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HOW CAN I HELP YOU TODAY? HOW FIRST-GENERATION LATINX/A/O COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS PERCEIVE COUNSELING

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Educational Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Isaac Acosta Escoto

May 2023

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Dissertation Titled

HOW CAN I HELP YOU TODAY? HOW FIRST-GENERATION LATINX/A/O COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS PERCEIVE COUNSELING

by

Isaac Acosta Escoto

APPROVED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2023

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ABSTRACT

HOW CAN I HELP YOU TODAY? HOW FIRST-GENERATION LATINX/A/O COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS PERCEIVE COUNSELING

by Isaac Acosta Escoto

Latinx/a/o students make up almost half of the California Community College system's population. However, Latinx/a/o students account for about 15% of three-year completion rates (certificate, degree, or transfer). In support of student success strategies, the literature describes the role of counselors and how they help students navigate the complexities of higher education. This mixed-methods study investigated how community college counseling practices and services are perceived by Latinx/a/o students; and which of those practices and services best supported the success of this student population. Key findings included the importance of counseling services, as well as preferred counseling appointment logistics and topics for discussion. Additionally, both positive and negative participant experiences with counseling were presented. Findings seem to suggest that proactive/intrusive counseling, appreciative advising, and culturally responsive counseling theories are particularly helpful for the study's population. Recommendations informed by key findings were noted for community college counselors, counseling department deans, and vice presidents.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting

Prior to applying to a community college, through the completion of their educational goal, community college students need to navigate the higher education landscape. This landscape is massive, complicated, and often stressful (Pierceall & Keim, 2007; Robotham & Julian, 2006).

As a community college counselor, and a prior community college student, I have seen first-hand how challenging it can be for students to find their way to, through, and beyond their time in college. To illustrate the complexity of the community college student journey, the following is the multi-step process it takes to navigate education in the California Community College system.

Before attending a California community college, students must first select a campus. With 116 California community colleges, prospective community college students have many options. Presumably, students would select from nearby campuses (Grodsky, 2002). However, due to the system-wide pivot to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual delivery of coursework is more prevalent than ever. Students can rely on various data points to pick the college they would like to attend, including, but not limited to financial aid, college reputation, campus safety, college website, campus activities and recreational facilities, and athletic teams and sports (Barreno & Traut, 2012).

Once the application is submitted and students receive their campus identification number, they are asked to complete a series of steps to help with the campus onboarding process. First-time college students are asked to complete a new student orientation, apply

for financial aid if applicable, and decide which Math and English course they should be placed into. Students must make decisions about registration, including selecting courses for the upcoming term, and how many total courses are appropriate. Additionally, students must navigate a multi-step registration system.

As students complete courses term by term, they need to keep track of course completion as related to courses necessary for their specific major of study. Appropriate goal-specific general education planning is also important. Although associate degree and transfer requirements can differ, students need to know the similarities and differences between the two, depending on if their goal is to complete the requirements for one or both of those options (Foothill College, n.d.). All the while, considering grade point average (GPA) is critical as various education related goals are likely to have a minimum GPA requirement.

In addition to understanding and implementing the various steps and actions necessary to navigate the various processes listed above, many students are faced with navigating multiple competing priorities. Multiple priorities may create a challenge in balancing school and personal obligations. Various aspects of students' lives needing to be balanced include academic success, academic and personal pressures, paying for school, finding career and personal direction, lifestyle choices, and finding transportation to campus (Miller et al., 2004). It is a continuous balancing act students must maintain for two or three years or more to achieve their goals of completing an associate's degree, completing transfer requirements, or overall personal and career growth.

It would be a big advantage for a student to have parents that completed a college degree (Horn & Bobbitt, 2000). Helping guide their children through the various procedures and

challenges college students face, informed by personal experience, would be an incredibly helpful guiding resource. However, first-generation college students do not have a parent they can rely on to help guide them through the journey explained above. Attending college is a new experience for first-generation families, thus introducing new challenges. These challenges include learning how to navigate higher education, taking the right coursework, and earning the necessary GPA for their academic goals.

In my experience as a community college counselor, I have seen how helpful it can be for students to work with a counselor. Counselors help students make sense of the many questions and variables that make up their educational experience, as well as guide them through the sequence of what to do and when to reach their goals (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges [ASCCC] et al., 1995). Though support from home can still be incredibly helpful for first-generation college students, the technical knowledge and experience of how to navigate higher education a counselor can provide serves as a critical support system for first-generation students. For this reason, it is important to know how first-generation Latinx/a/o students perceive community college counseling practices, so counselors and counseling departments could best inform how best to serve this student population.

Statement of the Problem

Hispanic students made up 45.25% of the 2,142,883 students enrolled in the California Community College system during the 2018-2019 academic year (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2020). However, Hispanic students made up 15.4% of three-year student completion rates (CCCCO, 2020). Additionally, The Campaign for

College Opportunity (2021) reports that 10% of Latinx/a/o students in the 2014-2015 academic year were supported to transfer within four years, as compared to 17% and 24% of White and Asian students, respectively.

An important component of the California Community College system is academic counseling (ASCCC et al., 2012). Each one of the 116 colleges has some sort of academic counseling component if not a full-fledged counseling department (California College Pathways, n.d.). However, one cannot assume providing counseling services, in the same way, will benefit all student populations equally. Studies have shown there may be a benefit to delivering instruction to Latinx/a/o and first-generation students in a way that honors their lived experiences (Arteaga, 2014; Orozco et al., 2010). This method is meant to provide support for their unique needs. The same approach must be taken with the delivery of counseling services to this population of students.

Counseling faculty play a critical role in the support and success of community college students because their role on campus is to "…diagnose the difficulties students face in the educational arena, to prescribe solutions for those difficulties, and to support students during their struggle to success" (ASCCC et al., 1995, p. 5). The role counselors play in helping community college students navigate various challenges is important as evidenced by various characteristics often experienced. These characteristics include social inequalities, academic challenges, economic challenges, social and informational hurdles, and attendance patterns (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

The literature is scant as related to how first-generation Latinx/a/o students perceive community college counseling practices. Arteaga (2014) notes that there is "scarce research

related to community college students and community college counseling services" (p. 708), a perspective also shared by Goldrick-Rab (2010). Research by Arteaga (2014) and Tovar (2014) provides a window into how community college counseling experiences are perceived by and affect Latinx/a/o students. However, research is largely missing in this space, which is problematic because Latinx/a/o students make up such a large percentage of the California Community College student population (California Community Colleges [CCC], n.d.).

What is largely missing from the research are the ways that community college counseling departments might best serve first-generation Latinx/a/o students. By highlighting and elevating student voice related to their perception, experience, and opinion of counseling services, counseling departments could use this information to refine how they deliver their services to first-generation Latinx/a/o students.

Purpose of the Study

Community colleges cannot assume that the services they provide and the way those services are provided are perceived and received the same way by all student populations (Guzman, 2014). Counselors are often the first if not one of the first, campus employees students come across when they arrive at a community college. This is why it is important to understand how what they do and how they do it is perceived by students, particularly first-generation Latinx/a/o students.

The purpose of this study was twofold: to investigate how community college counseling practices and services are perceived by first-generation Latinx/a/o students; and which of those practices and services best supported the success of this student population. This study

defines success as “progress towards or completion of a college-level certificate or degree, or successful transfer admission.”

The following research questions served to inform how community college counseling departments might inform what services to provide, which services to emphasize, and how those services might best be implemented to serve first-generation Latinx/a/o students. The first question explored the experiences first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students have had with their counseling department. The question highlighted what this specific population thinks about the practices and services provided by counseling.

The second question further explored the experiences of first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students with their counseling department. With so many different discussion topics, ways of relating to the student, and overall approaches to delivering said information, this question focused on discovering what combination of practices and strategies to deliver counseling services this student population feels is most supportive of their goals.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do first-generation community college Latinx/a/o students perceive counseling practices and services?

RQ2: Which community college counseling practices and services do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?

Site and Participant Selection

Participants in this study were Latinx/a/o, between 18-40 years old, and first-generation community college students. Students from four mid-sized California Community Colleges

located in northern California participated in the study. Each of the four colleges represented a minimum Latinx/a/o student population of 20%, therefore making them ideal campuses from which to select study participants.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

It is possible the number of interactions with counselors the study participants had to reflect upon varied from participant to participant. This is important because various interactions with a counselor or counselors could result in different discussion topics, the information given, and reactions and/or feelings by the participant. Since the scope of this study is of a general nature and doesn't include the ability to compare separate counselor interactions, participant responses may be overgeneralized.

A possible limitation may be geographic location. The parameters of the study were confined to students from four community colleges within a radius of about 44 miles. It is possible study findings could differ for students that live elsewhere in the state or country due to potentially different dynamics and/or variables affecting study outcomes.

Assumptions

There were two assumptions for this study. The first assumption is that participants utilized their campus counseling resources at least once. The second assumption is that participants answered the survey and interview questions honestly.

Researcher Positionality

I have Mexican roots with origins on both sides of my family tracing to México. Like my parents and grandparents, I am an English language learner, with Spanish being my first language. Both of my parents were first-generation college students, as their parents did not

have the opportunity to attend formal schooling beyond a young age. Though I am not a first-generation college student, due to my family history and lived experiences, I feel personally connected to the challenges and lived experiences many first-generation college students navigate as they pursue higher education. Hearing my parents share stories of how transformational education has been for them and their families instilled in me the importance and transformative power education can have on one's life, particularly for first-generation students.

Due to my fourteen-year experience as a counselor in the California Community College system, I have a biased opinion that community college counseling plays a pivotal role in student success. I have had countless discussions with students that expressed feeling lost regarding what path to follow to reach their academic and career goals, and how to navigate various challenges along that path. With so many applications, enrollment, support service, course, major, and transfer nuances, I have seen first-hand how overwhelming higher education can be for students. I have seen and heard the sighs of relief when we finish a counseling appointment, and the student shares their concerns were addressed, and that they now have a clear idea of what classes they need to take, and how to get needed support along their college journey. Fears of the unknown were no longer present, as the student was now able to picture themselves successfully navigating the process necessary to complete their educational goals. Both personal and professional experiences as listed above inform the motivation I have as a researcher for this study.

Definition of Terms

Advising: A service focused on disseminating information students need to reach their goals. Advisors explain and clarify information in a manner deemed most helpful for the situation of the student, including providing discipline-specific information. There are no state minimum qualification standards for the advising role in the California Community College system (ASCCC et al., 1995).

College Success: Progress towards or completion of a college-level certificate or degree, or successful transfer admission.

Community College: An institution of higher education that serves their community's needs by primarily offering associate's degree, Career Technical Education (CTE), and university-level transferable coursework. Some community colleges across the United States also offer baccalaureate degrees.

For this study, the term 'community college' was used when describing the setting of the study's participants. The literature commonly refers to 'community college,' 'two-year college,' and 'junior college' as synonymous terms. Terminology that differs from 'community college' was only used as needed for direct literature citations and references.

Counseling: "…the mission of community college counseling and guidance is to assist the individual with decisions which affect educational, vocational and personal goals, and to provide appropriate support and instruction which will enable the individual to implement these decisions. These may include career, educational, vocational and personal goals, and personal-social decisions. The implementation may include selection of appropriate institutions, academic planning, financial aid, dealing with learning handicaps, making the

transition from the community college to work or to an appropriate higher-level college or university, and assistance in handling personal, family or social problems which interfere with educational goal attainment" (ASCCC et al., 1995, p. 5).

Counseling Practices: Actions, discussion topics, activities, and/or strategies utilized by community college counselors to deliver their service.

Counseling Services: Broad term meant to encompass the services offered by a counseling department.

Educational Plan – An organized list of courses laid out in chronological order, that when followed, would complete a student's expressed educational-related goals, either in part or in their entirety.

First-Generation College Student: "An individual who is pursuing a higher education degree and whose parents or guardians do not have a postsecondary degree" (Peralta & Klonowski, 2017).

Hispanic: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (United States Census Bureau, 2022).

Latinx: "A term for people who do not identify along the European settler-colonial gender binary, and inclusive for all people of Latin American origin and descent" (Salinas, 2020, p. 159).

Latinx/a/o: A term meant to encompass the definition above, while also including the historically used 'Latina' or 'Latino' terminology.

While reviewing the literature in preparation for this study, I found various studies that disaggregate findings by race/ethnicity differ in their use and definition of descriptive terms

regarding people of Latinx descent such as Latina/o, Hispanic, Latinx, and Chicana/o. Each term has its history in the literature (Salinas, 2020) and can have nuances of usage in practice (Salinas et al., 2020). This study used the term Latinx/a/o for this population of students and will deviate from the term Latinx/a/o as needed for direct quotes. This was done to avoid unintended redefinitions and/or uses of terms employed by cited authors.

Retention: Consecutive fall-to-fall student enrollment.

Retention Rate: A measure of the rate at which students persist in fall-to-fall enrollment, expressed as a percentage.

White: The term "White" is capitalized in this study to "emphasize the systemically privileged nature of this social identity (White) and racialized discourse (Whiteness)" (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017).

Overview of the Study

This chapter provided the background, purpose, significance, and scope of this study. Chapter two provides a review and synthesis of the relevant literature on community colleges as a whole, and California community colleges, specifically. It also provides an account of the literature on Latinx/a/o and first-generation college students, as well as counseling and advising. Chapter three provides a review of the methodology used in this study. Chapter four outlines the findings of the study, while chapter five provides an in-depth discussion of the study findings along with recommendations and implications of future research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter provides the necessary background, context, and information to answer the following research questions: How do first-generation Latinx/a/o students perceive community college counseling practices? And which community college counseling practices and services do first-generation Latinx/a/o students find most helpful in supporting their success? Literature sources were procured through diverse electronic database sources such as Google scholar, the San José State University library website, and various library catalogs. A literature review matrix was created on Google sheets to aid with organization and annotation.

The literature contains a robust amount of content related to the history of community colleges in the United States, as well as advising at the high school and university level. However, there is minimal literature specific to community college counseling, particularly related to community college counseling in California. This chapter highlights the need for research specifically focused on counseling in the California Community Colleges (CCC) as it pertains to Latinx/a/x students.

The following literature review is organized into five sections. First, topics covered include the history, description, and student population of community colleges in the United States. The second section of this chapter includes a description of the Latinx/a/o college student, their history in higher education, and the ongoing discussion in academia regarding the terminology used to describe student populations of Latin descent. The third section introduces the concept of the first-generation college student and defines the parameters of the student population included in the study. Academia has not agreed upon a single

definition of “first-generation college student” (Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020). Therefore, various definitions were explored, and one was chosen for this study. The definition of “first-generation college student” used for this study was suggested by Peralta and Klonowski (2017) “an individual who is pursuing a higher education degree whose parents or guardians do not have a postsecondary degree” (p. 635). The fourth section introduces community college counseling; what it is, its history, and how it supports student success. Additionally, the fourth section makes the case for why there is a need to study how first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students perceive counseling. The fifth and final section concludes with conceptual frameworks used in this study.

Community Colleges in the United States

Current research shows that in 2021 community college enrollment in the United States totals reached almost 6 million students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-b), attending 1,462 community college campuses. Of these, 1,047 are public institutions and 415 are private. States with the largest number of public community colleges are California, Texas, North Carolina, Illinois, and New York. Compared to university campuses, of which 7.5% have open admissions policy, a substantially great percentage (62%) of community colleges admit students on an open-admissions basis. To better understand what community colleges are today, it is important one reviews how community colleges came to be.

History

Former Executive Director of the American Association of Junior Colleges, Walter Crosby Eells, explained what might be considered the first junior college in what is now the

United States was opened in 1677 in Newton, Maryland. However, later Eells suggested the oldest junior college was established in 1851 named Lasell Female Seminary (Eells, 1931; Palinchak, 1974). In contrast, the literature also shows the first two-year college was Lewis Institute, opened in Chicago, Illinois in 1896, which later joined with Armour Institute in 1940 to become the Illinois Institute of Technology (Ferrier, 1937; Palinchak, 1974). Similar to Ferrier (1937) and Palinchak (1937), Thornton (1972) asserts the first of four stages of the present-day community college began in 1850. Regardless of which origin story of community colleges one leans towards, it is clear that the concept of community colleges began before the 20th century.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, several university administrators argued the first two years of the American liberal arts college were not collegiate and belonged to secondary [high] schools. William Watts Folwell, President of the University of Minnesota, and the University of Michigan president, Henry A. Tappan, both argued that the 'secondary' years of their institutions should be eliminated, though to no avail (Thornton, 1972). Along with a similar, though not identical perspective, in 1892, University of Chicago President William Rainey Harper separated the first and last two years into the 'Academic College' and 'University College.' For years later, these titles were changed to 'Junior' and 'Senior' college (Thornton, 1972). In 1900, the University of Chicago began awarding an Associate in Arts degree to students that completed the junior college program of study.

By 1920, the community college movement became increasingly formalized when the United States Commissioner of Education, P.P. Claxton, called together a meeting of

community college representatives from across the country. At this meeting, the American Association of Junior Colleges was created. The purpose of this group was:

> To define the junior college by creating standards and curricula, thus determining its position structurally in relation to other parts of the school system; and to study the junior college in all its types (endowed, municipal, and state) in order to make a genuine contribution to the work of education. (Whissemore, 2020, p. 1)

The organization exists to this day and is currently named the American Association of Community Colleges. The name change was because of two reasons; to reflect the expanded mission of community colleges by serving their communities with career technical education programs and courses, and because its member institutions now refer to themselves as community colleges almost exclusively (Whissemore, 2020).

Though community colleges and universities both offer lower-division coursework, which can count toward and lead to a baccalaureate degree, that is about where the similarities end, according to Thornton (1972). One example of the differences between community colleges and universities is that universities usually accept students that have taken or will take coursework that will lead to a specialized baccalaureate, master's, or doctorate degree. In contrast, the community college "welcomes other students who do not need or desire advanced degrees" (Thornton, 1972, p. 34).

While universities often carry strict admission requirements, public community colleges tend to have much more permissive admission policies, often referred to as 'open admission.' For example, the California Community College system is required to admit any California resident that possesses a high school diploma or the equivalent. California community colleges may also admit any non-resident possessing a high school diploma or the equivalent, and anyone over the age of 18 without a high school diploma or the equivalent who is

capable of profiting from the instruction offered. Lastly, California community colleges may also admit minors who do not hold high school diplomas or the equivalent, per established requirements (CCCCO, n.d.a). This permissive admission policy is based on the idea that "higher education should be available to everyone" (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d., p. 4).

National Student Demographics

In the fall of 2018, about 5.6 million students were enrolled in two-year, public institutions (NCES, n.d.-b). Of these 5.6 million students, about 2 million were enrolled for full-time status, and 3.6 million were enrolled part-time (NCES, n.d.-c). However, one must note that the previously noted statistics underestimate the number of community colleges in the United States, as about 100 community colleges offer baccalaureate degrees, and as such are listed in NCES databases as four-year/university institutions (Community College Research Center [CCRC], n.d.). In the 2018-2019 academic year, community college enrollment disaggregated by race/ethnicity was as follows: 7% Asian, 13% Black, 25% Hispanic, and 45% White, which includes the 100 or so community colleges that award baccalaureate degrees (CCRC, n.d.).

In 2020-2021, the average tuition and fee costs for full-time students attending public community colleges nationally was $3,770, compared to $10,560 at four-year institutions (CollegeBoard, 2020). In 2015-2016, after accounting for grants, 44% of full-time status community college students paid no tuition or received money to cover other expenses. About 14% paid less than $1,100, and 14% paid more than $3,400 after accounting for grants (CCRC, n.d.).

About 23% of dependent community college students and 47% of independent community college students have family incomes that total less than $20,000. Additionally, about 80% of community college students work, with 39% working full-time. However, only 2% of community college students receive Federal Work-Study aid, compared to the higher 14% of undergraduate students at private nonprofit four-year colleges (CCRC, n.d.).

California Community College Students

In the Fall of 2019, 1,569,502 students were enrolled in the California Community College (CCC) system. Of those students, approximately 55% were continuing students, 16% were first-time, 11% were returning, 7% were first-time transfers, another 7% were special admit students (concurrently enrolled in high school), and 4% of students were unreported (CCCCO, n.d.b). Students aged 19 or younger made up 36% of enrollment, while students aged 20-24 and 25-29 made up 29% and 12% respectively.

Hispanic CCC students make up the highest percentage of total enrollment in the CCC population at 47%, while White students make up 23%. Asian students make up 11%, and African Americans make up 5% of the CCC population (CCCCO, n.d.b).

The literature points to different reasons why it is common for Latinx/a/o students to begin their higher education journey at a community college, as opposed to going to a university directly. One could reasonably assume that these reasons also speak to, at least in part, why Latinx/a/o students make up such a high percentage of CCC students. First, research has shown students who attend high schools made up of mostly Latinx/a/o and or African American students had lower rates of university eligibility, fewer Advanced Placement (AP) course options, and less experienced teachers, compared to White-majority

schools (Teranishi et al., 2004). This is important to note since less favorable school conditions, including the fewest educational opportunities, are more likely at California's racially isolated schools (Oaks et al., 2004).

It has been shown to be common place for Latinx/a/o students to be placed on non-college preparatory course tracks (Yun & Moreno, 2006). This is a problem because without completing the necessary admission requirements to apply to a university, students are not given the choice to attend a university as a freshman applicant, leaving attending community college as one of the few options left in order to pursue higher education. This is evidenced by the fact that although 80% of California's Latinx/a/o students graduate high school, only 39% of those students do so by having completed courses necessary for entrance to the California State University and University of California systems (UnidosUS, 2021).

Additionally, the literature shows not speaking English as a first language is an added barrier for college preparation. Callahan's (2005) research found that English as a Second Language Learners (ESLL) students in California were commonly placed in language development classes that did not focus on other subject matter their peers were learning in non-ESLL classes. This would result in these students falling behind on subject matter compared to their peers. Similarly, because ESLL students would often miss subject matter their peers were getting in non-ESLL classes, they were often placed on non-college preparatory tracks. This would add to the likelihood that Latinx/a/o students would need to forgo applying to universities as freshman applicants, and enter higher education through a community college.

Exams that play a role in college preparation and admission processes can be another challenge for the higher education journey of Latinx/a/o students. In addition to the sparse availability of Advanced Placement courses available to many Latinx/a/o students (Teranishi et al., 2004), it has been argued that the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is culturally biased against communities of color by way of cultural familiarity and semantic ambiguity playing an essential role in performance (Teranishi et al., 2004). This is a relevant point since until 2022 and 2020, the California State and University of California systems incorporated SATs scores into their freshman applicant selection processes (Gordon, 2020; Smith, 2022). Whether the elimination of CSU and UC SAT requirements for freshman applicants impacts acceptance rates for Latinx/a/o students remains to be seen.

Latinx/a/o Community College Students

In order to adequately situate this study, one must understand Latinx/a/os in the context of college. Better understanding Latinx/a/o people in the college context sets the perspective from which this study is situated. A study by Carales (2020) found that of 800 first-time Latinx/a/o students whose first entry into higher education was at a community college, 52% were no longer enrolled 6 years later. Of the same sample population, 13% maintained enrollment, 21% completed a certificate or associate degree, and 14% transferred to a university or completed a baccalaureate degree.

The majority of student subjects in Carales' (2020) study were female (59%), first-generation college students (82%), and were from low-income backgrounds (56%). The largest representation of students that were no longer enrolled in college had children (26%). Though most students in the study worked 20 hours or more per week, employment was

distributed more evenly in terms of not working and working 19 hours or less with students that transferred or completed a bachelor's degree. Lastly, the highest group percentage of students (71%) that received a Pell Grant (federal financial aid) were students who transferred or obtained a bachelor's degree. These findings are consistent with those reported in the CCCCO (2020) State of the System report, which found that over a three-year period, 37.2% of students of Asian descent either transferred to a university or completed a degree or certificate. Over the same period, 28.2% transferred or earned a degree or certificate, whereas only 15.4% of Hispanic students achieved one of the three study success indicators.

Though the higher education literature includes a robust number of studies related to Latina/o/x students, studies focused on this population of students specific to the California Community Colleges are less prevalent. This seems like a missed opportunity considering how many Latina/o/x are enrolled in the CCC system (CCCCO, n.d.b). This study aims to follow the lead of other researchers who have done studies specific to Latinx/a/o students in the CCC system (Arteaga, 2014; Maldonado, 2018; Rendon, 1994; Tovar, 2014; Xiong et al., 2015).

Academic and Social Challenges

Latinx/a/o college students often struggle with academic and social challenges throughout their educational journey (Carales, 2020). Said challenges further include "…lower expectations from teachers and peers, being the first in one's family to attend college" and, more generally "…learning to navigate the cultural environment of college" (p. 1) as found in a study by Cerezo and McWhirter (2012) which included 104 Latinx/a/o, mostly second-year students enrolled in one of three public universities. Additionally, many Latinx/a/o

students begin college with no prior knowledge of how to persist in college and often have limited family information or experience with how to navigate academic and social stressors that contribute to attrition. Latinx/a/o students are also less likely to pursue professional emotional support services while experiencing challenges in school, particularly if they are enrolled at predominantly White institutions (Kearney et al., 2005).

A study by Yosso et al. (2009), which included focus groups with 37 Latinx/a/o university students, found how racial microaggressions shaped their undergraduate experiences. The study found of the microaggressions experienced, the most often variations felt by students were: interpersonal microaggressions, racial jokes, and institutional microaggressions. Examples of microaggressions are “nonverbal gestures, stereotypical assumptions, lowered expectations, and racially assaultive remarks” (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 661). Due to these aggressions, the study’s participants experienced doubt about their academic merits and capabilities, their ethnic identity demeaned, and their cultural knowledge dismissed (Yosso et al., 2009).

First-Generation College Students

Defining “First Generation College Student”

The academy has yet to agree on a common definition for a first-generation college student (Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020). This lack of consistent definition continues as mentions of first-generation college students have become increasingly common in higher education-focused research and literature (Toutkoushian al., 2018).

To illustrate the effect the definition used for first-generation college students has on research findings, one might consider a study done by Toutkoushian et al. (2018). They

found that out of the study's population of 7,300 students, 22% had parents which neither attended college. In contrast, when first-generation college students were defined by one parent being college-educated, the percentage of students that met this criterion was 47% to 77%. As noted by Toutkoushian et al. (2018), the definition of first-generation students researchers use is of great importance. Definitions have implications, including who gets served (or overlooked) in policies, research, and practices.

In an analysis of the literature, by Peralta and Klonowski (2017) reviewed 24 articles, from six academic journals published between January 2005 through December 2015. The goal was to "shed light on the extent of inconsistency between definitions of the concept first-generation college student in studies that are published in high-impact higher education journals" (p. 630). These conceptual definitions included: no defined definition, neither parent earned a bachelor's degree, no member of the immediate family had earned at least an associate's degree or baccalaureate degree, parents do not have a postsecondary education degree, parents do not have a postsecondary education degree/in a single-parent household, an individual whose only parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree, parents have not graduated from college, parents were not college educated, neither parent has completed a 4-year degree in the U.S. by the time the student entered college, first generation to attend college, first generation in family to go to college, both parents or guardians had a high school education or less and did not begin a post-secondary degree, and parents never attended college.

As evidenced by the variance in definitions of first-generation college students in Peralta and Klonowski's (2017) study, such a definition can include many nuances in levels of

educational attainment, such as varying levels of college-level completion by a parent, the addition of 'guardian' to the definition, as well as the inclusion of families with one parent. Moreover, some articles did not have any clearly defined definition of first-generation college students.

The CCC system describes a first-generation student as "one for whom no parent or guardian has earned more than a high school diploma or attended college" (Constantouros et al., 2017, p. 3). It is important to note that this definition excludes the varying amounts of interaction a parent or guardian might have had within higher education. The CCC definition would seem to group all higher education enrollment together. Doing so overlooks the vast nuances in action and experiences possible as related to higher education enrollment. Nuances such as: units enrolled, units successfully completed, grade point average, and certificate or degree awarded.

This study will use the following definition of 'first-generation college student' as suggested by Peralta and Klonowski (2017) "an individual who is pursuing a higher education degree whose parents or guardians do not have a postsecondary degree" (p. 635). This definition was selected because it provides clear parameters compared to definitions that do not specify the level of involvement in higher education of a parent or guardian. A definition that lacks an attained degree but includes an unidentified amount of course work and outcomes for said coursework, provides little further information for the result of the unidentified number of courses.

Lastly, one can reasonably assume the completion of a postsecondary degree denotes a certain level of knowledge attained regarding how to successfully navigate higher education.

This is important because part of the purpose of clarifying which college students are first-generation is to denote which students have a parent or guardian whom can help them navigate postsecondary education as informed by experience (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018).

First-Generation College Students as Learners

In their comprehensive review of how the literature positions first-generation college students as learners, Ives and Castillo-Montoya (2020) found this population is viewed based on their academic performance, the influence of cultures on learning, and the contributions of their lived experiences to their academic learning, advancement of disciplines, and extensions of learning. It was found that the first two groups of literature [academic performance, and influence of cultures on learning] show an "assumption that the successful college student thinks and behaves in normative ways" (p. 161).

The above findings are important because assuming that successful college students think and behave in a specific manner implies an expectation for students to adopt or internalize norms in the field in order to be successful (Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020). This is problematic in the context of first-generation students as it "frames first-generation college students as the ones who need remediation by comparing their backgrounds, preferences, and outcomes with those of their continuing-generation peers who are viewed as the "norm" in higher education (Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020, p. 162).

Gutiérrez (2012) explains that trying to change students to fit into the normative system is patronizing and harmful. She posits that instead of pushing for students from different walks of life to conform, the structure and culture of the academy should adapt to better serve them. Ives and Castillo-Montoya (2020) suggest that if higher education scholars want to study

first-generation college students in ways that highlight their agency and power to contribute to their learning, it would be helpful to rethink designs, frameworks, and tools.

First-Generation College Student Experience

A study by Clayton et al. (2017) sought to understand how first-year, first-generation Latinx/a/o college students experience their first year of college. Their study included four students enrolled at a predominantly White university (PWI) located in the Southeastern region of the United States, and found five emerging themes of the students' experiences: the importance of their Latinx/a/o identity expression, the role that being first in the family to go to college played in the college-going process, the search and desire for a sense of community at the university, the significance of embracing their Latinx/a/o identity in college, and the focus on having a self-motivated personal responsibility for education.

Deficit Language and Assimilationist Views on First-Generation College Students

In the context of education, the deficit thinking model posits that students who fail in school do so because of internal deficits or deficiencies (Valencia, 2019). It is claimed these deficits manifest due to "limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior" (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). Valencia (1997) asserts, however, that many behavioral and social scientists dispute the deficit thinking model, arguing that it's "unduly simplistic, lacks empirical verification, more ideological than scientific, grounded in classism and racism, and offers counterproductive educational prescriptions for school success" (p. 2).

The deficit thinking model is often used in the literature about first-generation college students. A systematic review of the literature on first-generation students done by Ives and

Castillo-Montoya (2020) included 75 articles focused on first-generation college students as learners within the United States. It was found that the majority of the reviewed literature conceptualized first-generation college students as learners based on their academic performance and cultural influence on their learning. This is important to note because "these two conceptualizations positioned first-generation college students against normative ways of learning, and in doing so promulgate an assimilation approach in higher education" (Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020, p. 139).

Deficit language and an overall assimilationist approach are also apparent in Pascarella et al.'s (2004) study on first-generation college students. First-generation students are described as likely to enter college "…with lower stock of cultural/social capital than their peers" and that engaging academic and social engagement in college might help to "make up for this deficit" (p. 252). The article goes on to describe first-generation students as "handicapped" (p. 275) concerning the types of higher education institutions they choose, and the experiences they have.

College Advising and Counseling

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, a lack of consistent terminology across the literature made it a challenge to synthesize research and writings on this subject. The student service term "advising" in the literature, often being synonymous with the term "counseling," coupled with the nuances of the differences between a "counselor" and "advisor" as described by the ASCCC et al. (1995), made for a daunting task of navigating the use of various terms in the literature often referring to the same educational position and role.

Nuances in terminology aside, without the support of counseling and advising to college students, research has shown that students may take longer to graduate, enroll in unnecessary classes for their degree, encounter greater financial expense, and/or become frustrated with college and withdraw their enrollment (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013). In order to understand why counseling/advising can be so pivotal to student success, the following subsections will delve into what college counseling/advising is, its history, how it serves students, and different frameworks to approaching the discipline.

College Advising History

Higher education academic advising in the United States can be characterized by four different eras (Folsom et al., 2015, Chapter 1). The literature suggests the first period took place between 1636 and 1870 when advising did not occupy a separate role on college campuses. The second era of academic advising took place between 1870 and 1971. During this time, colleges and universities began to incorporate vocational programs into their undergraduate curricula. To supplement these new career-focused courses, higher education institutions began to offer elective courses to ensure students would get a well-rounded education. In response to curricula growing more complex, President of The Johns Hopkins University, Daniel Coit Gilman, coined the term "adviser" in reference to anyone who provided advice to students concerning academic, social, and personal matters. During this time, most advice given was related to making curricular choices (Folsom et al., 2015, Chapter 1).

Gordon et al. (2009) assert in 1947 that the Alfred University president had a cross-functional campus committee formed with the charge of furthering the advising of freshman

and sophomore students. It is believed from this effort came the idea of a system that supplemented, as opposed to replaced faculty in the advising process. This event is important in the context of the evolution of advising since prior advising was thought of as an additional role faculty had and not a separate profession.

The third era of advising came about between 1972 and 2002, brought on by the work of Burns Crookston and Terry O'Banion. Crookston (1994) characterized the developmental advising era when he asserted "advising is concerned not only with specific personal or vocational decisions but also with facilitating the student's rational process, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making and evaluation skills" (p. 5). Similarly, O'Banion (1994) described the academic advising process as including the dimensions of "exploration of life goals, exploration of vocational goals, program choice, course choice, and scheduling courses" (p. 83). Both Crookston and O'Banion believed advisors should do more than simply prescribe courses to students, but should also help students sort out the causes of their concerns, and help them create and apply strategies for addressing those changes. In summary, academic advising eras evolved due to the progression of the complexities of higher education college and university students needed to navigate.

Per Folsom et al. (2015), the fourth and current era of academic advising began in 2003 with the ushering in of initial steps to make academic advising a recognized profession. Virginia Gordon, National Academic Advising Association Past President, explained that a newly formed task force (now known as NACADA: National Academic Advising Association) was tasked with recommending categories of advising competencies that

advisors should be able to demonstrate (Folsom et al., 2015). It must be noted that though formal steps were taken in 2013 to solidify the academic advisor as a recognized profession, the faculty counselor position had already existed in the California Community College system for many years (Glendale Community College, 1985).

Though not presented as various periods in the history of advising, Gordon et al. (2009) similarly suggest college advising came about in the 1800s and continued its infancy through the early 1900s. They explain that in a general sense, all higher education institutions had some form of formalized advising program by the late 1930s.

According to Crookston (1994), historically the primary focus of the academic advisor and vocational counselor was "concerned with helping the student choose a major or an occupation as a central decision around which to begin organizing his life" (p. 5). Crookston (1994) asserted that advising should not only focus on student-specific personal or vocational decisions, but should also include "facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision making, and evaluation skills" (p. 5). From this perspective, he argued advising includes a teaching function as well, therefore, "the nature of the relationship between the academic advisor and the student is of critical importance in distinguishing those dimensions of this relationship that are developmental from those that are not" (p. 5).

Roles and Responsibilities in Advising

The literature varies in its description of what counseling and/or advising in higher education is, and more specifically, the role of a counselor and/or advisor. Additionally, the roles and responsibilities of counselors/advisors have evolved over time. For example,

Warnath (1973) presents higher education counseling in a general sense as "part of student personnel work in which a counselor marshals the resources of an institution and of the community to assist a student to achieve the optimum of adjustment of which he is capable" (p. 21). In contrast of depth, though not in content, a National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) task force created the following advising goals used by the Council for Advancement of Standards (CAS) to develop the CAS Standards for Academic Advising and the CAS Self-Assessment Guide for Academic Advising (Gordon et al., 2009):

> 1. Assisting students in self-understanding and self-acceptance (values clarification; understanding abilities, interests, and limitations). 2. Assisting students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of higher education. 3. Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives. 4. Assisting students in developing decision-making skills. 5. Providing accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs. Referring students to other institutional or community support services. 7. Assisting students in evaluating or reevaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans. 8. Providing information about students to the institution, college, academic departments, or some combination thereof. (p. 40)

Creamer (2000) shares practical boundaries of academic advising organized in five areas: the purpose of academic advising, the art or science of teaching is the pedagogy of advising, the context of academic advising, the focus of academic advising, and the content of academic advising. First, the purpose of academic advising is student learning and personal development (Creamer, 2000). Second, Creamer argues teaching methods that utilize active or collaborative learning approaches, that recognize the social nature of learning are the most effective. Therefore, Creamer asserts this teaching pedagogy should be applied to advising. Third, the context of academic advising is centered around a "calling for the information and implementation of educational and life plans" (p. 19). Creamer goes on to assert that

academic advising "derives its meaning from the setting and achieving of student goals" (p. 19).

The fourth boundary of academic advising is the focus on the whole student. Creamer (2000) argues creating plans for students' careers and lives requires a holistic perspective that includes their history, current circumstances, and their current educational environment. Lastly, the content of academic advising knowledge is constructed between the student and the advisor, regarding the student's educational and life plans. Creamer points out that though many students follow similar educational paths (ex: similar course sequences for the same major) each student's plan includes their individual dreams and how they perceive reality.

Creamer (2000) hypothesizes the following conditions influence effectiveness in educational advising for students: students are able to set goals and make and execute plans to achieve those goals based off of their knowledge and understanding of themselves, their knowledge of available institutional resources, and will make and accept consequences about educational and life opportunities. Creamer continues to hypothesize the effectiveness of advisors is influenced by: their knowledge of institutional resources and of their students' developmental and maturation levels, their sensitivity to the needs and plans of their students, as well as intervention and communication skills.

Crookston (1994) believed that counselors and advisors should be introspective. He believed it was of high importance that a counselor or academic advisor be able to recognize a need to change themselves if they expect to keep in tune with students in a changing world.

It is critical for advisors to also develop the ability and sensitivity to perceive these self-changes as they occur.

Regardless of the services counselors and advisors provide students, one must be mindful of how the institution contributes to any challenges the students may experience. As noted by Warnath (1973), in some instances the counselor may relieve the college administration from examining the contributions the institution makes to the student problems counselors are asked to address. Warnath (1973) explains this is a possibility because the counselor may help the student address concerns that are a result of poor functioning in the system. By doing so, counseling places the locus of problems within the student, not the institution itself.

College Advising and Counseling Discussion Topics

The literature finds that conversation topics in advising and counseling sessions can vary greatly (Arteaga, 2014; Eduljee & Michaud, 2014; Gordon et al., 2009; Orozco et al., 2010). Though discussions during a session may vary in content, there are common similarities as well. Common advising and counseling discussion topics include education planning, transfer planning, career paths, financial aid, time management, student personal issues, and how to navigate higher education as a whole. These discussion topics have been shown to occur at both the university and community college levels (Eduljee & Michaud, 2014; Orozco et al., 2010).

The literature notes fewer common topics discussed in advising sessions include ways to secure on-campus employment, withdrawing from the institution, and financial aid (Eduljee & Michaud, 2014). It must be noted, however, that what constitutes a discussion topic as common or not common may be determined by the student population being referenced. As

noted above, Arteaga (2014) found financial aid as a common counseling discussion topic with Latinx/a/o students. In contrast, at a predominantly white institution Eduljee and Michaud (2014) found financial aid to be a less common advising discussion topic.

Community College Counseling in California

The literature is in large part missing studies focused on counseling in the California Community College system. Understanding the history, purpose, and description of counseling will help both frame as well as clarify the need for this study.

In 1988, the California State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1725 (AB 1725, 1988), which updated the focus and purpose of the California Community Colleges, and was originally referenced in the California Master Plan for Higher Education (Coons et al., 1960). Assembly Bill 1725 clarified that it is the responsibility of the state of California to provide every Californian the opportunity to realize his or her intellectual, emotional, and vocational potential. The Bill goes on to explain that it is the joint responsibility of the student at the community college to realize the student's goals and aspirations, which often change during their educational experience. AB 1725 states that open access to community colleges must be assured for all adults who can benefit from instruction, for which access is meaningful only if it is supported by certain services. Among said services is counseling, which assists students in identifying their talents and abilities and directs them to courses that meet their needs and maintains standards designed to ensure their success.

To further clarify the role and responsibility of counselors in the California Community College system, California Education Code defines three major areas of which counselors are tasked with providing service for the system's students: academic, career, and personal

(ASCCC et al., 1995). Educational counseling centers around assisting students in assessing, planning, and implementing their immediate and long-range academic goals. Career counseling is meant to assist students in assessing their aptitudes, abilities, interests, and provide advice concerning current and future employment trends. Lastly, personal counseling is meant to assist students with personal, family, or other social concerns when that assistance is related to the student's education (State of California Education Code 72620, 1995).

California Community College Counselors and Paraprofessional Advisors

Prior to 1990, to be hired as a faculty member in the California Community College system, one needed to meet applicable credential requirements. However, when Assembly Bill 1725 was signed into law, "credentials were replaced by a set of minimum qualifications that determine eligibility for academic and administrative positions in the California Community Colleges system" (CCCCO, n.d.b, p. para. 1). For academic disciplines, including counselors, the minimum qualifications are a master's degree in the discipline of the assignment or a bachelor's degree in the discipline of the assignment and a master's degree in a reasonably related discipline. Degrees considered to be reasonably related are defined in a state-wide disciplines list (CCCCO, n.d.c).

To meet minimum qualifications for a counseling faculty position in the CCC system, one must possess a master's degree in either counseling, educational counseling, or marriage and family therapy, among others (CCCCO, 2021). When reviewing the various graduate degrees that would qualify for counseling minimum qualifications, one would consistently find that program learning outcomes include knowledge of: human development (both

normal and abnormal), social/cultural/ethnic issues, ethical and legal aspects of counseling, learning processes, and decision making/transition models. Additionally, graduate degree programs that meet counseling minimum requirements consistently share learning outcomes regarding students having the ability to: diagnose student problems, help students, learn problem-solving and decision-making skills, develop student educational plans, and develop effective curriculum (ASCCC et al., 1995).

In addition to counseling faculty, some California community colleges employ educational advisors, also known as paraprofessionals; however, educational advisors/paraprofessionals are more common on university campuses (ASCCC et al., 1995). One must note that a certain amount of education and/or experience required of educational advisors has not been established at the state level. This resulted in some California community college districts hiring educational advisors and setting their standards for these roles (ASCCC et al., 1995). Educational standards and requirements for educational advisors in the California Community College system have varied with the nature of the tasks for that position. The Academic Senate for California Community College (1995) reports that "Frequently, the paraprofessional (Educational Advisor) is someone who possesses an Associate or Bachelor's degree, and/or may have student services experience. Paraprofessionals might also be community college or other college students" (p. 11). Warnath (1973) also notes the attainment of a graduate degree as one of the differences between counselors and paraprofessionals.

In comparison to faculty counseling minimum qualifications, and the role faculty counselors have on California community college campuses, ASCCC et al. (1995) identified

appropriate roles of educational advisors as they do not require the minimum qualifications of the counseling discipline; such potential activities include: assisting students with course registration by providing information and referring students to campus offices and services, providing information about program requirements, facilitating and supporting various campus activities, and they might assist students in using reference materials or other technology-based information systems. Additionally, paraprofessionals may be less likely to incorporate counseling theory in their work, as noted by Warnath (1973).

In 1995, the ASCCC et al., a representative body of all faculty in the California Community College system, approved a resolution by which adopting the paper "The Role of Counseling Faculty in the California Community Colleges" and affirming "the professional role of counseling faculty." The counseling faculty position in the California Community College system is defined by ASCCC et al. (1995) as:

> Counseling faculty are professionally trained to diagnose the difficulties students face in their educational arena, to prescribe solutions for those difficulties, and to support students' stated goals in the context of human development and the inevitable changes that occur as they undertake college education. Even when students present clear goals, counseling faculty understand that students change as the result of their unfolding education or personal situations. This requires careful attention to cues that suggest students need assistance in reevaluating their goals. (p. 5)

Though counselors in the community college system are categorized as faculty in the references above, the literature often labels faculty and counselors as separate entities (Tovar, 2014). This subtle use of language, though potentially unintentional, may indicate to the reader that counselors are not faculty by way of being listed separately.

General Student Population Perceptions of Advising/Counseling

As the field of college counseling and advising has evolved over the years, studies have attempted to capture how this service is perceived by students.

A study by Eduljee and Michaud (2014) compiled the perceptions and measured the satisfaction of advising services by 396 predominately white students from a small liberal arts college in the northeast of the United States. There were 70% or higher levels of agreement to the following perspectives of advisors: respects opinions and feelings, encourages me to achieve my educational goals, is a good listener, is approachable and easy to talk to, provides a caring and open atmosphere, and encourages me to assume an active role in my academic planning. Conversely, low levels of agreement (56% or lower) were found for the following perspectives: encourages involvement in extracurricular activities, takes initiative in arranging meetings with me, encourages me to talk about myself and my college experiences, anticipates my needs, and accepts constructive feedback concerning their effectiveness as an advisor.

Lazarowicz and McGill (2022) conducted a study with 12 post community college transfer students currently enrolled at a predominantly White large Midwest institution, and each participant viewed advising as a critical part of effective transfer. The study respondents reported mixed experiences (positive and negative) with their advisors.

Certain circumstances have been shown to affect how students perceive counseling. A study by Guzman (2014), which included 1,728 community college students in southern California, found that educational goals and frequency of interactions with counselors affected counseling perceptions. Students with the educational goal of transferring to a

university reported higher levels of satisfaction than students who did not intend to transfer. Additionally, a correlation between the frequency of counselor contact and counselor satisfaction was found.

There is some research to suggest that perceptions and preferences related to advising may be linked to student gender and age. A study by Christian and Sprinkle (2013) surveyed 125 undergraduate and graduate students from a mid-sized southeastern college on their perception of college advising. The study found that older students preferred a more collaborative experience with their advisors when planning their course schedules. Older students also showed a greater willingness to accept responsibility for their educational progress. In contrast, the study's younger respondents were more likely to place the burden of schedule planning and graduation timeline planning on their advisors. The same study found that male respondents demonstrated a lack of interest in having an advisor who is motivating and focuses on individualizing student schedules. These preferences meant that for this study (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013), male students were more likely to prefer a prescriptive advising approach (Crookston, 1994).

Community College Counseling and Latinx/a/o Students

A study by Arteaga (2014) examined the perceptions and experiences of counseling by 26 first-generation low-income Latinx/a/o students. The study found that participant preferred counselor characteristics were:

> …caring, warm, empathetic, develop student-counselor relationship, understanding of student's needs and life experiences, patient, trustworthy, listen without judgement, encouraging, motivational, supportive, welcoming, friendly, approachable, easy to talk to, enthusiastic, humorous, respect diverse student views, accessible and available, provide useful, accurate, and timeline information, guide students in their educational path, interested in students'

> academic and personal welfare, help students with anything necessary, refer students to resources on the web, on-campus, and/or in the community, knowledgeable about the community college counseling practice and resources, communicate fluently in English and Spanish, and advertise counseling services on-campus (location, phone number, hours of operation). (p. 721)

To help navigate the college landscape, Carales (2020) implores community college counselors to have ongoing and meaningful conversations with their Latinx/a/o students, to help them understand the clearest path to their educational goals. This advice regarding helping students see a clear academic path to their goals is consistent with the role of community college counselors as reported by the ASCCC et al. (1995).

Orozco et al. (2010) studied effective counseling of diverse students in community colleges. They found that less than half of the Latinx/a/o students in their study had visited a counselor before, as compared to 70% and 65% of White and Asian students, respectively. A Latinx/a/o student from the same study shared that he didn't feel encouraged to build a relationship with a general counselor, and see them on an ongoing basis. However, the same student shared that one has a better chance of developing a relationship with counselors in the cohort-based program Extended Opportunity Programs and Services.

Participants in the study by Orozco et al. (2010) shared that they had felt cultural stereotyping in the past, the participants therefore emphasized wanting respect, to be treated as equals, and feeling like what they have to say carries as much as what other students say. One participant shared that though she was in the top 10% of her high school class, her counselor advised that she take three basic skills/non-transferable courses in order for her to "ease into the college environment" (p. 731).

Theory and Frameworks

According to Creamer (2000), as included in Gordon et al. (2009), "sound theory provides plausible explanations of a complex phenomenon. It distills the phenomenon to its essence and makes systematic observations about apparent relationships or underlying principles. Good theory is useful in practice; it illuminates complex circumstances and makes puzzling things understandable" (p. 18). It is for this reason one must look at theory and conceptual frameworks of college counseling and advising to best understand college counseling and advising both as a professional role and approach to working with students.

Community Cultural Wealth

It has been documented in the literature that racism continues to exist in the United States school system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Patton, 2004). Yosso (2005) asserts that community cultural wealth "is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). Therefore, one can see how the framework of community cultural wealth is a lens through which to better understand how Latinx/a/o students might navigate the system of higher education.

Yosso (2005) posits that Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through six forms of capital, which include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital. *Aspirational capital* points to the ability to maintain dreams and hopes for the future, amongst real or perceived barriers. *Linguistic capital* refers to the social and intellectual skills acquired through communication experiences in more than one language. *Familial capital* notes cultural knowledge nurtured among family that carries a sense of memory,

community history, and cultural intuition. *Social capital* refers to networks of people and community resources used to access instrumental and emotional support to navigate society's various institutions. *Navigational capital* points to the skill of moving about through social institutions, particularly institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind. Finally, *resistant capital* refers to the knowledge and skills gained through oppositional behavior that challenges and confronts inequality.

Advising/Counseling Frameworks and Approaches

Culturally Responsive Counseling with Latinx/a/o Students. Due to the continued increase of Latinx/a/o population in the United States (Zong, n.d.), Arredondo et al. (2014) assert it is important that scholars place at the forefront of research and clinical practice the best ways to tailor counseling services to Latinx/a/o students. They posit a way to tailor a counseling approach specific to Latinx/a/o students is to utilize dynamic multidimensional perspectives, integrate cultures and therapeutic structures, apply strengths-based models, consider situational and contextual interpretations, include spirituality and healing practices, and implement social justice directives.

Arredondo et al. (2014) state that though there are many counseling methods available, methods used with Latinx/a/o students should emphasize "the need to integrate culture, relational factors, communication synchronization, and practice accommodations with Latino clients" (p. 196). They underscore the need for ongoing professional development in Latinx/a/o culture, the use of culturally grounded strategies, and reliance on evidence-based research findings with a specific focus on Latinx/a/o -specific data.

Intrusive (Proactive) Counseling. In 1976, Robert E. Glennen published an article that would inform college advising for years to come (Donaldson et al, 2016; Molina & Ableman, 2000). Glennen (1976) described a type of college counseling named 'Intrusive Counseling,' which he described as contradictory to traditional professional counseling in which the counselee would be expected to seek out counseling on their own, and the counselor would not actively recruit clients. As noted earlier in this chapter, Glennen saw a difference between college advising and counseling. Glennen described advising as a role that centered around providing information about academic subjects, procedures and regulations, where s counseling "involves a more intensive interviewing process in which a counselor assists a client in exploring his or her feelings and attitudes and in which a client learns from the very process of the counseling session" (p. 48).

In 1973, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) recruited faculty to be trained and subsequently provide academic counseling to students. Though these faculty were not trained counselors, the university provided ongoing training and support such as: meetings to learn and discuss curriculum, college rules, regulations and counseling techniques. These faculty learned from guest speakers in the fields of counseling education, psychology, and student personnel workers from within the university. Additionally, workshops were provided for the group by recognized authorities in the counseling field.

As described by Glennen (1976), these UNLV faculty counseled students throughout the preadmission to matriculation processes. The faculty counselors reviewed each student's file in order to better understand students' individual situations and needs. Once the semester began, students were called in for intrusive counseling. The counseling these students

received is described as intrusive because it invited students in to see the faculty counselors established rapport and covered academic and attendance regulations, grading systems, probation, and available curricular options. Every student was seen by a faculty counselor at least once that academic year. When midterm reports were turned in by instructors, students receiving low grades were asked to see their counselor. Additionally, students receiving good grades throughout the year were invited to see faculty counselors in order to celebrate their success. The intrusive counseling effort also included referrals to the campus learning and resource center, which provided tutoring, reading and writing support, program materials, as well as study skills development support.

Glennen (1976) reported that within the first two years of the University of Nevada instituting intrusive counseling, the institution noted substantial positive changes. The freshman attrition rate was reduced from 45% to 6%. Simultaneously, the number of students that made the dean's honors list increased by 9%. Additional results included an increase of 25% of students with a 3.0 grade point average, 325 fewer students on academic probation, 46 fewer students being suspended from the university for low academic performance, and the university saw 25 fewer student withdrawals. It is important to note this seminal article by Glennen did not include empirical data that academic research often includes. The article did not provide specific information about the sample population used in the study, nor did it provide any sort of demographic data. Regardless of how this article compares to common research studies, it is important to note Glennen's work as related to future college counseling and advising.

In addition to Glennen's (1976) seminal work on intrusive (proactive) counseling, the literature includes mixed outcomes when intrusive (proactive) counseling/advising was instituted. Moreover, consistent with scant literature on college counseling and Latinx/a/o students, as is the literature on intrusive (proactive) counseling Latinx/a/o students.

In a study by Morillo (2012), intrusive (proactive) counseling was not shown to impact student grade point average, retention, or progression to graduation. Similarly, Holst (2007) found no statistically significant impact on at-risk historically bypassed community college students. However, intrusive (proactive) counseling has been shown to positively affect student educational outcomes (Chase, 2004; Donaldson et al., 2016; Rodgers et al., 2014).

Chase (2004) found a strong relationship between intrusive (proactive) counseling and re-enrollment in subsequent academic terms. Similarly, Rodgers et al., (2014) found an increase in retention rates across three years with students that received intrusive (proactive) counseling. Donaldson et al., (2016) found that students that received intrusive (proactive) counseling reported having a better understanding of their educational plan to completing their goals, as well as being more likely to continue to see counselors even post intrusive counseling efforts.

Prescriptive and Developmental Advising. During a presentation in 1970, Crookston (1994) proposed an advising model based on student development concepts in which advisors followed one of two approaches to working with students; the prescriptive, and developmental relationship. Crookston describes the prescriptive advisor relationship as "traditional" (p. 5), implying this style of relating to students was common in the years leading up to his work. Crookston describes this relationship as one based on power where

“the advisor is the doctor and the student is the patient” (p. 6). From this perspective, once advice is given, the advisor’s responsibility is largely complete. It is now up to the student to implement said advice. Crookston adds that where the responsibility of the advisor student interaction falls can be seen as different from the perspective of the advisory and student. On one hand, in a prescriptive relationship, the advisor assumes the responsibility is on the student to implement their advice, on the other hand, the student sees this relationship as one where they go to the advisor with a problem and are met with an answer. In this case, if the answer does not result in a desirable outcome, the responsibility falls on the advisor.

In contrast to the prescriptive advisor-student relationship, which he presents as authoritative, Crookston (1994) describes the developmental relationship as one in which both parties participate in a series of developmental tasks, which results in learning by both parties. These developmental tasks include “reaching an agreement on who takes the initiative, who takes responsibility, who supplied knowledge and skill, and they are obtained and applied” (p. 6). Crookston lays out ten central components of advising, of which he asserts differentiate the different approaches a prescriptive and a developmental advisor would take with their students: abilities, motivation, rewards, maturity, initiative, control, responsibility, learning output, evaluation, and relationship.

Conceptual Model for Developmental Advising. Creamer and Creamer (1994) saw the application of developmental theory to advising as a way to elevate even routine practices like answering common student questions, to opportunities for learning and personal development. This concept of how to view advising is closely related to Crookston’s (1994) perspective of viewing academic advising as teaching. Crookston viewed advising as a

teaching function “based on a negotiated agreement between the student and the teacher in which varying degrees of learning by both parties to the transaction are the product” (p. 9).

Developmental advising is described by Creamer and Creamer (1994) as the use of interactive teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies to help students achieve specific learning, developmental, career, and life goals. Within this conceptual model student goals are set through a collaborative partnership process between the student and the advisor, and these goals would guide all interactions between the two. Teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies are realized in developmental advising in the following ways, respectively: concentrate on the student as subject-matter, gain insight into and somethings modify personal conditions that affect learning, and prescribe specific intervention targets of intervention as related to student needs and challenges.

The following are intended outcomes for the developmental advising process: “setting career and life goals, building self-insight and esteem, broadening interests, establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships, clarifying personal values and styles of life, and enhancing critical thinking and reasoning” (Creamer & Creamer, 1994, p. 20). One must note that though advising interactions often stem from student questions, the developmental advising process creates an environment where the underlying motivations for student questions and the conditions those questions reflect create a ripe environment for learning and growth. In contrast, simply answering student questions, without considering deeper reflections and fertile soil for learning and growth, could be seen as ‘prescriptive’ advising per Crookston (1994).

It must be noted that though the literature often describes or alludes to the developmental approach to advising as the only approach to incorporate warmth and relationship building between the student and advisor, Mottarella et al. (2004) points out this is a false dichotomy. Mottarella et al. challenge the notion that an advisor's warmth towards and support of students is a sign of a developmental approach, and that an advisor cannot be warm and supportive as well as prescriptive, directive, instructive, and share information. They assert that "the establishment of a solid, warm, and supportive relationship can be the foundation of advising regarding less of the specific approach and advising tasks to be accomplished" (Mottarella et al., 2004, p. 57).

For the purposes of this study, I will be guided by the idea that a counselor can create a warm and relationship building environment with their students, while also providing specific information related to courses and requirements necessary for students to meet their stated goals. Combining elements of prescriptive and developmental advising approaches (Crookston, 1994), in a hybrid type approach of the two (Mottarella et al., 2004), would seem to address the six success factors: directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued, as necessary approaches to student support per Booth et al. (2013).

Appreciative Advising. It has been shown that the higher education space often views students with a deficit perspective and narrative (Valencia, 1997). Appreciative advising (AA) is a framework meant to counter such deficit-based narratives common in higher education. AA is built on Appreciative Inquiry, which provides a theoretical framework to aid advisors in uncovering, leveraging, and expanding students' positive attributes for academic and personal success (Hutson et al., 2014). AA is defined as intentional,

collaborative practice of asking positive, open-minded questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials (Bloom et al., 2008).

Hutson et al. (2014) note there are six phases in the AA framework. Phase one is the "disarm phase" which is meant to recognize that a student may find it intimidating to meet with an advisor. Therefore, the focus should be on an intentional welcoming approach by the advisor. Phase two is the "discover phase," where the advisor would ask positive, open-ended questions to help bring about student strengths, skills, abilities, while actively listening to the responses. In the third phase, named "dream phase," advisors ask students about their hopes and dreams for the future. The "design phase" is fourth, and focuses on the emphasis of student strengths while co-creating a plan meant for the student to achieve their dreams. Next is the "delivery phase" where advisors purposefully reiterate their confidence in the student's ability to achieve the plan they co-created. This phase includes the advisor encouraging the student to keep them updated on their progress and invites them to return in order to navigate obstacles or celebrate successes. Lastly, phase six is called the "don't settle" phase, which encompasses all of the phases and serves as a reminder for both the advisor and student to continue to learn, grow, and improve.

In practice, AA has been shown to positively influence student satisfaction with advising as well as improve academic probation status. A study by Holton (2017) included a survey of 200 nursing students at a large nursing college in the southeastern United States. It was found that AA had a positive impact on student satisfaction with advising as well as the efficacy of advisors' experiences. Research by Burks (2022) also found positive outcomes related to AA

in a nursing program. The study included 81 pre-nursing students and found AA had a statistically significant impact on students' positive regard with major choice.

Advising/Counseling Frameworks and Approaches and Latinx/a/o Students

An effort was made to locate within the literature specific advising/counseling frameworks that have been shown to best support Latinx/a/o student success. However, such studies were not found. Though located studies found varying effects of counseling frameworks and approaches on student outcomes, nevertheless, Latinx/a/o inclusion in the sample populations were minimal to nonexistent in these studies (Rios, 2019; Shirley, 2012; Vander Schee, 2007).

Moreover, though it was a challenge to locate specific counseling approaches best suited for Latinx/a/o students, the literature does suggest advising and counseling support Latinx/a/o students in a general sense (Gordon et al., 2009; Santiago, 2008; Torres & Hernandez, 2009). More specifically, Torres and Hernandez (2009) found that Latino students that consistently met with their advisor had higher levels of institutional commitment (retention), satisfaction with faculty, academic integration, cultural affinity, and encouragement.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to uncover the perceptions of community college counseling practices by first-generation Latinx/a/o students, as well as highlight the specific practices and strategies that support the success for this population of students. In order to understand the context, need for, and approach to addressing the focus of this study, this chapter reviewed the literature on community college as an institution, Latinx/a/o and first-generation college students, college advising and counseling, as well as theoretical frameworks and

approaches relevant to college counseling and advising. Chapter three will describe the research methods employed for this study, as well as describe the study population, sample, instruments, and limitations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents a description of the methods and procedures used in this study. The chapter includes the following sections: statement of purpose, research questions, research design and rationale, population and sample, selection criteria of the sample, instrumentation, trustworthiness in qualitative research, data collection procedures, data analysis, limitations, and a summary.

Statement of the Purpose

Community colleges cannot assume that the services they provide and the way those services are provided are perceived and received the same way by all student populations. Counselors are often the first, if not one of the first, campus employees students come across when they arrive at a community college. This is why it is important to understand how what they do and how they do it is perceived by students, particularly by first-generation Latinx/a/o students.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do first-generation community college Latinx/a/o students perceive counseling practices and services?

RQ2: Which community college counseling practices and services do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?

Research Design and Rationale

Mixed Methods Convergent Parallel Design

This study utilized a mixed-method, convergent parallel research design to collect and analyze data. Per Creswell (2014), the strength of mixed method convergent parallel design

is that it combines the advantages of each form of data. He explains “quantitative data provide for generalizability, whereas qualitative data offer information about the context or setting” (p. 542). The mixed-method approach was chosen in order to gather richer data than applying only a quantitative or qualitative approach. Additionally, as noted by Hurtado et al. (1996), the complexity of strategies and difficulties college students deal with are difficult for researchers to conceptualize, therefore, this “necessitates the collection and combined reporting of qualitative and quantitative information obtained from students” (p. 151). Moreover, researchers have encouraged future community college research to include both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to study the variety of student needs in the system (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Two-phase Study

The study included two phases. Phase 1 included both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with a multiple-choice and open-ended response survey. Phase 2 of the study included a qualitative methodology with interviews. The intention was for Phase 2 results to either confirm results from Phase 1 or inform a more robust findings discussion.

Per Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) there are three necessary characteristics of a mixed-methods study, (a) two datasets, (b) two types of analysis (statistical and thematic), and (c) a way of combining or mixing what is gleaned from the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. This study addressed the above three characteristics by gathering quantitative and qualitative data, frequency of response along and coding thematic analysis, and by using qualitative data to confirm the quantitative data.

Grounded Theory and Rationale

The qualitative portion of the study utilized a grounded theory research methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where in-depth perceptions and reactions to counseling experiences were captured through open-ended survey responses and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because as asserted by Drever (2022), with this approach the researcher creates a structure in order to map topics covered in the interview, and control the interview in order to ensure coverage of those topics. Additionally, a semi-structured interview allows for a prescribed scheme prior to the interview, which should make sense to the interviewee, and would allow for a single dialogue (Ruslin et al., 2022). In contrast, in ethnographic interviews, the interviewer is tasked with determining the interviewee's frame of reference, which may necessitate a series of interviews (Ruslin et al., 2022).

Grounded theory is described as a systematic methodological approach that differs from hypothesis-driven deductive approaches that use data to verify existing theory. Grounded theory, in contrast, derives theory from data gathered by the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe the grounded theory approach as beginning a study without having a preconceived theory but instead building a theory grounded in the data collected and analyzed from that study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) add that in grounded theory "data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other" (p. 23). Put differently, grounded theory research designs are "systematic, qualitative procedures that researchers use to generate a general explanation that explains a process, action, or interaction among people" (Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 240). In this study, a

grounded theory approach guided the analysis of the qualitative data. Specifically, data was analyzed through three grounded theory coding procedures: open, axial, and selective.

As asserted by Strauss and Corbin (1990) “the purpose of grounded theory method is…to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study” (p. 24). Noted in Chapter 1, the inspiration behind this study is to highlight and elevate Latinx/a/o voice related to their experience and perception of counseling services and practices. Instead of designing this study with a preconceived theory about the Latinx/a/o community college student experience with counseling, grounded theory was implemented in order to build theory from these experiences.

Both Chapters 1 and 2 have noted that research is scant on the topic of first-generation Latinx/a/o community college counseling. This study was meant to add to the literature on this topic regarding this population, so that other studies might add to this body of work. Per Strauss and Corbin (1990), researchers implementing grounded theory “…hope that their theories will ultimately be related to others within their respective disciplines in a cumulative fashion, and that the theory’s implications will have useful application” (p. 24). Indeed, this study design was chosen and implemented with the same hope; that the resulting theory and findings would have useful implications and application in the community college counseling field.

Population and Sample

Population

The population of first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students from one to six courses from four community colleges was 105 (n=105). The population number is a result

of an approximation of first-generation Latinx/a/o students per class, based on individual campus percentages of the same metric. These percentages ranged from approximately 27% to 43%. Precise numbers of first-generation Latinx/a/o students per class were not available.

Participant Recruitment

The study population resulted from in-person or virtual recruitment visits. The range of one to six courses per college was selected to ensure enough participants for the study, as I did not know how many instructors would be receptive to recruitment class visits. Instructors were chosen either from referrals from professional networking, or because they taught courses I believed might have a high population of Latinx/a/o students. The population included participants from Puente (a Latinx/a/o based learning community), math, English, guidance, counseling, Chicano studies, and ethnic studies courses. A total of 11 courses were included in the sample.

Sample

Of the 67 students that filled out the Phase 1 survey, 44 met the selection criteria. Ten participants from Phase 1, which met the selection criteria for the study, chose to participate in Phase 2.

Selection Criteria for the Sample

Survey participants included in the sample met the following criteria:

1. Were enrolled in a California Community College
2. Self-identified as Latinx/a/o
3. Self-identified as a first-generation student

The first 10 participants that indicated they'd be willing to be part of the interview phase of the study were included in the interview protocol.

Instrumentation

This study utilized two instruments that I created. This was done because I found no applicable instruments in the literature appropriate for the purposes of the study. The instruments used in this study included a survey and interview protocol. In addition to the two instruments, a literature review was used to triangulate the findings. As asserted by Greene et al. (1989), the core premise of triangulation as a design approach is that all research methods have biases and limitations. However, when two or more methods are used in a study, and the results converge or corroborate each other, the validity is enhanced for the study's findings.

Survey

Phase 1 of this study included an electronic survey utilizing the Qualtrics platform. Qualtrics protected participant anonymity by automatically assigning a response ID per participant. The survey instrument was chosen due to Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) asserting that surveys can be used to note trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a large group. Plano Clark and Creswell also note the survey instrument can aid in identifying the beliefs and attitudes of individuals at one point in time.

I created the survey and included twenty-seven multiple-choice questions and two free-response questions (see Appendix A). The survey was designed to capture quantitative and qualitative data regarding student perceptions about the counseling practices they experienced while interacting with counselors. The survey was grouped into the following

themes: length of time in college, college goals, counseling appointment procedures, appointment content preferences, counseling appointment length, frequency and format of counseling appointments, family and culture of the participant, and demographic information. It included a question about whether the student is a first-generation college student, defined as "an individual who is pursuing a higher education degree and whose parents or guardians do not have a postsecondary degree" (Peralta & Klonowski, 2017). Survey participants self-identified as wanting to be included in Phase 2 by providing their email address or phone number.

Interviews

Phase 2 of the study included a semi-structured personal interview instrument I created (see Appendix B). The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed me to clarify and prompt the participants as needed, thus, supporting the quality and accuracy of data collecting. I chose the interview instrument because research interviews, as explained by Wengraf (2001), are for "getting a better understanding of reality" (p. 3). Additionally, Guba and Lincoln (1981) assert that "the interviewer is likely to receive more accurate responses on sensitive issues, and the interview itself is likely to provide a more complete and in-depth picture than other forms of inquiry" (p. 187). Since the goal of the study was to better understand the perceptions or 'reality' of first-generation Latinx/a/o perceptions of community college counseling, the interview was a logical instrument to pair with the survey in Phase 1. The student interviews were done electronically over Zoom, and pseudonyms were assigned per interview participant. Interviews were conducted over Zoom, instead of in person, out of an abundance of caution due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The interview (Phase 2) portion of the study included questions regarding the following themes: a question to build rapport and help the participant feel at ease, the participant's experience with and perspective on the role of community college counseling, the content of counseling appointments, participant feelings during counseling appointments, how counselors can support student success, participant perception of how well counselors understand their culture, and ways community colleges might encourage more students to make counseling appointments.

Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Guba (1981) asserts the four criteria for establishing research trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Below are measures taken in order to ensure the rigor of the study.

Credibility

Triangulation. I used triangulation to support the credibility of the study. This process supports the credibility of a study's findings because it exposes them to "…possibly countervailing facts or assertations or verifying such propositions with data drawn from other sources or developed using different methodologies" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Four sources of data were used to triangulate the study findings. These included the literature review, multiple-choice survey responses, open-ended survey responses, and interview responses.

Member Check. I used member checks in order to ensure their interpretations of interview responses were accurate. Since perspectives on the same conversation can be different for different people involved, it was important that I validated my understanding of the interview answers. Merriam (1995) describes the process of member checking by the

researcher as "…asking if the interpretations are plausible, if they "ring true" (p. 54). A list of concepts and assertions gleaned from each interview was emailed to each participant in order to allow for confirmation or clarification of my understanding of the responses. In general, participants confirmed the accuracy of the concepts and assertions, with additional details added by one participant.

Debrief with Advisor. In order to maintain the credibility of the study, I periodically met with my advisor and reviewed data as they were collected from both Phase 1 and Phase 2. This gave me the opportunity to share coding, concepts, ideas, and thought processes used in the ongoing review of data gathered. The result was either an agreement between my advisor and I on how I made sense of the gathered data, or different perspectives on the meaning of the data, which resulted in reviewing the data again and circling back with their advisor.

Transferability

Collecting thick descriptive data was part of this study in order to address the transferability of results (Guba, 1981). Thick descriptions were included in this study in order to allow for "judgments about fitting with other contexts possible" (Guba, 1981, p. 86). In this study thick descriptive details included the number of organizations utilized in gathering the sample, general location of said institutions, number of participants included in the study, data collection methods, number and length of data collection sessions, as well as the time period when data was collected.

Dependability

Dependability was addressed in this study by including overlapping methods, as referred to by Guba (1981). Overlapping complementary methods address dependability because they

are able to complement the weaknesses of each other (Guba, 1981). The results to phases 1 and 2 were reviewed in tandem and similarities served to strengthen the stability of those findings, thereby addressing dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability can be addressed by triangulation, as this method involves "collecting data from a variety of perspectives, using a variety of methods, and drawing upon a variety of sources so that an inquirer's predilections are tested as strenuously as possible" (Guba, 1981, p. 87). As noted above in this study, the following sources were used to triangulate the findings, literature review, multiple-choice survey responses, open-ended survey responses, and interview responses.

Field Test Procedures

A field test was implemented prior to the data-gathering phase of the study. The field test included three students, one classified professional, and two community college counselors. Both instruments were shared with the students, a classified professional, and counselors to ensure clarity and understanding of wording used, as well as to ensure each instrument resulted in the types of responses necessary for the study. Feedback was gathered regarding the experience of three students, one classified professional, and two counselors completing the instruments as part of the field test, and adjustments were made to the instruments as needed.

Field test participants offered general feedback and minor modifications to the survey and interview instruments. The feedback and modifications to the survey included: adding the ability to choose more than one option on certain multiple-choice survey questions, clarifying

the definition of “counseling” on the survey, allowing enough space in the free response area of the survey for the participant to be able to see what they wrote, as opposed to the space one would type an answer in only showing one line at a time, including space for participants to clarify their answer on the survey, making question-wording as simple as possible, and allowing for participants that would like to be included in the interview to submit their text phone number instead of only asking for their email for communication purposes.

Feedback and minor suggestions for the interview included: displaying the interview questions one at a time on a shared screen, adding clarification questions to the broad opening question about the participant’s educational history, and emphasizing that interview responses will not be traceable to the participant.

Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Procedures for Phase I

Data collected for this study were used to answer the research questions posed above. A total of three hundred students (n=300) from four mid-sized community college campuses were informed about the study. I contacted instructors of two to six classes at each campus and explained the spirit of the study. Instructors of the following courses were contacted: Puente, math, English, guidance, counseling, Chicano studies, and ethnic studies. Course subjects included in data gathering varied from campus to campus. If it was possible and with instructor approval, I attended a class session and notified students of the study. Class visitations and flyer distribution took place either in person, through zoom, or through a written blurb shared with online classes. I then asked that the instructor email out the survey

link to the students. In some cases, instructors allowed class time for students to complete the study survey.

The survey began with a letter of consent, and it was assumed that participants who continued onto the survey were giving their consent to participate in the study. Those that preferred to opt out of the survey were able to do so at that time. The survey included two open-ended questions regarding reasons for the likelihood of making a counseling appointment, and an elaboration of feelings participants have regarding talking with a counselor. At the end of the survey students were asked if they would be willing to participate in the interview (Phase 2) portion of the survey. Students were given the option to provide me with their email address, or if they preferred, a phone number for text correspondence.

Qualitative Data Procedures for Phase II

Initially 20 (n=20) survey participants indicated they would be interested in Phase 2 of the study. However, after follow-up communication to schedule interviews, responses were received from 10 participants.

The participants had an opportunity to ask me questions about the study, its purpose, and anything else they might have had on their mind. The purpose of this portion of the interview was to encourage an environment of trust and comfort. The interviews took place over Zoom, and lasted no longer than one hour. An hour was chosen as the time limit for interviews since the interviewer felt asking for a longer interview might have minimized the numbers of those willing to participate. The interviews were recorded and stored on an online, password protected, drive.

Responses to the survey and interviews were used to inform potential strategies for community college counselors to employ in their work with first-generation Latinx/a/o students. Additionally, the findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2 will help provide insight into future research on this topic and student population.

Data Analysis

Table 1 “Instrument Item and Research Question Alignment Matrix” displays the alignment of the research questions and instrument items. It presents major themes present in each research question, as well as where each theme is addressed among the items in the survey and interview protocol. Both RQ1 and RQ2 include themes of counseling practices (noted as “P”) and counseling services (noted as “S”). Counseling practices as a theme was broken down into three subthemes: actions (noted as “A”), strategies (noted as “T”), and discussion topics (noted as “D”).

Quantitative Data Analysis (Phase 1)

The data showing survey participant responses as related to counseling services delivery, content preferences, and overall perceptions were displayed. The quantitative survey data were summarized and displayed in tables as applicable. The quantitative data were gathered using Qualtrics. This broader survey collection of data was meant to further inform more detailed gathering of data with an interview phase of the study. The data gathered from interviews then helped explain findings from the survey portion of the study, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

Table 1

Instrument Item and Research Question Alignment Matrix

Research Questions	Survey	Survey Open-Ended Items	Interview Questions
RQ 1: How do first-generation community college Latinx/a/o students perceive counseling practices (P) and services (S)? Counseling practices: Actions (A) Strategies(T) Discussion Topics(D)	Item Q5: How likely are you to make a counseling appointment to talk to a counselor? (S) Item Q7: If the counseling office called you to make an appointment, how likely is it that you would agree to an appointment? (S) Item Q14: Do you look forward to talking with a counselor? (P) Item Q16: How important is it to you to feel like your counselor cares about your success? (P)(T) Item Q17: In general, do you feel your counselor/s care about your academic success? (P)(T) Item Q19: In general, do you feel your counselor/s understand your culture? (P)(T) Item Q25: In general, do you feel welcomed in counseling appointments (Do you feel that counselors are happy to see you and are friendly/polite?) (P)(T)	Item Q6: Please explain your answer regarding how likely you are to make an appointment to talk to a counselor? (S) Item Q15: Please elaborate why you do or do not look forward to talking to a counselor (P)(A/T).	Item Q2: What has been your experience with academic counseling at your college? (P/S)(A/T) Item Q3: What role do you think college counseling plays in your college journey? (P/S)(A/T) Item Q5: In counseling appointments you've attended, what has the counselor said or done that was the most helpful? (P)(A/T) Item Q6: How have counselors made you feel comfortable during an appointment? If counselors have made you feel uncomfortable, what did they do that contributed to you feeling that way? (P)(A/T/D) Item Q9: Do you feel counselors have been understanding/supportive of your culture? Why or why not? (P)(A) Item Q10: How do you think the college could get more students to make counseling appointments? (S)(T)
RQ 2: Which community college counseling practices (P) and services (S) do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?	Item Q4: How did you hear about the counseling office/counseling services? (check all that apply) (S) Item Q7: If the counseling office called you to make an appointment, how likely is it that you would agree to an appointment? (S) Item Q8: How would you prefer to make a counseling appointment? (S) Item Q9: What time of day would you prefer to attend a counseling appointment? (choose all that apply) (S)	Item Q6: Please explain your answer regarding how likely you are to make an appointment to talk to a counselor? (P)	Item Q3: What role do you think college counseling plays in your college journey? (P/S) Item Q4: What topics of conversation are most important to you in a counseling appointment? (P) Item Q5: In counseling appointments you've attended, what has the counselor said or done that was the most helpful? (P)

(table continues)

Table 1

Continued

Research Questions	Survey	Survey Open-Ended Items	Interview Questions
RQ 2: Which community college counseling practices (P) and services (S) do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?	Item Q10: For what reasons would you make a counseling appointment? (check all that apply) (S) Item Q11: How much time would you prefer to spend with your counselor during an appointment/session? (S/P) Item Q12: How many times would you like to talk a counselor per quarter or semester? (P) Item Q13: In what format do you prefer to attend counseling appointments? (S/P?) Item Q18: How important is it to you that your counselor understand your culture? (P) Item Q20: How important is it to you that your counselor asks about your family? (P) Item Q21: How important is it to build a relationship with your counselor? (P) Item Q23: How important is it to you that your counselor speak Spanish? (P) Item Q24: How important is it that you and your counselor talk about personal issues you may be experiencing? (P)		Item Q6: How have counselors made you feel comfortable during an appointment? If counselors have made you feel uncomfortable, what did they do that contributed to you feeling that way? (P) Item Q7: What can counselors do to help make you feel like they care about your success? (P) Item Q8: What could counselors do to be more helpful or provide a better service? (P/S) Item Q10: How do you think the college could get more students to make counseling appointments? (S)

Qualitative Data Analysis (Phase II)

Each interview audio was transcribed using the program Rev. I then played each interview and edited the transcription as necessary to ensure the audio transcription was accurate. I then conducted a member check with the participant (Merriam, 1995) and shared a

list of themes and assertions the interviewee made per during the interview. This was done in order to ensure I captured the interview accurately for the purposes of truth value of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). If the participant shared corrections, adjustments were made to the transcript. I chose to share the transcript of thirty minutes of the interview in order to shorten the amount of time and effort it would take for the participant to review. This was done in the hopes it would increase the likelihood of participants engaging in the member check process.

Data analysis procedures for the interview phase of the study were informed by Corbin and Strauss (2012). The first step in the analysis of each interview was to read the transcription of the recording of each interview soon after its conclusion. No notes were taken at this stage, nor was any highlighting of the transcription done. This was done so I could fully be in the moment with the interviewees. As described by Corbin and Strauss, the idea was to "enter vicariously into the lives of the participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen to what they are telling us" (p. 5). The coding process was initiated soon after each interview with participants, with an initial analysis of each answered question.

The coding process included open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding was implemented first as it allowed for an initial effort to categorize emerging codes. Next, axial coding was implemented in order to note relationships between categories found during the open coding process. Finally, selective coding was implemented for the purpose of selecting core categories in the qualitative data. These types of coding approaches were appropriate for

this grounded theory study as they aided in the process of deriving theory from the data gathered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Coding was implemented in order to attribute interpreted meaning for qualitative data gathered "for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Coding helped me make sense of the qualitative data in order to present theory, themes, and common threads throughout the gathered qualitative data. There were three coding passes. After the first pass, subsequent passes resulted in the collapsing of codes into themes (See Appendix C).

At this stage of analysis, it was important to differentiate between levels of concepts. Some concepts were lower-level and explanatory, while others were higher-level concepts that apply across the different interviews of the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2012). After creating memos during data analysis, I compiled a list of concepts and categories and themes.

The qualitative analysis for this study included data organization, coding, the identification of themes, as well as presenting and interpreting themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Coding methods used in this study included: axial, concept, and descriptive (Saldaña, 2016). The Phase II analysis was based on themes presented in the literature review, however, the analysis evolved as findings and themes emerged. Transcriptions and a table aided me in aligning the collected data to the study research questions. Once the table was complete, I continued to code the data as well as theme the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used mind maps, charts, and color coding to help sort, align, and analyze findings.

The triangulation of data gathered from both the quantitative and qualitative portions of this study served as a means for seeking convergence of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Limitations

The geographic location of the study sites could be a possible limitation of this study. The study parameters were confined to students from four community colleges within a radius of about 44 miles. It is possible study findings could differ for students that live elsewhere in the state or country due to potentially different dynamics and/or variables affecting study outcomes.

Summary

This chapter outlined the design, method, and rationale of the study. It described the two-part methodology that was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. An explanation was provided as to how the quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the survey and interviews. Procedures for analyzing the data were also shared. Limitations to the study were also discussed and mitigated to ensure the quality of the study.

Chapter 4 follows with an analysis and discussion of the data findings of the study. In closing, Chapter 5 presents conclusions, discussions, recommendations for future studies, and implications of action.

Chapter 4: Findings of the Study

Chapter Four presents an analysis of the data collected in this study. The findings are presented and discussed according to the two research questions and two-phase approach methodology which utilized a survey and interview protocol.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. How do first-generation community college Latinx/a/o students perceive counseling practices and services?
2. Which community college counseling practices and services do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?

This study defines college success as progress towards or completion of a college-level certificate or degree, or successful transfer admission. Therefore, success is not defined simply by the completion of an academic goal, but also by the progress toward any given goal/s.

Population and Sample Profile

Population

The study population included 105 (n=105) first-generation students from four mid-sized community colleges. These were located in the bay area and the central coast of California.

Sample Profile

The sample included 44 (n=44) first-generation students from four mid-size community colleges in the bay area and central coast of California. Table 2 “Demographic Profile of the

Table 2

Demographic Profile of the Sample

Characteristic	Number of Participants	% of participants
Age		
18-21	37	84
22-25	3	7
29-32	2	5
37-40	1	2
Decline to state	1	2
Current unit enrollment amount	*One respondent didn't answer this item.	
12-15	32	73
4-7	6	14
16-19	3	7
1-3	2	4
8-11	1	2
Amount of time enrolled in college		
First quarter/semester	23	54
3 quarters/semesters	8	18
5 quarters/semesters	3	7
7 quarters/semesters	3	7
2 semesters/quarters	2	5
6 quarters/semesters	2	5
9 quarters/semesters	1	2
4 quarters/semesters	1	2
Academic goal/s	(Participants were allowed to choose more than one goal.)	
Transfer to a university	32	32
Complete an associate's degree	16	16
Take classes/complete a program so you can work as soon as possible	5	5
Take classes to advance your career	4	4
Undecided	2	2
Complete a certificate	1	1

Note. n = 44

Sample" describes the age range, units currently enrolled, amount of time in college, and academic goals of study participants

As noted above, the sample included participants ages 18-21 to 37-40. Participants were enrolled from 1-3 to 16-19 units at the time of participating in this study. The amount of time participants had been enrolled at their college ranged from it being their first quarter/semester to their ninth quarter/semester. Participant college goals included: transferring to a university, completing an associate's degree, taking classes or completing a program in order to work as soon as possible, taking classes to advance one's career, undecided goals, and completing a certificate.

The demographic data for this study did not differentiate between a quarter and a semester. Typically, one academic year lasts three quarters or two semesters. For the purposes of clarity and ease of survey item comprehension, participants were not asked whether they attended a quarter or semester college system. This choice was in part informed by it being a common anecdotal experience that students were not clear if they were attending a semester or quarter system college. For this reason, participants were only asked how many terms they had attended their college, regardless of quarter or semester structure.

Data were collected between October 12, 2022, and December 17, 2022. I visited, physically or virtually, a total of 11 classes, and reached a total of 329 students. The survey was conducted through Qualtrics, and took approximately 3 to 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis was organized in two phases that aligned with the study's research questions. Both phases were designed to investigate how community college counseling practices and services are perceived by first-generation

Latinx/a/o students, as well as which of those practices best support the success of this student population.

Presentation of the Data

Table 2 reports how often various counseling actions, discussion topics, and strategies were mentioned in the gathered qualitative data. It is clear that educational planning and providing students guidance while being present and answering questions were by far the most frequently mentioned themes in the qualitative data.

Results for Table 3 were gathered from two open-ended survey questions in Phase 1 and 10 interviews in Phase 2.

Findings and Discussion of Research Question 1

How do first-generation community college Latinx/a/o students perceive counseling practices and services?

Quantitative Data from Survey Questions

Counseling Practices. Five survey questions were used in this study to assess participant perspectives on counseling practices. Participants were asked to relay their perspectives on what counselors do and how they deliver their services. Data were analyzed and organized according to frequency response.

Looking Forward to Appointments. A general theme of positive regard for counseling appointments was found. Respondents indicated how they feel about meeting with a counselor as 82% (36 of 44) of respondents indicated they look forward to talking with a counselor. A participant noted, “I am likely to make an appointment with my counselor if I

Table 3

Counseling Practice Coding Frequency of Response

Actions	Number of References	Number of Respondents
Educational planning	50	29
Guiding the student by being present while answering questions	49	42
Encouragement	11	7
Plan to see the student again in the future	4	2
Discussion Topics	**Number of References**	**Number of Respondents**
Family-home life	4	2
Financial aid	3	3
Transfer	3	3
Career discussion	3	3
Time management	1	1
Study skills	1	1
Strategy	**Number of References**	**Number of Respondents**
Accept students for who they are	11	5
Counselor same ethnicity as student	7	4
Motivation	5	3
Understanding	5	3
Care	5	2
Relationship building	4	8
Counselor's gender	3	1
Accept students for who they are	11	5

have any questions regarding university applications, financial aid help, help with determining my ed plan, and other college-related questions."

Welcoming Climate. A seemingly supportive finding of respondents being willing to make and look forward to counseling appointments is how welcomed they feel in the counseling office. Respondents indicated they feel welcomed in the counseling office at a rate of 80% (35 of 44). The welcoming environment participants reflected on is reflective of the disarm phase in appreciative advising as described by Hutson et al. (2014).

Caring Environment. The majority of survey respondents indicated it is either "very" or "moderately" important to feel like their counselor cares about their success with a response rate of 93% (41 of 44). Though at a slightly lower response rate, a majority of survey respondents 84% (37 of 44) indicated they feel their counselors care about their academic success.

Cultural Understanding. A majority of study respondents, 80% (35 of 44) indicated that they have experienced their counselor/s understanding their culture. This finding aligns with the results of a study by Orozco et al. (2010) that found community college students highly valued when their counselor understood their culture and experiences.

Counseling Services. Two survey questions were used to assess participant perspectives on counseling services.

Positive View of Counseling. A majority of the survey respondents indicated positive regard for counseling appointments as 80% (35 of 44) indicated they are either "very likely" or "likely" to make an appointment to talk to a counselor. These results support Arteaga's (2014) findings that the majority of Latinx/a/o students in her study believe counseling was important for their success in college. A study by Orozco et al. (2010) found similar positive regard for counseling, particularly for students in support programs such as Extended

Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), Puente, and Math Engineering Science Achievement (MESA). In contrast, as shown in a study by Lazarowicz and McGill (2022), as well as this study's findings, not all students have positive experiences with counselors and/or advisors.

Additionally, Guzman (2014) found that community college students meeting with the same counselor over time appeared to be the strongest predictor of counselor satisfaction and the value of counseling. Similarly, interviews in this study resulted in some participants sharing positive feelings toward meeting with the same counselor.

Of the respondents that answered Very Unlikely (1) or Unlikely (8) to the survey question "How likely are you to make an appointment to talk to a counselor?" four students explained this is because they either felt embarrassed to ask for help, felt a lack of confidence to make an appointment, get nervous talking to counselors, or find it a challenge to ask for help. Of the same respondents, one indicated they answered this way because they feel they can find the necessary information on the internet. Another respondent mentioned not knowing why they do not reach out to counselors, and that they see themselves as "lazy." Lastly, one respondent explained they think it is important to make a counseling appointment to receive guidance. This last respondent may have unintentionally marked "Very Unlikely" or "Unlikely" for this question, due to the spirit of their free response answer.

Counseling Office Outreach. Additionally, 86% (38 of 44) of survey respondents indicated a positive view of counseling as they would be "likely" or "very likely" to agree to make an appointment to see a counselor if they received a call from the counseling office for that reason. This finding is consistent with the recommendation from Donaldson et al. (2016)

that advising/counseling departments increase outreach. This is recommended because the assertation is that relying on students to seek out advising will not reach all who need it.

Qualitative Data from Open-Ended Survey and Interview Questions

Counseling Practices. Five interview questions were used in this study to assess participant perspectives on counseling practices. These are described below.

Positive Experiences. In accordance with the survey results, 50 percent of the interview participants (5 of 10) indicated generally having a good experience in counseling appointments. Arteaga (2014) noted a similar result when 69% of participants in her study reported having positive counseling experiences. Interview participant Elena remarked, "they [counselors] were all super helpful and nice." Jessica also shares a positive experience with counselors "I wouldn't have been able to do all the things that I'm doing if it wasn't for them. So, I'm grateful for counseling." The experiences shared by Elena and Jessica align with the developmental advising approach as described by Creamer and Creamer (1994).

Juana explained how being in the Puente program (predominately Latinx/a/o) has helped her feel more comfortable working with a counselor "I've actually reached out more to them [counselors] because I've never really been in a school or in a classroom where there's like a bunch of Latino kids…I feel like it's good because in a way I feel more comfortable with asking questions and explaining…life things going on."

Negative Experiences. Although negative experiences were not addressed in the survey, 50 percent (5 of 10) of the interview participants reported having negative experiences with counselors, in addition to positive ones. These experiences were described as feeling not cared for, feeling rushed, not feeling the counselor was paying attention to them, being given

incorrect information, being pressured into taking a course the participant did not want to take, and feeling discouraged from pursuing their career choice. Jaime described how he felt after sitting down to talk with a counselor “I remember the counselor walking over and the counselor seemed so…annoyed that I was the person that signed up for the appointment.” Jaime continued “I remember asking and answering questions…but they weren’t questions that made me feel cared for.” Adriana shared her experience when she felt a counselor discouraged her from pursuing a career in nursing “I stayed quiet and, you know, it impacted my day. It made me feel like…what the hell am I doing this for then?” Arteaga’s (2014) study resulted in similar findings regarding negative counseling experiences by participants in her study. Participants noted negative experiences included: a lack of caring, feeling rushed, being discouraged, and being given conflicting information.

As shown above, participants had both positive and negative counseling experiences. This is confirmed in the literature by Lazarowicz and McGill (2022). The researchers found that community college students in their study also had mixed experiences with individual advisors. One must note, however, their study was done with a predominantly White sample.

Counseling Role in College Journey. Interviewees were asked what counseling practices play a role in their college journey; gathered responses to this item included: (40%, 4 of 10) help to make an educational plan, (30%, 3 of 10) providing guidance, and (20%, 2 of 10) providing encouragement. Interviewees shared a sense of how important they perceive counseling to be overall to their success. Maria explained why counseling is important to her, particularly as a first-generation student, “I depend on these counselors to guide me through the whole process of it [navigating college] because I don’t know what I’m doing and the

people in my life don't know how to do it either. Adriana added to this sentiment "I think that especially for a first-time…college goer they [counselors] have such an instrumental role in your success. You know…it's kind of like make or break."

The counseling role and approach that the interviewees described above could be categorized as developmental advising/counseling as described by Creamer and Creamer (1994). Additionally, the above mentions of creating an educational plan with the counselor, as well as receiving guidance from the counselor, are indicative of the design phase in the appreciative advising framework (Hutson et al., 2014).

Helpful Counseling Practices. Regarding what interviewees felt were the most helpful practices counselors incorporated in sessions, six of the ten (60%) participants mentioned encouragement and/or reassurance. Juana remarked "…[counselors] just being honest and encouraging has really helped me." Similarly, Orozco et al. (2010) found that community college students in their study repeatedly stated that they want counselors whom encourage them to succeed.

Five participants (50%) indicated the creation of or adjustment to educational plans. This finding is consistent with the survey item regarding reasons participants meet with a counselor; 86% chose "help choosing classes" which is an integral part of creating/updating an educational plan. Veronica explained why she meets with a counselor to work on her educational plan; she stated, "I feel a lot better since I know what classes…I have to do for the major…planning ahead and stuff like that…that really helped me a lot." Among other practices mentioned were building an ongoing relationship with the student, understanding the student's history, and being sweet and positive. Findings by Orozco et al. (2010) found

that community college students felt supported when their counselor helped them choose classes and make an educational plan.

The approach to counseling described above underscores a preference for interactive and collaborative experiences with the counselor; as described in the developmental approach to counseling/advising (Creamer & Creamer, 1994). As noted above, the design phase (Hutson et al., 2014) in the adaptive advising framework continues to be found as important in participant responses, both quantitative and qualitative.

Comforting Environment. the following responses were mentioned as interviewees explained how counselors made them feel comfortable: the counselor being focused on the respondent/not distracted during an appointment (40%, 4 of 10), the counselor being the one to start the conversation (30%, 3 of 10), providing reassurance (20%, 2 of 10), getting to know the student (20%, 2 of 10), creating a welcoming physical meeting space (10%, 1 of 10), consistently meeting with the respondent (10%, 1 of 10), and an overall kind and warm affect (10%, 1 of 10). Maria explained "having that…space where you feel comfortable to…ask questions and not feel like, you know, pressure to…hurry up and just get it over with. That just helps a lot." Regarding how counselors have made respondents feel uncomfortable in the past, feeling rushed, and feeling discouraged to pursue their goals were mentioned.

The attributes of a comforting counseling environment as expressed by the survey participants highlight the disarm, dream, and deliver phases in the appreciative advising (Hutson et al., 2014).

Cultural Understanding. The majority of interviewees, seven of ten (70%), indicated their counselors have been understanding and/or supportive of their culture. Similarly, seven of ten (70%) interviewees indicated feeling a connection with their counselor, at least in part, because their counselor is Latinx/a/o. These findings are consistent with survey Phase 1 findings that 80% of respondents indicated they feel their counselor understands their (the respondent's) culture. This is in line with the 86% of respondents that indicated they feel it is either moderately or very important their counselor understand their culture. Elena remarked "…I've noticed I always get a lot of people [counselors] of color, so I feel like that definitely helps because I feel more comfortable with them sharing like certain details of my cultural life, or I feel like they would definitely understand me more. I feel most comfortable with them." Adriana added that having a Latinx/a/o counselor "makes me feel like…home…I didn't think it would be as important, but it's tremendously important."

The above findings are consistent with the results of studies by Arteaga (2014) and Orozco et al. (2010). Arteaga (2014) found 54% of participants in her study (all participants were Latinx/a/o), emphasized the importance of having counselors that understand their culture and could relate to their lived experiences. Similarly, Orozco et al. (2010) found community college students in their study highly valued having their culture and experiences understood by their counselors.

The findings of this study relating to the importance of the participants feeling like their counselor understand their culture, as supported with findings by Arteaga (2014) and Orozco et al. (2010), are congruent with the culturally responsive counseling framework by Arredondo et al. (2014). Additionally, this study and these findings add to the literature on

evidence-based research findings focused on Latinx/a/o students, as implored by Arredondo et al. (2014).

Counseling Services. One interview question was used in this study to assess participant perspectives on counseling services.

Counseling Outreach. Interview participants had many ideas of how counselor departments might increase the number of students that make counseling appointments. The most common finding of this item centered around sending electronic communication to students about counseling services. Six of the ten interviewees (60%) suggested counselors and/or counseling departments contact students about their services by way of email, texts, the college website, or the college online learning platform. This finding is consistent with the survey Phase 1 item regarding how respondents heard about counseling; of which 21 indicated they learned about counseling from an email sent by the college. Other ideas for marketing counseling services included: sharing information about counseling at student club meetings, counselors attending campus events, having a diverse group of counselors, having counselors individually email students, making counseling messaging specific to what students are studying, and having an overall theme that counseling appointments do not have to be overly serious and like a business meeting.

The above findings regarding counseling outreach by way of counselors actively seeking out student connection is an example of intrusive (proactive) counseling (Glennen, 1976).

Findings and Discussion of Research Question 2

Which community college counseling practices and services do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?

Quantitative Data from Survey Questions

Counseling Practices. There were five survey questions in this study that were used to assess participant perspectives on counseling practices. These are described below.

Importance of Cultural Understanding. Survey respondents indicated the importance of their counselor understanding their culture, as 86% (38 of 44) indicated it is moderately important or very important for their counselor to understand their culture. This finding was consistent with results of a study by Orozco et al. (2010). Though the Spanish language is a big part of the Latinx/a/o culture, 54% of respondents (27 of 44) indicated it is either “slightly important” or “not at all important” that their counselor speak Spanish.

Though these findings coincide with Arteaga’s (2014) study that found Latinx/a/o students preferred counselors that understood their culture. However, these findings differ from Arteaga’s (2014) findings in that for the majority of respondents in this study, the counselor speaking Spanish was not a priority.

Family as Discussion Topic. Though the literature has shown family is an integral part of Latinx/a/o culture (Delgado Bernal, 2002), survey participants indicated discussing their family during a counseling appointment is not generally a priority. Fifty-five percent of the respondents (24 of 44) chose “slightly important” or “not at all Important” regarding how important it is that their counselor asks about their family.

Relationship Building. Seventy-three percent of survey respondents (32 of 44) indicated it is either “very important” or “moderately important” that they build a relationship with their counselor. It would seem that talking about personal issues might be a way to build that

relationship, as 59% of the respondents (26 of 44) indicated it is "moderately important" or "very important" that they talk about personal issues with their counselor.

The affinity for building a relationship with the counselor is mirrored in Arteaga's (2014) study results, where participants desired student-counselor relationship building. Orozco et al. (2010) also found counselor relationship building as important to providing a good service to students, however, respondents in this study rarely reported having built a strong relationship with their counselor.

The emphasis and importance on relationship building with counselors noted by survey respondents is an example of building social and navigational capital as explained by Yosso (2005). Yosso (2005) asserts that social capital can be understood as networks of people and community services that can provide "both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (p. 79). Navigational capital, as explained by Yosso (2005), refers to "skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80).

Additionally, relationship building as noted by study respondents is part of the disarm, discovery, dream, and deliver phases in appreciative advising (Hutson et al., 2014).

Counseling Services. There were seven survey questions in this study that were used to asses participant perspectives on counseling department services. These are described below.

Counseling Marketing. Participants were asked how they heard about the counseling office/counseling services. Forty-eight percent of the respondents (21 of 44) noted they heard of counseling from an email sent by the college, by completing the new student orientation, or from an instructor. Other responses included learning about counseling from the college

website, their high school, an office staff member, a friend, a family member, or the EOPS program.

Counseling Outreach. As noted in the findings of research question 1: Phase 1, 86% of respondents (38 of 44) indicated they are "very likely" or "likely' to agree to make an appointment with a counselor if the counseling office were to give them a call. Taking the proactive approach of calling students to make a counseling appointment is consistent with Glennen's (1976) description of intrusive (proactive) counseling. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents (26 of 44) indicated they would prefer to make a counseling appointment themselves.

Appointment Length. Seventy-seven percent the of survey respondents (34 of 44) indicated they would prefer counseling appointments to last between 30 and 45 minutes. Forty-eight percent of the respondents (21 of 44) indicated preferring to spend more than a half hour in a counseling appointment.

Appointment Frequency. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents (39 of 44) indicated wanting to meet with a counselor more than once during a quarter/semester, and 70% (31 of 44) indicated they would like to meet with a counselor 2-3 times. These findings are congruent with the findings of a Donaldson et al.'s (2016) study which found that many community college students would like to continue to seek help from their advisor in the future. As mentioned prior in this chapter, Guzman (2014) found that community college students that met with the same counselor were more like to be satisfied with the service.

Participants' affinity for ongoing appointments with their counselor suggests an appreciation for the deliver phase of appreciative advising (Hutson et al., 2014).

Appointment Time. Fifty-nine percent of the survey respondents (26 of 44) prefer to meet with a counselor within the 10 am to 3 pm time window. The remainder of the participants selected the time frames of 8 am-10 am, 3 pm-6 pm, and 6-8 pm. A significant finding of the survey was 54% of the respondents (24 of 44) prefer an electronic format for the modality of how they would connect with their counselor; the choices included Zoom (20), and phone (4). The remainder of the respondents (20) indicated preferring in-person counseling appointments. Previous literature does not indicate counseling appointment time preferences.

Reasons for Making a Counseling Appointment. Survey respondents indicated a wide range of reasons why they would make an appointment to see a counselor. Findings for this item included "help choosing classes" (educational planning) 86% (38 of 44), and "get information about how to transfer" 77% (34 of 44). Similarly, a study by Donaldson et al. (2016) found that each participant viewed degree planning as a positive advising practice. These findings are consistent with Carales' (2020) advice to community college counselors to have ongoing and meaningful conversations with their Latinx/a/o students to help them plan the clearest path to their goals.

Additional reasons for making counseling appointments included: "help with financial aid" 70% (31 of 44), "learn about career options/paths" 61% (27 of 44), for "encouragement on my academic journey" approximately 52% (23 of 44), "information about how to complete an associate's degree" 52% (22 of 44), and "help picking a major" 45% (20 of 44). Other responses for this item included: "help with study skills," and "help with personal issues," and "help with time management." These findings show the broad list of items respondents expect, or at least hope, that counselors can help them with. These findings align

with the results from a study by Eduljee and Michaud (2014) where they found students met with advisors to: register for classes, discuss career options, and discuss personal issues.

The broad range of reasons participants have for making counseling appointments, indicate an appreciation and preference for the disarm, discover, dream, design, and deliver phases in the appreciation advising.

Qualitative Data from Open-Ended Survey and Interview Questions

Counseling Practices. There were seven qualitative items in this category meant to assess participant perspectives on counseling practices. These are described below.

Discussion Topics. The topics of conversation that participants felt are most important in counseling appointments are counselor check-ins (6 of 10), and making or updating their educational plan (5 of 10). These findings are consistent with those of Eduljee and Michaud (2014) where they found the most often discussed advising topics with advisors were course registration, course scheduling procedures, and discussing academic progress.

Jessica shared the reasons why counselor check-ins are important "Number one is always my academics…my goals. Then, I try to do like a work-life balance kind of check-in. Mentally, physically, how am I doing?" Juana shared that she values counseling check-ins because she often is "…wondering where I stand. I'm very anxious and I really wanna' make sure that I'm not like failing any classes." Arturo added that checking in on students is how a counselor can show they care "I feel like that's…they show a sort of care…and that's what people need in order for them to open up or share some things they [otherwise] wouldn't share." Elena added:

> It's really important just to check up on the person, just to make sure they're feeling alright and try to guide them in the right path and just make sure they're

> being aligned with their goals and vision. So just support them and just ask them if everything's going alright and how could you offer extra support if they need it…be there for them and just be a good listener.

Helpful Counseling Practices. Findings regarding what a counselor has said or done in an appointment that was most helpful included educational planning (50%, 5 of 10) and providing encouragement/reassurance (60%, 6 of 10). Other responses included: building an ongoing relationship, understanding their students and their history, as well as being sweet and positive. These findings are consistent with the Phase 1 Survey findings where 86% of respondents indicated help choosing classes/educational planning is a reason why they would make an appointment with a counselor. Similarly, these findings are consistent with the Phase 1 Survey finding that more than half of respondents noted making an appointment to see a counselor in order to receive encouragement on their academic journey.

These helpful counseling practice interview findings coincide with survey findings regarding participant usage of societal and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). It is clear respondents see a benefit to meeting with counselors as helping navigate college by way of educational planning, receiving encouragement, and receiving ongoing support.

Comforting Environment. A wide range of responses was recorded regarding how counselors made participants feel comfortable or uncomfortable in the past. Actions counselors have taken in the past that caused participants to feel comfortable are: the counselor was present and not distracted, the counselor reassured the student, the counselor began the conversation, the physical office space was welcoming, the counselor got to know the student, the counselor met consistently with the student over time, and the counselor had

a kind and warm approach. These actions are congruent with Arteaga's (2014) findings of preferred counselor characteristics by Latinx/a/o students.

Actions that made participants feel uncomfortable included the participant feeling discouraged from pursuing their chosen career, and the participant feeling rushed by their counselor during the appointment.

Importance of Check-Ins. Respondents reported (50%, 5 of 10) that a counselor reaching out to students and checking up on them is how counselors can show they care. Elena explained what it meant to her when a counselor reached out to her "I had a counselor and we would do weekly check-ins. That was really helpful because it builds a good relationship and it's just good to check in and just see where you're at." Juana added to this sentiment "[showing counselors] care for my success would be asking if I'm okay, you know, asking if I need or have any more questions or need help contacting somebody because that really comes to prove like you care." Veronica explained that hearing from a counselor is appreciated even if she's doing well in her classes "…even if I'm doing good in class, I still want somebody to be like "hey, if you need help, we have this system or we have a support system for you."

Counselor check-ins as described above are an example of intrusive counseling (proactive counseling) as noted by Glennen (1976). This approach is encouraged by the work of Molina and Abelman (2000). However, though counselor check-ins can be categorized as part of intrusive/proactive counseling, this approach was not seen by participants as crossing any sort of personal boundaries. This is important to note because the term "intrusive" can bring about boundary-related assumptions.

Counseling Office Outreach. The above findings are consistent with the results of Phase 1 findings because 86% (38 of 44) of survey respondents indicated they would be "very likely" or "likely" to agree to make an appointment if the counseling office called. Similarly, 93% (41 of 44) survey respondents indicated it is "very important" or "moderately important" that their counselor care about their success. Survey responses showed that 84% (37 of 44) of participants feel their counselor cares about their academic success. These findings align with Arteaga's (2014) study results where 100% of participants in her study asserted a desire to feel cared for by their community college counselors.

Caring Environment. The following counselor practices were reported to show they care about their students: being encouraging and supportive, not rushing the student during an appointment, providing helpful resources, offering to meet with their student on an ongoing basis, responding promptly to student emails/phone calls, being patient. These findings regarding how counselors create a caring environment in their approach parallels findings by Arteaga (2014).

Improving Counseling. Participants shared what counselors could do to be more helpful or provide a better service; responses included: making time and being available to meet (40%, 4 of 10), not being judgmental (30%, 3 of 10), being present and paying attention during an appointment (10%, 1 of 10), spending more time with students (10%, 1 of 10), taking and sharing appointment notes with the student (10%, 1 of 10), not rushing the appointment (10%, 1 of 10), responding promptly to communication initiated by the student (10%, 1 of 10), and being trustworthy (10%, 1 of 10).

Counseling Services. There were three qualitative items meant to assess participant perspectives on counseling services. These are described below.

Counseling Role in College Journey. Participants were asked what role counseling plays in their college journey; responses included: counselors helping make educational plans (40%, 4 of 10), counselors providing guidance (30%, 3 of 10), counselors providing encouragement (20%, 2 of 10), helping keep the participant on track (10%, 1 of 10), and being a support system for the participant (10%, 1 of 10). Though findings for Research Question 2: Phase 1 indicate a majority of participants value building a relationship with a counselor and talking about personal issues among discussion topics, Manuel is an example that not all participants feel the same way. Manuel explained he only wants to meet with a counselor in order to receive the information he was not otherwise able to gather, himself. The counseling/advising style Manuel prefers is prescriptive, as explained by Crookston (1994), because he's looking for a one-directional, transactional experience.

Though the majority of interviewees spoke positively about the role counseling plays in their journey, Adriana shared her perspective on feeling discouraged by a counselor when she mentioned during an appointment what her career goals were:

> If I hadn't built that within myself and say, you know, my mental health was a little bit weaker, I probably would've dropped out. I probably would've you know, not continued and took the easy way out and just said "well, alright, let me just move up within, you know, the retail job that I'm working right now. You know, like, well, let me take that route…" versus, you know, trying to pursue a higher education"

Adriana explained that she has had some positive experiences with counselors, however she pointed out that in some cases, the interaction with a counselor was detrimental.

Counseling Outreach. The one interview item that resulted in significant findings (60%, 6 of 10) regarding how colleges might get more students to make counseling appointments found that counselors and/or counseling departments should send reminders to students and call attention to counseling services. Ideas of how counselors and counseling departments could remind students about counseling services included: email, phone text messages, college website, and communicating through the online instruction platform. Other responses to how/where to market counseling services included: counselors attending campus events, sharing information at student club meetings, making it evident that counseling appointments do not have to be formal and business meeting-like, having racial and ethnic diversity representation in the counseling office, making counseling related marketing specific to the course of study students may be pursuing, and counselors themselves being the ones to reach out to students (as opposed to the office or college marketing department doing so).

Summary

This chapter reported the findings from quantitative and qualitative data that were collected and analyzed for the purpose of exploring how first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students perceive counseling practices and services. This chapter also reported findings for the purpose of exploring which community college counseling practices and services first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success. The mixed-methods study utilized a survey and interview protocol to gather both quantitative and qualitative data for the purpose of triangulating findings of how first-generation Latinx/a/o students experience counseling. The next and final chapter summarizes key findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for this study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations for Future Research

Introduction

Chapter 5 includes the study research questions, and offers conclusions generated from key findings. Also included in this chapter are potential implications for action as well as recommendations for future research.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. How do first-generation community college Latinx/a/o students perceive counseling practices and services?
2. Which community college counseling practices and services do first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students find most helpful in supporting their success?

This study defined college success as progress towards or completion of a college-level certificate or degree, or successful transfer admission. Therefore, success was not defined simply by the completion of an academic goal, but also by the progress toward any given goal.

Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter will present conclusions from the study and discuss implications as informed by the research questions listed above. Conclusions drawn from this study were informed by the key findings listed in chapter four and helped address the research questions.

Perceptions of Counseling Practices and Services

In order for counselors, counseling departments, and community colleges as a whole to best serve their students, it is critical they assess student needs and priorities. This is

particularly important for Hispanic students, as the data shows California Community Colleges have struggled to close the equity gap between Hispanic and White students (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2021). Counseling services at California community colleges are tasked with addressing the various challenges that can make it difficult for students to be successful (ASCCC et al., 1995). Additionally, the literature shows that without the guidance provided by counseling/advising, students may take longer to graduate, enroll in unnecessary courses, encounter greater financial expenses, and become frustrated enough to withdraw from their college (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013).

For the reasons listed above, it is of the utmost importance to make clear how counseling can best support Latinx/a/o students. I would argue the best way to do so is to directly ask students. They know what they need, and their perspectives should drive how services are provided. It is key to understand the student perspective of how counseling is provided, and what content counseling emphasizes in its delivery of services. The notion of gathering input from students is supported in the literature regarding how best to serve students (McLeod, 2011).

Counseling Appointments are Important to First-Generation Latinx/a/o Students. Findings from this study suggest that first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students see value in meeting with a counselor. The combination of a high likelihood of making an appointment to see a counselor, as well as a clear understanding that counselors support their success, shows participants see counseling as a resource that supports their college goals.

This study showed a high likelihood of participants making an appointment to see a counselor. These results might encourage colleges to increase counseling outreach efforts in

order to reach more students and potentially increase the success rates of first-generation Latinx/a/o students. Furthermore, findings from this study suggest that electronic reminders about counseling may be a beneficial strategy to remind and encourage students to make an appointment.

This study did not compare the likelihood of making a counseling appointment between students that had and had not made a counseling appointment before. However, results suggest seeing a counselor at least once could create an affinity for utilizing counseling resources, which may result in the continued use of counseling resources.

Most Important Counseling Appointment Topics. The literature shows that counselors are expected to have knowledge of, and support students on a wide range of topics (Arteaga, 2014; Eduljee & Michaud, 2014; Golrdon et al., 2009; Orozco et al., 2010); which is corroborated by findings in this study. Key findings of this study showed that participants look to counselors for help choosing classes, making educational plans, providing transfer information, helping with financial aid, receiving encouragement on their academic journey, and information about how to complete an associate's degree. Additionally, survey participants emphasized the importance of counselors contacting them and checking on their academic process and overall well-being. These check-ins lead to discussions about the common topics listed above.

Though counselors are commonly expected to know an incredible amount of academic knowledge, findings from this study may help counselors know which topics are most important to first-generation Latinx/a/o students. Knowing which topics are most important to this specific population of students may help inform the focus of counseling in-services,

meetings, and professional development opportunities, with the goal of being best prepared to provide the information students find most helpful.

This study found that a majority of students would prefer to meet with a counselor two to three times per term. Colleges might choose to consider how much counselor availability and staffing would be necessary to allow for this level of service to their student population. The ASCCC et al. (1995) recommendation of 370:1 student-to-counselor ratio should be a reference point for community college counseling staffing planning discussions. Taking such action would be consistent with the literature as Donaldson et al. (2016) posit:

> a successful practice of advising program requires advisors with both the time and ability to give individualized attention to advisees, and administrators must consider ways advising services can be restructured to ensure reasonable caseload levels for advisors; to maintain a proactive program, they may need to hire additional advisors" pg. 38

Counseling Appointment Logistics. The literature is lacking in the space of counseling logistic preferences by students. However, this study found that in addition to perceptions and reactions to counseling content and how it is delivered, participants had clear preferences for appointment logistics. The majority of participants reported preferring counseling appointments to last between 30-45 minutes. Regarding the time of day, more than half chose between the time of 10 am and 3 pm. Additionally, just over half of the participants preferred to meet with their counselor over Zoom or the phone, rather than meeting in person.

These findings are helpful for counselors and counseling department administrators alike, as they inform the scheduling logistical questions that are often posed. How much time should be allotted per counseling appointment? What type of appointment modalities should be made available for students? When should the bulk of appointment availability be

scheduled throughout the day? These are critical questions and answers to be considered as counseling departments have a finite amount of counselors, and consequently, a finite amount of appointments to be made available to students.

Mixed Experiences with Counseling. This study found a generally positive view of counseling by survey participants, in that 82% look forward to talking to a counselor, as well as 80% have a high likelihood of making a counseling appointment. However, it must be noted that those key findings included mixed experiences with counselors. The interviews resulted in both positive and negative counseling interaction examples. Each interview participant shared good experiences with counselors. However, five of the ten interviewees shared negative counselor experiences. The following quotes display positive participant counselor experiences. Jessica shared how critical to her college success her counselors have been "…I feel like I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for my college counselors." She continued "I wouldn't have been able to do all the things that I'm doing if it wasn't for them. So, I'm grateful for counseling." Elena described her experience with counselors "…they were really super helpful and nice." Elena went on to recall the help she received from a specific counselor "…because of him, I kind of got a clear vision, an idea of how I can organize myself and use my time wisely."

Although this study reported mostly positive experiences, there were a few negative experiences shared during the interviews. Maria shared her challenges with counseling related to feeling rushed and not being responded to "…sometimes when you meet with counselors, they sort of like rush through the meeting, or it's hard like reaching out to them because they just never answer." Jaime shared that during one appointment, he did not feel

welcomed by his counselor "I remember the counselor walking over and the counselor just seemed…annoyed that I was the person that signed up for the appointment."

The literature supports the findings of this study regarding mixed counseling experiences with students (Arteaga, 2014; Lazarowicz & McGill, 2022). However, one must note the nuances that may play a role in the negative experiences found in counseling-related student perceptions. Needing to juggle competing priorities like working with a certain number of students per day/week, as well as following up with all students that needed more information or further questions asked, can make it a challenge to provide a good service. Arteaga (2014) and Orozco et al. (2010) assert that high student-to-counselor ratios create challenges for counselors in delivering services.

Counseling/Advising Theories are Important

Findings from this study suggest that it may be beneficial to deliver counseling to first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students through the lens of certain theories. As noted by Jordan (2000), many different advising approaches can be used to address the various needs students have. The following theories were found to address the specific needs and preferences of the study's participants.

Appreciative Advising

Key findings of this study highlighted participant affinity for being comforted by their counselor, receiving guidance on how to navigate college, and building a relationship with their counselor. Appreciative advising (Bloom et al., 2008) is a theoretical framework that emerged as an applicable approach to addressing participant needs. This study concluded that appreciative advising may be a helpful framework to apply to working with first-generation

Latinx/a/o students; as it emphasizes creating a comforting environment, providing guidance, and helping students plan their education while building a relationship between the counselor and the student

Building and maintaining a relationship with their counselor was of particular importance to study participants. Key findings from the survey found that a majority of participants reported it is important that they have an ongoing relationship with their counselor. This is one of the many reasons findings from this study suggest appreciative advising as an appropriate framework for implementation by counseling departments.

Of the six phases of appreciative advising as described by Hutson et al. (2014), this study would suggest that the fourth and fifth phases, "design phase" and "delivery phase," respectively, may be of particular support for the study's population. These phases emphasize a collaborative approach to making an educational plan, as well as the counselor reiterating their confidence in the student's ability to be successful; both of which were stressed as important to study participants.

Culturally Responsive Counseling

Participants in this study noted feeling cared for by their counselor when the counselor showed cultural understanding. This study revealed that participants felt it is important for their counselor to understand their culture. Similarly, key findings from this study showed most participants feel their counselor understands their culture. Adriana made the following remark while referring to being culturally understood by her counselors "it just makes me feel, like home…I didn't think it would be as important, but it's tremendously important." Similarly, Elena explained how she feels when she works with counselors that understand her

culture "…I feel like that [working with counselors of color] definitely helps because I feel more comfortable with them sharing certain details of my cultural life, or I feel like they would definitely understand me more…I feel most comfortable with them."

The conclusion that culturally responsive counseling would be a beneficial theory to apply to counseling community college Latinx/a/o students is shared by Arteaga's (2014) study results. It was found that applying culturally responsive counseling, or "applying cultura" as phrased by Arteaga (2014), could "potentially improve the student-counselor relationship, enhance students' counseling experience, empower students to build on their existing skills and knowledge, and equip students with the tools necessary to confidently navigate the complexities of college…(p. 718).

As noted by Arredondo et al. (2014), findings from this study also suggest a need for ongoing professional development in Latinx/a/o culture and culturally grounded student support strategies. Participants from this study mentioned time and again how helpful it has been to have counselors that understand their culture. It would seem that having a robust number of counselors that understand Latinx/a/o culture would provide an equally robust opportunity for Latinx/a/o students to most benefit from counseling services.

Proactive (Intrusive) Counseling

Proactive (intrusive) counseling (Glennen, 1976) emerged in this study as a relevant framework applicable to the population. The focus of proactive (intrusive) counseling is contradictory to waiting for students to seek out counseling services on their own, as it emphasizes actively seeking out students. This framework is relevant to this study since key findings suggest that the counselor or the counseling office reaching out and initiating

contact with students is a major way of showing care for students. Additionally, the literature suggests that without proactively connecting with students, not all students that need/could benefit from the services counseling/advising provides would receive them (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Counselors checking in on students and making sure they feel thought of/cared for were common ideas gathered in this study. The connection between counselors being proactive in contacting students, and students thus feeling cared for is supported by the results of studies by both Arteaga (2014) and Orozco et al. (2010).

Additionally, this study indicated counseling departments might increase the number of appointments made if a staff member were to call students and offer to schedule an appointment. However, this study also showed that more than half of the participants prefer to make their counseling appointments themselves.

First-Generation Latinx/a/o Community College Students are Not Monolithic

This study would suggest that first-generation Latinx/a/o community college students are not a monolith, and treating them as such would overlook their needs and preferences. It was found that not all participants in this study had the same experiences, needs, thoughts, or preferences. These findings are consistent with literature findings that different students have different advising/counseling and academic needs (Herndon, 1996). Though all participants in this study met the same selection criteria, some participants had nothing but good experiences in school, while others struggled and had negative memories of school. Some participants spoke of impactful experiences with racism, while others did not. Many participants reported focusing on transferring to a university and/or earning an associate's

degree, while others mentioned focusing on finishing a few classes instead of finishing transferring or completing a program. Additionally, not all participants prefer the same counseling practices. Many participants like it when their counselor is personable, asks about their personal struggles, and creates an overall warm environment. However, other participants made it clear they do not prefer personal discussions and want to focus on receiving the technical information they needed.

Additionally, many of the key findings from this study had response rates in the 50% and 60% range. Though a response rate of higher than 50% signified a key finding in this study, survey and interview findings in the 50-60% response range show a sizeable portion of the study population felt differently than what was reported as a key finding. This strengthens the study's findings that not all first-generation Latinx/a/o students feel the same, think the same, have the same perspective or have the same needs as related to counseling practices and services.

Recommendations for Further Research Studies

Counseling and Latinx/a/o Students

As mentioned in prior Chapters, there is scant research on how Latinx/a/o students experience and perceive counseling services. Since Latinx/a/o students make up such a large percentage of the California Community College system (CCCCO, 2020), and since the literature notes that counseling is supportive of student success (ASCCC et al., 1995) future research should add to this body of knowledge with robust empirical studies.

The majority of participants in this study were enrolled in their first college term. Future research might compare Latinx/a/o students having been enrolled for various amounts of

time. The literature would be more robust if it included comparisons of perceptions of counseling practices and services by Latinx/a/o students at various stages in their college careers.

Appointment Frequency and Length

This study did not differentiate between the varying time periods and frequency of interaction between counselors and students. Various counseling departments across the state employ different amounts of time allotted to the interaction between the student and counselor (City College of San Francisco, n.d.; San Diego Mesa College, n.d.). Due to this study denoting a range of counseling appointment logistic preferences, future studies might choose to gather data on whether or not different logistics result in different perceptions of counseling practices and services. Learning of any potential changes in perceptions of counseling services as related to various appointment logistics may help inform how counseling departments support Latinx/a/o students.

Counseling and Retention

An additional opportunity for future research would be the connection between community college counseling and the retention of Latinx/a/o students. Though the literature contains a robust amount of published works on retention in higher education (Cabrera et al., 1993; Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012; Fike & Fike, 2008; Peralta & Klonowski, 2017; Windham et al., 2014), there is an opportunity for research to better inform to what extent and how community college counseling has an effect on the retention of Latinx/a/o students. The work of Tovar (2014) suggests that feeling supported and valued by counselors may have a

positive effect on student outcomes. Further research in this space may result in positive shifts in retention and success of Latinx/a/o students.

Counseling/Advising Theory Effect on Community College Students

Findings from this study suggest it would be advantageous to conduct additional research on the efficacy of incorporating various counseling theories with first-generation Latinx/a/o students. Key findings showed an emergence of appreciative advising (Bloom et al., 2008), culturally responsive counseling (Arredondo et al., 2014), and proactive (intrusive) counseling (Glennen, 1976) theories as preferable counseling frameworks. Further research could serve to confirm or disprove these theories as supporting first-generation Latinx/a/o student success.

Compare Responses Regarding Preferences for In-Person or Virtual Counseling

A replication of this study with a focus on comparing responses to counseling modality preferences could be advantageous. Since the current study's findings did not differentiate between respondents that prefer in-person or virtual counseling modalities, this could prove to be an opportunity for additional scope for research. Findings from such a study may better inform counselors and counseling departments regarding perceptions of counseling practices and services as related to preferences in counseling modalities.

Implications of Action

Implications, as informed by this study, can be gleaned specifically for counselors, deans of counseling departments, and vice presidents alike. Each organizational level has a substantial impact on organizational and operational details related to student and counselor

connection and interaction. The following messaging is tailored specifically for the counselor, dean, and vice president levels.

Counselors and Advisors

The findings of this study aren't meant to inform or create preconceived notions about whom each first-generation Latinx/a/o community college student is, or what they need. Even the most common responses and perspectives found in this study will not necessarily be true for all first-generation Latinx/a/o students. It would be a disservice to students for educators (counselors and non-counselors alike) to form preconceived notions of individual needs based on perceived race/ethnic backgrounds. The author's recommendation is that these study findings inform counselor education and preparation prior to student appointments. The hope is that this study would help add to the metaphorical counselor toolbox, so as to inform how best to serve students as needs come up naturally.

Findings from this study show that just as important, if not more, is how counselors deliver information, compared to what that information is being shared. It is clear students hope for/expect accurate technical information about their counselor, however, students are well aware of how their counselor makes them feel, separate from what information is being shared. Participants highlighted how important it is to feel supported and cared for. Additionally, participants shared how negatively impactful it was to feel like they were not their counselor's priority, and how bad it felt to feel their goals were dismissed by their counselor (even if the counselor meant well).

One of the ways counselors can make students feel cared for is by initiating contact. Findings from this study clearly show an affinity for the counseling office and/or for

counselors to contact students. The reasons for contacting students can vary, such as calling to make a counseling appointment or a simple check-in. I have experienced, and understand the scheduling logistics that can make contacting multiple students for a check-in, challenging. However, the implications from this study strongly support any amount of initiated contact with first-generation Latinx/a/o students. It might not be possible to follow up with each individual student a counselor has worked with, but this study would make it seem doing so whenever possible, with whomever possible, could be advantageous.

Counselors/Advisors and Instructors

The results of this study suggest contact between first-generation Latinx/a/o students and counselors commonly results in a general positive regard for counseling services. A strategy to encourage interaction between counselors and students is for intentional collaboration between instructors and counselors. If instructors were to provide even a small amount of class time for counselor visits, students would have the opportunity to meet counselors and learn about the available services. This strategy is advisable because it differs from a passive counseling outreach strategy where students are expected to navigate their own way to counselors.

Additionally, increased collaboration between counselors and instructors allows for increased opportunities for instructors to make “warm hand-offs” with their students. This means instructors may be more likely to make counseling referrals when they note their students might benefit from meeting with a counselor. Seeing a connection between their instructor and a counselor may potentially increase the likelihood of the student working with a counselor.

Counseling Department Deans

Though having counselor availability for students is generally a scheduling priority, this study's findings suggest an additional consideration for counseling schedules. Allowing time in counselor schedules in order for counselors to initiate communication and check in with their students may be a great way to support student success, particularly for first-generation Latinx/a/o students. Since it can be time-consuming for counselors to catch up on information finding and other necessary tasks after/between student appointments, it may be helpful to schedule additional time for counselors to be able to check in on the students they are working with.

Additionally, working with classified staff members (or whoever is available) to call students in order to offer to make a counseling appointment, would be a strategy to increase the counseling department's student reach. This study suggests that doing so could be a strategy to increase first-generation Latinx/a/o student interaction with counselors. Findings from this study indicate that students who have not yet met with a counselor may have an inaccurate perception that the counseling office and counseling appointments are overly serious, dry, and business-like. Receiving a warm and welcoming phone call from the counseling office may help shift the perception of counseling to a more welcoming one.

Finally, this study was intentional about highlighting and elevating student voice. I know firsthand how easy it can be to rely on past practices and approaches when working with students. The day-to-day services counselors provide, the follow-ups between student appointments, the meetings, are a lot of work that takes a lot of time. However, it is my recommendation that counseling departments advocate for, or make available, opportunities

for students to voice the type of counseling they need, and the approach they prefer. This study shows that students are well aware of what they need, and how they prefer for their needs to be met, and are willing to share that information.

Vice Presidents of both Student Services and Instruction

It is my experience that increased collaboration between student services and the office of instruction has been and continues to be a goal of community colleges. This is understandable, since student services and the office of instruction have different operational responsibilities and priorities, even though student success is the ultimate goal of every office on any campus. Nonetheless, this study contributes to the ongoing call for increased collaboration between student services and the office of instruction, specifically, the counseling office.

This study suggests that intentionally working to make counselors/the counseling office more visible to students, could result in increased student and counselor interaction. Findings showed that participants have questions about and need guidance with transferring to a university, completing an associate degree, and making an educational plan (among other items discussed in Chapter 4). As found in this study, participants generally find meeting with counselors informative, affirming, and supportive of their educational success. Working to include counselors (if even just for a quick introduction) in the classroom, office of instruction supported events, and any student-facing activities when deemed appropriate, could help increase student-counselor interaction, thus, bolstering student success.

Epilogue

The disparity between the Latinx/a/o student population and their success rates in the CCC system is unacceptable. This study was meant to be a small example of a CCC educator taking accountability for such disparity. Openly asking how we can better support this population, as well as taking ownership of how our system has continued to fail our Latinx/a/o students is an example of how we may progress in correcting this trend. As a higher education system, we must shift away from blaming students and looking for what they are "lacking," and instead celebrate the robust amount of skills, knowledge, and lived experiences they bring to our campuses.

Deficit ideologies are addressed when institutions (community colleges) change practices (counseling). I am encouraged by my community college colleagues locally, statewide, and nationally, who understand the importance of both taking accountability and implementing measurable steps to address the equity gap. I've seen and felt how powerful, affirming, and transformational counseling support can be for students. I truly believe that continued support of counseling departments, by way of providing what counselors need to best fulfill their role (necessary resources, adequate staffing, professional development, having a voice in campus-wide decision-making), along with continued efforts to connect students with counselors, is a critical piece of the student success puzzle.

It was a joy to conduct this study. It was an enlightening and enriching experience to take a step back and approach the student experience from the perspective of a researcher. The entire dissertation process has allowed me to grow as a counselor, educator, and person. It is clear to me that the lessons learned throughout this process will aid in whatever roles and

responsibilities I have in the future. I feel incredibly fortunate and thankful to have had the opportunity to pursue this degree, and I look forward to supporting others with the same aspirations.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Q1 Have you attended a college counseling (academic, career, and/or personal) session/appointment before?

- ◯ Yes (1)
- ◯ No (2)

Q2 How long have you been attending college?

- ◯ This is my first quarter/semester (1)
- ◯ 2 quarters/semesters (2)
- ◯ 3 quarters/semesters (3)
- ◯ 4 quarters/semesters (4)
- ◯ 5 quarters/semesters (5)
- ◯ 6 quarters/semesters (6)
- ◯ 7 quarters/semesters (7)
- ◯ A different amount of time. Please specify (8) ____

Q3 What is your academic goal at your college? (choose all that apply)

- Complete a Certificate (1)
- Complete an Associate's Degree (2)
- Transfer to a University (3)
- Take classes/complete a program so you can work as soon as possible (4)
- Take Classes to Advance Your Career (5)
- Undecided (6)
- Other. Please specify. (7)

____

Q4 How did you hear about the counseling office/counseling services? (check all that apply)

- ▢ An email sent out by the college (1)
- ▢ Completing the new student orientation (2)
- ▢ A friend (3)
- ▢ An office staff member (4)
- ▢ A class instructor (5)
- ▢ A family member (6)
- ▢ The college website (7)
- ▢ Your high school (8)
- ▢ This is the first time I'm hearing about counseling services (9)
- ▢ Other. Please specify. (10) ____

Q5 How likely are you to make a counseling appointment to talk to a counselor?

	Very Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Likely (3)	Very Likely (4)
Choose one (1)	o	o	o	o

Q6 Please explain your answer regarding how likely you are to make an appointment to talk to a counselor

____

____

____

____

____

Q7 If the counseling office called you to make an appointment, how likely is it that you would agree to an appointment?

	Very Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Likely (3)	Very Likely (4)
Pick one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q8 How would you prefer to make a counseling appointment?

- ○ Book the appointment myself (1)
- ○ Call the counseling office (2)
- ○ Counseling office website (3)
- ○ Website chat feature (4)
- ○ Other. Please specify. (5) ____

Q9 What time of day would you prefer to attend a counseling appointment? (choose all that apply)

- Early Morning (8-10am) (1)
- Late Morning (10am-12pm) (2)
- Early Afternoon (12pm-3pm) (3)
- Late Afternoon (3pm-6pm) (4)
- Evening (6pm-8pm) (5)

Q10 For what reasons would you make a counseling appointment? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Encouragement on my academic journey (1)
- ☐ Help choosing classes (2)
- ☐ Get information about how to transfer (3)
- ☐ Get information about how to complete an associate's degree (4)
- ☐ Help with study skills (5)
- ☐ Help with time management (6)
- ☐ Help with personal issues (7)
- ☐ Help with financial aid (8)
- ☐ Learn about career options and paths (9)
- ☐ Help picking a major of study (10)
- ☐ Other. Please specify. (11) ____________________

Q11 How much time would you prefer to spend with your counselor during an appointment/session

- ○ 15 Minutes (1)
- ○ 30 Minutes (2)
- ○ 45 Minutes (3)

◯ 1 Hour (4)

Q12 How many times would you like to talk to a counselor per quarter or semester?

◯ 0 (7)

◯ 1 (1)

◯ 2 (2)

◯ 3 (3)

◯ 4 (4)

◯ 5 (5)

◯ More than 5 times (6)

Q13 In what format do you prefer to attend counseling appointments?

◯ In Person (1)

◯ Zoom (2)

◯ Phone (3)

Q14 Do you look forward to talking with a counselor?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

Q15 Please elaborate why you do or do not look forward to talking with a counselor.

____

____

____

____

____

Q16 How important is it to you to feel like your counselor cares about your success?

	Very unimportant (1)	Unimportant (2)	Important (3)	Very important (4)
Choose one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q17 In general, do you feel your counselor/s care about your academic success?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q18 How important is it to you that your counselor understand your culture?

	Not at all important (1)	Low importance (2)	Important (3)	Very important (4)
Choose one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q19 In general, do you feel your counselor/s understand your culture?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q20 How important is it to you that your counselor asks about your family?

	Not at all important (1)	Low importance (2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
Choose one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q21 How important is it to build a relationship with your counselor?

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)
Choose one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q22 Do you speak Spanish?

- Yes (1)
- I understand it and speak Spanglish (2)
- I understand it but don't speak it (3)
- I don't understand it or speak it (4)

Q23 How important is it to you that your counselor speak Spanish?

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)
Choose one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q24 How important is it that you and your counselor talk about personal issues you may be experiencing?

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)
Choose one (1)	○	○	○	○

Q25 In general, do you feel welcomed in counseling appointments? (Do you feel that counselors are happy to see you and are friendly/polite).

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q26 How many units are you currently enrolled in?

- ○ 1-3 (1)
- ○ 4-7 (2)
- ○ 8-11 (3)

○ 12-15 (4)

○ 16-19 (5)

○ 20+ (6)

Q27 What is your age?

○ 18-21 (1)

○ 22-25 (2)

○ 26-28 (3)

○ 29-32 (4)

○ 33-36 (5)

○ 37-40 (6)

○ 40+ (7)

○ Decline to state (8)

Q28 Are you a first-generation college student? (an individual who is pursuing a higher education degree whose parents or guardians do not have a postsecondary (college) degree)

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q29 Choose the term you feel best identifies you

○ Latinx/Latina/Latino/Hispanic (1)

○ African-American/Black (2)

○ Asian (3)

○ Pacific Islander (4)

○ White (5)

○ Decline to State (6)

Q30 Would you be willing to further discuss these survey topics in an interview? (the interviews will be done through zoom, and will last no longer than one hour)

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q31 If you are willing to participate in the interview, please list your preferred contact email. If you'd prefer to be contacted through texts, please list a text number.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1) Tell me about yourself. Describe your educational experience throughout your life. What memories do you have of elementary, junior high, or high school?

2) What has been your experience with academic counseling at your college?

3) What role do you think college counseling plays in your college journey?

4) What topics of conversation are most important to you in a counseling appointment?

5) In counseling appointments you've attended, what has the counselor said or done that was the most helpful?

6) How have counselors made you feel comfortable during an appointment? If counselors have made you feel uncomfortable, what did they do that contributed to you feeling that way?

7) What can counselors do to help make you feel like they care about your success?

8) What could counselors do to be more helpful or provide a better service?

9) Do you feel counselors have been understanding/supportive of your culture? Why or why not?

10) How do you think the college could get more students to make counseling appointments?

Appendix C

Coding Processes

Coding 1

Actions	Number of References	Number of Respondents
Educational planning	38	21
Reach out to students, as opposed to waiting to be contacted by students	14	7
Answering questions	10	8
Encouragement	11	7
Progress check	12	8
Provide help	14	11
Guidance	9	16
Make it clear counselor is paying attention to student	4	4
Plan to see the student again in the future	4	2
Listen to the student	12	3

Coding 2

Actions	Number of References	Number of Respondents
Educational planning (education planning + progress check)	50	29
Being present with the student (Make it clear the counselor is paying attention to the student + Listen to student)	16	7
Guiding the student by being present while answering questions (answering questions + provide help + guidance + being present with the student) *this row is below the one above it because I wanted to show how the middle row was incorporated into the counts in the third row)	49	42

Coding 3

Actions	Number of References	Number of Respondents
Educational planning	50	29
Guiding the student by being present while answering questions	49	42
Encouragement	11	7
Plan to see the student again in the future	4	2

Discussion Topics	Number of References	Number of Respondents
Family-home life	4	2
Financial aid	3	3
Transfer	3	3
Career discussion	3	3
Time management	1	1
Study skills	1	1

Strategy	Number of References	Number of Respondents
Accept students for who they are	11	5
Counselor same ethnicity as student	7	4
Motivation	5	3
Understanding	5	3
Care	5	2
Relationship building	4	8
Counselor's gender	3	1
Honesty	4	1
Be available	3	2
Patience	2	1
Affect	1	1
Build trust	1	1
In-person counseling	1	1
Be prepared for the student	1	1