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ACHIEVING HIGHER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:
ACCESS AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION ON-CAMPUS COMMUNITIES

A Thesis

Presented to

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Masters of Arts

by

Koryn Cálee Dillard

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

ACHIEVING HIGHER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:
ACCESS AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION ON-CAMPUS COMMUNITIES

By Koryn Cálee Dillard

San José State University students living in the residence halls were sent a questionnaire via Google Docs. Students were requested to complete the questions about their experiences and knowledge of the campus community. This study focuses on feelings of acceptance, expression, resources, living circumstances, and behaviors of the racially/ethnically diverse students living on campus that urges them to success in the field of higher education. A total of 66 students living on campus completed the survey. The findings indicated that the on-campus Latina/Latino/Hispanic American students struggled more with their academics and had a significantly lower grade point averages than their counterparts. Students who identified as Black/African American/African/Caribbean and Latina/Latino/Hispanic American had on average more negative experiences. This study also points to a large difference in level comfort between students of color and White/Caucasian students with regards to their feelings of safety and acceptance. More equitable environments for students of color living on campus would help produce a better academic experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are 16 million students attending colleges and universities across the nation, and approximately 16% of those students live on campus (Flowers, 2014). The living environments to which students are subjected can influence the experiences that they have in their overall collegiate career. On-campus residential life can promote and foster a community where students are engaged and successful in their academics (LaNasa, Olsen, & Alleman, 2007). It can also create negative academic experiences for students. Those experiences can be stimulated by the relationships and experiences that individuals have with other people.

From infants to adulthood, individuals develop their own thoughts and opinions of the people around them. Through personal and interpersonal experiences, individuals develop biases and impressions of individuals outside and within their own culture and established norms. Because higher education is more populated by White students, the dynamics between different races/ethnicities are often substantially impacted. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 59% of students in higher education are White/Caucasian (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This can intimidate students of color living on campus in population, experience, and confidence, therefore causing students of color to be put at an academic disadvantage in comparison to White students. For example, when students of color attempt to report or express their feelings of exclusion and/or discomfort, they are put at risk of being viewed as "paranoids" who are seeking attention or special treatment (Boatright-Horowitz, Frazier, Harps-Logan, & Crockett, 2013).

There are numerous individuals who identify as White who believe that racism has already been resolved and is in the past (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013). Therefore, students of color who still experience racism struggle to express themselves to White students because of the White privilege power dynamic. Students of color who live on campus have as much right to a positive higher educational experience as other students who live on campus. The topics of race, gender, and generational status have a strong correlation with the barriers and limitations that students face when they pursue higher education (Hopkins & Domingue, 2015).

The residential housing community on a college campus can directly impact any student. Students of color, in particular, are faced with challenges at the intersections of racial background and academic success (Museus, 2008). As intersectionality and cultural competence are more widely researched, these areas are becoming increasingly influential when addressing campus climate and fostering student diversity within higher education (Hopkins & Domingue, 2015). In the current study, the relationship between racially and ethnically diverse students living on campus and their access to campus resources and success in higher education were assessed.

Problem Statement

The higher educational system faces challenges in producing equal opportunity and creating an environment of equal opportunity for all students (Kliewer & Zacharakis, 2015). Many college students of color attending four-year universities have different needs for resources to help them in their academic success. For instance, the African American and Latino/a communites place an emphasis on resources that create better

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faculty relationships, family support, and campus engagement (Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). Without some of these resources, students are more vulnerable to negative experiences. Such experiences can lead to a lack of self-empowerment and self-efficacy that extends to performance in the classroom and is heightened for students living on campus.

Only 20% of Black people and 11% of Hispanic people have obtained their bachelor's degree or higher compared to 39% of White people (YWCA Central Alabama, 2012). Students of color struggle psychologically and socially in settings like the classroom. Mental and emotional growth are lacking heading into higher education and can impact students in their academic performance (Tharp, 2012, p. 30). With a lack of mental and emotional growth, students of color often find it difficult to develop their sense of self-worth while trying to obtain degrees in higher education. This can lead to psychological disparities that cause students to feel disadvantaged.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between access to higher education resources and academic success for students living on campus based on race/ethnicity, gender, and generational college status. A review of the literature on academic success for students living on college campuses was also conducted. In addition, data were collected through an online survey on how students feel about the San José State University (SJSU) campus environment and how it relates to their academic performance and success in their higher education experience. The survey addressed factors that are thought to contribute to lower academic performance as well as the

factors that contribute to retention in college. The study honed in on racially and ethnically diverse students and highlights the campus residential life community. The study were also focused on feelings of acceptance, expression, campus resources, living circumstances, and behaviors of the racially/ethnically diverse students living on campus that might lead them to success in higher education. The data collected from this study will help both students and faculty highlight the areas where students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds can be given more support. With this information, college campuses can create more inclusive college environments.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed.

1. What college support services are utilized by underrepresented ethnic minority college students who live on campus?

2. How does living on campus impact the experiences of underrepresented ethnic minority college students?

3. What is the correlation between racially/ethnically diverse students living on campus and their academic success?

4. How do underrepresented ethnic minority students who live on campus perceive the campus climate?

5. What are some causes of stress and concern for underrepresented ethnic minority students who live on campus?

Definition of Terms

This study used the following definitions.

Access: The accessibility of resources and opportunities for all students.

Cultural Competence: A process that evolves over an extended period of time that contributes set attitudes and behaviors that allow for individuals to work efficiently in cross-cultural situations.

Higher Education: The educational level beyond K-12 education.

Information Literacy: Evaluating information ethically and effectively while being able to access, evaluate, and use that information (Latham & Gross, 2008).

Intersectionality: Intersecting social identities related to systems of oppression, dominance, and discrimination.

Marginalized Student: A student restricted to a powerless position, with limited influence and power in a group or society.

Microaggression: Behavioral, verbal, or environmental indignities that create a hostile, racial, or derogatory insult toward people of color (Young, Anderson, & Steward, 2015).

Multicultural Education: In order to help students participate in cross-cultural interactions, students need to develop the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Lemley, 2014).

Residence Hall: Living quarters on a university or college that accommodate students while they pursue higher education.

Students of Color: Students who identify as an ethnicity other than White.

Underrepresented Students: Low representation of a specific student population, specifically based on race and/or ethnicity.

Assumptions

In order to conduct this research, this study assumed that:

- Students, specifically students of color, would be willing to participate in the survey.

- Students of color are doing well in higher education but need more support to increase their retention rate.

- The experience of living on campus at an institution can contribute to students' successful or unsuccessful overall college experience.

- Students who are required to live on campus have a substantially different college experience than those who do not live on campus.

Significance Statement

The present study identifed the importance of acceptance and expression for students of color during college, particularly while students are living on campus. When promoting these three key areas in the residential community, there can be success and satisfaction for universities and the students they serve. This study was aimed at campus leaders, administrators, and students and their parents, to expand their knowledge of what is leading to the success of students of color so that there can be more support and improvements in the higher education system. With this information, universities can enhance their training and programs that would contribute to the success of racially and ethnically diverse students living on campus.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The review of the research literature presented in this chapter focuses on the complexities of racially marginalized students of color and their circumstances while living on campus in higher education. More specifically, this chapter examines both the advances and setbacks of higher education for racially marginalized students of color while in college. Student feelings of expression and acceptance are also examined alongside their academic achievement. Research related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), classroom settings (students and teacher challenges), access and equity, campus climate, and multicultural education in higher education are also discussed. Furthermore, this literature review examines the pressures and circumstances racially marginalized students encounter while living on campus and how these experiences contribute to their retention in higher education.

Access and Equity in Higher Education

Changes in access to higher education have allowed for students of color to succeed in a multitude of ways. Students of color are becoming more involved in higher education and as this trend continues, new opportunities have been created for students of color to succeed. A student's experience while living on campus can have large-scale repercussions. More specifically, for racially/ethnically diverse students who are living on campus, the impact of the community cannot be stressed enough. Students who choose and/or are required to live on campus go through different experiences compared to students who do not live on campus. Studies show that living on campus allows for students to have greater persistence, improved academic performance, and better social

and academic transition (Long, 2014). Furthermore, students' experience living on campus can strengthen or weaken their resilience to complete their degree.

Overall, college students living on campus exhibit positive growth and development as they experience an increase in value and openness to diversity (LaNasa, Olson, & Alleman, 2007). Also, while living on campus, students are exposed to more opportunities to access student services and resources due to the proximity of where they live compared to students who commute to campus. The opportunities are much easier to access for students who live in close proximity to the very resources that could help benefit them. Residence hall experiences foster empathy, acceptance, opportunities for more academic engagement, and active/critical thinking (Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012, p. 160). Because living on campus indirectly impacts students, their social, cultural, and extracurricular engagements are expanded to foster student learning (LaNasa, Olsen, & Alleman, 2007).

Students of color who pursue higher education often are first generation students with little to no guidance in navigating the higher education process. Students of color sometimes enter college with a lack of knowledge of services and opportunities that are offered because they have never been introduced to those services. One of the challenges is introducing students of color to the services that campuses offer to better aid them through their academics. Another challenge is universities creating equitable opportunities for students to be connected with resources while in college. In a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, in the span of 8 years, it was shown that 43% of minority students did not graduate with a degree after enrolling in

post-secondary school between 1992 and 2000 (Petty, 2014). First generation students of color are at a major disadvantage due to multiple challenges they face in their pursuit of earning their degrees.

Students with parents who have at least their bachelor's degree have an advantage over first generation students of color. Each generation of graduates is able to build upon the next and give those after them a chance at higher education success as well. With each passing generation, the number of minority students in higher education continues to climb. For example, 25% of Black students compared to 40% of White students between the ages 25 and 29 received a bachelor's degree or higher in 2013 (Casselman, 2014). Students of color are now more driven to attend a postsecondary school. However, there is a disconnect between the enrollment and graduation rates. Student may be enrolling in post-secondary school, but they are not completing their degrees (Casselman, 2014). For instance, there are many Black students who lack the support and guidance that are required for them to sustain themselves through higher education. However, a population of Black students have successfully completed higher education and have gone on to inspire others to do just the same. The accomplishments of the Black community in higher education have positively changed history and paved a way for future Black students to also be prosperous in their educational experiences. Court cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* changed the future of the educational system by making segregation unconstitutional; however, Black students are still faced with racial integration challenges (Bentley-Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015). Even though this Supreme Court

decision was made in 1954, there are still racial integration issues that cause students to feel unsafe, unheard, and uncared for to this day.

The role that college faculty and staff have in the success of students of color is also greatly impactful. Not only do professors/instructors impact the experiences that students have, all campus employees add to the environment of the campus including those working in on-campus housing. More specifically, teacher education is a widely studied area of study because the educational atmosphere of students' learning experiences is strongly correlated with a teacher's ability to produce a socially just environment. A prosperous educational environment would focus on cultural consciousness, commitment to change, constructive views of change, and dedication to learning about the history of students (Lemley, 2014). How individuals in the educational system address and propose ways to transform acts of discrimination is a positive step in the direction of addressing equitable and social justice issues. Getting students, faculty, and staff to engage in social responsibility and global issues to create awareness around everyday acts of discrimination brings into perspective some of the areas that need to be worked on at urban universities.

When it comes to opportunities like studying abroad or traveling for research purposes, students of color find themselves with limited financial services or resources (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012). The lack of finances has driven Black students to work toward narrowing the socioeconomic disparities and promoting social justice for all students when it comes to education, available resources, and more (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012). Diversity is essential in post-secondary institutions to create a thriving multiracial

and multiethnic society (Garces, 2014). Students are able to develop better critical thinking skills and cultural preparedness to prepare them to enter a diverse workforce (Garces, 2014). Consequently, laws have restricted institutions' ability to use affirmative action to take race and ethnic background into consideration in the admission process. Even with this known, there are many acts of racial inequities that persist in the higher education system.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

When addressing the needs of the students, it is best to start with basic human needs. Student feelings of acceptance and expression heavily rely on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In general, students may struggle with multiple areas in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but if students are able to build upon these areas, there is potential to increase student satisfaction and create a more successful experience in higher education.

Physiological. The first area is physiological, an area where many college students struggle. Due to the overwhelming price tag of attending four-year universities coupled with demanding course loads, students struggle with basic necessities like food, sleep, and homeostasis. Students from different cultural backgrounds have diverse experiences physiologically; however, many students in college gain or lose a significant amount of weight and report lack of sleep across race, age, and gender lines (Edens, 2006). Lack of sleep has become one of the top three reasons why students are struggling with their academic performance causing a decrease in grades and failing to complete courses (Edens, 2006). First year college students in particular have been studied in regards to their weight gain in their first year of college. Students who graduate

overweight are at a higher risk of becoming obese and having health problems in the future (Das & Evans, 2014).

Lack of sleep and overconsumption of unhealthy foods or under consumption of meals can throw off a student's feeling of homeostasis. College students, particularly freshman students, are at risk of gaining weight due life changes, stress, and lack of exercise (Gropper et al., 2009). For students living on campus, the dining commons greatly contribute to the fluctuation in weight and food satisfaction. In fact, most university residence halls that require their first year students to live on campus offer buffet style dining options for every meal. In addition to this, students often become less active when transitioning from high school to college also adding to their weight gain (Das & Evans, 2014). Consequently, 84% of undergraduates report feeling overwhelmed by the demands of college and 32% report feeling depressed at some point in college (Taliaferro & Muehlenkamp, 2015). These feelings of being overwhelmed also relate to the lack of sleep numerous students struggle with. Studies show that there is no significant difference in excessive sleepiness for students living on campus versus students living off campus (Edens, 2016). Therefore, sleep deprivation is a motivational concern for all students.

Safety. Next, safety and security follow where students may also feel at a disadvantage. Attending colleges and universities is an ambivalent time in a student's life. Safety and security not only applies to the physical well being of students, it applies to their overall feelings of being secure as college students, interns/employees, and student leaders. Students attend college to create their career path, but often start not

knowing or not sure of what that career path is going to be. On top of not being sure

about their path of employment, students are also more susceptible to alcohol and drugs.

Students often turn to these substances to "help" with the pressures and demands of

college. Research shows that group cohesion relates to a student's perception of safety

and social adjustment (Long, 2014). The student's perception of safety also ranges from

how they feel physically living on campus to how safe they feel in regards to their race.

Approximately one quarter of entering freshman students at four-year universities believe

that racial discrimination is no longer a huge issue amongst society (Hurtado, Alvarado,

& Guillermo-Wann (2015). However, incidents across the country regarding race prove

that racial discrimination is still prevalent on campus universities. This can impact a

student's ability to feel safe, especially living in an environment that is causing that

discomfort.

      Love/Belonging. After safety is love or belonging. This applies to friendships,

families, and intimate relationships that students can create while living on campus and

throughout their college experience. Developing relationships in college is vital to a

student's academic success as well as to their feelings of acceptance and expression.

Naturally, most individuals need to develop meaningful relationships. Meaningful

relationships have a substantial impact on a student's persistence to follow through with

higher education. The higher the level that students feel supported and accepted by their

teachers and peers, the more likely that the students will not be under distress (Zumbrunn,

McKin, Buhs, & Hawley 2014). As the classroom is often the center of a student's

experience in college, students, especially students of color, pursue academic success and

try to develop relationships with faculty. Students also spend a substantial amount of their time with each other, therefore, friendships and peer interactions plays a critical role in persistence and retention (Zumbrunn et al., 2014).

      Esteem and Self-actualization. Relationships directly impact a student's ability to develop self-esteem, confidence, and respect by others. Issues on campus can cause students to struggle with their self-esteem. Stress is a prevalent contributing factor to a student's inability to perform daily tasks and possibly adapt to future work environments (Fernández-González, González-Hernández, & Trianes-Torres, 2015). This can often be seen in students living on campus where students struggle to find the time to spend adequate time in the space that they are working so hard to afford. College students often have to balance their financial hardships, family problems, and work/academic pressures, which can cause students to lack in academic success (Fernández-González et al., 2015). For instance, the underrepresented population of first generation college students is four times more likely to drop out of college than their counterparts (Petty, 2014).

      Many students who are first generation in higher education come from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds. Because students who are first generation most likely are not in the financial situation to put themselves through college without working, many first generations students have to spend more time working than studying to even stay in the higher education system (Petty, 2014). This can impact the self-esteem of students who do not have the same opportunities. Self-esteem is a vital reason why students, like first generation college students, are willing to follow through with their higher education.

Lastly, self-actualization could be reached as students go on to graduate and get ready to begin their careers. After years of hard work, student loans, and sleep deprivation, graduation is often seen as "the light at the end of the tunnel." Students can then start to see the payoffs of all their work, as they get ready to embark on a new journey in the workforce.

Has Racism Transformed?

The role that intersectionality plays in the higher education system is crucial to the experiences that students, faculty, and staff create. The students living on campus are directly impacted by what happens on campus due to their close proximity. Issues involving campus climate and campus politics can more directly impact students living on campus because they are living where the problems reside.

At predominantly white universities, there is a lack of resources for minority students to be successful at these universities. With the lack of financial, academic, and social support, students of color cannot prosper at these universities due to the negative impact of the absence of these essential resources (Payne & Suddler, 2014). This also impacts urban universities because urban universities offer financial, academic, and social support services, but still manage to struggle to retain students of color.

Campus racial climate. It is common that minority student stories and experiences are used as lessons for White students to learn about White privilege and racism (Blackwell, 2010). In addition, while minority students are present in the classroom, they are often pushed to the side to create room for White students to learn about racism and establish a need for social justice (Blackwell, 2010). This does not

mean that minority students are all socially just. Awareness to how anti-racism is taught in the classroom should not be at the expense of students of color in the classroom. This prompts minority students to be the experts in the area of racism, which causes unwarranted pressure upfront that may cause minority students to feel uncomfortable. Race, class, and gender are three facets of identity that individuals often use to define themselves and are categories that are used to manipulate and reinforce unequal social arrangements between each other (Wilkins, 2012).

Diversity has evolved substantially in the past three decades, thus diversity has been analyzed beyond race to gain a better understanding of how far diversity expands (Bowman & Park, 2014). As diversity continues to advance, the correlation between cross-racial interactions and interracial relationships is being considered in regards to the campus racial climate. For most students, living on campus is new after living at home with a guardian for the majority of one's life. Once a student takes on the experiences of living on campus, they are exposed to an entirely new way of life that can either make or break their educational success. In Bowman and Park's (2014) study, whether students lived on campus or not did not have a direct effect on overall interracial contact. However, the study did show that white students living with Black roommates were more likely to have Black friends. Students' understanding of their university can create a climate that either reinforces, in a positive or negative way, the environment the college is trying to create.

Microaggressions. There are many universities where racism is very prominent and very much outspoken in the student, faculty, and administrative communities.

Although campuses are more racially/ethically diverse than ever, racial and ethnic students still report a lower satisfaction rate with campus climate than white students (Boysen, 2012). This often leads to the increase in racial tensions and society's frustrations to express themselves. For example, the University of Missouri, directly uncovered the impact of campus climate on its community. This predominantly white university has become an example of how racism still exists on campuses.

From microaggressions to blatant racism, students of color have a different experience living on campus compared to their white counterparts. There are many forms of microaggressions including: "(a) racial jokes and verbal comments, (b) racial slurs written in shared spaces, (c) segregated spaces and unequal treatment, and (d) denial and minimization of racism" (Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012, p. 159). In other words, there are many ways that racism can be expressed as well as many different levels it can go to.

Cultural Competence: Multicultural Education

Cultural competence is another significant area that impacts the campus community. When an institution has established an environment that stimulates cultural competence and multicultural education, students, faculty, and staff are impacted and encouraged to work effectively in the institution of cross-cultural situations. Having a strong sense of racial identity is vital for student development. In addition, being aware of one's own racial identity allows for individuals to explore and better understand other racial identity similarities and differences (Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015).

The teacher/professor has a great influence over the class environment and can change the dynamics of how students address each other. Universities around the country experience student resistance to multicultural classes regarding power, privilege, and hegemony (Dunn, Dotson, Ford, & Roberts, 2014). Opinions, thoughts, and beliefs will often differ; however, from the perspective of teachers, there is a struggle in the classroom to create an environment that is socially just. It is in the classroom that students engage in discourse that can positively or negatively impact all students.

Cross-cultural conversations can be difficult for teachers to facilitate and get students engaged in. However, it is these conversations that allow for students to become aware of their privileges and gain a better understanding of their fellow students (Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather, 2014). In order to promote further development, students must engage and challenge themselves to address racial divides in relation to the classroom and society (Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather, 2014). This makes individuals aware of the perceived boundaries and difficulties creating relationships.

There are many forms of privilege in the higher educational system and professors often hold a direct position of students that can create a forum for respectful discussion around sensitive topics. Every student's level of awareness around topics that society may be actively addressing is different. Therefore using the classroom as a basis for fruitful conversation and perspectives allows for students to bounce ideas and thoughts off each other. This can also create more comfort between students to have difficult conversations about what is happening in the world.

A study by Packard (2013) found that Black students are more likely than their white counterparts to find connections between their coursework/assignments and their daily life. Living on campus creates opportunities for students with different cultural backgrounds to live with each other and get to know the experiences of the other. There has been a lot of research on various students resulting in a diverse collection of thoughts, ideas, and opinions in relation to what happens inside the classroom (Packard, 2013). Students are often positively impacted by other students with diverse backgrounds that positively impact areas such as: cultural awareness, retention and satisfaction, and intellectual motivation and confidence (Packard, 2013).

The Gap Between K-12 and Postsecondary School

Graduating from high school is one of the most impactful experiences that a student can experience in their education. It is no secret to America that there is a disconnect between K-12 education and postsecondary schools for students, especially students of color. It is very possible that students of color are internalizing racism due to the racial inequitable educational system (Kohli, 2014). Students are continuing to internalize these feelings of oppression and racism in relation to the educational system. This is also having a negative impact on students as a whole as there has only been a 6.6 percentage increase in bachelor degree graduates in the last 20 years (Kim, 2011). There is a substantial amount of research on the differences and lines drawn between black and white students. From graduation rates to feelings of expression and acceptance, the statistics differ greatly.

Summary

Although there are numerous negative factors that can detour the academic success of students of color, there are many areas that can foster it. This would then create an environment where students of color living on campus can feel like they are being accepted and able to express themselves. Access for minority students in higher education will positively influence students to use campus resources and services to stimulate success in their academics and then eventually graduation. Knowledge of intersectionality would give students a better opportunity to learn from each other and apply that knowledge in their day-to-day lives. Lastly, cultural competence would allow for students to develop their cultural sensitivity to become well-rounded global citizens.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to analyze the experiences that students undergo while living on campus in the higher education system. This exploratory study used a quantitative survey approach to gain insight into the experiences and knowledge of the campus community among students living on the SJSU campus, a population that makes up approximately 10% of the SJSU campus community. San José State University is an urban university located in downtown San José and in the middle of the Silicon Valley. In fall of 2015, the student population was .1% American Indian, 3.1% Black, 32.1% Asian, .4% Pacific Islander, 23.2% Hispanic, 19.9% White, 12.2 Foreign, and 9.1% other (SJSU Fall Enrollment by Ethnicity, 2015).

This exploratory study was based on the general concerns of SJSU college students living on campus, specifically those of color, living in a new environment outside of "the home." Furthermore, the questions were designed to determine the relationship between living on campus and academic performance. In this study, it was assumed that non-White students are less comfortable living on campus than White students and may face additional stressors from being non-White. External stressors such as finances, job requirements, sleep deprivation, and personal appearance influence the quality of on-campus living. This exploratory study delved into discrepancies between White and non-White students living on campus. It iwas not, however, designed to answer why these discrepancies exist.

Participants

Approximately 3,800 San José State University students living in the residence halls were sent a questionnaire via Google Docs. Sixty-six students responded to the survey. Of the 66 respondents, 69.7% were female and 30.3% were male. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 33 years, with a mean age of 19.76. The participants' class levels were 48.4% freshman, 14.1% sophomore, 14.1% junior, 15.6% senior, and 7.8% graduate level. The respondents' racial/ethnic breakdown was 46.9% Latino/Hispanic American, 31.3% Asian/Pacific American, 21.9% White/Caucasian, 15.6% Black/African American/African/Caribbean, 1.6% Native American/Alaskan Native, and 3.1% other. In addition, almost half (48.4%) the respondents reported being first generation college students. The respondents' average grade point average (GPA) was 3.23, which is slightly above a "B" average.

Instrument

An online Google Docs survey consisting of 17 questions was created (see Appendix A). In order to maintain confidentiality, the survey was anonymous. However, demographic questions related to students' gender, age, year in college, ethnicity, educational family history, and SJSU GPA were included in the survey. In addition to the six demographic questions, the survey included 11 questions using the Likert Scale and/or short response questions. These items asked participants to answer questions in regards to their feelings of acceptance and expression on campus, their comfort with peers and professors, their awareness of resources offered on campus, how they felt about living on campus, and reasons why they lived on campus (see Appendix A). These topics

of focus were addressed through four areas: participant feelings of acceptance and expression, participant knowledge of on-campus resources, participant level of comfort on campus, and participant perception of their academic success.

The survey was designed using proven areas of need such as a sense of belonging, safety, and self-esteem (Maslow, 1943). These areas were then expanded on to analyze the responses to phrases such as "I do not feel comfortable addressing racial tensions with my classmates" and "I feel accepted and comfortable on campus" using a Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Likert, 1932). This scale was utilized to measure the participant level of agreement and/or disagreement throughout the survey.

Procedure

With permission from San José State University Housing Services and the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, this study was conducted through the use of a voluntary online survey and the responses were recorded through a Google Docs form. The online survey was sent to the student residential community through an online Residential Management System used by San José State University Housing Services called *StarRez,* which is linked to the school's *MySJSU* database. This system allows emails to be sent to every resident in on-campus housing simultaneously, and students received the survey through an email asking them to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The *StarRez* system sent the survey to the SJSU residents' email addresses listed on their accounts. All SJSU student residents were invited to complete the survey including: first year, sophomore, junior, senior plus, and graduate students, as long as

students were 18 years or older. Through the use of a Google Docs form, the *StarRez* system was used to collect and generate the data for this study.

After reading the survey instructions, students were prompted with a question to verify they were at least 18 years old to complete the survey. There was an option for participants to not respond to any given question if they chose not to. In collaboration with SJSU's University Housing Services (UHS), the responses to the survey were collected and recorded, but only for the purpose of conducting this study. The data collected from this survey were protected by username and password on a secure server.

Data Analysis

The data from the survey were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics V21.0 software. Tables and charts were also created through the use of SPSS and Microsoft Excel. SPSS calculated a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) that examined GPA as a function of race/ethnicity. Students' GPAs were important when analyzing their level of academic success and relating it to their race/ethnicity for the purpose of this study. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was also used to explore differences in how students felt about their experiences living on campus, the link between gender and GPA, and the connection between a student's year in school and their academic GPA.

Chapter 4: Results

Students living on campus in higher education are provided with a number of opportunities: convenience and quicker access to classes, social/personal development, and proximity to resources. However, students of color may not be aware of or exposed to the resources that can help them with better performance in the classroom. The study was conducted to examine student feelings in multiple areas of their college experience. The four themes addressed by this study included feelings of acceptance and expression, knowledge of on-campus resources, level of comfort on campus, and perception of academic success. Within those themes, race/ethnicity, gender, generational status, campus climate, and GPA were focused on to analyze academic success and the overall student experience living on campus.

Feelings of Acceptance and Expression

The participants were asked a number of different questions to evaluate their feelings of acceptance and expression. In one item, the participants were asked to rate their comfort level with expressing their thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to faculty/staff on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Approximately 55 students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, "I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to faculty/staff." Approximately 32% of the participants felt neutral about this question. The results of the responses to this statement are shown in Figure 1.
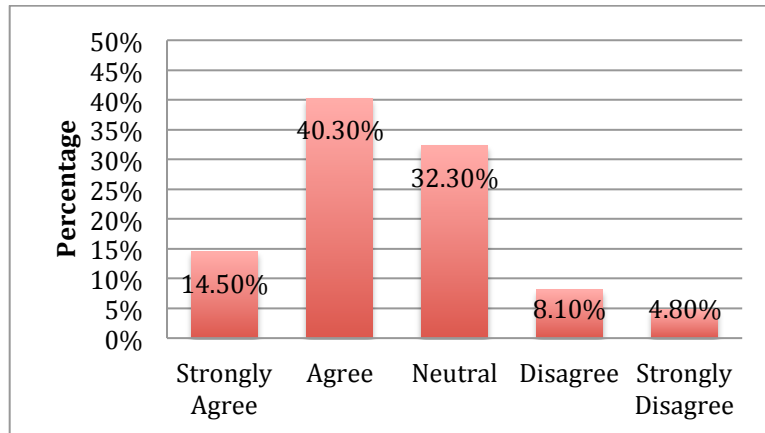
Figure 1. Distribution of responses to "I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to faculty/staff" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Students were also evaluated on their feelings of expression and acceptance with their fellow students. Approximately 46% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable expressing their thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to other students as shown in Figure 2.
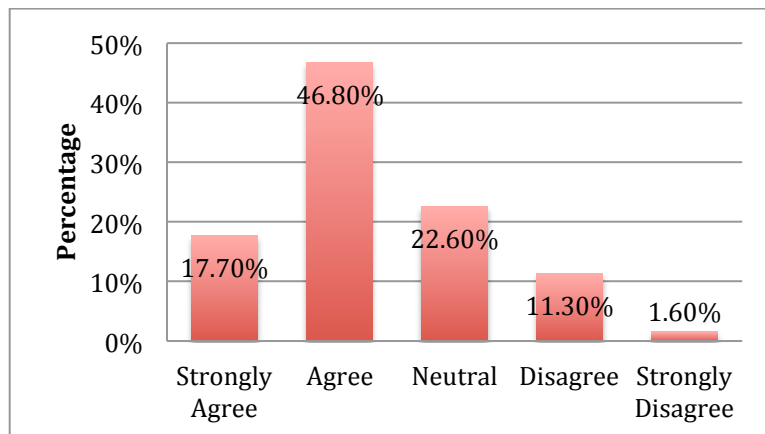
Figure 2. Distribution of responses to "I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to other students" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Students were then asked to rate the statement "I do not feel comfortable discussing racial tensions with my classmates" on a scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to

Strongly Agree. As Figure 3 shows, approximately 33% of the participants either agreed

or strongly agreed with this statement, while about 25% of students felt neutral, 39% of

students disagreed, and 3% of students strongly disagreed.
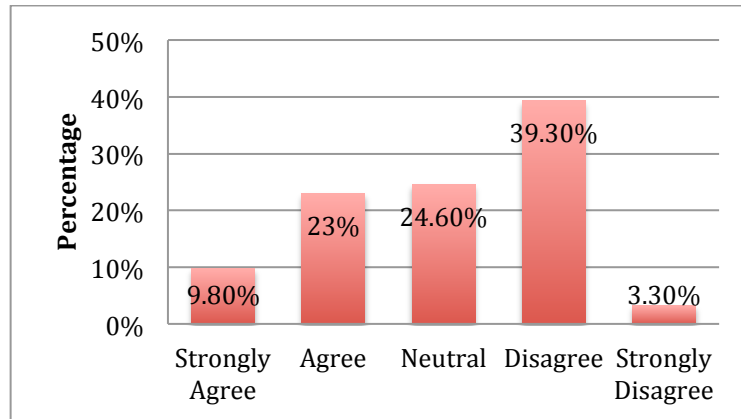
Figure 3. Distribution of responses to "I do not feel comfortable discussing racial
tensions with my classmates" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Additionally, students were then asked to rate the statement "I do not feel comfortable

discussing racial tensions with my instructors" on a scale from Strongly Disagree to

Strongly Agree. Approximately 35% of the participants either agreed or strongly

disagree, while 22.6% of students felt neutral and 32.3% disagreed (see Figure 4).
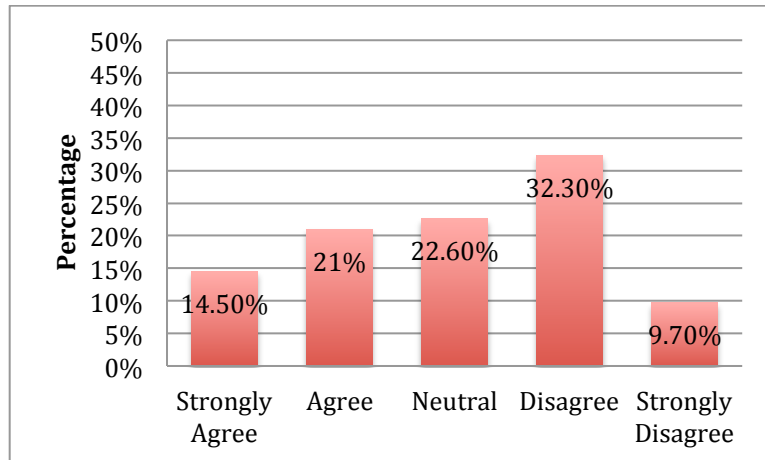
Figure 4. Distribution of responses to "I do not feel comfortable discussing racial tensions with my instructors" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Students then were asked to respond to the following statement: "I feel like I am aware of my own marginalized identities as well as those of my peers." As Figure 5 shows, approximately 74% of the respondents agree or strongly agree, while almost 23% reported being neutral.
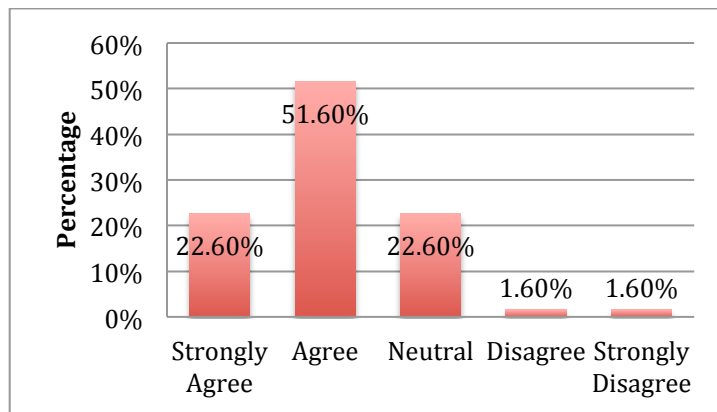
Figure 5. Distribution of responses to "I feel like I am aware of my own marginalized identities as well as those of my peers" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Knowledge of On-Campus Resources

The second theme represented in the survey addressed students' knowledge of on-campus resources. Students were asked to mark any resources/services they had utilized

within the past year. The survey listed Peer Connections, the Career Center, Counseling Services, the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office, the MOSAIC Cross-cultural Center, the Student Health Center, Student Involvement, Associated Students, Academic Advising and Retention Services/The Advising Hub, the Cesar E. Chavez Community Action Center, the Educational Opportunity Program, and an option for Other (see Appendix A, Question #11).

When examining the data shown by resource/service, the frequencies of the students that reported utilizing some of the services/resources offered at SJSU varied. All services were used at different rates: Peer Connections (28.3%), Career Center (31.5%), Counseling (31.5%), Financial Aid and Scholarship Office (69.2%), MOSAIC (14.8%), Student Health Center (74.1%), Student Involvement Services (28.3%), Associated Students (44.4%), Academic Advising and Retention (33.3%), Cesar Chavez Community Center (7.4%), and the Education Opportunity Center (24.1%). The mostly frequently used services were the Student Health Center and the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office. The services least utilized were the Cesar Chavez Community Center and MOSAIC.

Level of Comfort on Campus

The third theme represented in the survey was level of comfort on campus. Comfort levels typically vary between students so each participant was prompted to address their feeling of acceptance and comfort on the SJSU campus. The results for this item are presented in Figure 6. About 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
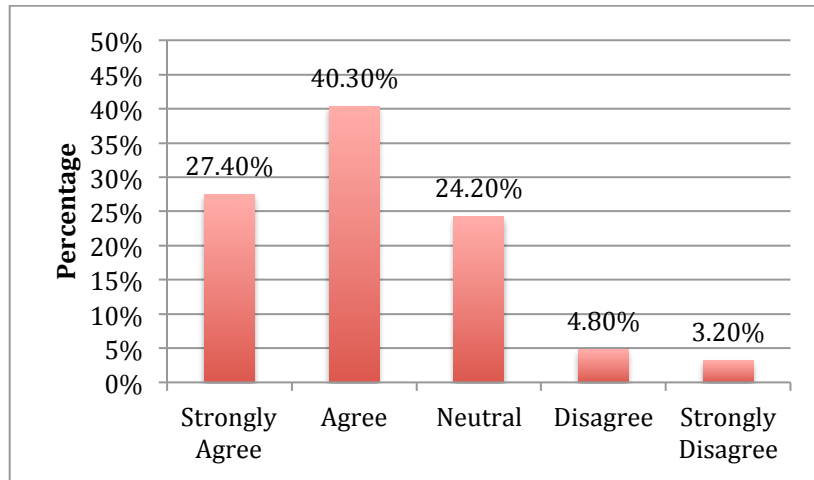
Figure 6. Distribution of responses to "I feel accepted and comfortable on campus" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Additionally, Figure 7 shows that approximately 43% of students who identified as White strongly agreed that they felt accepted and comfortable on campus versus 27% of students of color.
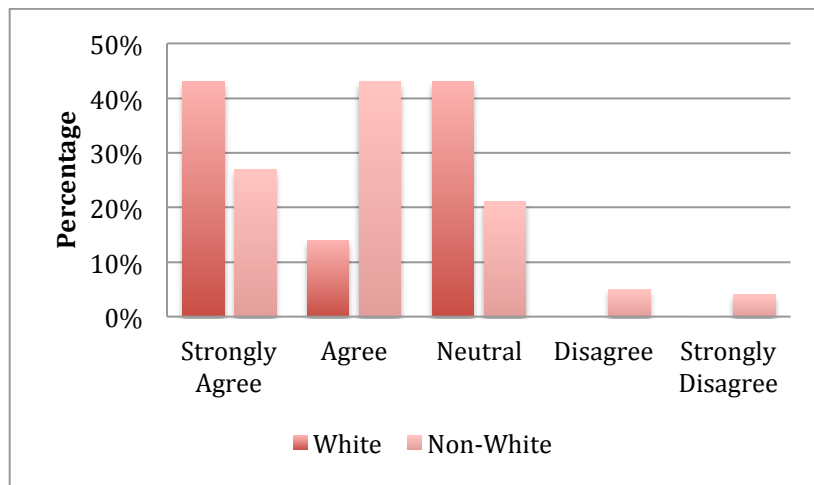
Figure 7. Distribution of responses based on White or Non-White classification to "I feel accepted and comfortable on campus" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

The survey also addressed the participants' appreciation for other race/ethnicities that are different from their own. The survey asked the participants to rate their perception of their appreciation of others whose race/ethnicity is different from their own on a scale of

strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results are presented in Figure 8. Almost 89%

of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they appreciated others whose

race/ethnicity are different form their own.
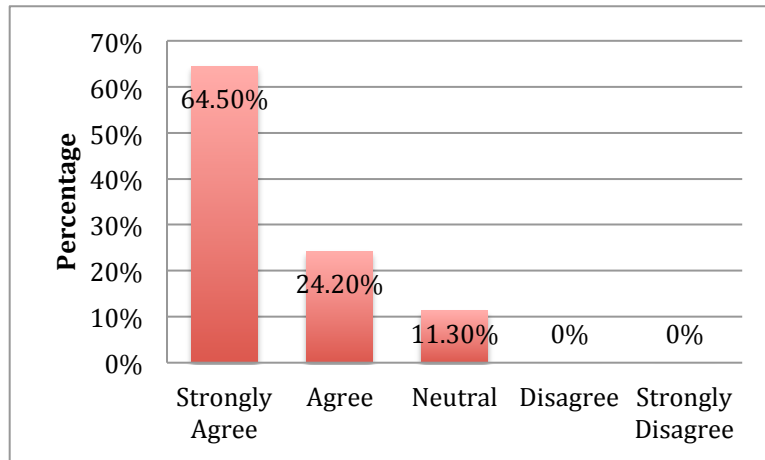
Figure 8. Distribution of responses to "I appreciate others whose race/ethnicity are different from my own" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Students were also asked to respond to their thoughts on whether they agreed that

SJSU was making positive progress with diversity initiatives. Figure 9 shows that about

61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SJSU was making positive progress in

this area, with 16.4% reporting that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
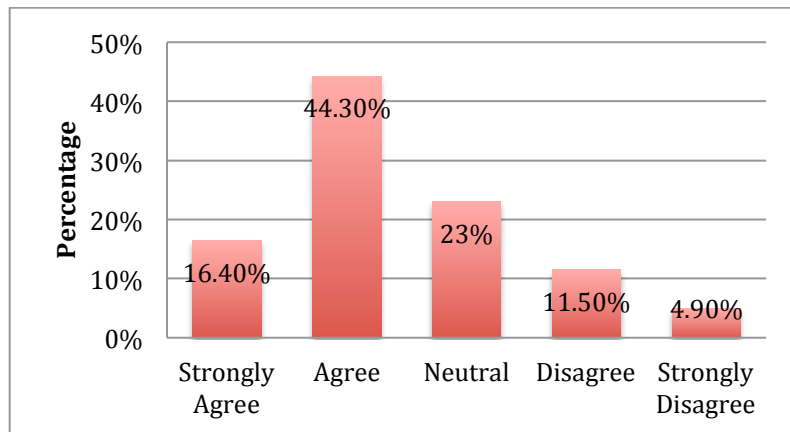
Figure 9. Distribution of responses to "SJSU is making positive progress with diversity initiatives" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Students' level of comfort on campus was also assessed by asking students whether any of the following areas have been a major cause of stress since attending SJSU: finances, academics, jobs and/or internships, personal appearance, personal health, sleep, or family problems. As Figure 10 shows, students reported that academics (84%), finances (77%), sleep (69%), job and/or internship (63%), and personal health (56%), in that order, were the major causes of stress for them. Academics and finances caused the most major stress for the students in this study, followed by sleep and jobs and/or internships.
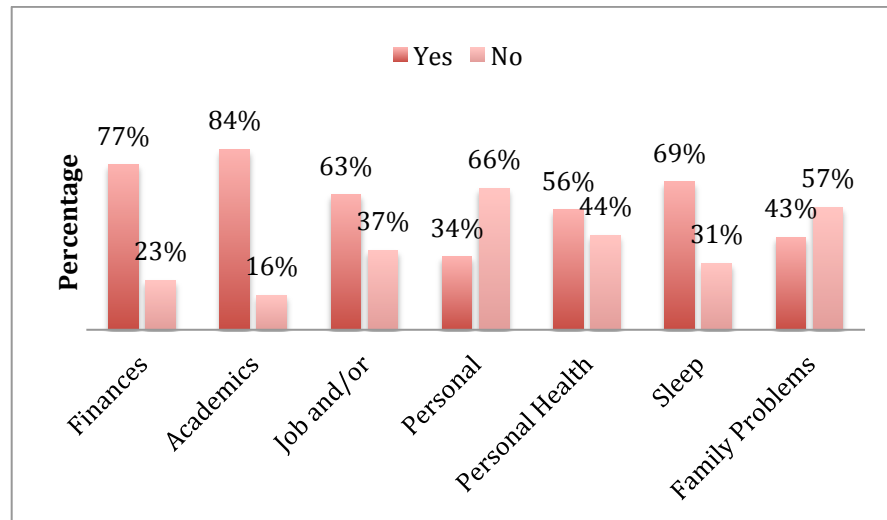
Figure 10. Major causes of stress since attending SJSU.

Perception of Academic Success

The results for the fourth theme, perceptions of academic success, are presented within this section. The mean grade point average (GPA) of all the participants in this survey was a 3.23.

Using the one-way ANOVA, it was discovered that the Latina/Latino/Hispanic American population reported a significantly lower GPA than non-Latinos, $F(1, 56) =$

7.69 > p = .01 (M = 3.03, SD = .54) shown in Table 1 and 2 below. The mean for non-Latina/Latino/Hispanic Americans was 3.39, showing a significant difference in GPA. The Latina/Latino/Hispanic participants made up approximately half of the participants in this survey.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of GPA as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Non-Latina/Latino/Hispanic American	29	3.39	0.46
Latina/Latino/Hispanic American	29	3.03	0.54

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Variance of GPA by Race/Ethnicity

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	1.93	1.93	7.69	.01
Within groups	56	14.07	0.25		
Total	57	16.00			

The Black/African American/African/Caribbean community did not report any significant difference in GPA compared to those who do not identify in that community, $F(1, 56) = .30$ p = .59 (M = 3.23, SD = .55) shown in Table 3 and 4 below. In this study, the GPA for the Black/African American/African/Caribbean population was slightly lower than the non- Black/African American/African/Caribbean.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of GPA as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	n	M	SD
Non- Black/African American/African/Caribbean	48	3.23	0.53
Black/African American/African/Caribbean	10	3.18	0.55

Table 4

One-Way Analysis of Variance of GPA by Race/Ethnicity

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	1	.09	1.09	.30	.59
Within groups	56	15.92	0.28		
Total	57	16.00			

Additionally, the Asian/Pacific American community did not report any significant difference in GPA compared to those who do not identify in that community, $F(1, 56) = .41$ $p = .52$ (M = 3.28, SD = .53) shown in Table 5 and 6.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of GPA as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	n	M	SD
Non-Asian/Pacific American	39	3.18	0.53
Asian/Pacific American	19	3.28	0.54

Table 6

One-Way Analysis of Variance of GPA by Race/Ethnicity

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	1	.12	.12	.41	.52
Within groups	56	15.89	0.28		
Total	57	16.00			

The White/Caucasian community reported the highest GPA out of any of the other race/ethnicities, $F(1, 56) = 1.64$ p = .21 (M = 3.38, SD = .54) shown in Table 7 and 8.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of GPA as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Non-White/Caucasian	46	3.17	0.53
White/Caucasian	12	3.38	0.54

Table 8

One-Way Analysis of Variance of GPA by Race/Ethnicity

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	.45	.45	1.64	.21
Within groups	56	15.55	0.28		
Total	57	16.00			

The Native/Alaskan Native community reported the lowest GPA out of any of the other race/ethnicities with sample size of 2, $F(1, 56) = 1.64$ $p = .21$ ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .54$) shown in Table 9 and 10.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of GPA as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Non-Native/Alaskan Native	56	3.28	0.07
Native/Alaskan Native	2	2.76	0.91

Table 10

One-Way Analysis of Variance of GPA by Race/Ethnicity

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	.42	.42	1.51	.22
Within groups	56	15.58	0.28		
Total	57	16.00			

One level of success analyzed was gender and GPA. The GPA was self-reported which may have likely skewed the actual results. Additionally there were a substantially larger amount of females (44) in comparison to males (16). There were no significant differences between genders. Females showed the following, $F(1,56) = .37$ $p = .54$ ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.48$) and males showed the following, $F(1,56) = .37$ $p = 54$ ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .67$) see Tables 11 and 12 below. Females overall had the higher GPA.

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Gender as a Function of GPA

		GPA	
Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Males	16	3.14	0.67
Females	44	3.24	0.48

Table 12

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Gender by GPA

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	.11	.11	.37	.54
Within groups	58	16.45	.28		
Total	59	16.56			

Class level by GPA was also analyzed. It was discovered that there is a digression in GPA from first year to 4th year. Though, graduate students ended up having the highest overall GPA (3.33) and fourth years had the lowest (3.02). There was no significant difference in GPA across classes as shown in Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Class Level as a Function of GPA

		GPA	
Class level	*n*	*M*	*SD*
First year	29	3.29	0.52
Second year	6	3.20	0.69
Third year	9	3.19	0.36
Fourth year	10	3.02	0.62
Graduate	5	3.33	0.45

Table 14

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Class Level by GPA

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	4	.62	.15	.55	.70
Within groups	54	15.27	.28		
Total	58	15.87			

Participants were then asked to respond to how living on campus affects their academic performance (see figure 11). According to the responses, 66% of students reported that living on campus positively affects them versus 27% thought it impacted them negatively.
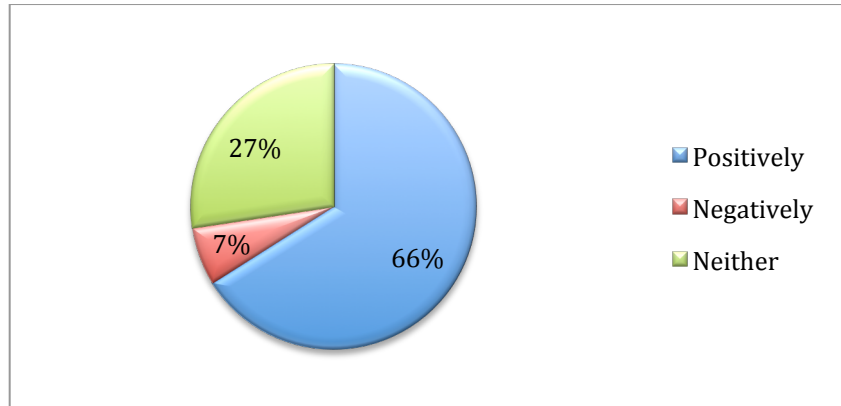
Figure 11. Participants' response to living on campus affects academic performance.

Academic success was also evaluated indirectly through the responses to the following statements: "I am actively involved on campus," "I enjoy attending SJSU," "I feel supported by my family to pursue higher education," and "I feel like my friends are a positive influence on me as I pursue my college education." As stated in Chapter 2, part of students' perception of academic success is their involvement on campus. Students' responses to their involvement on campus are represented in Figure 12.
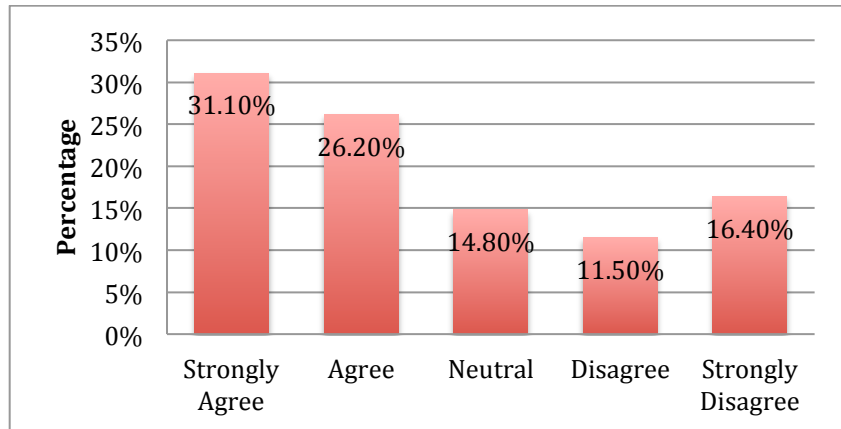
Figure 12. Student responses to "I am actively involved on campus (i.e., sororities, clubs, organizations)."

About 57% of respondents reported that they strongly agreed or agreed to being actively involved on campus whereas almost 28% reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Participants' responses to the statement "I enjoy attending SJSU," are shown in Figure 13. The majority of the respondents (75%) reported that they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Only 7% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
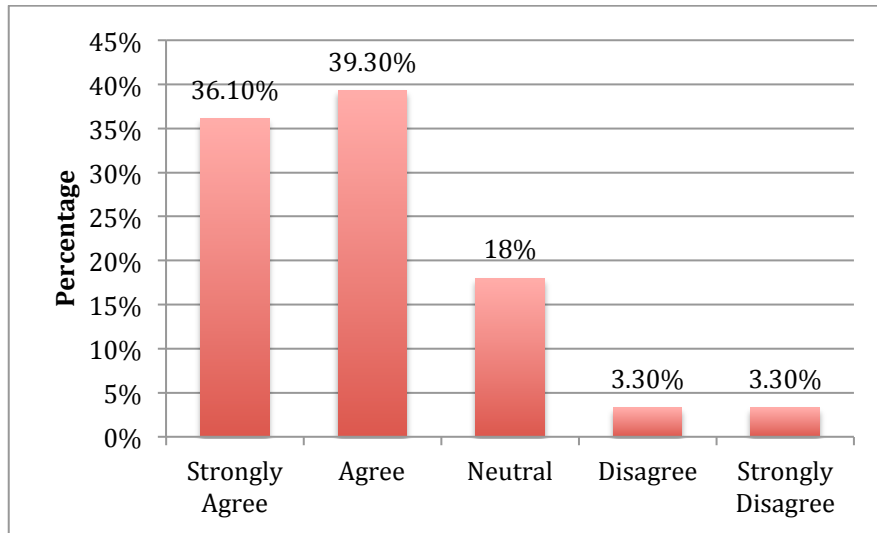
Figure 13. Participants' responses to "I enjoy attending SJSU."

Figure 14 shows that when students were asked to respond to a statement in regards to whether they felt supported by their family to pursue higher education, the majority (90.2%) reported that they did by marking that they strongly agreed or agreed they felt supported by the family.
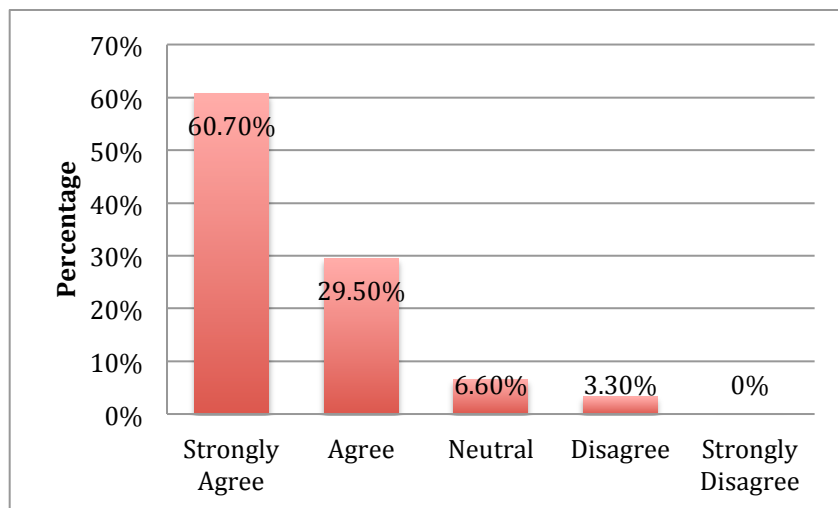
Figure 14. Participants' responses to "I fell supported by my family to pursue higher education."

Additionally, participants were asked to respond to whether they felt their friends were a positive influence on them as they pursued their college education. As Figure 15 shows, 78.6% reported they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.
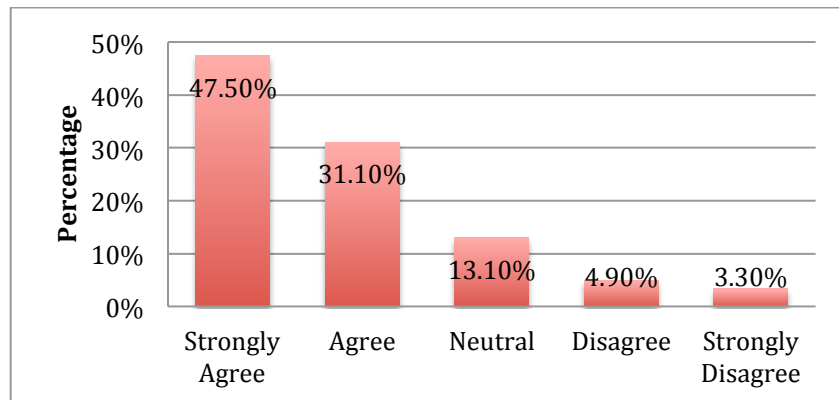
Figure 15. Participants' responses to "I feel like my friends are a positive influence on me as I pursue my college education."

Additionally, participants were asked if they had experienced any of the following: homesickness, relationship difficulties, roommate difficulties, or sleep difficulties. Participants were given the option to click "Yes," "No," or "I'm not sure." The results of this section of the survey are presented in Figure 16. The highest percentage of students reported difficulties with sleep (75%) and homesickness (58%).
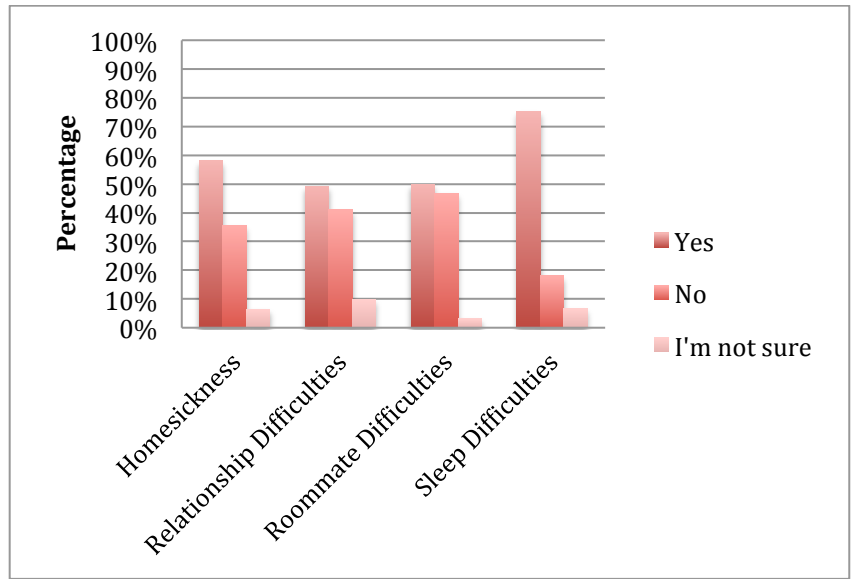
Figure 16. Participants' responses to "Since attending SJSU have you ever experienced any of the following."

Additional Items

Questions not addressed in the previous four categories relate directly to why students chose to live on campus and what their experiences had been at San José State University as a whole. Students were asked to answer why they chose to live on campus and were given the following options: It is convenient, It is required of me, I could not find any other options, and/or I enjoy the community I live in. More than one option could be selected. As Figure 17 shows, the majority of respondents (75.8%) chose to live on campus because it was convenient.
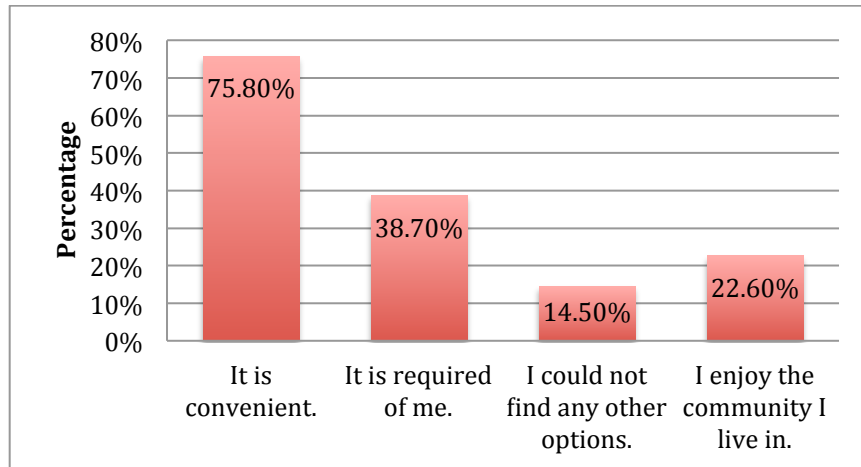
Figure 17. Participants' responses to "I live on campus because"

Participants were then asked a question in regards to whether living on campus had been a mostly positive, mostly negative, or neutral experience. As Figure 18 shows, 61.3% of students found their experience to be mostly positive. Only 8.1% of students found their experiences mostly negative and 30.6% of students found their experiences to be neutral.
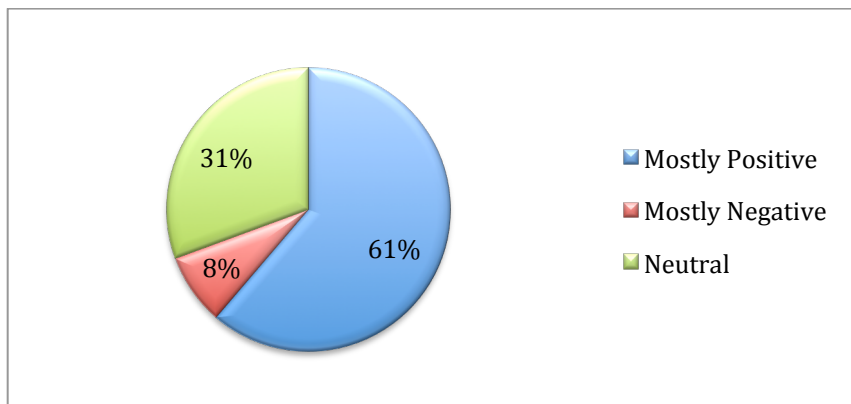
Figure 18. Participants' responses to their experiences living on campus.

Then students were asked what their experiences were living on campus and were given three options: mostly positive, neutral, and mostly negative. A one-way ANOVA was used to find the measure of campus living as a function of race/ethnicity.

In other words, each student level of comfort was coded (mostly positive = 2, neutral = 1, and mostly negative = 0) to find the mean for the student satisfaction with living on campus.

Black/African American/African/Caribbean students had a mean experience of 1.40, which was slightly lower than non- Black/African American/African/Caribbean's at 1.54 (see Table 15 and 16). This suggests that most individuals that identify with this community have either neutral or mostly positive experiences living on campus $F(1, 58)$ = .38 p = 0.54 (M = 1.40, SD = .84).

Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Campus Living as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	n	M	SD
Non- Black/African American/African/Caribbean	50	1.54	0.61
Black/African American/African/Caribbean	10	1.40	0.84

Table 16

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Campus Living by Race/Ethnicity

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	1	.16	.16	.38	.54
Within groups	58	24.82	.43		
Total	59	24.98			

The Latina/Latino/Hispanic American community reported a lower mean in their feelings of living on campus comparison to individuals that did not identify in that community. The mean (1.34) suggests that Latina/Latino/Hispanic American students felt more neutral about their experiences living on campus, $F(1, .58) = 4.12$ $p = .05$ $(M = 1.34, SD = .72)$. The non-Latina/Latino/Hispanic American students showed a more positive outlook about their experiences living on campus (Tables 17 and 18).

Table 17

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Campus Living as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Non-Latina/Latino/Hispanic American	31	1.68	0.54
Latina/Latino/Hispanic American	29	1.34	0.72

Table 18

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Campus Living by Race/Ethnicity

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	1.66	1.67	4.12	.05
Within groups	58	23.33	.40		
Total	59	24.98			

Asian/Pacific Islanders reported a more positive view of their experiences living on campus $F(1, 58) = 3.31$ p = .07 (M = 1.74, SD = .45). With a mean of 1.74 Asian/Pacific Islanders have a mostly positive experience, according to this survey (see Tables 19 and 20).

Table 19

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Campus Living as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Non-Asian/Pacific Islander	41	1.41	0.71
Asian/Pacific Islander	19	1.74	0.45

Table 20

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Campus Living by Race/Ethnicity

Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	1.35	1.35	3.31	.07
Within groups	58	23.64	.41		
Total	59	24.98			

White/Caucasians reported a more positive experience than non-White/Caucasians, $F(1, 58) = .68$ p = .41 (M = 1.64, SD = 0.50). With a mean of 1.64 White/Caucasians had a mostly positive experience, according to this study (see Tables 21 and 22).

Table 21

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Campus Living as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	n	M	SD
Non-White/Caucasian	46	1.48	0.69
White/Caucasian	14	1.64	0.50

Table 22

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Campus Living by Race/Ethnicity

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	1	.29	.29	.68	.41
Within groups	58	24.69	.43		
Total	59	24.98			

Native American/Indigenous reported a mean level of experience of a 2.00 (see Tables 23 and 24). There were only 2 participants that participated in this study that identified as Native American/Indigenous, however, both individuals had mostly positive experiences living on campus, $F(1, 58) = 1.14$ $p = .29$ (M = 2.00, SD = 0.00).

Table 23

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Campus Living as a Function of Race/Ethnicity

		GPA	
Race	n	M	SD
Non-Native American/Indigenous	48	1.50	0.66
Native American/Indigenous	2	2.00	0.00

Table 24

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Campus Living by Race/Ethnicity

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	1	.48	.48	1.14	.29
Within groups	58	24.50	.42		
Total	59	24.98			

Participants were also asked a question in regards to what is most valuable to them "right now." Figure 19 shows that over 61% of students reported that education was most valuable.
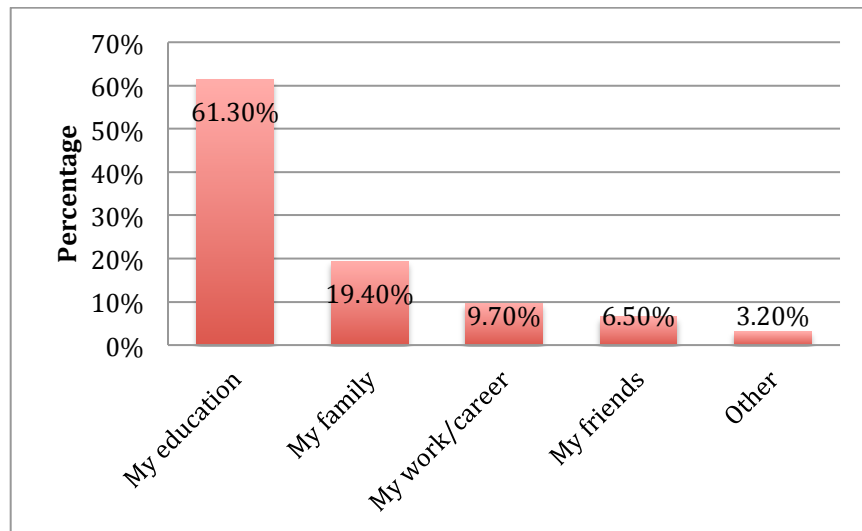
Figure 19. Participants' responses to what is most valuable to them "right now."

Summary

Ultimately, the results from this survey show a number of varying experiences while living in the residence halls across cultural backgrounds. Students' feelings of acceptance and expression, knowledge of on-campus resources, level of comfort on campus, and perception of academic success were all addressed. There were links between generational status and race/ethnic identity as well as a difference in responses for overall experiences for students living on campus.

Some of the major patterns that can be identified from the results were the differences in educational history between White/Caucasian and non-White/Caucasian students. As the survey results showed, 44% of students who identified as non-White/Caucasian also identified as first generation college students, therefore, students of color were more likely to be first generation college students.

Student responses to the statement "I feel accepted and comfortable on campus" varied between the two major groups, White vs. non-White as well. According to the survey results, 43% of White students strongly agreed with the statement and 14% agreed. On the contrary, 27% of students of color strongly agreed while 43% agreed. The major difference between the two groups was that there were students of color who disagreed (5%) or strongly disagreed (4%) with the statement while no white students disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

This study was focused on the importance of the environment the residence halls at four-year universities provide for students, specifically for student of color. Students of color should have the same access that campuses offer regardless of their cultural background. Challenging the higher education system to produce more equal opportunity situations will help create a socially just society and better educational experience (Kliewer & Zacharakis, 2015).

The living environments that students are exposed to can set the tone for their entire higher education experience. Therefore, residence halls at higher education universities should have the proper knowledge, tools, and skills to recognize the disparities putting students at disadvantages. It is also important to create a commitment to change for individuals that attend higher education universities. Looking at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically as it relates to finances, sleep, feelings of safety, a sense of belonging, and fostering self-esteem/self-actualization can benefit residential communities. As students struggle financially, personally, academically, and professionally they can be consumed by overwhelming feelings of external pressures (Fernández-González et al., 2015). This coupled with a shortage of opportunities for students of racial/ethnic backgrounds other than white and generational status can send students heading in an unhealthy direction. Faculty, staff, and student knowledge about issues related to access, intersectionality, and cultural competence can better facilitate a well-rounded opportunity for all students. Thus, the following research questions were created and addressed.

Discussion & Conclusions

The results from this survey presented a range of age, class, race/ethnicity, gender identity, and generational status. The percentage of students of color was 78.1% of the overall participants in this survey. Of the participants, almost half identified as first generation college students (Figure 18).

The survey results revealed the majority of students felt safe expressing themselves to their student peers and faculty. Similarly, the literature review identified that the intersections of race, gender, and generational status, have a strong connection with access, intersectionality, and cultural competence in higher education. The majority of participants strongly agreed, agreed, or felt neutral about their level of comfort with faculty/staff. Therefore, students living in the residence halls showed a strong level of comfort with faculty and staff on the SJSU campus.

While talking about racial tensions was challenging for some students, feeling safe around campus was generally true for all students. Participants' feelings about discussing racial tensions with their classmates were split. One quarter of participants felt neutral about talking about racial tensions, while 42% strongly disagreed or disagreed that they did not feel comfortable as shown in Figure 3. However, respondents displayed high levels of general comfort about their overall campus safety. Even in light of the hate crimes on campus, Black/African American students did not show a significant difference in satisfaction of living on campus. Further research should be conducted on these results.

In addition, when participants were asked what contributes to their academic success, many responses involved their friends and family. According to this survey,

friends and family played a key role in the academic success of the survey participants. Students used self-motivation to get them through their academic careers, and this has proved beneficial for them as the average GPA for the students that took this survey was 3.23. This shows that students were becoming more academically inclined and thoughtful in their collegiate careers based on their motivations of family, friends, and self-motivation. Additionally, of those sampled, there were more non-White students who had a negative experience living on campus than white students. The presented statement on comfort level and acceptance was addressed by level of agreement. All White individuals are either neutral, agree, or strongly agree that they feel comfortable and accepted living on campus. The reason that Figure 8 has interesting results is because 0% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This ties in with points discussed previously in regards to student comfort and acceptance on campus. It's unacceptable that nine percent of students of color disagree and strongly disagree with this statement, especially while there were no White students who reported similar feelings. Another interesting finding was the disparity between White and non-White students experiences living on campus. Zero percent of students reported having a negative experience living on campus versus 9% of non-White students. Of non-White students, 44% compared to 29% of White students were first generation. These results are important because being a first generation college student comes with additional stresses, especially when considering the support group for the student (family) has most likely not gone through college. Therefore, additional resources must be utilized in order to make the educational journey successful.

Another interesting result regarding the ethnic/racial breakdown by GPA was that Latina/Latino/Hispanic American students showed a significantly lower GPA than those who did not identify in that community. White/Caucasian students reported the highest GPA out of all the ethnic/racial groups. The students of color had more trouble achieving as high academic success as White/Caucasians. Black/African American/African/Caribbean and Latina/Latino/Hispanic American students also reported the most negative results when asked about their experiences living on campus.

The responses to Question 9 of the survey also show a strong correlation between academic success with regards to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in which extensive research was reported. According to the survey results, the major causes of stress were finances, academics, and sleep. This agrees with the student value response where 61.3% of the participants stated that academics were most important to them. Students also reported that their experiences living on campus were mostly positive or neutral. This study supports current research with regards to how student residence halls foster acceptance, academic engagement, and critical thinking.

Research Limitations

The sample size from this study was small (N=66); therefore the results from this survey may not be statistically significant. With a confidence level of 95%, sample size of 66 participants, population of 3,800, and percentage of 50%, the confidence interval is 11.96. In addition, the number of students who identified as white in this survey was a much less number than those who identified as other racial/ethnic identities. Further studies may be needed to verify the obtained results for specific campuses.

Limitations

The following limitations were beyond the control of the research design.

- Some students may not be able to find any successful resources on campus to contribute to their success as a college student.

- Not all on-campus students live on campus full time (students may be commuting home).

- Residence hall communities may vary drastically between campuses.

- Although all students have the opportunity to benefit from resources offered on campus to promote the success of their education, this study only focused on students living in the residence hall community of one college campus.

- The study does not include data for college students living on campus younger than 18 years old.

Research Implications & Recommendations

Ultimately, increasing social justice and more cultural awareness on four-year campus universities is going to take dedication and commitment from every individual who enters the higher educational field. Creating more knowledge and awareness around topics related to access, intersectionality, and cultural competence requires work both as an individual and as a society. University personnel can better serve students of color by first becoming aware of their own social identity and how this impacts the people around them.

Acknowledging and recognizing one's own privileged identities as well as their own marginalized identities creates more general awareness and sensitivity. Students, faculty,

and staff can also make more effort to become knowledgeable of different identities such as nationality, sex, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, religion, race, ethnicity, social class, and any other areas where students need support. As these areas are becoming more widely researched, a multitude of statistics and studies are being drawn specifically to educate individuals on topics of identity and self-pride. The data from this study will be used to help provide SJSU Housing Services with a better understanding of students' experiences. The data can also be used as a resource for the campus to address issues regarding identity in relation to on-campus living.

Conclusion

With the understanding of access, interesectionality, and multicultural competence, students, faculty, and staff can create an environment that promotes social justice for all students. Ultimately, students, faculty, and staff would benefit from the results of this study because they would become better informed about the importance of knowledge around access, intersectionality, and multicultural competence in relation to promoting students of color educational success.

Overall, it is vital for student empowerment and motivation that research is continued on the topic of students of color living in the residence halls. Consistent evaluation on what is working well and what can be improved upon is how students who may be struggling, can thrive and those who are already doing well, can continue to prosper.

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Appendix A: Survey

Achieving Higher Academic Performance: Access at the Intersections of Culturally Diverse Populations in Higher Education On-Campus Communities Survey

Achieving Higher Academic Performance: Access at the Intersections of Culturally Diverse Populations in Higher Education On-Campus Communities Survey

A survey administered by Koryn Dillard, graduate student in SJSU's Department of Counselor Education; faculty supervisor - Dolores Mena, Ph.D.

You are invited to participate in a 10-15 minute voluntary survey about the relationship between underrepresented minority college students living on campus and academic success. For the purpose of this survey, "minority students" refers to students who identify as a race other than white. The data collected from this survey will be used as graduate research at San Jose State University. If you agree to participate in this survey, please answer the questions to the best of your ability and with your upmost honesty.

You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the survey will not contain information that will personally identify you, nor will the survey collect your email or IP address. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with San Jose State University representatives. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Results will be used to improve the student experience at San Jose State University.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please contact Koryn Dillard at koryn.dillard@sjsu.edu. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Lewis Aptekar at lewis.aptekar@sjsu.edu, Department of Counselor Education Chair. Questions about research subjects' rights may be presented to Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President of Research at pamela.stacks@sjsu.edu or (408) 924-2479.

Your completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate. Please keep this information for your records and do not write any information that could identify you on the survey."

* Required

1. **You must be 18 years or older to participate in this study. By checking this box, you acknowledge that you are 18 years or older. ***
   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Yes I am 18 years or older.

2. **1. What is your gender**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Male

   ◯ Female

   ◯ Other: ....

64

3. **2. What is your age?**

_____

4. **3. What year in school are you?**
Mark only one oval.

⬭ Freshman

⬭ Sophomore

⬭ Junior

⬭ Senior

⬭ Graduate

5. **4. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify with? (Please select all that apply.)**
Check all that apply.

☐ Black/African American/African/Caribbean

☐ Native American/Alaskan Native

☐ Asian/Pacific American

☐ Latina/Latino/Hispanic American

☐ Native American

☐ White/Caucasian

☐ Other: _____

6. **5. Educational family history**
Mark only one oval.

⬭ I am a first-generation college student

⬭ I am not a first-generation college student

7. **6. What is your SJSU GPA (e.g., 3.10)?**

_____

65

8. **7. Please answer the following addressing your comfortability level on campus. Please rate the following items based on a scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to faculty/staff.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I feel comfortable expressing my thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs to other students.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I do not feel comfortable discussing racial tensions with my classmates.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I do not feel comfortable discussing racial tensions with my instructors.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I feel like I am aware of my own marginalized identities as well as those of my peers.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I feel accepted and comfortable on campus.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I appreciate others whose race/ethnicity are different from my own.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
SJSU is making positive progress with diversity initiatives.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

9. **8. Please rate the following items pertaining to your experiences with education based on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am actively involved on campus (i.e. sororities, clubs, organizations)	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I enjoy attending SJSU	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I feel supported by my family to pursue higher education.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I feel like my friends are a positive influence on me as I pursue my college education.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

66

10. **9. Since attending SJSU have any of the following been a major cause of stress?**

    Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No
Finances	◯	◯
Academics	◯	◯
Job and/or internship	◯	◯
Personal appearance	◯	◯
Personal health	◯	◯
Sleep	◯	◯
Family problems	◯	◯

11. **10. Since attending SJSU have you ever experienced any of the following?**

    Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No	I'm not sure
Homesickness	◯	◯	◯
Relationship difficulties	◯	◯	◯
Roommate difficulties	◯	◯	◯
Sleep difficulties	◯	◯	◯

12. **11. Please mark all of the SJSU resources/services you have utilized in the past year.**

    Check all that apply.

    ☐ Peer Connections

    ☐ Career Center

    ☐ Counseling Services

    ☐ Financial Aid and Scholarship Office

    ☐ MOSAIC Cross-cultural Center

    ☐ Student Health Center

    ☐ Student Involvement

    ☐ Associated Students

    ☐ Academic Advising and Retention Services/The Advising Hub

    ☐ Cesar E. Chavez Community Action Center

    ☐ Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

    ☐ Other: ....

13. **12. What is most valuable to you right now?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ My education

   ◯ My family

   ◯ My work/career

   ◯ My friends

   ◯ Other: ....

14. **13. I live on campus because:**
   Check all that apply.

   ☐ It is convenient.

   ☐ It is required of me.

   ☐ I could not find any other options.

   ☐ I enjoy the community I live in.

15. **14. Your experience living on campus has been:**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Mostly Positive

   ◯ Mostly Negative

   ◯ Neutral

16. **Please explain why:**

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

17. **15. Do you feel like living on campus has affected your academic performance:**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Positively

   ◯ Negatively

   ◯ Neither

18. **Please explain why:**

....

....

....

....

....

19. **16. How would you describe the SJSU campus climate?**

....

....

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....

20. **17. Overall, what do you think mostly contributes to your academic success?**
(i.e. parents, family, friends, campus resources, mentors)

....

....

....

....

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Appendix B: Email Sent to Students

Achieving Higher Academic Performance: Access at the Intersections of Culturally Diverse Populations in Higher Education On-Campus Communities Survey

Dear Residents,

A survey administered by Koryn Dillard, graduate student in SJSU's Department of Counselor Education; faculty supervisor - Dolores Mena, Ph.D.

You are invited to participate in a 10-15 minute voluntary survey about the relationship between underrepresented minority college students living on campus and academic success. For the purpose of this survey, "minority students" refers to students who identify as a race other than white. The data collected from this survey will be used as graduate research at San Jose State University. If you agree to participate in this survey, please answer the questions to the best of your ability and with your upmost honesty.

You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the survey will not contain information that will personally identify you, nor will the survey collect your email or IP address. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with San Jose State University representatives. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Results will be used to improve the student experience at San Jose State University.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please contact Koryn Dillard at koryn.dillard@sjsu.edu. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Lewis Aptekar at lewis.aptekar@sjsu.edu, Department of Counselor Education Chair. Questions about research subjects' rights may be presented to Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President of Research at pamela.stacks@sjsu.edu or (408) 924-2479.

Your completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate. Please keep this information for your records and do not write any information that could identify you on the survey.

Please complete this survey by **Monday, March 14, 2016 at 5:00PM**

Link to survey: http://goo.gl/forms/LVFTeMvR2r

Sincerely,

Koryn Dillard