled or LGBTQIA. However, none of the participants offered any other identities.

What the participants did share about their pride centered around two prevalent identities, being Latinx and a first-generation college student. Despite revealing that they felt pride at their accomplishments, there was little boasting or bragging in their statements. Valeria captured this well when she stated that despite pursuing a college education at a notable institution, her humble roots has prepared her to never act any better than anyone else. Valeria really embodied this notion of being rich with family and culture.

While Reynaldo felt strongly that a son of Latinx immigrants was what empowered him, this notion did not occur to him initially: "At first, I didn't pay much attention to my identity, or I

guess I didn't know what power there is in one's identity." He continues to say that he felt pride at being the son of immigrants and thereby, this became the lens in which he viewed the world.

Aurora was the only participant who shared that she felt that being educated somehow meant she was not the same as others who identified the same way she did: "I feel like sometimes I felt like I was like less Mexican, because now I was educated." I found this statement to be especially compelling because what Aurora is saying is that she associated *being Mexican* with *being uneducated*. I have to admit that this correlation was devastating to hear and not something any of the other participants shared.

### The Role of Cultural Assets in Overcoming Obstacles

I knew that it would be near impossible to talk about going to college without discussing the obstacles students face. I found that as the students shared, the three themes that stood out were self-doubt, financial concerns, and imposter syndrome. I will discuss each theme below.

The participants spoke about experiencing self-doubt before even getting to college, when the self-doubt evolved into imposter syndrome, which will be discussed a little later. Alejandro shared his uncertainty about being successful:

I think there was a point where I was unsure that I was going to survive my first year, since it was so difficult the first quarter. And I failed. Well not, failed, but I got really terrible grades my first quarter at UN. I was really feeling deflated; I had wanted to be a software developer, but how am I supposed to apply to the computer sciences major when I got really terrible grades in the introductory courses?

As shared by the participants in the previous chapter, financial concerns were seemingly the most prevalent obstacle for these participants. Mahaffy and Pantoja (2012) conducted a needs assessment on Latinx students and found that a significant barrier was financial: "Financial

assistance can make the difference between staying at the university and dropping out” (p. 366).

All six participants mentioned finances in some capacity or another, whether related to the application process or when they arrived to campus. During this topic, it became clear that the participants did not want to burden themselves or their families with the financial debt that college entailed. This was almost too much for these participants to endure.

What I found during the discussions on imposter syndrome, was that experiencing these feelings did not stop the students from doing what they had set out to do. Factors that may influence the imposter syndrome in college students is their ethnic identity and whether they are a first-generation college student as well (Peteet et al., 2015). So, it comes as no real surprise that a first generation Latinx migrant may experience imposter syndrome, and that these pervasive thoughts may affect their college experiences. As Aurora shared, it got so bad that she was, “bawling my eyes out like I'm not supposed to be here.” This is compelling for many reasons, despite prevalent feelings of imposter syndrome, the participants managed to overcome them and thrive. None of the participants left due to feelings of imposter syndrome; in fact, it appeared to serve as more motivation to work hard and succeed.

When I asked the participants to speak to the strengths they brought with them to college, many of the participants uttered the phrase that most qualitative researchers hope to avoid: the ubiquitous “I don't know.” Wanting to use this stage of the interview process to capture how the participants viewed their culture as an asset; I asked about things like family, language, and food. For the sake of this line of inquiry, I defined “an asset” as a useful or valuable quality that made them stronger, or more prepared to face obstacles. I elaborated that could be something they had learned or been taught, was an inherent part of their upbringing, or a combination of these. This explanation helped them to further articulate what they felt was their cultural strengths or assets.

It is important to note that they did not associate these strengths as being cultural; this was the label I provided, based on the nature of the qualities they discussed, of which I will discuss here.

Half of the participants, three in total, talked about resilience as being something they embraced after being exposed to it at a young age. Beatriz equated resilience to the ability to “bounce back.” She explained it as “when the going got tough,” she was able to endure during the less than perfect circumstances. Regarding the concept of resilience, Aurora explained that she watched her mom work in the *empaque* (packing warehouse) for many years and never gave up. She took the notion of resilience to heart when she was considering leaving the UN due to the pervasive feelings of homesickness she was experiencing. She felt that sharing these with her mother almost seemed like a betrayal, after her mom worked so hard for her to get to college. Reynaldo described his resilience as being “okay with not being okay,” which I found was a rather profound way of describing resilience.

I want to be sure to mention here that resilience is often regarded as a definitive path to success; however, what I have discovered over the years is that when it comes to Latinx migrant students, success hinges on much more than solely on how resilient one is. I think assigning resilience as the critical ingredient is a disservice to students who can be extremely resilient but have other barriers to pursuing, and being successful in, post-secondary education.

Another cultural asset expressed and shared by several of the participants was their work ethic. As demonstrated in the literature, migrant students are no strangers to hard work and encounter obstacles that their other non-migrant peers do not. “Children of migrant workers are often impacted by poverty, relocation, isolation and at times, a lack of understanding and flexibility from rigid school cultures” (Jasis & González, 2017, p. 52). Alejandro felt his work

ethic and motivation influenced his college persistence; the most prevailing one being his role as the first in his family and one of very few in his community to obtain a college degree.

This made complete sense to me after conducting all the interviews of the participants.

They truly represented much more than themselves and immediate family, even when away from their families. They saw themselves as examples of the larger Latinx migrant community, pursuing a college education as few before them had, but hopefully more will, as increased attention and focus is given to equity and access for populations like Latinx migrant students.

#### The CAMP Program: A Safe Place

When asking the participants to reflect on their community and various supports their freshman year, they spoke a lot about the connections they established through the CAMP program, which provided services and resources to them through the completion of thirty-six college credits. They also spoke about feeling comfortable in working the staff, the access to services and appreciation for events and activities sponsored by the UN CAMP program.

The participants shared that the spaces they were able to access, namely the campus's Ethnic Cultural Center, made them feel more at home than other spaces on campus. However, regarding campuses that boast a diverse student life, Yosso et al. (2009) argued that "the contradiction of universities celebrate diversity with ethnic food and fiestas while failing to provide equal access and opportunity to Students of Color" (p. 664).

Latinx migrant students are expected to navigate a college system, a system built on exclusionary practices, with little to no college preparation, and limited access to resources in their respective communities and families and achieve academic success. It is truly no wonder that students from certain backgrounds are not always successful right off the bat. Compound this climate with racial microaggressions often found at PWIs, and institutions of higher

education across the country see students of color departing at a rapid rate. “Very little research qualitatively examines how racial microaggressions shape a negative campus racial climate” (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 661). A microaggression can be described as “the set of beliefs and/or ideologies that justify actual or potential social arrangements that legitimate the interests and/or positions of a dominant group over non-dominant groups, that in turn lead to related structures and acts of subordination” (Pérez Huber & Solarzano, 2014, p. 7).

It was determined that quite simply, the CAMP program held a unique role in the persistence of these six participants, as all of them concluded that being in the program helped to facilitate their academic success. “It also was a place students felt comfortable going for any issue; the role of CAMP was critical for most students” (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004, p. 19) One study concluded that a sense of belonging was very nuanced and complex and overt and subtle forms of exclusion in college can hinder their development of a sense of belonging to university communities complex (Nuñez, 2009).

While not many studies focus solely on the CAMP program, the ones that do exist have found that CAMP provides a home away from home (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004; Mendez & Bauman, 2018). And even further, “The CAMP program itself utilized similar notions of *familia* to break the practice of ‘manufacturing sameness’ typically experienced by students in the freshmen year (Cranston-Gingras et al., 2004). One piece of feedback that the participants provided was that wished that the program lasted beyond the first year. I was able to provide some insight into the federal legislation behind CAMP and the subsequent provisions set forth by the government, including participant eligibility and terms of service.

## Implications for Theory and Research

Chapter Two outlined the theoretical framework used in this study, funds of knowledge.

In the next section will address the way funds of knowledge were used as lens to explore the data findings discussed in the previous sections.

### Funds of Knowledge and Latinx Migrant Students

The cultural assets that Latinx migrant students bring to college was a focus of this research study and came up frequently throughout the participant interviews. However, throughout the discussions, similar to the earlier mention of oppressive systems, the participants did not refer to their strengths as cultural assets. I labeled these particular strengths in this manner, as they proved to be congruent with the funds of knowledge framework. Leading funds of knowledge theorists Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2018) posited:

Our concern is that the field of higher education is perpetuating the idea that under-represented students (and their families and communities) are lacking or deficient simply because they are not doing what “successful” students do. Since this is the lens through which services, programs and policies were and are created, it is no wonder why participation, retention and graduation rates remain painfully low for under-represented college students around the country. (p. 4)

One of the challenges is that Latinx migrant students are commonly regarded as “less than” in academic spaces, their background and experiences disregarded. They are often placed into ESL classes, despite many of them being born in the U.S., rather than integrated into general population of students. They are then denied the opportunity to participate in courses that are required for college enrollment. Therefore, this demographic of students is being set up to be unsuccessful early on in their post-secondary pursuits. Students in marginalized communities

have the most disproportionate opportunities to access higher education (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012). Colleges may have offer diverse programming and resources, but if the access to their institutions is limited, the diversity they boast is near meaningless.

Funds of knowledge recognizes the talents and abilities of Latinx migrant students. FK changes the narrative of how educational knowledge and culture is valued (Kiyama, 2018). With this notion in mind, I would venture that Latinx migrant students are rich in cultural knowledge and experiences for these reasons: they often travel from place to place, and therefore see many regions and landscapes, speak more than one language, know about agriculture and ecosystems, frequently live multi-generationally, and often, have strong ties to their history and heritage, extended family networks, and their surrounding communities. And yet, terminology such as “at-risk,” “academically deficient,” and “in need” is frequently used to refer to Latinx migrant students. In the next section, I will address each of the research questions in this study.

#### Research Questions Revisited

##### **What are the college persistence experiences of Latinx CAMP students?**

It is imperative to address the research questions at this point in the study. It is evident that the study participants—Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, Flor, and Valeria—first-generation students from rural communities, faced adversity, a lack of academic capital in their families and rural home communities, varying levels of support from their secondary school systems, and in some circumstances, experienced feelings of guilt and homesickness—have managed to persist and remain enrolled at UN.

In conducting the interviews with the participants, I was most interested to hear about their personal experiences, specifically, how much of their educational experiences were shaped by their upbringing, their personal motivations to attend college, their exposure to college

campuses, the support and guidance they received, as well as the influence of the campus climate and offerings of UN. Finally, I was compelled to understand the role of the CAMP program in these experiences. As exhibited earlier in the literature, CAMP provided comfort, stability and safety for migrant students, of any ethnicity, as they transitioned from rural high schools to campuses of all size and locations.

I also came to understand during the interview process that the participants' experiences were influenced almost entirely by whether their immediate needs were being met. UN seemed to meet their needs in many ways, creating an environment in which these participants were afforded. One study that examined the needs of Latinx students concluded that "the type of institution that Latina/o students attended had an effect on their graduation rates" (Mahaffy & Pantoja, 2012, p. 361). However, I would also like to dissect this notion a bit further and commend the participants who are the true successes.

When these participants arrived at the UN, they had already faced and addressed many of the challenges that many Latinx migrant students experience, especially those students who identify as first-generation. They had made the decision to embark on a lesser traveled path in their communities, sought relevant guidance and support from the appropriate individuals, made plans to leave their families and friends, applied for housing, financial aid, and many scholarships. I know I am not alone when I contend that their efforts should be both recognized and celebrated.

I am not by any means minimizing or reducing the college experiences of these students, but it could be argued that by the time Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, Flor, and Valeria got to the UN campus, they had already overcome some of the most challenging elements of the college enrollment process. Then, once on campus, they became participants of the CAMP

program, found peers with similar backgrounds, and ultimately forged their own path for success. Now, one might be wondering, what is considered successful? I would define success as not just persisting and graduating, but also integrating into campus life, a sense of belonging, and feeling socially and academically enriched.

One could say that grades and GPA are the best example of success; however, I would argue that there are other ways in which we can, and should, define success, especially for underserved populations, such as migrant students. In the next section, I will discuss the ways in which the participants' cultural assets are regarded within higher education environment.

### **In what ways are the cultural assets of Latinx CAMP students acknowledged and valued within higher education?**

When I began this study, I knew I wanted to explore the notion of deficit perspectives often used in reference to the Latinx migrant student population. As I have detailed throughout this study, the asset-based funds of knowledge framework allowed me to examine in great detail how these participants regarded their own cultural strengths as they maneuvered the oppressive waters of a post-secondary institution in an urban environment. I concluded that when students did encounter obstacles, they were able to address it using their cultural knowledge and strengths, with a much more positive outlook than I think many would be able to, including myself.

In the case of Valeria being worried about not being able to connect with her peers due to her limited grasp of English (her phrasing). However, not only was she able to make friends; she viewed her white classmates as helpful and considerate of her situation. I saw this as a cultural strength, for these reasons: Valeria had worked alongside her mom in Mexico, witnessed the deportation of her father, and despite these obstacles, persevered and pursued post-secondary

opportunities. She was able to be the only “brown girl,” without it affecting her, in her classes, as this was not even close to the worst thing she had experienced.

Earlier I discussed how the participants exhibited their cultural assets in times of uncertainty. But could things have turned out differently if these assets were not utilized when needed? For example, what if Aurora had not inherited or adapted to her mom’s resilience as an *empaque* worker, and given into her very real and extreme feelings of homesickness? Would she have left UN and gone back to her hometown, without her degree? And was it the feelings of guilt she experienced enough to keep her enrolled at UN, or was it simply her ability to face obstacles and understand that while anxiety invoking, they were temporary and able to be overcome? Additional studies could provide further insight into circumstances where students were not able to call upon or rely on their much-needed cultural assets.

#### Limitations and Strengths

It is important to acknowledge both the limitations and strengths of any research study. Starting with the strengths, the connection I already had to this population of students only served my capacity and desire to listen passionately and intently. This was not a population I was just learning about, after or even during coursework. Latinx migrant students are a demographic with which I am well acquainted and have been for quite some time. I also felt that having only six participants allowed me to really become intimate with the data, listening to the interviews and re-reading the transcripts after each interview had concluded.

Another notable strength was that during the data collection process, I truly felt I was conducting a research study that could serve a meaningful purpose. “Qualitative methodology can provide knowledge that targets societal issues, questions or problems and therefore serves humankind” (Tracy, 2020, p. 7). It would be my greatest wish to serve humankind with the

findings of this research study. At the very least, I can shed light on the experiences of students often slighted in academic spaces.

It goes without saying that no research study is flawless. In that vein, there were some limitations with this study, one of them being the way in which the interviews were conducted. I would offer that while I felt the recruitment process went as best as it could, seeing as we were in the middle national pandemic, I really would have liked to conduct the interviews in person. I don't know if this would have improved the interview process, but I still would have liked to be on the UN's campus, met the participants in person, and observed them in their collegiate environment.

In addition, while the three-pronged interview approach (Seidman, 2019) seemed like the most organized and effective way to conduct the interviews, I found that not every participant needed three interviews. In fact, two interviews would have been fine for the majority of the participants. I attempted to adhere to the three-part interview process as much as possible, but as I revealed in Chapter Three, I conducted only two interviews for two of the six participants. I also felt that the wording of my questions in my interview protocol weren't always the easiest for the students to understand. I found myself having to explain the questions, which made for a somewhat clunky exchange.

I also identified students who had once been in the CAMP program but were for the most part upperclassmen; several of them were about to be seniors. However, I was inquiring about their first year, which for some was several years ago. This made some of their experiences a challenge to remember, as they were not exactly recent. I do feel that technology has led to our brain capacity being less available, as we rely on our devices to remember many things for us.

## My Research Journey: Personal Reflections

Reflecting on my research journey could fill up another hundred pages; however, I will do my best to unpack this notion of personal reflections briefly. I started this process like many doctoral candidates probably do: hopeful, overwhelmed, and ultimately on a path of self-discovery. Like many researchers before me, I landed on a topic that I found compelling but also knew some things about. Discovering Latinx migrant students' motivations, stressors, and personal stories and perspectives was something I always knew I wanted to focus on. I also truly believed their stories should be shared. Ultimately, I wanted to give voice to Latinx migrant students. Then reality set in and, with it, confusion, imposter syndrome, and the always present tendency to procrastinate, something I was often guilty of throughout the process. I quickly learned that there was plenty I did not know about Latinx migrant students and more importantly, how they perceived the world around them. I read many, many books, under the auspice of being inspired; however, in retrospect, it could have just been added to my procrastination. I also declined to remove myself from the other activities I enjoyed, serving on boards and councils, reviewing grant proposals, and serving as a mentor for new federal program directors.

As an introvert, I also had the assumption that the interview process would not be the enjoyable experience I ultimately found it to be. As one qualitative researcher suggested (Tracy, 2020), "Keeping yourself vibrant as a researcher can be a challenge" (p. 117). I anticipated struggling to maintain a certain level of energy. However, the opposite occurred. I found myself looking forward to the interviews and felt like I was really got to know participants, despite having never met them until the first interview. If I could describe the research process in three words, I would have to say it was *exhilarating, fulfilling, and anxiety inducing*.

I, of course, considered the effect my role as a long-time migrant education practitioner could have on the research process. Early on, I even worried that my tendency to assume a CAMP administrator role would cloud the interactions between the participants and me. However, I can honestly say that it really had little to no bearing on the interview process. In fact, I often forgot my role as we spoke. I would hope that the participants would hold the same belief, that they did feel that my professional role permeated any aspect of the interviews.

The research process was not without its hiccups, as the national COVID-19 pandemic hit, I was paralyzed with fear. I worried that I wouldn't be able to focus on the task at hand, which was to sufficiently collect and analyze the research data. I was worried I would be placing undue burden on students who were dealing with their own struggles and maybe could not find the time to spend several hours talking to me. I also began the interviews in December, which is not exactly a great time for college students to step away from their studies. The calendar year is winding down and students are busy with holidays plans and wrapping up the quarter/semester. Several of the participants mentioned how busy they were prepping for finals, and I know that the time spent on these conversations with me, while not too much of a time commitment, was still time they could have been spent doing a variety of other things.

If I could summarize the interview process, I would frame it like this: I asked questions, I listened, I talked, I absorbed, and I wrote. I attempted to find meaning. I pored over articles, books, and other publications I thought would aid in my study. I talked to folks in the field, those who had been through this process and those who were going through it. I asked more questions, generated themes, and then revised all of those themes. I saw few friends and family as COVID-19 infiltrated all our lives and I became very careful with my social activities, reducing them to

hardly anything. However, because of this change in lifestyle, I was afforded the opportunity to live and breathe this research study.

I will be forever grateful to my participants—Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, Flor and Valeria—for taking the time out of their extremely busy schedules to meet with me and share their stories. These stories were not always sunshine and roses. I can only hope I was able to sufficiently elevate their voices throughout this study as these individuals truly deserve nothing less than that.

#### Implications for Practice

The essence of most research studies is how to use the findings to effectively inform practice. Due to the inequities that exist, there are students who are not permitted the same educational access and opportunities as other students. This has more to do with the reality these students face and less to do with their intellectual prowess. Other students, more than likely, have come from college educated parents, socio-economic advantages and have and access to resources like college and test preparatory courses, just to name a few.

This is where, in my opinion, the widely regarded grit argument holds little water. Grit does not help you pay for things; it doesn't make parents any more able to help their first-generation students apply to college, and it certainly does not make you any more prepared for difficult courses. In the next several sections, I will discuss the impact of migrant systems not aligning with the expectations of higher education, as well as recommendations for policy makers, migrant educators, post-secondary administrators, and the CAMP program.

#### Migrant Systems and Higher Education

It is important to make mention of migrant systems and how they are often in direct conflict of the long-established structures of higher education. At its very core, the nature of

migrant work is unbelievably demanding and inflexible. Yet, higher education fails to complex backgrounds of migrant students.

I recall a time when the former admissions director at my institution asked me about a CAMP student's transcript. The student had been denied admission to the university and I was advocating on their behalf. The director wondered how the student could possibly have failed Spanish when on their application they had indicated it was the language most often spoken at home. I explained that, as best I could, that just because Spanish was their native language, it did not automatically mean they would perform well in the course; after all, did everyone whose native language was English always do well in their English classes? Language classes were much more than just the language itself. I also pointed out that the semester they had not done well in Spanish, they had not done well in their other courses.

In fact, their transcripts told a story, a story that a person familiar with this population understood immediately. This was the time during while the family was moving, possibly as much as weekly from one place to another. The nature of migrant work does not allow for the children of migrant workers to be as dedicated to their studies as their non-migrant peers. Jasis and González (2017) reported that “relocation, particularly if it is a regular occurrence, results in discontinuity in education, which causes migrant students to progress slowly through school and often drop out at a much higher rate than their non-migrant peers” (p. 52). They continue on to share that the constant moving of a migrant family impacts their ability to establish lasting friendships with their peers, which results in feelings of isolation (Jasis & González, 2017). We are all aware of what isolation does a person.

Farmworkers put food on our tables, on everyone's tables. Yet, the structures in higher education are as inequitable as ever. Case in point, the summer orientations I mentioned

previously: These mandatory events sometimes last multiples days and are held in the summer, during very demanding harvest times. Agricultural workers can put in twelve-to-sixteen-hour days, sometimes more, leaving no time to attend their child's orientations. Often, this work schedule precludes the student from attending pre-college events held in summer as they are expected to help run the household while the parents are at work. I have encountered countless students who do attend orientation, only to leave as soon as they are able to register for classes. I have also had to work with housing administrators to ensure students who are unable to attend are receiving the proper credit, arguing that it isn't the students' fault they cannot attend.

#### Recommendations for K-12 Migrant Educators

The federal government initiated the Migrant Education Program (MEP) in the 1960s, which has since played a pivotal role in the educational lives of many migrant and seasonal agricultural communities across the U.S. (Jasis & González, 2017). Similar to CAMP, MEP was designed to support migratory children education programs through the delivery of high-quality services and programs, to ensure migratory children are not penalized by disparities in academic standards in the form of curriculum, and graduation requirements as they move across states (Zarate et al, 2017). "In other words, MEP services are aimed at bridging achievement gaps that may result from the high rate of mobility" (Zarate et al., 2017, p. 2)

Willison & Jang (2009) argued factors such as family educational levels, access to preventative health care, and financial security all have the potential to influence a migrant student's academic success; therefore, it has been established migrant students without assistance are at a higher risk than their freshman peers for not achieving academic success. However, many migrant students face obstacles long before they reach a college campus.

While it is apparent that migrant education programs are successfully providing support and services for migrant students and families, collaboration among federal programs and agencies at the various national, state, and local levels appears limited in nature (Cranston-Gingras & Rivera-Singletary, 2017). I have observed this lack of collaboration first-hand. In many states, the K-12 migrant programs do not always communicate with the post-secondary education programs like CAMP. This can be attributed to many factors; these positions are often funded for one year at a time, are not full-time positions and the individuals in them have a demanding and unreasonable caseload. Expecting them to reach out and connect with CAMP, if there is one in their state, can be a rather complicated ask.

It is also of significance to note that the body of research on migrant students and the data collection from programs that provide services to migrant students is scarce. This could be contributed to the fact that there is not adequate funding for research, but it is evident the data is just not as readily accessible as we would be liked. While programs like CAMP do collect data regarding their respective program measures, it remains unclear how this data is informing practitioners and being utilized to ensure equity and access for future Latinx migrant students.

#### Recommendations for the CAMP Program

If I could describe the overall sentiment that the participants shared when they were asked about the CAMP program, both its staff and services, it would be overwhelmingly positive. I was not surprised at this, as I have been working with CAMP for seventeen years. I know first-hand the excellent work being done by CAMP programs and staff across the country. However, this did not mean that I wasn't going to listen with an open mind to what the students had to say about their CAMP experiences. After all, my goal was to showcase the participants' voices as much as possible throughout this process. Therefore, I made sure to let the students

speak and share openly. As Alejandro suggested during our interview, it would be a good idea for the CAMP program to connect students earlier on in the academic year, but it was less of a critique and more of a suggestion.

I will say that one thing that I feel that all support programs could improve on, not just CAMP, is the facilitation of interactions between their student participants and other areas and communities on campus. The students shared throughout the interviews, that they were anxious to know what would happen to them after their year with CAMP left. It is common for support programs to be somewhat insular in nature; however, I felt that many of the participants would have benefitted from becoming more familiar with the UN campus, beyond the space CAMP inhabits.

The role of support programs is to provide a safe and accessible environment for students, but in the case with first-year programs like CAMP, students can almost become too comfortable, thus making their transition out of the program and into their second year, somewhat of an upheaval. It is also common for students to find that because the other support programs they enroll in serve higher numbers of students than CAMP, they therefore may not have the same amount of time to dedicate to each student like CAMP did.

#### Recommendations for Higher Education Administrators

“Higher education must accommodate the changing dynamics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student” (Giraldo et al., 2018, p. 62). As higher education continues to focus more on inclusive and diversity programming, there remains a critical need for institutions to dig deeper when it comes to surface displays of inclusivity, typically in the form of activities and events. Regarding the intention behind this diversity programming often offered at colleges and universities, Yosso et al. (2009) argued:

Evidence of genuine diversity would include programs to compensate communities the university has historically underserved and initiatives to remedy social inequalities the institution has perpetuated. Such efforts may disrupt the institutional status quo and destabilize the university's historical racial power base. (p. 663)

Based on what the participants shared, the CAMP offerings found at UN appeared to have a positive influence on Latinx migrant student college persistence. This understanding of persistence is critical for institutions of higher education. "By uncovering differences in persistence patterns across diverse groups, we can illuminate factors that inhibit equal opportunity as well as policy factors that might be able to improve opportunity" (Carter, 2006, p. 34). Whether it is the staff, often former CAMP participants themselves, who are able to connect with their program participants in a meaningful way, or the services they provide, CAMP participants express gratitude at feeling supported and integrated into the university culture.

This leads me to ask the question, what are institutions of higher education doing to replicate the effective and efficient framework of the CAMP program? Is this something that can be modified and delivered to larger groups of students of color, and if so, what is stopping institutions of higher education from learning from this small, but effective program? While the funding may not be federal, there is certainly the potential for the institution to fund similar initiatives.

#### The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Workers

We cannot discuss migrant workers without addressing the impact of this national pandemic on migrant workers, the individuals responsible for getting food to our tables. A recent study addressed how the migrant agricultural worker population, which includes migrant,

minority, and low-income individuals, was declared essential and therefore potentially at high risk for contracting COVID-19 (Lusk & Chandra, 2021).

A USA times article about how the harsh toll COVID-19 was taking on California's agricultural workers, of whom about 90% are Latino, reported, "Farms and processing plants across the region have reported alarming COVID-19 outbreaks, leading to a disproportionate rate of cases among the Latino and migrant community" (Lopez, 2020, page #?). This article also notes how hard migrant laborers work to put food on the table for Americans and for their families (Lopez, 2020).

As someone who has worked with this population for many years, it quickly became apparent that our migrant families were struggling. While many agricultural workers' hours were reduced, there was still a pervasive demand to not disrupt the food supply chain. There were outbreaks at many facilities, where physical distancing was not possible, nor encouraged. As these individuals, ironically only now labeled as essential, continued to maintain the efficiency of the food supply chain, some argue that federal policies have not sufficiently protected worker safety, amongst migrant farm workers, in particular (Lusk & Chandra, 2021).

### Conclusion

As noted earlier, there is still much to learn about how to foster connections with Latinx migrant students as they engage in the process of applying to, and enrolling in, post-secondary institutions. Throughout this study, I was able to ascertain the cultural assets that Latinx students possess, that largely go unnoticed. This is evidenced throughout the research; there are few studies that focus on the cultural assets of Latinx migrant student. However, students like Beatriz, Aurora, Alejandro, Reynaldo, Flor and Valeria represent a population with much to offer educational spaces; their tremendous capacity to learn, for one. First and foremost, we need to

find ways to center the voices of these students. There are individuals across college campuses who are in the position to center Latinx student voices: “Addressing educational barriers requires a commitment to social justice and social equity, and researchers often occupy a unique position and ability to advocate for students” (Giraldo et al., 2018, p. 62).

Program like CAMP need to be looked at as leaders in support programs, and they need to be replicated, but with state funding that is not at risk every few years. This will ensure that even when the government is unable to fund CAMP, their services are still very much present and integrated on our campuses. The six students in this study are representative of a larger subset of Latinx migrant students, who while possess the motivation and support to seek higher education, often require some additional supports.

## References

- Acevedo-Polakovich, I. D., Cousineau, J. R., Quirk, K. M., Gerhart, J. I., Bell, K. M., & Adomako, M. S. (2014). Toward an asset orientation in the study of U.S. Latina/o youth. *The Counseling Psychologist, 42*(2), 201-229.
- Araujo, B. (2011). The college assistance migrant program: a valuable resource for migrant farmworker students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 10*(3), 252-265.
- Araujo, B. (2016). Migrant farmworker student's counterstories: Contradicting immigration myths and stereotypes. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, 7*(1), 7-27.
- Arciniega, T. A. (2012). The crucial role of Hispanic-serving institutions in the education of Latino/a youth. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 11*(3), 150-156.
- Bejarano, C., & Valverde, M. (2012). From the fields to the university: Charting educational access and success for farmworker students using a community cultural wealth framework. *Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators, 6*(2), 22-29.
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Carter, D. F. (2006). Key issues in the persistence of underrepresented minority students. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 130*, 33-46.
- Castellanos, J., & Garcia, A. M. (2007). Research considerations and theoretical application for best practices in higher education: Latina/os achieving success. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 6*(4), 378-396.
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(5), 811-831.

- Cavazos, A. G., & Cavazos, J., Jr. (2010). Understanding the experiences of Latina/o students: A qualitative study for change. *American Secondary Education*, 38(2), 95-109.
- Cavazos, J., Johnson, M. B., Fielding, C., Cavazos, A. G., Castro, V., & Vela, L. (2010). A qualitative study of resilient Latina/o college students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 9(3), 172-188.
- Chesler, M. A., Lewis, A. E., & Crowfoot, J. E. (2005). *Challenging racism in higher education promoting justice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Converse, M (2012). Philosophy of phenomenology: How understanding aids research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(1), 28-32.
- Cranston-Gingras, A., & Rivera-Singletary, G. (2017). Educational initiatives supporting students from migrant farmworker backgrounds. In P. Perez & M. Zarate (Eds.), *Facilitating educational success for migrant farmworker students in the U.S.* (pp. 14-31). Taylor and Francis.
- Cranston-Gingras, A., Morse, W. C., & Alvarez McHatton, P. (2004). First-year college experiences of students from migrant farmworker families. *Journal of the First-Year Experience*, 16(1), 9-25.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Crisp, G., Taggart, A., & Nora, A. (2015). Undergraduate Latina/os students: A systematic review of research identifying factors contributing to academic success outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 1-26.
- Daigle-Matos, J. (2015). La Familia: The important ingredient for Latina/o college student engagement and persistence. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 48(3), 436-453.

- DeGarmo, D. S., & Martinez, C. R. (2006). A culturally informed model of academic well-being for Latino youth: The importance of discriminatory experiences and social support. *Family Relations*, 55(3), 267-278.
- Delima, D. G. (2019). Making a case for a funds of knowledge approach to teaching and learning for first-generation college students. *College Teaching*, 67(4), 205-209.
- Dennis, J. M., Phinney, J. S., & Chuateco, L. I. (2005). The role of motivation, parental support, and peer support in the academic success of ethnic minority first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(3), 223-236.
- Flood, A. (2010). Understanding phenomenology. *Nurse Researcher*, 17(2), 7-15.
- Garcia, M. (2014). From the jaws of victory: *The triumph and tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the farm worker movement*. University of California Press.
- Gibson M. A., & Bejínez, L. (2002). Dropout prevention: How migrant education supports Mexican youth. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1(3), 155-175.
- Gildersleeve, R. E. (2010). *Fracturing opportunity: Mexican migrant students & college-going literacy*. Peter Lang.
- Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). Phenomenology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 25-50). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Giraldo, L. G., Huerta, A. H., & Solórzano, D. (2018). From incarceration to community college: Funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth and critical race theory. In J. M. Kiyama & C. Rios-Aguilar (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths* (pp. 48-65). Routledge.

Gloria, A. M., Castellanos, J., Lopez, A. G., & Rosales, R. (2005). An examination of academic nonpersistence decisions of Latino undergraduates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 27(2), 202-223.

Gloria, A. M., Castellanos, J., & Orozco, V. (2005). Perceived educational barriers, cultural fit, coping responses, and psychological well-being of Latina undergraduates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 27(2), 161-183.

Gonzalez, J. (2013). Understanding the role of social capital and school structure on Latino academic success. *Lux*, 2(1), 1-16.

Gonzalez, K. P. (2002). Campus culture and the experiences of Chicano students in a predominantly White university. *Urban Education*, 37(2), 193-218.

Hart, J., & Fellabaum, J. (2008). Analyzing campus climate studies: Seeking to define and understand. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(4), 222-234.

Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, 120, 7-24.

Hernandez, J. C. (2002). A qualitative exploration of the first-year experience of Latino college students. *NASPA Journal*, 40(1), 69-84.

Hoffman, M., Richmond, J., Morrow, J., & Salomone, K. (2002). Investigating “sense of belonging” in first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 4(3), 227-256.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students’ sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 70, 324-345.

Hurtado, S., & Ponjuan, L. (2005). Latino educational outcomes and the campus climate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4(3), 235-251.

Hurtado, S, Ramirez, J., & Cho, K. (2018). The current Latinx/a/o landscape of enrollment and success in higher education. In A. E. Batista, S. M. Collado, & D. Perez (Eds.), *Latinx/a/os in higher education: Exploring identity, pathways and success* (pp. 3-21). NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

Ishisaka, N. (2020, August 10). The heat is rising and so is the danger to farmworkers. We can do something about it. *The Seattle Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/the-heat-is-rising-and-so-is-the-danger-to-farmworkers-we-can-do-something-about-it/>.

Israel, M. (2015). *Research ethics and integrity for social scientists* (2nd ed). Sage Publications.

Jasis, P., & González, A. (2017). Nuestra familia es nuestra fuerza: Building on the strengths of migrant families towards school success. In P. Perez & M. Zarate (Eds.), *Facilitating educational success for migrant farmworker students in the U.S.* (pp. 50-66). Taylor and Francis.

Johnson, D. R., Soldner, M., Leonard, J. B., Alvarez, P., Inkelaas, K. K., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., & Longerbeam, S. D. (2007). Examining sense of belonging among first-year undergraduates from different racial/ethnic groups. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(5), 525-542.

Jones, L., Castellanos, J., & Cole, D. (2002). Examining the ethnic minority student experience at predominantly White institutions: A case study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1, 19-39.

- Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. L. (2013). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: fundamental elements and issues*. Routledge.
- Kim, Y. K., Rennick, L. A., & Franco, M. A. (2014). Latino college students at highly selective institutions. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 13(4), 245-268.
- Kimura-Walsh, E., Yamamura, E. K., Griffin, K. A., & Allen, W. R. (2008). Achieving the college dream?: Examining disparities in access to college information among high achieving and non-high achieving Latina students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(3), 298-315.
- Kivel, P. (2007). Social service or social change? In Ed., Incite. *The revolution will not be funded: Beyond the non-profit industrial complex* (pp. 129-419). Duke University Press.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2018). College aspirations and limitations: The role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American families. In J. M. Kiyama & C. Rios-Aguilar (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths* (pp. 87-105). Routledge.
- Kiyama, J. M., & Aguilar, C. R. (2018). *Funds of knowledge in higher education honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths*. Routledge.
- Liou, D. D., Antrop-González, R., & Cooper, R. (2009). Unveiling the promise of community cultural wealth to sustaining latina/o students' college-going information networks. *Educational Studies*, 45(6), 534–555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131940903311347>
- Lopez, N. (2020, September 3). Essential and vulnerable: COVID-19 takes hard toll on California's migrant farm workers. *USA Today: Report for America*.  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/09/03/covid-19-hits-californias-migrant-farm-workers-hard-column/5689601002/>.

- Lozano, A. (2010). Latina/o culture centers: Providing a sense of belonging and promoting student success. In L. Patton (Ed.), *Culture centers in higher education: perspectives on identity, theory, and practice* (pp. 3-22). Stylus Publishing.
- Luna, N. A., & Martinez, M. (2013). A qualitative study using community cultural wealth to understand the educational experiences of Latino college students. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 7(1), 1-19.
- Lusk, J. L., & Chandra, R. (2021). Farmer and farm worker illnesses and deaths from Covid-19 and impacts on agricultural output. *PLOS ONE*, 16(4).
- Maestas, R., Vaquera, G. S., & Zehr, L. M. (2007). Factors impacting sense of belonging at a Hispanic-serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 6(3), 237-256.
- Mahaffy K. A., & Pantoja C. (2012). Latina/o students' needs. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*. 14(3). 359-370.
- Manen, M. V. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press.
- Martinez, S., Torres, V., White, L. W., Medrano, C. I., Robledo, A. L., & Hernandez, E. (2012). The influence of family dynamics on ethnic identity among adult Latinas. *Journal of Adult Development*, 19(4), 190-200.
- McHatton, P. A., Zalaquett, C. P., & Cranston-Gingras, A. (2006). Achieving success: Perceptions of students from migrant farmwork families. *American Secondary Education*, 34(2), 25-39.
- Mejía, O. L., & McCarthy, C. J. (2010). Acculturative stress, depression, and anxiety in migrant farmwork college students of Mexican heritage. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 17(1), 1–20.

- Mendez, J. J., & Bauman, S. (2018). From migrant farmworkers to first generation Latina/o students: Factors predicting college outcomes for students participating in the College Assistance Migrant Program. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(1), 173-208.
- Mensah, E. (2015). *Exploring constructivist perspectives in the college classroom*. SAGE Open, 5(3), 1-14.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. SAGE.
- Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and Unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, 36(7), 388–400.
- Moschetti, R. V., Plunkett, S. W., Efrat, R., & Yomtov, D. (2017). Peer mentoring as social capital for Latina/o college students at a Hispanic-serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1-18.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Museus, S. D., & Quaye, S. J. (2009). Toward an intercultural perspective of racial and ethnic minority college student persistence. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33(1), 67-94.
- Nuñez, A. (2011). Counterspaces and connections in college transitions: First-generation Latino students' perspectives on Chicano studies. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(6), 639-655.
- Nuñez, A. M., & Gildersleeve, R. E. (2014). Sociocritical matters. *Educational Policy*, 30(3), 501–535.
- Nuñez, A., & Kim, D. (2012). Building a multi-contextual model of Latino college enrollment: student, school, and state-level effects. *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(2), 237-263.

Nuñez , A. M., Hoover, R. E., Pickett, K. A., Carruthers, C. S., & Vasquez, M. (2013). Latinos in higher education: creating conditions for student success. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 39(1).

O'Connor, B. H., Mancinas, O., & Deeg, M. T. (2020). Drops in the ocean: Rooted academic identities and transformational resistance in a college assistance migrant program. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-16.

Palys, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of Qualitative research methods (Vol. 2)* (pp. 697-8). Sage.

Pérez Huber, L., & Solorzano, D. G. (2014). Racial microaggressions as a tool for critical race research. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 18(3), 297-320.

Peteet, B. J., Montgomery, L. & Weekes, J. C. (2015). Predictors of imposter phenomenon among talented ethnic minority undergraduate students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 84(2), 175.

Pew Hispanic Center. (2019). *Hispanics have accounted for more than half of total U.S. population growth since 2010*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/10/hispanics-have-accounted-for-more-than-half-of-total-u-s-population-growth-since-2010/>

Quezada, R. L., Rodríguez-Valls, F., & R. B. Lindsay. (2017). Helping educators connect with migrant students and families: A culturally proficient approach. In P. Perez & M. Zarate (Eds.), *Facilitating educational success for migrant farmworker students in the U.S.* (pp. 32-49). Taylor and Francis.

- Ramirez, A. D. (2012). The impact of the College Assistance Migrant Program on migrant student academic achievement in the California State University system. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 11(1), 3-13.
- Ream, R. K. (2005). Toward understanding how social capital mediates the impact of mobility on Mexican American achievement. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 201-224.
- Reyes, R. (2016). *Learning the possible: Mexican American students moving from the margins of life to new ways of being*. University of Arizona Press.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2012). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Sage Publications.
- Rios-Aguilar, C., & Kiyama, J. M. (2012). Funds of knowledge: An approach to studying Latina(o) students' transition to college. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1(1), 2-16.
- Rios-Aguilar, C., & Kiyama, J.M. (2018). The need for funds of knowledge approach in higher education contexts. In J. M. Kiyama & C. Rios-Aguilar (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge in higher education: Honoring students' cultural experiences and resources as strengths* (pp. 3-6). Routledge.
- Rios-Ellis, B., Rascón, M., Galvez, G., Inzunza-Franco, G., Bellamy, L., & Torres, A. (2015). Creating a model of Latino peer education: Weaving cultural capital into the fabric of academic services in an urban university setting. *Education and Urban Society*, 47(1), 33-55.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.

- Salinas, C. (2020). The complexity of the “x” in Latinx: How Latinx/a/o students relate to, identify with, and understand the term Latinx. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 19(2), 149-168.
- Santos, C. (2017). The history, the struggles, and potential of the term Latinx. *Latina/o Psychology Today*, 2(4), 7-14.
- Saunders, M., & Serna, I. (2004). Making college happen: The college experiences of first-generation Latino students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(2), 146-163.
- Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press.
- Steinberg, S. R. (2014). Critical constructivism. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.), *The sage encyclopedia of action research* (pp. 203-206). SAGE.
- Strayhorn, T. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging*. Routledge.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (Second Edition). University of Chicago Press.
- Torres, V. (2004). Familial influences on the identity development of Latino first-year students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(4), 457-469.
- Torres, V., & Hernandez, E. (2009). Influence of an identified advisor/mentor on urban Latino students' college experience. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 11(1), 141-160.
- Torres, V., Hernández, E., & Martínez, S. (2019). *Understanding the Latinx experience: Developmental and contextual influences*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

- Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, Communicating Impact*. Wiley Blackwell.
- Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1), 80–96.
- Turner, D. W., III. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 754-760.
- Vaccaro, A., & Newman, B. M. (2016). Development of a sense of belonging for privileged and minoritized students: An emergent model. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(8), 925-942.
- Vega, D. (2016). “Why not me?” College enrollment and persistence of high-achieving first-generation Latino college students. *School Psychology Forum: Research in Practice*, 10(3), 307-320.
- Villalpando, O. (2004). Practical considerations of critical race theory and Latino critical theory for Latino college students. In A. M. Ortiz (Ed.), *Addressing the unique needs of Latino American students. New Directions for Student Services*, 105, 41-50. Jossey-Bass.
- Vogt, W. P., Vogt, E. R., Gardner, D. C., & Haeffele, L. M. (2014). *Selecting the right analyses for your data: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. The Guilford Press.
- Wertz, F. J. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. The Guilford Press.
- Willison S., & Yang, B. S. (2009). Are federal programs bearing fruit? An analysis of the college assistance migrant program. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(3), 247-262.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.

Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659-691.

Zalaquett, C. P. (2006). Study of successful Latina/o students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 5(1), 35-47.

Zalaquett, C. P., & Lopez, A. D. (2006). Learning from the stories of successful undergraduate Latina/Latino students: the importance of mentoring. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 14(3), 337-353.

Zalaquett, C. P., McHatton, P. A., & Cranston-Gingras, A. (2007). Characteristics of Latina/o migrant farmworker students attending a large metropolitan university. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 6(2), 135-156.

Zambrana, R. E., & Zoppi, I. M. (2002). Latina students. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 11(1-2), 33-53.

Zarate, M. E., Pérez, P. A., & Acosta, R. (2017). Migrant education: Equity in context for farmworkers and their children. In P. Perez & M. Zarate (Eds.), *Facilitating educational success for migrant farmworker students in the U.S.* (pp. 1-13). Taylor and Francis.

## Appendix A: Email to CAMP Program Director/Principal Investigator

Dear University CAMP Director/Principal Investigator,

Greetings! My name is Miriam L. Bocchetti, and I am a PhD candidate at Colorado State University (CSU) in the Higher Education Leadership (HEL) program. Currently, I am conducting a study in which I plan to explore the college persistence experiences of Latinx participants in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). I have received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Colorado State University to officially identify potential participants and move forward with conducting this study.

Because my study focuses on the first-year persistence experiences of CAMP students at the University, I am looking for your assistance in sharing this information with the students in your CAMP program. Ideally, I like to identify 6-8 student participants, who meet the following requirements:

- Identify as Latinx
- Are still enrolled at the University
- Have already completed their first year in the CAMP program

I will be conducting a total of three interviews, about 60-90 minutes in length, during which I will be asking them to reflect back on their first-year experiences. I would very much appreciate it if you could please forward the following email to CAMP participants who you believe meet the above criteria. I will then perform a secondary screening to ensure participants meet the established study criteria. All research materials have received approval by the Institutional Review Board at Colorado State University. Please feel free to contact me at [Miriam.bocchetti@gmail.com](mailto:Miriam.bocchetti@gmail.com) or via my cell phone at (509) 312-9473 for further clarification or questions you may have regarding this study. If I do hear back from you within 5 business days, I will be following up this request with a phone call.

Sincerely,

Miriam L. Bocchetti  
Candidate, Doctor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
[Miriam.Bocchetti@gmail.com](mailto:Miriam.Bocchetti@gmail.com)

## Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Prospective Study Participants

Dear University of the Northwest CAMP participant,

My name is Miriam Bocchetti and I am a PhD candidate at Colorado State University, conducting a study on the college persistence experiences of first-year Latinx students in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). This study will assist researchers in understanding CAMP participants' first year persistence experiences at your institution, from their perspective and in their own words.

I would like you to invite you to participate in an interview process during which I would ask you questions about your first year at the University of the Northwest. These virtual interviews will be conducted in three parts and last 60-90 minutes in length. You may be asked to participate in a follow up interview to clarify any answers you provided. Any and all data collected throughout the interview process will be used only for official research purposes and only with your written consent, via an informed consent form that will be given to you prior to the first interview.

You do not have any obligation to this study. Your name and any other confidential information shared during the study will not be released, and you will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used in place of your name. Please respond to this email within the next 72 hours, as I hope to schedule the interviews in an efficient manner.

Sincerely,

Miriam L. Bocchetti  
Candidate, Doctor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
[Miriam.Bocchetti@gmail.com](mailto:Miriam.Bocchetti@gmail.com)

## Appendix C: Follow up Email to Prospective Study Participants

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study on the college persistence experiences of first year Latinx student participants in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). In order to move forward in the research study process, I would like to verify that you meet the established study criteria by asking that you check the statements below that apply to you:

- I identify as Latinx
- I was a participant in the CAMP program for the duration of one academic year (at least three consecutive quarters.
- I am currently enrolled in an institution of higher education

Please reply to this email and based on your responses, I may be contacting you to schedule the first of three 60-90 interviews. You will receive a consent form at this time, which I will review with you prior to the interview process. All research materials have received approval by the Institutional Review Board at Colorado State University.

Thank you for your interest!

Miriam L. Bocchetti  
Candidate, Doctor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
[Miriam.Bocchetti@gmail.com](mailto:Miriam.Bocchetti@gmail.com)

## Appendix D: Research Study Informed Consent Form

### Colorado State University Consent to Participate in Research

**Title Study:** A Funds of Knowledge Study on the College Persistence Experiences of First Year Latinx Students in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

#### Introduction and Purpose

My name is Miriam L. Bocchetti, and I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University, studying the college persistence experiences of Latinx students in the CAMP program, a first-year support program for migrant students. This research study is being overseen by Dra. Susana Muñoz, a CSU School of Education professor, and my doctoral advisor.

#### Procedures

Thank you for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my research study. Your participation in this study is very helpful. You have been identified as an eligible participant regarding the above titled study. As I have shared with you, my study seeks to understand the college persistence experiences of first year Latinx migrant students in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), as well as their family and community interactions as they transitioned into higher education. The goal of this study is to document these experiences as told directly by the participants of this study. Throughout the course of three separate, 60-90 minute interviews via Zoom, I will be asking a series of questions that will require you to think about and reflect on experiences with your family, friends, peers, community, school officials, and campus climate, as well as the process of applying to, and enrolling in, higher education.

With your permission, I will record each interview. Zoom provides a transcription option that will allow me to download a transcript of our interview, which I will share with you. The recording is to accurately capture the interview content and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recording at your request. If you find yourself not wanting to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. I expect to conduct a total of three interviews; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you after the interviews by phone and/or email.

#### Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. The goal of any research study is to be better informed regarding specific topics. Ultimately, the intention of this study is to understand the first-year college persistence experiences of Latinx migrant students and inform higher education practitioners how to better engage and support Latinx migrant students as they navigate the systems of higher education.

#### Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. I will be asking you to share experiences with your surroundings as you made the transition to higher education. Some of the questions could bring up sensitive topics or challenging situations. You do have the option of not

answering or skipping any questions during the interview process that you are not comfortable answering. While it is difficult to identify all potential risks in research procedures; however, the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

### **Confidentiality**

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, I will take all precautions to minimize the risks.

To minimize confidentiality risks, I will securely store audio recordings, transcripts, and notes in a secure location that only myself and the principal investigator (Dra. Muñoz) will be able to access.

To ensure confidentiality your name will be changed to a pseudonym. To ensure accurate representation, you will have the opportunity to check all transcripts. Only the PI and the Co-PI of the research study will have access to study records, which will be in a secure electronic folder. I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by myself or others. Audio recordings will be transferred to a third-party service for transcription. In addition, observation notes and non-written materials will be stored in a secure area for 5 years and will then be destroyed.

### **Compensation**

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

### **Rights**

***Participation in research is completely voluntary.*** You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. If you choose to participate in the research and/or choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### *Permission to audiotape/videotape interviews or interventions*

I, Miriam L. Bocchetti, would like your permission to video, and audio record your interview to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded. Once transcribed, only the PI and Co-Pi will have access to the audio recording; they will be erased and destroyed five years after the research project is finished. Do you give the researchers permission to audio-record your interview? Please initial next to your choice below.

- Yes, I agree that my interview can be audio recorded. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)  
 No, do not audio record my interview. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

*Permission to use direct quotes*

Please let the researcher know if you would like your comments to remain confidential or attributed to you. Please initial next to your choice below.

I give permission for comments I have made to be shared using my exact words and to include my (name/position/title). \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

You can use my data for research and publishing, but do NOT associate my (name/position/title) with direct quotes. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

**Questions?**

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 509-312-9473 or at [Miriam.bocchetti@gmail.com](mailto:Miriam.bocchetti@gmail.com). You may also contact Dra. Susana Muñoz at [Susana.munoz@colostate.edu](mailto:Susana.munoz@colostate.edu).

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1553, or e-mail [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu).

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

---

Participant's Name (*please print*)

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix E: Official Interview Protocol

**Study Title:** A Funds of Knowledge Study on the Persistence Experiences of First Year Latinx Participants in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)

<b>DATE:</b>
<b>INTERVIEWER'S NAME:</b>
<b>PARTICIPANT'S NAME:</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>
<b>TIME OF INTERVIEW:</b>

### **Research Study Summary:**

*Thank you for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my research study. You have been identified as an eligible participant regarding the above titled study. As I have shared with you, my study seeks to understand the college persistence experiences of first year Latinx migrant students in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), as well as their family and community interactions as they transitioned into higher education. The goal of this study is to document these experiences as told directly by the participants of this study. Throughout the course of three separate, 60-90 minute interviews, I will be asking a series of questions that will require you to think about and reflect on experiences with your family, friends, peers, community, school officials, and college campus as well as the process of applying to, and enrolling in, higher education. Your participation in this study is very helpful.*

### **Interview #1**

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your family background, including their levels of educational attainment and experiences.
2. Please describe when and how you made the decision to pursue a college education and whether your parents' own educational histories were a factor in this decision?
3. Who (family, friends/peers, school officials) was involved in your decision to pursue a college education and in what ways specifically did they influence your decision-making process?
4. Did you ever have doubts about attending college and if so, what were they and can you share your process of addressing these doubts?
5. How did your friends/peers/family/school officials/community support you in your decision to attend college?
6. Can you share whether there was any support you wished you had received but did not?

### **Interview #2**

1. In your opinion, what were your biggest obstacle(s) in seeking a higher education?

2. Tell me about how you experienced being Latinx and migrant during your first year of college, specifically?
3. In what ways, if any, was being Latinx and migrant a prevalent identity during your first year? Are there any other identities you also want to mention?
4. Can you share a time when being Latinx and migrant influenced interactions with your friends/peers/family/school officials/community?
5. How certain were you that you would complete the first year of college and if you were uncertain, can you share what factors influenced you to stay?
6. As a Latinx migrant student, what strengths and abilities did you bring with you to college?

### **Interview #3**

1. How would you describe your college's overall attitude towards Latinx migrant students? Can you this illustrate this with a story?
2. Did you feel the attitude varied depending where on campus and with whom you were with? If so, what did you attribute this attitude to?
3. In what ways did the college campus climate affected your ability to navigate the campus or achieve academic success?
4. Drawing from your first-year experience, in what ways did the CAMP program contribute to your academic success?
5. What specific resources, services, and support provided by the CAMP program were most valuable to you as a participant in the program participant?
6. Were there additional resources, services, and support you felt you could have benefitted from during your first-year transition to college? What kind?

Appendix F: Interview Protocol Matrix

	<b>Background Information</b>	<b>Research Question 1:</b> What are the college persistence experiences of Latinx CAMP students?	<b>Research Question 2:</b> In what ways are the cultural assets of Latinx CAMP students acknowledged and valued within higher education?
<b>Interview Q1</b> Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your family background, including their levels of educational attainment and experiences.	X		
<b>Interview Q2</b> Please describe when and how you made the decision to pursue a college education and whether your parents' own educational histories were a factor in this decision?	X		
<b>Interview Q3</b> Who (family, friends/peers, school officials) was involved in your decision to pursue a college education and in what ways specifically did they influence your decision-making process?	X		
<b>Interview Q4</b> Did you ever have doubts about attending college and if so, what were they and can you share your process of addressing these doubts?	X		
<b>Interview Q5</b> How did your friends/peers/family/school officials/community	X		

support you in your decision to attend college?			
<b>Interview Q6</b> Can you share whether there was any support you wished you had received but did not?	X		
<b>Interview Q7</b> In your opinion, what were your biggest obstacle(s) in seeking a higher education?		X	
<b>Interview Q8</b> Tell me about how you experienced being Latinx and migrant during your first year of college, specifically?		X	
<b>Interview Q9</b> In what ways, if any, was being Latinx and migrant a prevalent identity during your first year? Are there any other identities you also want to mention?		X	
<b>Interview Q10</b> Can you share a time when being Latinx and migrant influenced interactions with your friends/peers/family/school officials/community?		X	
<b>Interview Q11</b> How certain were you that you would complete the first year of college and if you were uncertain, can you share what factors influenced you to stay?		X	
<b>Interview Q12</b> As a Latinx migrant student, what strengths and abilities did you bring with you to college?		X	
<b>Interview Q13</b>			X

How would you describe your college's overall attitude towards Latinx migrant students? Can you this illustrate this with a story?			
<b>Interview Q14</b> Did you feel the attitude varied depending where on campus and with whom you were with? If so, what did you attribute this attitude to?			X
<b>Interview Q15</b> In what ways did the college campus climate affected your ability to navigate the campus or achieve academic success?			X
<b>Interview Q16</b> Drawing from your first-year experience, in what ways, if any, did the CAMP program contribute to your academic success?			X
<b>Interview Q17</b> What specific resources, services, and support provided by the CAMP program were most valuable to you as a participant in the program?			X
<b>Interview Q18</b> Were there additional resources, services, and support you felt you could have benefitted from during your first-year transition to college? What kind?			X

## Appendix G: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



eProtocol  
Office of the Vice President for Research  
321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 eprotocol  
TEL: (970) 491-1553

*Knowledge to Go Places*

**DATE:** November 10, 2020  
**TO:** Munoz, Susana, School of Education  
**FROM:** Faircloth, Susan, Clark, Kelli, School of Education, Bocchetti, Miriam, School of Education  
**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Chance, Claire, CSU IRB 2  
A Funds of Knowledge Study on the College Persistence Experiences of First-Year Latinx Students in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)  
**FUNDING SOURCE** None  
**PROTOCOL NUMBER:** 20-10379H  
**APPROVAL or DETERMINATION PERIOD:** November 10, 2020

### NOTICE OF IRB REVIEW FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Thank you for submitting your application for expedited review to our Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (CSU IRB)(FWA0000647). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. As the nature of the research met the requirements for expedited review under provision Title 45 CFR 46. 110, Category 6, 7 of the federal Protection of Human Subjects Act, the IRB conducted a formal, but expedited, review of your application materials.

Based upon our review, your IRB application has been approved. The IRB approval begins today November 10, 2020, and expires on November 09, 2023.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and may require a submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond November 09, 2023, a continuing review must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit. Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu)  
Claire Chance, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381; [Claire.Chance@Colostate.edu](mailto:Claire.Chance@Colostate.edu)  
Tammy Felton-Noyle, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1655; [Tammy.Felton-Noyle@Colostate.edu](mailto:Tammy.Felton-Noyle@Colostate.edu)

Chance, Claire

Initial review has been completed on 11/10/20. Approval has been approved to recruit adults with the approved recruitment and consent procedures. Review was conducted under expedited review categories 6 & 7. Continuing review is not required in accordance with 45 CFR 46.109(f)(1)(i). The study was assessed as being no more than minimal risk and in accordance with 45 CFR 46.111. This study is not funded.

Approved documents include:



*Knowledge to Go Places*

eProtocol  
Office of the Vice President for Research  
321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 eprotocol  
TEL: (970) 491-1553

- Informed Consent, MiriamBochetti, IRB.docx
- Email to CAMP Project Director and Principal Investigator
- Recruitment Email to Prospective Study Participants
- Follow up Email to Prospective Study Participants
- Interview Protocol
- Chapter Three, Bocchetti\_IRB

---

None