Latinos' intent to persist in Community College:

A comparison between the experiences of first- and non-first-generation

Latino community college students in San Diego County, California.

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Acknowledgements.

With great pleasure I hereby present the last missing piece of my master's program. More specifically, this thesis can be seen as the concluding work of the program 'Conflicts, Territories and Identities' offered by the Human Geography Department and the Centre for International Conflict Analysis and Management (CICAM) at the Radboud University Nijmegen. I am very proud and relieved to say that I have finally finished this comparative study, in which I have explored the barriers and support systems that first-generation and non-first-generation Latinos experience at the Southwestern Community College in San Diego, California. During the process of this thesis, I have experienced interesting, inspiring and challenging times both related and unrelated to my research. These experiences have made me better, stronger and wiser and I will carry them with me to wherever my future takes me.

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Mitchell Regterschot

Summary.

This master's thesis aims to enhance the literature on student persistence for Latinos in community colleges in the United States. In this qualitative research based on the principles of grounded theory, I have aimed to understand which positive and negative influences both a group of first-generation Latino community college students and a group of non-first-generation Latino community college students experience in relation to their intent to persist at Southwestern Community College, which is located in San Diego, California. In other words, I have holistically examined what motivates and demotivates these Latino community college students to keep going in college. The research question that I answer in this thesis is: *How is the intent to persist in college formed for first-generation Latino community college students, whose parents have dropped out of their bachelor's program or have never been enrolled in college, and how does this differ from non-first-generation Latino community college students?*

This is vital, since the relevance of this question derives from the fact that Latinos in the United States have the lowest percentage of college graduates. Moreover, first-generation Latino students, which are defined as students whose parents do not have a college degree, have an even lower persistence rate than non-first-generation Latino students (Reyes and Nora 2012). Furthermore, as Tovar and Simon (2006) argue, students at a community college generally have the biggest chance of dropping out of all different institutions. At the same time, Cabrera *et al.* (2012) claim that almost 50 percent of the prospective Latin American college students join such a college, which is the highest percentage for all different ethnic groups. For these reasons, this research argues that first-generation Latino community college students have the most room for improvement. Ultimately, this research aims to help achieve the big goal of the Lumina Foundation, which entails that by 2025, 60 percent of the people in the United States need to have a postsecondary certificate or degree.

By reviewing the concourse, which is everything that could be said about a topic, I have created statements about Latino student persistence, which have aided me to conduct eleven semi-structured interviews with non-first-generation Latino students and ten semi-structured interviews with first-generation students from Southwestern Community College. In these interviews, the students were asked about several categories that were said to have an influence on the intent to persist of these students, such as the students' perception of the campus climate, validating experiences with faculty and professors, academic development and external factors, such as the students' financial situation.

Based on the analysis, I have shown that there do not appear to be many noteworthy differences between the group of non-first-generation students and the group of first-generation

students that participated in this study. I concluded that the students from both groups have a really strong desire to succeed in college, because they are surrounded by people that are similar to them. Whether these similarities were found in their ethnicity, views or attitude, the students' intent to persist in college showed to be strengthened. For example, the students argued to have experienced very little discrimination or hostility towards their ethnicity, because Latinos are in the majority on campus. Furthermore, the close intimate setting in the classrooms has helped the students to connect to the professors more, which, in turn, has helped the professors to understand the stories of the students. Due to this, the students from both groups experienced plenty of validating actions from the professors. Furthermore, the students that surrounded themselves with other people that value education, whether these were parents, friends or (high school) staff also influenced the students' intent to persist. The only difference between first-generation students and non-first-generation students is that the former have a strong desire to get a college degree, because they have more often experienced financial worries. A college degree is thought to change this for the better. Lastly, students from both groups that were engaged in activities at the institution and reached out to counselors when necessary, have also generated more close connections with peers and counselors at the college. In fact, this has especially proven useful to strengthen the intent to persist, but also to mitigate other negative influences of the students at this community college.

The students' desire to succeed in college has been influenced in a negative manner by external factors, such as the students' financial situation. In fact, this has been the only telling difference between the group of first-generation students and non-first-generation Latino community college students. First-generation Latino students generally argued to have less time available to study or be involved in college than non-first-generation Latino students, because of their responsibilities outside of college, such as work, money and family. Though, the results showed that some non-first-generation students, who were also struggling financially, had just as little time available as most of the first-generation students. This thesis thus concludes that more meaningful results can be found in relation to student persistence, when the groups aren't differentiated by whether or not the students' parent have a postsecondary degree, but when they are differentiated by the social statuses and financial capabilities of the students.

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1: Introduction.

The Latino population within the United States has seen a significant growth over the last couple of decades. In 2014, the Pew Research Center estimated that more than 55 million people in the United States have ancestral ties to Latin America. This is almost twenty million more than in the year 2000 and 45 million more than in the year 1970. This means that, nowadays, the Latino population makes up for almost twenty percent of the United States' entire population.[1]

Though, Latinos in the United States have historically lived under difficult circumstances, such as poverty and discrimination (Rubio-Marin 2000). Today, many Latinos still have to endure similar conditions. According to a census by Pew in 2014, one in four Latino in the United States still lives below the poverty line, of which more than five million are children. Furthermore, one third of the Latinos in the United States do not have health insurance and, lastly, Latinos in the United States are still the second most discriminated against ethnic or racial group behind African Americans.[2] According to an earlier census of Pew in 2010, it was discovered that 61 percent of the Latinos living in the United States found that discrimination towards being Hispanic/Latino is a major problem and prevents them from succeeding in the United States.[3]

An additional historical struggle for Latinos in the United States has been their persistence within higher education. This struggle will be at the center of attention in this thesis. Even though the Pew Research Center argues that the Latin American population has gradually become more present in higher education in recent decades, they are still behind on all other minority groups in the United States. They state that although the percentage of Latino high school dropouts dropped from 32 percent in 2000 to around twelve percent in 2014, that twelve percent is still the highest percentage for an ethnic or racial group in the United States. At the same time, they found that Latinos have become the largest minority group on college campuses in the last twenty years. In 2014, they measured that 2.3 million Latinos were enrolled in a college or university. Thus, this means that more and more Latinos are finding their way towards college. Nevertheless, Latinos in the United States still have the highest rate of college dropouts.[4]

Because Latinos have become more noticeable in higher education in the last decade or two, many of the current Latino college students are the first in their family that go to college (Reyes and

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[1] The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that studies social issues, such as Hispanic trends in the United States. The rapid increase in the amount of Latinos in the United States is better portrayed here: http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2015/04/lopez_census_meeting_dept_of_commerce_2014.pdf

[2] For more information about the issues Latinos face in the United States, check: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/19/hispanics-only-group-to-see-its-poverty-rate-decline-and-incomes-rise/

[3] This census may be found through the following link. http://www.pewhispanic.org/2010/10/28/iii-discrimination-deportation-detainment-and-satisfaction/

[4] The college dropout rates can be found here: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/5-facts-about-latinos-and-education/

Nora 2012). These 'first-generation' college students have been the focal point in various academic studies in the last decades. In their review of first-generation college students, Reyes and Nora, perhaps unsurprisingly, concluded that first-generation college students have a higher probability to dropout than non-first-generation college students. According to a study of Choy in 2001, referred to by Reyes and Nora in their review, this is also the case for first-generation Latino college students. Of the first-generation college students that were examined, only 52% were still in college three years later, as opposed to 67% of non-first-generation college students. Although this study took place fifteen years ago and these percentages may have changed throughout these years, the Latino population in the United States still has highest amount of college dropouts, which means that both non-first-generation and first-generation Latino college students still encounter serious barriers that prohibit them from persisting in higher education (Reyes and Nora 2012).

According to Tovar and Simon (2006), the type of institution of higher education that a student is enrolled in also plays a part in a student's probability of persisting in college. They found that students at a community college generally have the biggest chance of dropping out. As opposed to a four-year-university or college, a community college has a workload of two years, it rewards students with an associate degree instead of a bachelor degree after graduating and will make students eligible to transfer to a four-year university or college. At the same time, Cabrera *et al.* (2012) claim that almost 50 percent of the prospective Latin American college students join such a college. They state this is the highest percentage for all different ethnic groups.

In this thesis, I will explore the college experiences of students from the ethnic group with the highest percentage of college dropouts at an institution of higher education with the highest percentage of dropouts. Thus, I aim to understand the college experiences of Latino community college students in the United States. More specifically, I aim to understand and explore the experiences of both first-generation Latino community college students and non-first-generation Latino community college students. This is crucial in order to identify the challenges and support systems both the first-generation and non-first-generation Latino students perceive at a community college, which will help to battle the imbalances that are noticeable in higher education and in the United States in general.

1.2: Research specifications.

More specifically, the aim of this thesis is to explore the differences and similarities in the college experiences of Latino community college students whose parents have never been enrolled in a postsecondary program or have not finished their postsecondary program (first-generation) and Latino community college students who have at least one parent with a postsecondary degree (non-

first-generation). As mentioned, this is crucial to help identify the challenges and support systems of the first-generation and non-first-generation Latino students. First-generation Latino college students are here thus not defined as first-generation immigrants. I will attempt to explore and understand these differences and similarities by conducting in-depth interviews with participants from both groups based on the principles of grounded theory. For these reasons, the question that will be central throughout the research is the following:

How is the intent to persist in college formed for first-generation Latino community college students, whose parents have dropped out of their bachelor's program or have never been enrolled in college, and how does this differ from non-first-generation Latino community college students?

Furthermore, this research is focused on first-generation and non-first-generation Latino students from the Southwestern Community College in Chula Vista, which is located in San Diego County and has a good representation of Latinos. Since the nature of the research is explorative and holistic, it is not common to postulate any expectations. Therefore, it is difficult to form sub questions that entail categories that are said to influence a student's intent to persist in college. The theoretical framework in chapter three will, however, elaborate on the concepts and theories that this research is built on. The following four sub questions, however, cover the main research question as well:

Sub question 1
What barriers to college success do first-generation Latino students from the Southwestern Community College experience?

Sub question 2
What barriers to college success do non-first-generation Latino students from the Southwestern Community College experience?

Sub question 3
What motivators to persist in college do first-generation Latino students from the Southwestern Community College experience?

Sub question 4
What motivators to persist in college do non-first-generation Latino students from the Southwestern Community College experience?

In the review of the literature in chapter three, positive and negative influences, such as the student's perception of the level of diversity on campus, validating experiences from faculty and peers, family support, work responsibilities, financial need, cognitive development and other interactions in the social and academic environment are discussed. Furthermore, I have decided to analyze and interpret the semi-structured interviews with non-first-generation Latino community college students and the semi-structured interviews with first-generation Latino community college students according to the principles of grounded theory. However, instead of a list of question, I had a set of statements. In this research, the participants were asked to rank specific statements about the topic of student persistence in relation to each other in a table to help me guide the interview. Each statement addresses a different aspect of the topic and together these form the concourse. This will be discussed more in chapter four, but it is important to keep this in mind while going through the following paragraphs regarding the societal and scientific relevance of this research.

1.3: Societal Relevance.

According to Reyes and Nora (2012), the large amount of research on student persistence in recent decades has already changed a lot for Latino students. This is in line with the findings shown above that held that in the last fifteen years the Latino population has seen a huge increase in the amount of college goers (Pew Research Center 2015). Reyes and Nora expect that Latino students and others that have traditionally not done so well in college, will even become more and more successful in the next decade. However, in order for this to actually happen, it is important that more awareness is created for struggling students and more research is done about the college experiences of Latino students in the United States. Once these people will become more successful in their academic life, they will at the same time have a bigger chance of becoming more successful in their societal life as well. Sommers (2007) states that due to the international economic competition every year more highly trained individuals are needed in the United States. He stated that, in 2007, six in ten jobs demand postsecondary education. Furthermore, he stated that people who will graduate from college will generally obtain better jobs and will generally earn more money than people who only have a high school diploma. This means that helping Latinos persist in college could theoretically also help to reduce the large amount of poverty within this population group.

Ultimately, this research could help achieve what the Lumina Foundation has called 'the big goal' which entails that by 2025, 60 percent of the people in the United States should possess a postsecondary certificate or degree.[5] For this reason, it is especially important that more awareness is created and more research is done for Latino college students, whose parents have never been

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[5] More information about the Lumina Foundation for Education and their 'big goal' can be found here: http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_stronger_nation.pdf

enrolled in college or have not graduated from college, as they have been significantly growing in numbers and are shown to have the highest dropout rate (Reyes and Nora 2012). My research aims to help these first-generation Latino college students in the county of San Diego, California. More specifically, it aims to help first-generation, but also non-first-generation Latino students at a community college called Southwestern Community College, which is located close to the border with Mexico. As mentioned, a community college is often the point of entry into higher education for a Latino in the United States (Cabrera et al 2012) and community colleges have lower attainment rates than four-year universities (Tovar and Simon 2006). For these reasons, the biggest improvements could be made at a community college.

One final thing this study is good for is that the chosen interview method, which resolved around the ranking of statements, may have created more knowledge and awareness amongst the research participants themselves. The sorting has namely forced people to rank statements about the topic in relation to each other, which should make them truly think about their perception on the topic. According to Jedeloo and Van Staa (2009), such thorough engagement with the statements could result in a better understanding of the topic for the participants themselves. For this reason, this study might help the participants to better understand their barriers and support systems, which may encourage them to battle the former and strengthen the latter. Hopefully, this study has strengthened at least one participant's determination to get a college degree. The sorting activity and the creation of the statements will be discussed more in chapter four: Methodology, Methods and Techniques and in appendix I.

1.4: Scientific Relevance.

Tinto (1975) is seen as the founding father for theorists in the field of higher education. According to him, college is a longitudinal process of interactions that takes place between individual students and the academic and social systems present at the college. The author states that a student with a low academic and a low social integration will be more likely to drop out of college (Tinto 1975). Not long after his work, many others followed with a theory of their own, such as Bean's (1990) *Longitudinal Student Attrition Model*, Rendon's (2002) *Validation Theory*, Astin's (1984) *Development Theory of Student Involvement.* All of these theories had as its aim to explain why people leave college before graduating. In 2000, Braxton and Lien correctly noted that there were hundreds of studies and partial theories that focus on particular aspects of student persistence. Though, he also mentioned that all of these studies and theories do contribute to our understanding of the complex persistence puzzle. This research aims to contribute to this puzzle of student persistence as well. More specifically, this inductive research aims to enhance the existing literature on Latino student persistence by exploring

the underlying processes in the experiences of first-generation and non-first-generation Latino community college students in the United States.

Nora and Crisp (2012) argued that more cultural sensitive research on student persistence is needed in order to truly capture an understanding of this puzzle. They state that Tinto's theoretical frameworks on the topic of student persistence relied too much on ethnocentric definitions and conceptualizations, while other research had already shown that students with different backgrounds do not all experience college in the same way. For this reason, the authors called for the inclusions of environmental factors, such as the level of diversity on campus, financial need, family responsibility and validating experiences from faculty and peers when doing research on Latinos in college in the United States. In this work, internal and external environmental factors were thus included. According to Nora and Crisp (2012), quantitative studies, who have aimed to identify these characteristics and experiences of Latino students, have already found possible correlations between various characteristics, experiences and behaviors during college and student persistence until graduation, such as the abovementioned environmental factors.

Likewise, Reyes and Nora (2012), who argued that research on first-generation Latino students is still in its baby shoes compared to research on non-first-generation Latino students, have argued that quantitative research has demonstrated that first-generation college students are less likely to still be in college three years later than non-first-generation students. According to the authors, quantitative research has shown that first-generation students more often tend to have lower college aspirations, to come from lower-income households, to be older, to have dependent children, to have tiring jobs besides college and to be women. Due to these restrictions and responsibilities, the authors argue that first-generation students are more likely to leave college prematurely (Reyes and Nora 2012). Although scholars are thus beginning to take into account such environmental factors, more research is needed. For example, Nora and Crisp (2012) demand more thorough and holistic qualitative studies in order to provide the literature on Latino student persistence with a richer description. The authors argue that *"more current and more apposite statistical techniques and qualitative procedures are required to truly ascertain the underlying processes represented in Latino student behavior* (Nora and Crisp 2012, 20).

For this reason, this type of inductive and explorative research is perfect to enhance the current concepts and theories in the literature. The in-depth interviews in this research will help to identify and better describe the important characteristics and experiences of first-generation and non-first-generation Latino students. As Nora and Crisp (2012) stated, it remains important to further define the characteristics and experiences of Latinos in higher education in order to better understand why the dropout rate is so high for Latinos. Furthermore, they state that a better understanding is needed of the role that various forms and sources of support play for Latino

students. According to the authors, support from family and faculty has indeed been found to positively affect Latino students, but more descriptive research is needed to aid institutions in their quest to keep more students enrolled. For this reason, the positive experiences of the Latino students in San Diego County should enhance the literature about Latino student persistence as well. In other words, it remains important to further examine which of the characteristics of the Latino students helps them succeed in higher education and which of these make it more challenging.

Additionally, most research on student persistence has focused on students enrolled in a four-year college or university. Supported by Reyes and Nora (2012), Nora and Crisp (2012) and Tovar (2013), more should be done for students at community colleges. It is odd that students at community colleges haven't been studied more, since community colleges generally have lower attainment rates than four-year colleges or universities (Tovar and Simon 2006). Bean and Metzner (1985) were, however, the first authors to do so. They already argued that previous theoretical frameworks that focused on four-year universities, such as Tinto's Student Integration Model, didn't fit students from community colleges, because community college students do not have the same amount of opportunities to create positive interactions on the college campus. This is based on the fact that community college students do not live on the campus, are often enrolled part-time and often have other responsibilities outside of college. Because the environment in community colleges is different from four-year universities or colleges, several authors claim that more research is needed in order to assess the community college environment better (Nora and Crisp 2012; Tovar 2013; Reyes and Nora 2012). Therefore, this research aims to explore the experiences of Latino students at a community college in San Diego County in order to be able to enhance the concepts to better represent the environment of a community college as well.

1.5: Structure

In the next chapter of this thesis, the context of this research will be discussed. I find it important to provide more information about the historical conditions of Latinos in the United States, the system of education in the United States and the demographics of San Diego County, California before diving into the existing theories and literature on student persistence in college in chapter three. In this theoretical framework, I will first define student persistence. Afterwards, I will describe the relevant theories concerning student persistence in higher education. I will show that there has been a recent shift in thought towards more cultural sensitive theories and concepts. As mentioned, Nora and Crisp (2012) strongly propose that scholars, who want to do research on the college persistence of Latino students in the United States, should not only incorporate themes, such as the students' academic development and their academic and social interactions on campus in their theoretical framework,

but also other themes, such as the students' perception of the level of hostility on campus, validating experiences from faculty and peers, environmental pull factors and other external factors. Where possible, I have included literature about students in community colleges. This chapter ends with a paragraph specifically devoted to first-generation Latino students in the United States.

In chapter four, I will show why I have chosen to use grounded theory and why I have used a set of statements instead of a list of questions to help me conduct my semi-structured in-depth interviews. Furthermore, I will describe how I have created the statements that have been used for the interviews and how the participants have sorted them. Lastly, I will discuss several limitations I have encountered with this research. These limitations are general limitations of qualitative research that can be summarized as limitations due to human error and external validity.

In chapter five, the results of the analysis have been put to paper. This analysis has been done with the use of Atlas.ti. In this chapter, I will first argue that the overall argument in this chapter entails that students, who have surrounded themselves with others that see the necessity of a college degree, have a strong desire to persist in college and show this in their actions. Whether these people were their parents, friends or (high school) staff, the students' intent to persist is positively influenced. The only difference between first-generation students and non-first-generation students is that the former have a strong desire to get a college degree, because they have more often experienced financial worries and a college degree is thought to change this for the better.

In regards to the experiences on campus, the students at the community college mentioned they weren't able to form meaningful connections with peers in the classroom, because they see each other so little. Though, through social activities, which were available at Southwestern, the students still managed to create such connections with others, which helped them persist significantly. Furthermore, the Latino students from both groups experienced very little discrimination on campus due to being part of the majority and due to that they were able to connect to the professors at their community college, because of the close intimate setting in the classrooms. In turn, professors were able to understand the stories of the students, which resulted in many validating experiences. Nevertheless, the intent to persist is indeed negatively influenced by out-of-college responsibilities, such as the students' financial situation. This made that they often had troubles prioritizing college over work or family, even though they realize college will be more beneficial in the long run. In the final chapter, I will argue that more meaningful results can be found in relation to student persistence, when the students' social statuses are compared to each other instead of examining the role of the level of education the students' parents have achieved.

2: The Context.

In this chapter, I will describe the context of this research. First, I will give a short overview of important historical events that occurred in relation to Latinos in the United States in order to show the harsh conditions Latinos have had endure over the years. Next, the system of education in the United States is elaborated upon. Finally, I will discuss the demographics of San Diego County to show in which neighborhood the community college is situated.

2.1: A History of Latinos in the United States.

The relationship between the United States and Latin American immigrants is one that dates back all the way to the nineteenth century. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War in 1848, the United States was given land from Mexico that is now known as Arizona, New Mexico, California, Nevada and Utah. This 'Mexican Cession' increased the size of the United States by 25 percent. However, due to this expansion, the United States also added the residents in these areas, who were Mexican nationals, to their ranks.[6]

Throughout the rest of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, immigrants from Mexico were given no restrictions. Mexicans were free to move across the border during this time, because the United States found that Mexican labor significantly aided the United States' economy. The economic crisis of 1929, however, brought a quick end to the free and unhindered passage of Mexican migrants. An anti-immigration sentiment rose, because United States citizens were desperate to find jobs themselves during this time. In the following ten years more than 400,000 Mexican citizens were forced back across the border and racial immigration quotas were implemented to regulate the immigration to the United States (Rubio-Marin 2000).

Yet, with the labor shortages that the Second World War had created, the United States began to accept and encourage seasonal labor from Mexico. This was called the 'Bracero program', which was agreed upon with the government of Mexico. Bracero in English means 'arms' or 'manual laborer' (Mandeel 2014). This program meant that millions of Mexicans were given temporary contracts to work the land in the United States in exchange for housing and a minimum wage. From 1942 until 1964, the year the Bracero program ended, over two million people from Mexico had temporarily migrated north of the border to work primarily in agriculture (Mandeel 2014). At the same time, however, many Mexican workers who were not able to obtain passage to the United States through the Bracero program and workers from other Latin-American countries entered the United States illegally. According to Mandeel, the number of undocumented workers who entered

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[6] More information can be found here: https://courses.lumenlearning.com/ushistory1os2xmaster/chapter/the-mexican-american-war-1846-1848/

the United States during the time of the Bracero program was equal to or even surpassed the number of braceros. Braceros, however, had to live under merciless conditions. During the two decades that the program was active, laborers were marginalized and discriminated by the US government and the United States citizens. In Texas, for example, Mexican laborers were discriminated against to such an extent that the Mexican government demanded to stop using their citizens to work for them in the fields of Texas (Mandeel 2014).

In 1965, a new immigration law passed. The United States Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Services Act, which removed the racial immigration quotas from the previous immigration law. It is only since this moment that the United States has become a melting pot of ethnicities and nationalities (Rubio-Marin 2000). Many Latin Americans decided to travel to the United States trying to find a better life. It didn't take long before Mexico surpassed Germany as the number one country regarding the amount of emigrants in the United States (Hirschman 2006).

However, as the turn of the 21st century approached, the amount of unauthorized Latin American migrants kept growing significantly. This created a new 'restrictionist spirit' in the public opinion in the United States, which is based on the idea that immigrants and ethnic minorities pose a threat to the economy, culture and national security (Phillips 2010). This idea entails that ethnic minorities are thought to be more present in criminality and are thought to take jobs from the 'white' Americans. For this reason, a new law was passed that again made it harder for immigrants to be granted a legal status (Rubio-Marin 2000).

2.2: Understanding the System of Education in the United States.

Nowadays, more than 55 million people in the United States have their origins in Latin America. Many of these people still experience the consequences of the oppression of the previous centuries. As mentioned, Pew measured that 25 percent of the Latinos in the United States live below the poverty line and over 30 percent of the Hispanics do not have health insurance. Also, Latinos are still the second most discriminated against ethnic or racial group in the United States behind African-Americans and earning a degree or certificate in higher education has always been and still is a serious challenge for Latinos in the United States as well. As mentioned, Pew found that Latinos still have the highest percentage of college dropouts.[7]

In the United States, education is primarily the responsibility of the state and of local government, instead of the federal government. In the US, every state has its own department of education and its own laws that regulate finance, curriculum, the hiring of school personnel and the

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[7] For more information about the issues Latinos face in the United States, check:
http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/19/hispanics-only-group-to-see-its-poverty-rate-decline-and-incomes-rise/; http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/5-facts-about-latinos-and-education/

number of compulsory years of education.[8] For example, according to the International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) at the University of Minnesota, less than five percent of the funding for public education in the state of Minnesota comes from the Federal government. This means that the other 95 percent is locally or state funded.[9] In other words, every state in the US has the power to set its own requirements for their students, but at the same time every state is also responsible for their own funding of education.

Furthermore, in most states, the public education system is further divided into local school districts. These school districts are managed by a school board, which represent the local community. A school board in a local district is responsible for coordinating the education policies, but they also have the responsibility to keep the community happy with the education provided. If this is not the case, the school board has the power to change the education and establish new programs and curricula. According to the ISSS, public schools often heavily rely on local property taxes and will therefore often reflect the educational values and financial capabilities of the communities in which they are located. For this reason, there are big differences among schools regarding courses and subjects. It is the location that is often the most important.[10]

Like in many other countries the educational system is divided into three levels: elementary education, secondary education and higher education. In the United States, the term 'K-12' is often used to describe all elementary and secondary education. 'K' stands for kindergarten and '12' stands for the amount of grades children have to go through to graduate from their secondary education. Local communities may, however, again differ in the way these years are shaped. The most common pattern of education, however, is one year of kindergarten, five years of elementary school, three years of middle school (junior high) and four years of high school (senior high).[11]

A student's Grade Point Average (GPA) plays a big part in the opportunities he or she will be given in higher education. This grading system goes as follows: each course is given a certain number of 'credits', depending on the content. In high school most courses have the same amount of credits, but this is not the same in higher education. GPA follows a grading scale of A, B, C, D and F and each grade is assigned a number of grade points. An A grade receives four points, a B receives three points, a C receives two points and a D receives 1 point. Furthermore an F equals zero points. This means that one's GPA is the average of all grade point values of credit courses that someone has

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[8] The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment Office of Educational Research and Improvement U.S. Department of Education and their report on the educational system in the United States: http://www2.ed.gov/PDFDocs/UScasestudy.pdf

[9] Guide to the Education System in the United States. Written by Antonella Corsi-Bunker at the International Student & Scholar Services for the University of Minnesota: https://isss.umn.edu/publications/USEducation/2.pdf

[10] ibidem.

[11] Ibidem.

earned.[12] According to a survey done by NACAC in 2011, a student's GPA is one of the major things that schools look at when reviewing applications for admission.[13] Typically a GPA of 3.5 - 4.0, which means an A, A- average, is expected for admission to top colleges. However, as mentioned, the level and form of education might differ substantially from one high school to another. Therefore, a student's GPA is not the only thing that is looked at when considering one's admission to college. According to NASAC, the most important factor that schools look at when reviewing one's admission is the students' participation in college prep courses. College 'prep' or preparatory classes constitute of for example Advanced Placement (AP) classes or Honors classes. In these classes, the workload is intensified for the students to have them get a feel of what higher education is going to be like. Colleges and universities want students to take classes in high school that prepare them to succeed in college even though this might mean that their GPA will go down because of it. For them it is important to see that students are willing to work hard for their grades.[14]

There are different types of institutions of higher education a student could apply for. A student could apply for a state college or university, a private college or university or for a community college. A state college or university is supported and run by the state or the local government. Every state in the United States of America has at least one state university and multiple state colleges. A student can earn a bachelor's degree from both a state college and a state university. Obviously, a private college or university is private. This means that that the state or the local government does not support it financially. This makes that these kinds of schools are often much more expensive for students. Finally, a community college is a two-year college that awards students an associate degree at the end of two successful years. There are two types of associate degrees: one that will ready students to enter the workforce, such as a fireman or nurse certificate, and another that will make students eligible to transfer to a four-year college or university. Students of a community college will often aim to transfer to four-year colleges or university to earn their bachelor's degree. The credits they have earned while attending community college are transferrable, which means that they will be able to finish their bachelor's program within at least two years after transferring.[15]

In the United States, students will often need financial aid to finish their educational program. Financial aid is both available for community college students as well as state college or university students and can covers costs, such as tuition, fees, transportation and books. Financial aid

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[12] Ibidem.

[13] Nacac stands for the National Association for College Admission Counseling and was founded in 1937 and is dedicated to serve students in higher education. Other factors that are important in the admission decision can be found on: http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/articles/Pages/Factors-in-the-Admission-Decision.aspx

[14] ibidem.

[15] The information is retrieved from this website: https://www.studyusa.com/en/a/58/understanding-the-american-education-system

can come from the federal government, the state, the college and a nonprofit or private organization. It can be awarded in the forms of grants, scholarships and education loans. One's eligibility for grants is determined by one's financial need and academic merit. Scholarships can be awarded based on merit and financial need as well, but they can also be based on a student's creativity or athletic ability for example. Grants and scholarships will not have to be paid back. Education loans, however, do need to be repaid with interest. The less income and assets a student or family has, the simpler it should be to apply for financial aid. However, most people may apply for financial aid. Even students with low grades may still be eligible for financial aid.[16]

There are many different forms of grants and scholarships, but one of the biggest foundations in the United States that provides grants to students is the Lumina Foundation of Education. As already mentioned, they have what they call their 'big goal' to help as many students graduate from a college or university. In their words: "*Lumina's overarching goal is to increase the higher education attainment rate of the United States to 60 percent by 2025*".[17] In 2014, Lumina found that the attainment rate in California only just reached 40 percent.[18] This means that there still is a gap to fill in the next nine years for the Lumina Foundation to achieve their goal.

2.3: San Diego County, California.

San Diego has been the first place in California that Europeans have settled in. For this reason, San Diego is known as 'the birthplace of California' (McGrew 1922). Now, with a population of almost 1,4 million, San Diego is the second largest city in California and the eighth largest city in the United States. The city is located in the most southwestern region of California, San Diego County, and directly borders one of the biggest cities in Mexico: Tijuana. This border between San Diego and Tijuana is considered to be the busiest border in the world. There are three different operating land ports of entries, with the San Ysidro to Puerta Mexico as the absolute biggest border crossing in the world. This border crossing has 30 different lanes and saw, according to the statistics of the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunites (COBRO), approximately 65 million individual crossings in the year 2015.[19]

Mostly because of the aforementioned historical and geographical facts, the region is demographically very diverse. According to the SANDAG, the region of San Diego is one of the most

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[16] More information about financial aid in the United States can be found on: https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/
[17] The quote can be found here: http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_stronger_nation.pdf
[18] More information about the lumina foundation can be found on this website: https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/california-brief-2016.pdf
[19] The COBRO serves as a working group for the San Diego Associaion of Governments (SANDAG). Information and statistics about San Diego and the border-related issues can be found on: http://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_1424_17572.pdf

ethnically and culturally diverse places in the nation. In 2016, SANDAG showed that the White population was the largest population group in San Diego with 46.9 percent. The Hispanic population, however, was not very far behind. They were good for 33.4 percent of the total population in the region of San Diego.[20] It is expected that in the near future the Hispanic population will overtake the White population as the majority in San Diego.[21]

As mentioned, Lumina found that the postsecondary attainment rate in California only just reached 40 percent in 2014.[22] In San Diego County, they found this percentage to be slightly higher: 45 percent. When looking at these rates, there is a lot of room for improvement. Moreover, according to the Lumina Foundation, Latinos are by far the least successful in higher education in California. Only 17.5 percent of Hispanic residents in California between the age of 25 and 64 have earned a postsecondary degree or certificate. This is in comparison with 52 percent of the White population, 33 percent of the African-American population, 60 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population and 27 percent of the Native American population.[23]

The universities and colleges in and around San Diego are widespread across the county. One of the most famous universities is the University of California, San Diego or UCSD. This university is state funded and located in the northwestern part in San Diego. Specifically, it is located in La Jolla (*see:* Figure 1). The university scores well on the diversity chart. It has students enrolled from a wide range of ethnicities. However, the Caucasian and Asian population still has a big majority at this university.[24] Another big university is San Diego State University, or SDSU. This college is located in the northeastern part of San Diego and has similarly to UCSD, students from all ethnicities.[25] Other public universities, such as California State University and San Marcos are located in the northern part of San Diego County. The most well known private university is the University of San Diego or USD. This university is located on the top of a hill just outside of downtown San Diego, in Mission Valley (*see:* Figure 1). Education at this university will cost students around 45,000 dollars a year.[26] Much cheaper options are the community colleges in and around San Diego. These community colleges are located in five different school districts. These are: Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community

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[20] This document of SANDAG shows the demographics in San Diego Region. Information about all ethnicities can be found in table 8: http://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_2001_20213.pdf
[21] More information about the predicted future demographics of California can be found here: http://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_1490_11298.pdf
[22] https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/california-brief-2016.pdf
[23] ibidem.
[24] The University of California, San Diego is strongly concerned with the level of diversity on the campus. This document summarizes their campus climate. http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/ucsd-summary.pdf
[25] The San Diego State University was ranked 18th in the nation for campus ethnic diversity in 2012. More information is found here: https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/marcomm/images/diversity_fact_sheet_0812.pdf
[26] More information about this college can be found on this website: https://www.sandiego.edu/admissions/undergraduate/affording-usd/tuition-and-fees.php

College District, Miracosta Community College District, Palomar Community College District, San Diego Community College District and Southwestern Community College District (*see:* Figure 2).

Figure 1: Regions of San Diego County.[27]

Figure 2: Community college districts.[28]
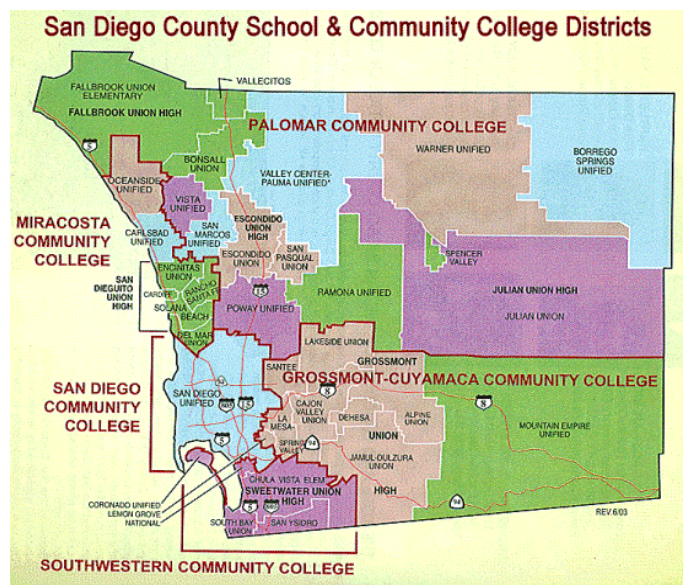
The difference in size among the school districts is evident. For this research, the most important college district is the one that is located closest to the Mexican border: Southwestern Community College District. This district serves as the primary source of college education for the communities of Bonita, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, Nestor, Otay Mesa, Coronado and San Ysidro. The majority of the population in these regions is Hispanic. For example, in Chula Vista, the area where the community college is located, 65 percent of the people are Hispanic.[29]

In concluding words, this chapter has argued that the educational system in the United States puts a lot of pressure on the students to perform at an early age. Students need to have a good GPA and follow preparatory classes in high school in order to be able to enroll in top universities. Furthermore, many Hispanics still experience discrimination and still live in poverty in the United States. Since public schools in the United States often reflect the educational values and financial capabilities of the college district, in which they are located, and since Southwestern Community College has its own district, which is dominated by Latinos, it is interesting to explore how the Latino students at Southwestern value getting a postsecondary degree and how they experience their opportunities in higher education in general.

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[27] The source for the image can be found here: http://www.smusd.org/Page/15900
[28] The image is retrieved from this website: http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/auditor/trb1415/schoolmap.pdf
[29] All facts about demographics in the different regions can be found on this website: http://www.sandag.org/resources/demographics_and_other_data/demographics/fastfacts/chul.htm

3: Theoretical Framework.

In order to understand Latino students in community colleges on their persistence to degree completion, this chapter has to address several areas of the literature that are directly related to the success of these college students. However, while my research focuses on community college students, the theories and models that specifically apply to students in this type of college is limited. Therefore, this review of the literature will also examine the relevant theoretical models and concepts concerning four-year college students and institutions. I will start by discussing the definition of a student's intent to persist. Then, in paragraph two, I will outline the most cited theoretical model on student success: Tinto's (1975, 1993) *Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure*, also known as, Tinto's *Student Integration Model.* Even though I will argue that this model has been useful in understanding why students departure from college, I will also show the limitations of this model by referring to Bean's *Longitudinal Student Attrition Model* (1990) and Nora and Crisp's (2012) ideas on student persistence in this paragraph. I will argue that Tinto's idea of 'integration' is wrongfully based on ethnocentric definitions. Supported by Bean and Nora and Crisp, minority students often had troubles integration into the institution, because of external commitments, such as family responsibilities, they could not separate from. For this reason, I concur with Nora and Crisp (2012) that Tinto's model does not reflect the experiences of minority students. In paragraph three, I will shift the focus further away from the concept of integration towards more cultural sensitive concepts that aim to help measure student success. These concepts are, for example, Hurtado and Carter's (1997) *sense of belonging*, but also other concepts, such as their *campus climate*, Schlossberg's (1989) *mattering*, Rendon's (2002) *validation* and Kuh's (2009) *engagement*. In contrast to the concept of integration, these concepts express that institutions have as much of a role to play in influencing the students' intent to persist as the students themselves. Where possible, existing literature regarding students in community colleges will be added. Finally, in paragraph four, the specific literature regarding first-generation college students will be discussed and compared to non-first-generation students.

3.1: Defining Students' Intent to Persist.

Scholars who have previously aimed to understand why students decide to leave their higher educational program before graduating have unfortunately not been very consistent in their use of terms and their definitions for these terms. Supported by Tovar (2013) and Hagedorn (2012), the terms that are used are often used in different contexts. For example, the terms 'student persistence' and 'student retention' are oftentimes used interchangeably in the literature, while the definitions of these two terms can mean very different things. In addition, the terms 'student

attrition' and 'dropout' aren't perfectly defined either (Hagedorn 2012). The contention surrounding these terms and the definitions that have been chosen for this research will be discussed below.

According to Hagedorn (2012), a 'persister' is defined as someone who stays enrolled in college until his or her program is completed and a 'non-persister' is someone who leaves college without completing it and without having the desire to return. Furthermore, a student's 'intent to persist' is their willingness to persist, or, in other words, their willingness to stay enrolled in college until their program has been completed. The author states that there is little disagreement regarding these definitions. The confusion, however, lays in its assumed correlation with the term 'retention'. According to Hagedorn, retention is often used in the literature to provide an account for the number of students that remain at a school or institution for a specific period of time. Hagedorn, however, argues that the difference between the two terms is that 'retention' is an institutional measure and 'persistence' is a student measure. In other words, "*institutions retain and students persist*" (Hagedorn 2012, p. 85).

Adelman (2006) and Carbrera et al (2012) argue that, for future research, the term 'persistence' is a better fit than 'retention', because the term 'retention' doesn't cover the entire higher education system. Wild and Ebbers (2002), for example, already argued that the definition of student retention in classic theoretical models could not be applied to community colleges. They state that most research on student retention is "*based on traditional-age students in the residential settings of universities, which provides the benchmarks by which universities manage and gauge their success in student retention*" (Wild and Ebbers 2002, 504). According to them, such research does not do enough for community colleges. The definition of retention is institution-specific and, therefore, not generalizable to community colleges.

In addition, Hagedorn (2012) points out that another distinction in measuring student success in higher education is necessary. He states that 'persistence', 'retention' and 'attrition', which is basically the opposite of retention, models do not account for students that return to college after having dropped out before. For this reason, the term 'dropout' is also a problematic one. A dropout may namely enroll again and, in the process, become a non-dropout. Therefore, Tovar (2013) states that it is important for future researchers to recognize the ideas of transferring to other colleges and temporary leaving college in their theoretical models.

While I will discuss some of the many theories concerning students in higher education below, it is important to keep in mind these differences in definitions in the remainder of this theoretical framework. As will become clear, there has already been a slight shift in the literature towards using the term 'student persistence' in the last two decades. Because of recommendations made by scholars such as Hagedorn (2012), Adelman (2006) and Carbrera et al (2012) to use persistence instead of retention when studying the experiences of students and because this

research has been formed around in-depth interviews with individual Latinos, who are still in college, this research has chosen to use the term 'intent to persist' in order to find what influences the Latino community college students in their ongoing quest until degree completion.

## 3.2: Tinto's Student Integration Model.

Spady (1970, 1971) is the first person that attempted to create a sociological and theoretical model with the aim of explaining why so many people leave their institution of higher education without a degree. According to the author, previous research on this matter lacked theory and, for this reason, he called it upon himself to create the first theoretical model to keep students in college. His theory, which is a theory of student retention, states that a student's decision to drop out rests on his or her interaction with the college environment. The author argued that some attributes of students, such as their background characteristics, interests, skills and abilities, as well as other factors, such as grades and institutional commitment, played the most important roles in the students' process of adaptation to the academic and social systems of the college. The author claimed that students were more likely to stay in college when they were more adapted to the normative culture of the institution (Spady 1970. 1971).

Several years later, Tinto (1975) followed with a sociological theory called *The Theory of Individual Student Departure,* also known as Tinto's *Student Integration Model.* Even though Spady (1970) was the first to create such a theoretical model, Tinto is more often seen as the founding father of the theory on student integration, since his work has become the most discussed and cited theory in higher education (Bensimon 2007). Tinto (1975), however, heavily based his theory on Spady's work. Tinto, like Spady, stated that college student departure could be best understood by using Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide. According to this theory, suicide is more likely to happen when a person is poorly integrated into a society. Thus, translating this to the theory of student departure, Tinto (1975) argued that a student is more likely to drop out of college when they lack institutional integration. With his theory, however, Tinto wanted to expand Spady's theory of student integration by clarifying the effect of the interactions that take place between individual students and the academic and social systems within the colleges. He concluded that student retention is a longitudinal process of interaction and that "*it is the interplay between the individual's commitment to the goal of college completion and his commitment to the institution that determines whether or not the individual decides to drop out*" (Tinto 1975, 96).

Tinto revised his theory in 1993 in his book called *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition.* In this revision, the author further clarified that student attrition is a longitudinal process of interactions that takes place between individual students and the academic

and social system within their colleges. His conceptual model consisted of several characteristics: pre-entry attributes, goals/commitments, institutional experiences, integration, goals/commitment and outcome (*see:* Figure 3). According to Tinto, students already develop certain attributes, such as academic and social skills before enrolling in college. He claims that these skills help form students' goals and commitments regarding college and society in a whole. Furthermore, upon entering college, aspects, such as one' grades and intellectual development, and experiences, such as social interactions with other students, faculty and staff are said to affect the level of integration the student has towards to college. In turn, a student's level of integration is said to affects his or her development of goals and commitments. Finally, this will result in either persisting in college or departing from college (Tinto 1993). In other words, as cited by Swail, Redd and Perna (2003), *"the match between student characteristics and institutions shapes students' goal commitments, which in turn influence persistence* (44).

Figure 3: Tinto's Student Integration Model (Source: Tinto 1993, 114).
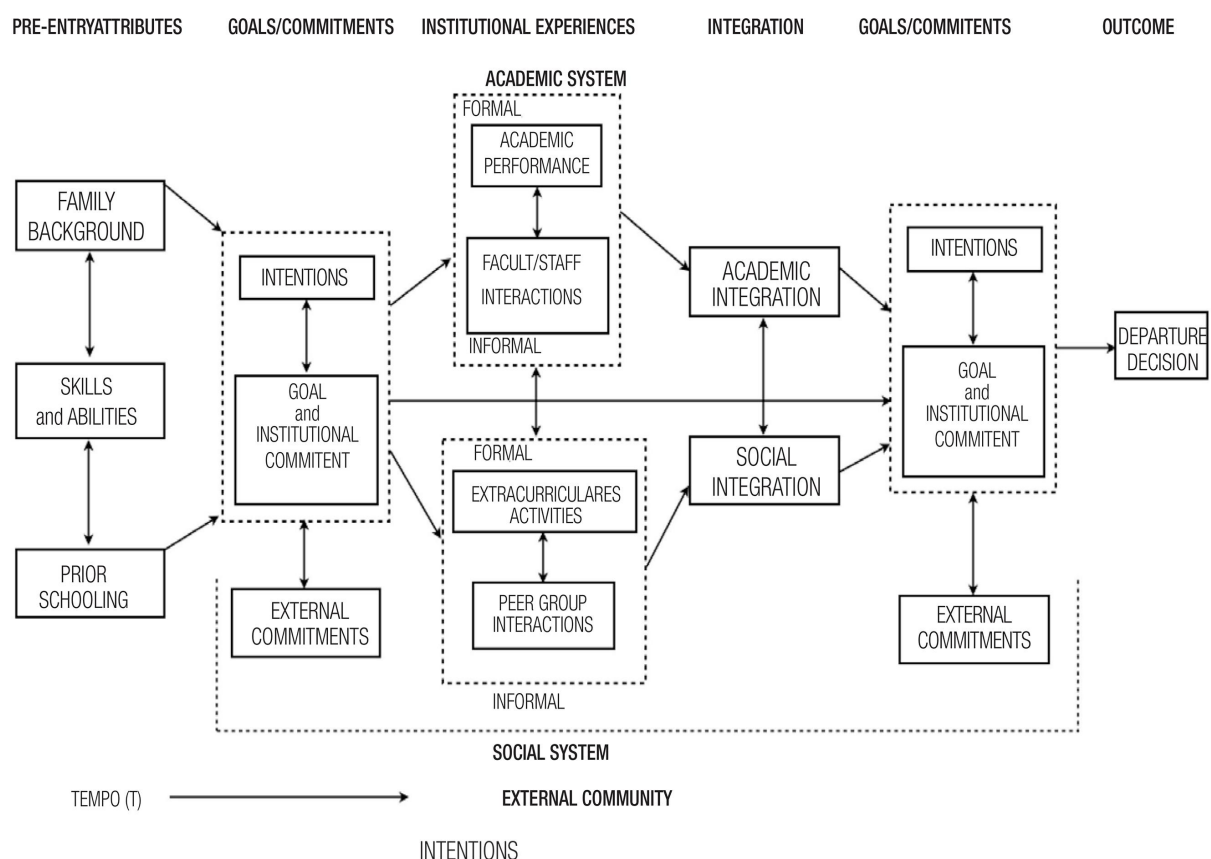
In his revision, Tinto (1993) also aimed to describe the roles external factors played when looking at student departure. For this, he used another source of inspiration: Van Gennep's (1960) study of the rights of passage. According to the social anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, a person must undergo three different stages in order to integrate successfully into a new society. These

stages are: separation, transition and incorporation. The stage of separation means that an individual parts from previous habits and associations, such as different norms or a different society. Then, the person enters a stage of transition. This stage defines the moment an individual begins to interact with their new group. Finally, the stage of incorporation is reached when the individual takes on the beliefs and norms on this new group (Van Gennep 1960).

For this reason, Tinto (1993) believed that students had to undergo a series of changes as well in order to successfully integrate into the academic and social systems of their college or university. By following Van Gennep's stages, Tinto trusted that students should separate from past associations, such as high school, family and local residence, in order to undergo this process effectively. In other words, the author argued that a student would be more likely to drop out when they were not able to make a smooth transition into the norms and values of the college or were generally not ready for the demands of college (Tinto 1993).

3.2.1: Evaluating Tinto's Integration Model.

Tinto's theory has been revised and expanded by numerous other researchers. For example, Bean's (1980) theoretical model is based on Tinto's work. Similar to Tinto, Bean described student attrition as a longitudinal process of interactions between the students and the institution.

In a following quantitative study about nontraditional undergraduate students, such as commuter students and students over the age of 25, Bean, however, argued that environmental pull factors play a crucial role for such students. These factors were, among others, financial need, family and work responsibilities, opportunities to transfer and a student's desire to go to a different college or university. Commuter students, the authors define as students who are not able to spend enough time on their college campus to form meaningful relationships with other people and the institution itself (Bean and Metzner 1985). In 1990, Bean managed to create a *Student Attrition Model* that covered sociological, economic, organizational and psychological factors. The sociological factors contained student background characteristics, academic and social integration of the student with the institution, work and family responsibilities. The most obvious economic factor was student finances. Furthermore, organizational factors included admission, rules and regulations, course scheduling, academic advising and counseling, and financial aid. Finally, psychological factors were, for example, a student's attitude, self-belief, stress and academic intent (Bean 1990).

Similar to Tinto, Bean (1990) asserted that the academic and social integration of students would form their commitment to their institution. According to the author, a student's attitude is formed by the social integration and the organizational variables, which then determines the student's institutional 'fit' and commitment. However, as mentioned, Bean (1990) expanded Tinto's *Student Integration Model* by placing more emphasis on the role of environmental pull factors.

Furthermore, as mentioned by Swail, Redd and Perna (2003), Bean had the understanding of college grades (GPA) as an outcome rather than an element of academic integration. These are biggest differentiating features in Bean's theoretical framework (Bean 1990).

Cabrera, Castenada, Nora and Hengstler (1992), state that both Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean's Longitudinal Model of Student Attrition do not offer a good enough understanding of minority student retention. However, they did state that a combination of the two would account for a more encompassing understanding. They concluded that Bean's theory explained more of the variance in student retention, because of the inclusion of environmental factors, but that Tinto's model was more robust, because of a higher amount of validated hypotheses. According to Braxton and Lien (2000) some of the most important validated hypothesis are: the entry characteristics of students affect the level of initial commitment to the goal of graduation from college; the initial level of commitment to the goal of graduation from college affects the subsequent level of commitment to the goal of college graduation; the greater the level of subsequent commitment to the goal of college graduation, the greater likelihood of student persistence in college (Braxton and Lien 2000). For this reason, it remains important in this research to understand why the first- and non-first-generation Latino students have decided to go to college in the first place and how their initial commitment to their goal of college completion has been formed.

Braxton and Lien (2000), however, also acknowledged that Tinto's model does not sufficiently account for students who are not able to spend enough time on the college campus. They state there is not enough evidence available to support most of Tinto's theory for nontraditional students, such as these commuter students and minority students. The theory fails to bring to light the factors that contribute to the retention of such students. Furthermore, the biggest critique on these theories, and on Tinto's in particular, is the lack of cultural sensitivity. According to Rendon, Jalomo and Nora (2000), Tinto's theory is not suited for minority students, because it demands of these students to separate from their previous associations and renounce their culture and beliefs in order to become integrated and accepted on the college campus. They state that the reality of student persistence is more complex than a theory based on Van Gennep's rites of passage. This is echoed by Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Tierney (1992), who say that ethnic minority students would need to assimilate into the dominant culture in order to be accepted and integrated. Tierney (1992) claimed that Tinto "*has misinterpreted the anthropological notions of ritual, and in doing so he has created a theoretical construct with practical implication that hold potentially harmful consequences for racial and ethnic minorities*" (615). In other words, by integrating in the values and norms of institutions, a student with different norms and values would commit cultural suicide. A student's diverse background, whether ethnic or not, should instead be recognized by the institution (Rendon et al 2000; Hurtado and Carter 1997; Tierney 1992).

In recent years, Tinto (2006) himself has acknowledged the limitations of his theory. He now recognizes that the word 'integration' is indeed problematic. Influenced by Hurtado and Carter (1997), he states that, while past associations do play a part in one's experience in college, separating from them is not necessary to successfully transition into and succeed in college. The author now acknowledges that institutions have as much of a role to play in affecting the students' initial commitment to the goal of college completion as the students themselves (Tinto 2006). In other words, the initial commitment to the goal of college completion isn't strengthened or weakened by the level of social and academic integration. Instead, institutions should create an environment that allows for the students to have positive and reinforcing experiences on campus.

3.3: The Shift Towards Cultural Sensitive Concepts.

In order to be able to move on to a more encompassing, cultural sensitive theoretical framework, other interconnected concepts and theories that have started to get more attention in the academic world in recent years will be discussed in this paragraph. These include Hurtado and Carter's (1997) *sense of belonging* and their notion of the *campus climate*; Kuh's (2009) notion of *engagement*; Rendon's (2002) *validation theory* and the closely connected concept called *mattering*. It is necessary to address these concepts and theories to better understand Nora and Crisp's (2012) call for a better and more cultural sensitive theoretical framework of student success.

3.3.1: Sense of Belonging and Campus Climate.

While criticizing Tinto, Hurtado and Carter (1997) aimed to introduce a concept in the literature on higher education themselves in order to assess *"which forms of social interaction (academic and social) further enhance students' affiliation and identity with their colleges"* (328). They proposed to use the concept 'sense of belonging' in order to include and fully understand minority students in the literature about student persistence in higher education. In their work, the authors defined sense of belonging as a feeling of affinity towards the college community. Furthermore, they stated that a person could feel they belong to multiple places at once (Hurtado and Carter 1997).

Hurtado and Carter (1997) argue that one may feel they belong to a college community, when they feel accepted and recognized as a member of that community. This entails that the nature of the academic and social interactions of college students is thought to be crucial in determining the sense of belonging of the students towards their college community. In other words, positive social interactions with other students and with the institution are said to create a higher sense of belonging for students, while the perception of being unwelcome or being discriminated against is said to do the opposite (Hurtado and Carter 1997). Tinto (2012) himself has echoed this. He recently

stated that the feeling of belonging for students is formed by how the students' interactions with the college are perceived by the students themselves. In addition, while quantitatively researching Latino college students in the United States, Hurtado and Carter (1997) indeed found that the Latino students were sensitive to hostility on campus. They namely stated that Latino students who perceived more hostility on campus had a lower sense of belonging towards the college community. For this reason, the authors also introduced the concept 'campus climate' as a suitable way of researching student persistence (Hurtado and Carter 1997).

In a follow-up study, Hurtado found that diversity has a significant role to play in influencing students' sense of belonging (Hurtado and Guillermo-Wann 2013). The authors found that minority students experience less hostility at more diverse college campuses and at colleges where the minorities themselves are represented in greater numbers. Nevertheless, they do report that students continue to experience a significant amount of discrimination and bias. They stated that African American students experience the most hostility on campus and, according to these African Americans, racial stereotypes are their greatest barriers to academic success. In the case of Latinos, Hurtado and Ruiz Alvarado (2015) found that across 82 campuses in the United States, the percentages of Latinos who have experienced discrimination and bias were also high. For example, the amount of Latino students who experienced verbal comments, exclusion and offensive visual images on campus ranged between 38% and 62,3% (Hurtado and Ruiz Alvarado 2015).

Maestas, Vaquera, and Zehr (2007) also studied the role of diversity in college for minority students. They argued that having interactions with students that are different from them could positively influence their sense of belonging. This is based on Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis that aimed to explain why people still discriminate. This hypothesis entails that while people are anxious towards the unknown and would rather avoid encounters with 'others', contact with the other is the best way to reduce prejudice and discrimination, because then the unknown becomes more known and predictable. However, as Valentine (2008) for example has pointed out, contact with 'the other' does not automatically reduce prejudice and discrimination. Valentine argues that encounters do not naturally produce respect for differences and may even reinforce existing stereotypes when the encounter has been a negative one. Maestas, Vaguera and Zehr (2007), therefore, state that it is crucial for these students to value their experience with diversity and have positive interactions with diverse students in order to create a stronger sense of belonging to the college community. Specifically, the authors discovered that being involved in a fraternity or a sorority, being part of a student organization and living on campus were all found to have influence on a student's sense of belonging (Maestas, Vaguera and Zehr 2007).

Research on the sense of belonging of college students has thus mostly had the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities as its focal point. According to Tovar (2013), however, the relationship

between sense of belonging and student persistence is not as clear and strong as for example Tinto and Hurtado and Carter claim it is. He debates that by referring to Hausmann, Ye, Schofield and Woods' (2009) work. He states that while in this work *"belonging significantly contributed to the total variance in either intentionality to persist or to persistence, there were other factors that most significantly accounted for these outcomes, including encouragement from family and friends, institutional commitment, GPA, goal commitment, and academic development"* (Tovar 2013, 39). For this reason, the author requests more research to clarify the relationship between sense of belonging and student persistence. As it stands, he says, sense of belonging does not cover every aspect of student persistence (Tovar 2013).

3.3.2: Student Engagement.

A different, interconnected theory is the theory of engagement, which has evolved out of Astin's (1984) Development Theory of Student Involvement. Astin stated that involvement in college is the key to success in college. It is measured by the amount of physical and psychological energy a student invests in their academic life. Involvement refers to both formal academic as well as extra-curricular activities and, for example, consists of the amount of hours needed to study, the development of the cognitive skills and the participation in social clubs, as well as the interactions and bonding with faculty, peers and other institutional agents. In other words, he claimed that the quantity and quality of involvement has direct effects on the learning experiences of students.

Engagement is closely related to involvement and, according to Khuong (2014), can be used interchangeably in research on student development and learning. Nevertheless, it slightly differs on an important point. In a journal of College Student Development, Kuh (2009) similarly described engagement as the amount of time and effort students put in their involvement in educational practices that promote their learning and development, such as studying, participating in extra-curricular programs and participating in student clubs. Though, Kuh states that engagement is not only a concept for students. The effort that institutions put in creating the activities that enable students to learn and develop is also a significant portion of the concept. Engagement is thus not only about what activities the students undertake, but also about what activities the institution has created for the students.

In a revision of his model, Tinto (2000) stated that the link between student learning experiences and retention was practically ignored in his Student Integration Model (1993) and in Bean's Longitudinal Student Attrition Model (1990). He stated that his previously mentioned academic and social integration did focus on students' experiences, but not directly on the actual learning behaviors and their interactions with peers and institutional agents both inside and outside of the classroom (Tinto 2000).

Nevertheless, Kuh (2009) found that engagement strengthens students' institutional commitment and is, for this reason, an important predictor of college completion. In other words, a high level of engagement is thought necessary to have a positive effect on students' intent to persist in college. For example, Wolniak, Mayhew and Engberg (2012) reiterate this. In a response to the call for creating learning environments, they argue that perceived gains in cognitive abilities can indeed positively influence persistence. In regard to nontraditional students at a community college, Tovar (2013) notes that the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the University of Texas confirms that there is also a positive correlation for these students. In general, nontraditional students with a higher level of engagement also have a significantly higher GPA (CCSSE 2012).

3.3.3: Validation and Mattering.

Similar to the previously mentioned Hurtado and Carter (1997), Rendon (2002) did not endorse the idea that integration was central to success for nontraditional students as well as for students in community colleges. She argued that for these students, the concept of validation is more important for their success and persistence. According to the author, validation has both an academic and interpersonal dimension. This entails that validating experiences occur when students feel that their interactions with specific people at the institution strengthens their self-belief and academic development. In other words, interconnected with Hurtado and Carter's sense of belonging, validation occurs when students feel accepted and recognized by the faculty and by other people on the campus community through their positive interactions. Furthermore, like sense of belonging, validation places the onus more on the institution, because Rendon (2002) argues that institutional agents should often initiate the interactions. The students shouldn't need to seek for these validating experiences. So, in short, the theory entails that students need to be provided with academic and interpersonal validation, so that they are empowered to believe in their own abilities.

According to Tovar (2013), this concept of validation is closely related to the concept of mattering. With mattering, the founders, Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), meant our subjective perception that we can make a difference to others in our lives on both an interpersonal and a societal level. The interpersonal level refers to specific others in our lives, such as friends and peers, while the societal level refers to communities and institutions, such as a college or a government. Rosenberg and McCullough reasoned that mattering consists of three dimensions: attention, importance and dependence. Attention is the sense that one commands the notice of others, importance is the belief that other people care about what we think and say, as well as the feeling that other people care for what we achieve in life and dependence is the realization that others depend and rely on our actions (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981). Schlossberg (1989), who introduced this concept into the field of higher education, suggested a fourth dimension:

appreciation. Appreciation is achieved when our actions and efforts feel valued and respected by peers and faculty members. Tovar (2013) states that in studies about the validating experiences of student the words 'attention', 'caring' and 'appreciation' are all included and, therefore, validation is closely connected to the concept of mattering.

In relation to students in higher education, Schlossberg (1989) mentioned that those who perceive they do not matter would feel marginalized and disconnected from the college community. In other words, people who perceive they are not listened to, not cared for, not appreciated and generally don't think they will contribute to anything in life will be more likely to feel disconnected from the college community and may, therefore, eventually dropout of college. When others validate our actions and notice our presence, we matter (Schlossberg 1989). Furthermore, Rendon (2002) similarly mentions that students who are not empowered by academic and interpersonal validating experiences are more likely to become less engaged or involved at the college (Rendon 2002). Tovar (2013) echoes this. He found that students' relationship with institutional agents such as counselors and professors can positively affect the students interpersonally and academically. When a counselor or professor openly shows that the students' participation or contribution is valued, students will feel they matter and will feel their actions are validated. For this reason, the author says they will be more inclined to participate at the college and be more engaged in the college (Tovar 2013). Hurtado and Guillermo-Wang (2013) further recognize that validation also mediates the effects of a hostile campus climate on the sense of belonging in college. In other words, they state that validating learning environments may decrease the discrimination that minority students experience in college. Nevertheless, the authors also claim that minority students still experience lower levels of academic and interpersonal validation than white students (Hurtado and Guillermo-Wang 2013).

Yet, while Rendon (2002) created validation as an alternative to integration, Barnett (2010) mentions that validation could also be seen as a precondition for integration for minority students. She mentions: *"students who did not grow up assuming they would go to college could have insufficient ease with, and knowledge about, college environments to become readily integrated without additional assistance"* (196). In other words, institutional agents should reach out to nontraditional students and give these students validating experiences before they have actually gone to college. In addition, Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) similarly considered mattering to be a foundation for social integration. Furthermore, Tovar, Simon and Fujimaki (2008) mention that support from family, friends and the institution during the transitional period from high school to college plays a big factor in enhancing the sense of mattering for minority students as well.

Tovar (2013), however, states that there is not enough research available that supports the claim that these theories can fully explain student persistence. Yet, Tovar mentions that a relationship between validation and students' intent to persist in college is present. Barnett (2010),

who studied students at a community college, for example, noticed that students who perceive higher levels of validation from the faculty are also more likely to have a stronger intent to persist in the community college. Furthermore, validation and mattering have reinforced the psychological dimension that Bean (1990) introduced in the literature about student persistence. For example, DeForge (2008) argued that mattering influences one's psychological well being, especially during young adulthood. The author found that when someone feels they do not matter, they would feel more psychological stress. This is similar to research about the campus climate. For example, a study about Latinos in college by Okamoto (2009) has shown that a strong perception of being discriminated against also correlates with low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, acculturative stress and psychological conflicts. According to DeForge (2008), what is most important for these students is how they cope with the psychological stress. The authors argued that support from all directions, such as family, friends, peers, faculty and sports and religious clubs, could alleviate these stressors.

3.3.4: Nora and Crisp's Model of Student Success.

Nora and Crisp (2012) have heartened the previous concepts and theories that aim to include the experiences of minority students and have argued that recent studies on Hispanic students have indeed begun to consider factors that better reflect the experiences of Hispanics. Nevertheless, firstly, they state that research on minority students has mostly depended on existing databases, which have made it inevitable for scholars to rely on ethnocentric definitions and conceptualizations of variables. Furthermore, the authors state "*that culturally-sensitive models of student success have not been tested extensively, that current measures of student integration and engagement may not be appropriate for minority students, and that familial and other circumstances are often not incorporated in existing models*" (Nora and Crisp 2012, 8). Therefore, they state it remains important that future scholars develop and use better cultural sensitive theoretical framework in order to fully capture and identify the experiences of minority students in college. In order to achieve this, Nora and Crisp argue that scholars need to widen their approach conceptually as well as methodologically.

Ultimately, Nora and Crisp (2012) argue that the cultural sensitive theoretical framework should embody psychological, social, cultural and environmental perspectives. The psychological variables show high resemblance to the psychological factors that Bean (1990) mentioned in his attrition model. According to Nora and Crisp, the non-cognitive variables that have an influence on students' decision to persist in college are coping mechanisms, spirituality, college efficacy, personal efficacy, stereotype threat, resiliency, depressive symptomology, self-esteem and stress.

Furthermore, the social variables involve many of the variables mentioned throughout this chapter as well. These include mentoring experiences, family and community support systems, faculty and institutional support, overall satisfaction with the quality of the college, social

engagement on- and off-campus, sense of belonging and social interactions with peers. The cultural perspectives include the level of acculturation imposed on the students and the cultural competence of the faculty and of peers. In other words, it includes the students' experiences of acceptance, tolerance and diversity on campus (Nora and Crisp 2012).

The environmental perspectives have both an internal and an external side. As mentioned, Nora and Crisp stated that familial and other circumstances are often not included in a theoretical framework. In other words, this means that the external environment is often left out of theoretical frameworks. Factors belonging to this are the student's financial situation, off-campus work and family responsibilities, commuting to college, the student's high school preparation for college and their freedom to choose which college they want to go to (Nora and Crisp 2012). In 2005, Nora, Barlow and Crisp namely concluded that minority students often have to overcome barriers that have been caused by these external circumstances. For example, they found that minority students in high school often lacked crucial information about college, such as how to apply for financial aid, which greatly influenced their success in college. This environmental factor thus pulled Latinos away from successful persistence (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).

Finally, the internal environment is closely connected to the concept of campus climate. This namely consists of, for example, the availability of campus support programs and the students' experiences with discrimination (Nora and Crisp 2012). Nevertheless, as shown in Nora and Crisp's (2009) review of Hispanics in higher education, other obvious factors should not be forgotten either. These are the cognitive factors, such as students' academic performance and academic development, and other factors, such as their institutional commitment and goal determination.

In concluding words, it is argued that those students who perceive to be in a college environment free of hostility, who have few or none environmental pull factors, who perceive to have positive social interactions with diverse peers and who experience supportive and engaging interactions with family, friends, the faculty and other staff that provide the moral, emotional, social and academic support needed to succeed in college, have the greatest probabilities to complete their educational program (Nora and Crisp 2009). However, several authors in recent paragraphs have also shown that the commitment to staying in college and the commitment to getting a college degree prior to actually attending college is still interesting to study (Tinto 2006, Tovar 2013)

3.4: First-generation Latino college students.

According to Reyes and Nora (2012), research that specifically focuses on first-generation college students is still in its baby shoes compared to research on college students in general. As mentioned, the authors state the same can be said for research that has Latinos as its focal point. Nevertheless,

they also state that there have been visible developments in these areas in recent years. More and more scholars have namely started to examine why first-generation Latino college students have the highest percentage of college dropouts. In addition, Reyes and Nora state that most of these scholars have done so using theoretical and conceptual frameworks that aim to understand the student's background and experiences in a holistic manner (Reyes and Nora 2012).

The definition of first-generation college students isn't unambiguous in the literature. In their review, Reyes and Nora (2012) have examined literature on first-generation college students, whose parents did not enroll in college and literature on first-generation college students, whose parents have not graduated from college. As the authors state, it is important to keep in mind these differences in definition when reviewing the literature on first-generation college students, because an inconsistency in definitions could result in very different outcomes. To complete the needed definitions, non-first-generation college students are often defined as students, who have at least one parent with a college degree (Reyes and Nora 2012).

In concluding words, Reyes and Nora (2012) stated that there are indeed differences in the way first- and non-first-generation college students experience college. Firstly, the authors show a significant difference in the pre-college characteristics of first-generation Latinos compared to non-first-generation Latinos by referring to the quantitative works of Choy (2001) and Bui (2005). These authors found that first-generation high school students, whose parents had not graduated from college, generally followed less challenging classes than non-first-generation college students, generally had lower high school GPAs and generally had lower college entrance exams. In addition, first-generation students have been found to have lower education aspiration than non-first-generation students. According to Bui (2005), this is particularly significant, because students will often develop college aspiration in middle school. In other words, they said that parental education influences students' actual probability to enroll in college. According to Choy (2001), only 65 percent of first-generation high school graduates, who aspired to enroll in college, actually entered a college within two years, while 87 percent of the non-first-generation peers managed to do so.

Secondly, Reyes and Nora (2012) argue by referring to the quantitative work of Gibbons and Borders (2010) that first-generation Latino college students generally have a more pessimistic perception of what their college life is going to be in comparison to non-first-generation Latino college students. In other words, this means that first-generation Latino college students generally expect to face more barriers in college than others. In fact, the authors found that first-generation Latino college students expected to perceive more barriers in college than any other ethnic or racial group of students (Gibbons and Borders 2010). More specifically, Gibbons and Borders found that upcoming first-generation Latino college students experienced more difficulties when preparing for college than their non-first-generation counterpart. For example, they found that first-generation

Latino students perceived they were less encouraged and supported in high school to apply for colleges in comparison to non-first-generation Latino students (Gibbons and Borders 2010). Other scholars, such as Boden (2011) and Borrero (2011), also acknowledged the barriers of first-generation students during the college preparatory phase. However, in their qualitative studies, these authors found that support systems, such as family members, friends, and teachers were crucial to helping the students overcome these barriers and to make concrete college plans.

Boden (2011) found that her participants felt proud of being the first person in the family to go to college and generally felt they had a responsibility towards their family as well. The author found that many participants *"expressed a desire to find careers that would facilitate their ability to financially assist their families"* (Boden 2011, 101). Thus, the families of the first-generation Latino college students and the communities they engage play a significant role in their quest to persist in college. Gloria and Castellanos (2012) reiterate this. Similarly, they argued that being the first person in the family to go to college could be perceived as both a struggle and a privilege. Furthermore, they state that first-generation Latino college students can overcome barriers by maintaining family and community connections. They go as far as to state that these students rely on the support and encouragement from their family to be able to persist in college.

In terms of actual college experiences, first-generation college students (here defined as students, whose parents had never been enrolled in college) were more likely to take fewer courses, to study fewer hours for their courses and to have lower grades than continuing-generation college students, according to Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini (2004). In addition, they were found to be less engaged in extra-curricular courses, sports and other non-course-related interactions with peers, such as voluntary work. Correspondingly, first-generation students were less likely to seek advice from mentors and other staff (Pascarella *et al.*). Though, as stated by Gloria and Castellanos (2012), on-campus support networks aid first-generation Latino college students considerably in their persistence battle. The authors found that support networks, such as Latino support programs, for example, helps the students feel validated in their actions. For this reason, Reyes and Nora (2012) argue that advisors and other institutional agents must reach out more to the first-generation Latino college students in order to serve them better.

Additional differences between first-generation and non-first-generation Latino college students is that the former more often tend to come from lower-income households, to be older, to have dependent children, to have tiring jobs besides college and to be women (Reyes and Nora 2012). For these reasons, the authors state, first-generation college students are more likely to live closer to home, which also means that their options to choose between colleges is more limited for them than it is for non-first-generation college students. Furthermore, as Reyes and Nora argue, their financial situation further limits the choices prospective first-generation college students have. Due

to these aforementioned restrictions and responsibilities, the authors argue that community colleges are the most popular destination for first-generation college students. Community colleges namely are more affordable and more convenient (Reyes and Nora 2012).

To conclude this paragraph, Reyes and Nora (2012) argued that first-generation students more often have a weaker commitment to go to college and graduate from college, have more external commitments, put fewer hours into studying and are on campus less often than non-first-generation students. For this reason, this research aims to answer the main research question by exploring how the initial commitment or intent to go to college and get a college degree has been formed for the first-generation Latino community college students and the non-first-generation Latino community college students, how the experiences on campus have strengthened or weakened this commitment or intent for both groups of students and, lastly, how external factors have influenced this commitment for both groups of students. As mentioned throughout this research, many of the current Latino students in college are first-generation. Therefore, Reyes and Nora (2012) rightfully argue it is extremely important that more is done to understand first-generation college students. This is needed in order to close the educational gap that is evident in the United States.

4: Methodology, Methods and Techniques.

This chapter describes the methodology that has been used to provide an answer to the research question: *"how is the intent to persist in college formed for first-generation Latino community college students, whose parents have dropped out of their bachelor's program or have never been enrolled in college, influenced and how does this differ from non-first-generation Latino community college students?"* This qualitative inductive research aided me to explore and understand the most dominant perspectives of a group of first-generation Latino community college students and a group of non-first-generation Latino community college students in San Diego County, California.

With the help of an internship at Border Angels, which is a non-profit, all-voluntary organization in San Diego that focuses on helping Latin American immigrants succeed in the United States, I have been able to come into contact with several universities and colleges in and around the area of San Diego, California. Ultimately, I have been able to conduct two preparatory interviews with former students of Latin American descent, one preparatory focus group discussion with five current first-generation Latino college students, ten in-depth interviews with first-generation Latino community college students and eleven in-depth interviews with non-first-generation community college students. In the rest of this chapter, I will explain the choices I have made regarding the methodology, methods and techniques.

4.1: Approach and Design.

For this research, I have decided to follow the principles of grounded theory, which have been introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. According to Bryman (2012), grounded theory is one of the most frequently used qualitative designs in the human and social sciences. The main difference between grounded theory and other qualitative designs is the emphasis on theory development. This means that grounded theory is positioned in a holistic framework of research methodologies. For this reason, this methodology offers the perfect chance to achieve the goal of this research, which is to understand and explore the differences and similarities in the intent to persist in a community college in a holistic manner for two different groups of Latino students. Moreover, I find it is crucial to preserve the participants' subjective meaning in the analysis of this research.

According to Bryman (2012), grounded theory has had its fair share of criticism over the years. The critics mostly argued that grounded theory is often used as a way of justifying any type of inductive research. In other words, they argued that the principles of grounded theory were not always followed. These principles are: theoretical sampling, coding, theoretical saturation and constant comparison. Theoretical sampling is seen as one of three forms of purposive sampling. The other two forms are generic purposive sampling and snowball sampling. For this research, I have

used both theoretical sampling and snowball sampling. According to Bryman (2012), *"the goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed"* (418). Theoretical sampling, thus, entails that the Latino students, who have become the story of this research, have been strategically selected on theoretical grounds. It was necessary to talk to as many first-generation Latino community college students and non-first-generation Latino community college students to be able to achieve theoretical saturation for both groups of participants. For my convenience, I have also chosen to use snowball sampling to gather enough Latino students. Many of the students that I have spoken to, have indeed directed me to people they were acquainted with, who were also eligible and willing to do an interview with me. Furthermore, I have not used generic purposive sampling as a sample method, since this method is not necessarily conducted with regard to the generation or enhancing of theory (Bryman 2012).

As mentioned, I have been able to conduct eleven interviews with non-first generation Latino students and ten interviews with first-generation Latino students. All of these students were enrolled at the Southwestern Community College and all have given their consent to do the interview with me. During the last couple of interviews, I noticed I was not getting any new information from the Latino students. This means that another one of the principles of grounded theory, the theoretical saturation, had been achieved (Bryman 2012). The other two principles, coding and constant comparison, are related to the analysis of this research and will be further discussed in one of the next paragraphs of this chapter.

In the research plan that I wrote prior to my internship, however, I imagined this thesis would have taken the shape of a Q-study. Though, during the process of writing my thesis, I came to the conclusion that the Q-method could not be used for a comparative study, such as this one. Instead, I decided that grounded theory would be a better fit for achieving the goal of this research. Still, I have chosen to do the sorting activity that is inherent to the Q-methodology. Since I will need to further clarify this decision, it is important to first examine the Q-methodology a bit more.

The Q-methodology is a form of mixed methods research created by the psychologist Stephenson (1935, 1953). It is mostly suited to identify a typology of different perspectives and it is based on the idea of 'finite diversity', which means that a topic only has a certain amount of possible perspectives within the research population (Brown 1980). With his methodology, Stephenson aimed to create the foundation for the systematic analysis of human subjectivity, in which self-referential meaning and interpretation are central. Thus, the methodology aims to understand the diversity of views within a topic of interest. The use of interpretation in the analysis led to the critiques of more conventional psychologists, because, up until then, psychological research was quantitatively dominated, which inherently meant that there was no room for the subjective meaning of

respondents. Therefore, in contrast to conventional psychological research and quantitative research in general, and similar to qualitative research, the Q-methodology, fundamentally opposes positivism and empiricism (Jedeloo and Van Staa 2009).

In short, a Q-study has two fundamental features. Initially, participants are asked to rank order a number of statements that cover the whole topic by personal preference in a ranking table. This is the first fundamental feature. Once filled in, the researcher has to use the second fundamental feature. The researcher namely has to use a by-person factor analysis to analyze the ranking tables. With this quantitative technique, groups of participants with similar ranking tables will be positioned together. The results represent the possible perspectives within the topic of interest. Additionally, it is necessary in a Q-study for the participants to briefly explain the statements they have placed on both ends of the ranking table in order to preserve the subjective meaning of the participants. This has to be interpreted by the researcher and, in turn, embodies the qualitative technique of the methodology (Jedeloo and Van Staa 2009). Furthermore, as stated by Jedeloo and Van Staa, a Q-study is not about the amount of participants, but about the representation of the different viewpoints within a particular group of people. In other words, similar to research based on the principles of grounded theory, the viewpoints need to feel saturated.

The decision to only do the sorting acting activity had to be made, because the by-person factor analysis could not be used for this study. A Q-methodology usually focuses on the diversity of perspectives within one single group of people (Watts and Stenner 2005). The decision to compare two different groups of Latino students has, therefore, contested the traditional use of the Q-methodology. This once again shows that doing research is an iterative process. Thankfully, Watts and Stenner (2005) say that no special criticism should be directed at people who misunderstand the Q-methodology, since misunderstandings with the Q-methodology are exceedingly common. According to these authors, Rogers (1954) is the most well known scholar who separated the two crucial aspects of the Q-methodology. Similarly to me, he did not make use of the by-person factor analysis to find his results, while he did have his respondents sort his statements. Though, in contrast to Rogers (1954), I personally do not claim to use the Q-methodology. I merely claim to use the sorting activity of the Q-methodology as a creative and original way to initiate my in-depth interviews.

According to Shinebourne (2009), the Q-method could indeed be used as an original and creative way to start a qualitative research, because of the similarities with qualitative research. She states that the "*Q-method shares with other qualitative methods the principles of seeking meaning through the exploration of subjective understandings from participants' perspectives, the attempt to identify broad categories and common themes, and a commitment to a collaborative engagements with participants"* (Shinebourne 2009, 95). However, instead of following up a full and completed Q-

study with purposively selected in-depth interviews, like Shinebourne envisioned it, I have decided to use the sorting activity as not much more than a handlebar for in-depth interviews.

This decision has, in fact, been very helpful to me in each of the in-depth interviews. The statements and the ranking of the statements have namely helped me guide the direction of my follow-up questions, which I would have definitely found more difficult to do otherwise. This means that the interviews can be comprehended as semi-structured interviews. Instead of having a list of questions, I had a set of statements. Additionally, Jedeloo and Van Staa (2009) argued that the Q-method is a 'fun' way of doing research, specifically because of the sorting activity. They stated that participants often enjoy the ranking of the statements and will, therefore, be more inclined to talk openly about difficult subjects. I have indeed experienced this with several of the interviewees. Most of the students seemed to like sorting the statements and almost every student was willing to talk me about seemingly sensitive topics. The only downside of my decision to leave the Q-methodology behind is that the systematic nature of the analysis, which, according to Jedeloo and Van Staa (2009), gives a bigger amount of substantiation to the data in comparison to other qualitative research methods that also aim to understand patterns in people's way of thinking, is lost in this research.

To summarize this paragraph, I have decided to follow the principles of grounded theory instead of using the Q-methodology to answer my research question. As argued, grounded theory better suits the goal of this research, because I aim to explore and understand the experiences of both first-generation and non-first-generation Latino community college students. Fortunately, the Q-methodology has made me adhere to same principles as the principles of grounded theory, since 'theoretical sampling' and 'theoretical saturation' are included in both methodologies. The other two principles of grounded theory, coding and constant comparison, are limited to grounded theory, but don't come into play until the analysis. Therefore, these will be discussed in the paragraph specifically dedicated to the analysis of this research. However, first it is important to further discuss the creation of the statements and the set-up of the interviews. Then, in the final paragraph of this chapter, I will outline the limitations I have experienced with this research.

4.2: The Statements.

Before the participants were able to rank the statements, these statements had to be created by extensively researching the concourse on this topic. A concourse consists of everything that is known about the topic. According to Jedeloo and Van Staa (2009), a concourse usually consists of scientific literature and interviews with experts. In other words, the most important thing is to collect as many different aspects of the topic as possible. Before I headed out to San Diego, I had already reviewed the literature about Latino college student persistence, which resulted in 75 different statements. By

removing overlapping statements, this amount was later reduced to 40 (*see:* Appendix I). Furthermore, in San Diego, I have been able to conduct two interviews and one focus group with purposely-selected participants to develop the concourse in relation to the local context. One interview was held with a first-generation Latino male college student and one was held with a non-first-generation Latino male college student. Both of these interviews were conducted in the house of the interviewee. The focus group discussion was conducted at the office of my internship organization, which all of these students were familiar with. The group consisted of five first-generation Latinos, of which three were male and two were female. These interviews were semi-structured and based on the statements I had already derived from the literature. At the beginning of the interviews, I told everyone my name, where I came from, why I wanted to talk to them and that they would all remain completely anonymous throughout the whole process of this research. At the end of each of these preparatory interviews, I asked the students if I missed out on any statements in my literature review.

In order to make the set of statements usable for sorting, the set had to be reduced to a manageable size. According to Brown (1980), between twenty and sixty different statements is usually enough to cover the concourse. Ultimately, the set of statements in my research consisted of 34 statements. These are outlined below in table 1. The preparatory interviews and focus group discussion have helped to reduce the set of statements further. Though, these interviews have mostly helped me to better the consistency of the statements and to better phrase the statements in relation to the context of San Diego, California. The full process of creating these statements is discussed in more detail in appendix I. After these statements were created, a final test has been conducted with a student that I talked to before in one of the preparatory interviews in order to check the validity of the statements. In this test, I asked the student to check the clarity and consistency of these statements. No changes were made because of this.

Nevertheless, according to Watts and Stenner (2005), a 'less than ideal' Q-set might still generate useful data, due to the active engagement with the participants. It is said that the engagement with the participants will create a general overview of relevant perspectives on the topic. In this research, fear for a less than ideal set of statements has become almost non- existent, because of my decision to conduct in-depth interviews with the participants instead of asking them for brief comments on specific statements. At the end of each interview, I have asked each informant whether or not I overlooked any statement that they thought I should have included and they really wanted to talk about. These were few in numbers. Only three students mentioned they missed a statement about their psychological wellbeing.

Table 1: The Final Set of Statements.

Statement	Source	Category
1: My aspiration to get a college degree helps me to keep going in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Non-cognitive
2: The amount of time I have to study to get good grades makes it more difficult to succeed in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Cognitive
3: The academic support my parents give me, helps me succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	Encouragement from family, friends and faculty
4: Conversations with mentors, advisors help me persist in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Validating experiences
5: Peers and faculty members understand my story, which helps me persist in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	Campus climate
6: Extra-curricular activities help me persist in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012).	Internal environment
7: My responsibility towards my family makes it harder to succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	External environment
8: My middle- and high-school preparations for college help me succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	External environment
9: My determination to get a good job after college helps me to persist in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Non-cognitive
10: My intellectual development helps me to persist in college.	(Tinto 1993)	Cognitive
11: I can be myself in college, which helps me persist in college.	(Hurtado and Carter 1997)	Non-cognitive
12: The academic support my siblings give me, helps me succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	Encouragement from family, friends and faculty
13: The level of diversity in college positively influences my stay in college.	(Hurtado and Carter 1997)	Campus climate
14: Commuting to college makes it harder to succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	External environment
15: The difficulty of the courses in college makes it harder for me to keep going.	(Tinto 1993)	Cognitive
16: The academic level of the teachers helps me persist in college.	(Kuh 2009)	Encouragement from family, friends and faculty
17: Out-of-class discussions with peers help me succeed in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Validating experiences
18: The level of hostility I experience on campus makes it	(Hurtado and Carter	Campus climate

more difficult for me to persist in college.	1997)	
19: Participating in student clubs, religious clubs or sports helps me persist in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012; Kuh 2009)	Internal environment
20: The learning environment in college discourages me to persist in college.	(Kuh 2009)	Internal environment
21: My financial situation makes it harder for me to succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	External environment
22: My friendships in college help me persist in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	Encouragement from family, friends and faculty
23: The time college takes to complete makes it more difficult to succeed in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Non-cognitive
24: The emotional support my family gives me, helps me succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	Encouragement from family, friends and faculty
25: Other students in the classroom care for my opinion, which stimulates me to persist in college.	(Schlossberg 1989)	Validating experiences
26: My desire to be enrolled in this specific college keeps me motivated to succeed in this college.	(Nora and Ramirez 2006)	Non-cognitive
27: I feel competent enough to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going.	(Tovar 2013)	Non-cognitive
28: Stereotypes make it harder for me to succeed in college.	(Hurtado and Carter 1997)	Campus climate
29: The difference in the expectation I had of college life and the reality makes it harder for me to succeed in college.	(Tovar 2013)	External environment
30: A college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college.	(Rosenberg and McCullough 1981)	Validating experiences
31: Latino support programs help me succeed in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Internal environment
32: My responsibility towards my work makes it harder to succeed in college.	(Nora and Crisp 2012)	External environment
33: My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college.	(Reyes and Nora 2012)	Campus climate
34: My involvement with the faculty helps me to keep going.	(Kuh 2009)	Internal environment

4.3: The Interviews.

Before more details about the interviews are disclosed, the distribution for the 34 statements needs to be elaborated upon. The participants have been asked to rank-order the statements from 'most disagree' to 'most agree' in a ranking table equal to the one in appendix II). This has of course happened face-to-face, since Kralendonk (2009) argues it is important that the participants take the time to consciously rank the statements and give a substantiated explanation on their choices afterwards. At the start of the interviews, the statements were given to the participants. All statements had a corresponding number ranging from 1 to 34 (*see:* Table 1). The participants were first asked to read through all of the statements carefully to get a first impression of the type and range of statements. During the same time, the informants were asked to roughly sort the cards into three categories: statements he or she agrees with, statements he or she disagrees with and statements about which he or she is still undecided or neutral about.

As a following step, the participants were asked to pick the one statement he or she agrees with the most and write down the corresponding number in the square in the upper right-hand corner of the table. The participants were then asked to pick two other statements he or she agreed with and place them next to the previous one. This continued until the participants had worked their way through the table from right to left and felt they had every statement in the position best suited to them (*see:* Appendix II). Afterwards, the participants were asked to elaborate on their point of view. Normally, the statements at both extreme ends would be asked for a brief clarification. Though, because I decided to conduct in-depth interviews, I always asked for more clarification before moving on to the next statement. Furthermore, unlike a traditional Q-study, I sometimes also felt that I needed to ask the students their view on the statements they did not place in either end of the table in order to gather information rich enough for the analysis. As mentioned, this means that the interviews can be understood as semi-structured interviews.

In hindsight, it wouldn't have been necessary to have the students rank-order the statements in relation to each other. A simple ranking scale with the options 'disagree, neutral or agree' could have been sufficient instead. For example, a *likert scale* could have been used. This is a quantitative research method, which also examines to what extent one agrees with or does not agree with a statement (Brown 2011). Such a method does not demand of the participants to think about the statements in relation to each other. However, according to Jedeloo and Van Staa (2009), sorting the statements in relation to each other does demand of the participants to think about the topic in a significant manner, which, according to them, helps to create more knowledge and awareness amongst the participants about the topic, which in a best-case scenario could result in a change of perspective on the matter. For this reason, this particular ranking activity might have helped the

participants identify their barriers in college and it might have helped encourage them to seek help and do something about it.

Regarding ethical dilemmas, I again told the participants exactly who I was and why I wanted to talk to them prior to conducting the interviews. Since I could imagine that this topic would be difficult for some people to talk about, I needed their full consent to participate in this research. I told the students that I am a student myself, that I would really like to know how they experience college, that they could talk to me freely and that they could end the interview at any time. During the interviews, I indeed noticed the sensitivity of the topic. Several students had to shed some tears, while talking about their demanding circumstances at home. Though, thankfully, everyone was still willing to complete the interview with me. The interviews all took place in a secure room at the Southwestern Community College, a location and room the students were all familiar with. Furthermore, the sessions with the participants have all been recorded and transcribed so that I have been able to interpret the exact words the participants have used. Regarding the sensitive content of some of these words, the participants will remain completely anonymous throughout the rest of this thesis. The names that will be used in chapter five are not the actual names of the students. The two preparatory interviews, the focus group discussion and the 21 ranking interviews generated seventeen hours of audio and 220 pages of interview transcripts.

4.4: The Analysis.

As mentioned, the principles of grounded theory are theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, coding and constant comparison. For this reason, I have used coding for the analysis of the transcripts (Bryman 2012). I have decided to code the interviews with the use of the qualitative data analysis and research software Atlas.ti, since Bryman argues using such a program leads to greater transparency of processes used for analyzing data. All transcripts were uploaded to this program. Of course, I made sure to separate the transcripts of the first-generation students and the non-first generation students at first to be able to efficiently code the transcripts.

Coding in grounded theory consists of three phases: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Bryman 2012). I have made use of all three of these. First, it was necessary to use open coding to label fragments of the interviews with keywords. At first, I figured to label these fragments with the numbers of the corresponding statements. However, I changed this to keywords after coding a couple of interviews, because in the answers to some of the statements similar things were talked about and I wanted to label the fragments efficiently. Also, one or two people talked about an influence that I perhaps didn't quite capture with any of the statements. This was a statement that I had cut out during the reduction of the statements. This statement talked about the psychological

well being of the students. For these reasons, it seemed more appropriate to use keywords.

Afterwards, I moved on to the next phase, which is axial coding. This type of coding requires making connections between the interviews, which means I move from inductive to deductive analysis. In other words, making use of axial coding entails that I have compared all fragments with the same label and checked them for similarities and differences. According to Bryman (2012), these codes have to be constantly revisited in order to validate the coding. After having read the fragments a few times, I became more and more familiar with the content of the interviews. I coded the barriers, support systems and interesting quotes. The final phase of coding is different from the ones before, because no actual coding occurs. However, selective coding has been used to confirm relationships between codes and it has been used to find exceptions to the dominant perspective about the theme. Since I am my own research tool, finding the exceptions again helps to validate the analysis. In other words, the constant comparison between the codes has helped to analyze the coherence between the codes. Ultimately, the codes were regrouped in a logical way before disclosing them in the next chapter.

4.5: The Limitations.

In the previous paragraphs, I have already talked about my actions to increase the internal validity and consistency of this research. I have, for example, shown how I have formed the statements that have been used in the interviews. Though, in this paragraph it remains important to assess some other limitations to qualitative research. The biggest of these limitations generally include issues with the external validity of the research and with human error (Bryman 2012). While I have tried to be reflexive and transparent in every step of this research, these limitations still remain in this research.

The external validity of qualitative research will always continue to be an issue. This means that qualitative research has problems with generalizing results. In other words, this means that, due to the small sample sizes, it remains difficult to foresee what kind of impact such a research will have on the real world. For this research, it indeed remains challenging to assess how much the findings in this research will actually help improve the situation of Latino community college students or prospective Latino community college students in the United States.

Human error is another limitation to qualitative research. In contrast to quantitative researchers, I have not been able to rely on robust statistical analysis to come to my conclusions. Instead, I have been my only research tool throughout this study. This means that my characteristics, bias, health and interview skills could all have had an effect on the outcome of the interviews and on the interpretation of the data. For this reason, it has been crucial to remain reflexive and transparent in every step of this research. Because of this, I have been able to identify the limitations I have

experienced throughout this research and I have been able to explain why these limitations exist.

During the interviews with the Latino students, it was important to stay as objective as possible. Nevertheless, during some interviews, my bias towards, for example, the United States political system may have influenced some people's answers. Although I verbally stayed objective when one girl was talking about her political views that I did not agree with, my non-verbal behavior may have influenced her answers in the rest of the interview. In qualitative research, this limitation will always stay. An in-depth interview will always remain an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. However, in general, I felt that the students, both male and female, were very open with me. Especially when I told the students about my connection to Border Angels, I received many positive responses.

Furthermore, a different limitation to my research has arisen due to my health at the time of the interviews. As mentioned, I have been able to conduct 21 interviews. Eleven interviews were held with non-first-generation Latino community college students and ten were held with first-generation Latino community college students. Of the eleven interviews, six were held with females and five with males. Of the ten interviews with first-generation students, only two interviewees were male. Because of my health issues at the time, I predominantly made use of the more convenient snowball sampling, which did not result in a proportional representation of both females and males in the group of first-generation students. This is unfortunate, since males and females might well experience college differently. For this reason, I have been more careful when discussing the male first-generation Latino community college students in the rest of this thesis. In addition, students that agreed to participate in this study could very well have other viewpoints than students who did not want to be interviewed by me. However, I cannot force the students to participate.

Finally, I noticed during the interviews that some of the Latino students had difficulties with the English language. For most of the students I talked to, English wasn't their first language. For example, not every student was familiar with the words 'hostility' and 'commuting'. One girl thought I meant 'hospitality' instead of 'hostility'. The vastly different meanings of these words made that the statement this word belonged to, was placed on the wrong end of the ranking table. Though, for most of the students I talked to, the English language was no problem at all. Moreover, some Latino students did not even speak Spanish. The sorting activity has made me aware of these issues. If I hadn't had the students rank order the statements, these issues might not have come to light.

5: Results.

In this chapter, I describe the positive and negative influences on the intent to persist in community college of Latino college students, whose parents do not have a college degree and of the Latino college students, who have at least one parent with a college degree. More specifically, this analysis will give us an insight into the experiences of both groups of Latino students at the Southwestern Community College in San Diego and it aims to enhance the existing literature on student persistence.

In summary, this chapter shows that both groups of Latinos at the Southwestern Community College experienced support from a wide range of angles. The results of the interviews and their analysis show that the participants from both groups had a strong motivation to succeed in college. As will be elaborated upon further on in this chapter, most of the students in both groups of Latino students have said that the necessity of a postsecondary degree in the contemporary society is what keeps them going in college the most. Furthermore, the crucial support of family, friends, peers and high school in motivating the students to persist in college has been mentioned many times as well in both groups of Latino students. In addition, the students generally claimed Southwestern Community College to be a peaceful, open and supportive college, which encouraged them to further achieve their academic wishes, although this hasn't always been the students' college of choice. The students argued they had very few issues with the facilities at the college that hindered them from succeeding. These issues are, however, somewhat related to the issues that students brought up about the United States' system of education as a whole. In addition, the first-generation students appeared to experience external barriers, such as financial issues, more often than non-first-generation students.

I have aimed to describe the findings of my research in a logical order. For this reason, I have decided to divide this chapter into four different sections. The first section focuses on the students' strong motivation to be in college. I will discuss how this motivation has been formed. The second section focuses on the students' perceptions of the college environment. Furthermore, section three and four focus on the external pull-factors, such as commuting and out-of-college responsibilities, as well as their perceived issues with the American system of education, such as the limited financial funding. Although, these sections do not have the same exact labels as the categories that were mentioned during the creation of the statements, I will address all of them. In addition, I have chosen to discuss both groups of Latino students at the same time in order to keep this chapter easy to follow. In doing so, the similarities and differences between the two groups have been elaborated upon in a logic way as well. In the next chapter, the conclusion, these findings will be brought together more descriptively to generate an overall answer to the research question.

Furthermore, several appendices provide background information on the presented results. Appendix III shows the characteristics of the 21 participants in this research. As mentioned, eleven of the 21 interviews were held with non-first-generation Latino students at the community college and the other ten were held with first-generation Latino students. The group of non-first-generation students included five males and six females. Most of the students were around 20 or 21 years old. One male had the age of 31. The group of first-generation students was comprised of only two males. The other eight were female. Again, most were around 21 years old. Only one female was slightly older than the others (27). Furthermore, appendix IV shows bar graphs for each of the 34 statements. In these bar graphs, both the answers to the ranking table of the non-first-generation and first-generation students have been put side by side. Each bar graph shows how important each given statement has been for the students' intent to persist in college. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the students had to rank order the statements on a scale from most disagree (-5) to most agree (+5). Therefore, the bar graphs have a similar layout. I have added four bar graphs to this chapter, because I felt it was beneficial to substantiate the overall argument. Finally, in appendix V, parts of the transcripts that are relevant to validate this chapter will be outlined.

5.1: The Value of Going to College.

As will be discussed in this paragraph and throughout this chapter, it appears that valuing education and valuing going to college from an early age plays the most crucial role in positively influencing the intent to persist of the Latino students at the Southwestern Community College. According to both groups of students, the importance of having a degree in a modern day society is enormous. Therefore, the students stated they are extremely motivated to get a college degree so that it not only could help with getting the job they want, but also to help the students to contribute to society in a positive way. In the rest of this paragraph, I will show that there appear to be almost no noticeable differences between the non-first-generation Latino community college students and the first-generation Latino community college students regarding their college aspirations. Furthermore, I will dissect the said aspiration by showing that the encouragement from family, friends and high school staff members during the upbringing of the Latinos from both groups of community college students have all helped to form their strong college aspiration.

5.1.1: Degree Necessity.

Both the non-first-generation Latino students and first-generation Latino students claimed that their ambition to get a college degree played a very important role in keeping them in college (*see*: Figure 4). As mentioned, this aspiration has generally come from the necessity of having a college degree

when you want to succeed in life after college. However, students from both groups argued that a college degree could not only get them a well paid job, it could also aid them in their quest to help other people live a better life (*see also*: Appendix IV, Statement 30).

Figure 4: Degree Aspiration.

Statement 1: My aspiration to get a college degree helps me to keep going in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students ■ Non-first-generation students

For example, the non-first-generation, Vanessa, mentioned the degree necessity. She said: "In the job market of today, if you don't have a college degree, the possibilities of you having a successful life is zero. The jobs you can get without a college degree are, I wouldn't say is not fulfilling, but kind of. You wouldn't be able to sustain yourself economically without a degree" (Appendix V, Interview 1). Others, such as the first-generation Latina, Adriana, mentioned this necessity as well. She stated that a college degree could make you help others. In her own words, she stated: "You're going to have the means to help other people" (Appendix V, Interview 12). Thus, students from both groups of Latino students argued that a college degree will not only be advantageous for creating a stable life for themselves, but also for the people around them.

5.1.2: Encouragement from Family and Friends.
For both the non-first-generation Latino community college students and the first-generation Latino community college students, family has generally played a positive role in affecting their attitude. In the group of non-first-generation students, all but two students mentioned their family encouraged them going to college from an early age. For example, Janet argued: "Well, my mother is an educator. I come from a family of educators; my grandmother was an educator as well. She was the

director of schools in Mexico City. So the importance of education was very installed in my upbringing. School has been my top priority" (Appendix V, Interview 2). Ener acknowledged this. He stated that he wanted to have his own job and be successful like his father, who is a dentist, as well as other family members. He stated that they inspired him to prepare for college early on. He said: "I believe that if you start preparing at a very early age, you will be perfectly set until you start college, then you will be fine" (Appendix V, Interview 8).

Within the group of first-generation Latino students I interviewed, the dominant perspective is slightly different. Though, similar to the non-first-generation students, the importance of having a college degree has been imprinted into their minds at an early age as well. For example, Denisa mentioned: "Since I was in elementary, my dad has always been pushing us to get A's. When we got B's, we were in trouble. Because he has to work two jobs and he has to do all of this extra stuff to try and provide for our family. So that is why I am trying to get a really good job that I am passionate about and that I like for the most part and get paid for it" (Appendix V, Interview 20). Veronica mentioned that her parents saw the value of education as well. She stated that both of her parents had her education before anything else. She said: "They (my parents) know that like through hardships, economics, family, you know whatever it is, education is going to get us through" (Appendix V, Interview 5). Thus, even though their parents haven't finished their postsecondary education, they installed the importance of it on their children, because they seem to have generally had a more difficult time providing for their family and education is thought to change that for the better. Nevertheless, the family of the non-first-generation student, Jose, also struggled financially. For this reason, he understood as well that he needed to get a college degree in order to not experience the same challenging financial experiences as his parents (Appendix V, Interview 17).

Other family members and friends have also had a positive influence on the students from both groups. According to the first-generation student, Pablo, this is because it is crucial to surround yourself with people that support your ambitions. He argued that whether this support comes from family, friends, college professors or peers, it all has a positive affect on your intent to persist until graduation (Appendix V, Interview 11). For example, Alejandro, who is a 31-year-old non-first-generation student that suffers from ADD, argued this as well. He argued that his sister and his two best friends were his main motivators to succeed in college. Although he has dropped out several times in the last ten years due to his disease, the encouragement of his sister and his friends strengthened his motivation to come back each time and try again (Appendix V, Interview 6).

While the dominant perspective from both groups has been that the students have generally experienced encouragement from their family and friends to go to college in a positive manner, there are some exceptions and nuances that need to be addressed. First of all, a couple of non-first-generation Latinas and one first-generation Latina argued that their family didn't always understand

the usefulness of a postsecondary degree for their daughters. For example, Ora argued that all her life, her family did not expect that she would go to college. When asked for a clarification, she said: "(My family are like), oh you're just going to marry some guy and you're going to stay home and have kids" (Appendix V, Interview 13). Thus, her family didn't see her getting a college degree as normal. Although her family has been supportive with her and everything she is passionate about, her aspiration to get a college degree has not been installed by her parents. Instead, she mentioned that she found the importance of a college degree after she graduated high school, because the career she is after requires a college degree. For this reason, her own aspirations have made her want to prove her family wrong (Appendix V, Interview 13).

The non-first-generation Latina, Janet, and the first-generation Latina, Elena have also encountered such demotivating experiences from their families. While Elena's mother argued she didn't need a degree to be successful (Appendix V, Interview 10), Janet's father didn't really feel the need for her to continue her education, because she already could find a job baking pastries. Nevertheless, as mentioned, getting a college degree has been Janet's top priority. According to her, this is because her mother changed her father's mind. She stated: "That is mostly because he has seen the success my mother has had, being in school, so he is like oh, be like your mom" (Appendix V, Interview 2).

Furthermore, the first-generation student, Susana, embodies another exception to the general consensus. Even though her parents, who didn't even graduate elementary school, encouraged her academic endeavors and were very proud that she is in college, church has always been her number one. For this reason, she didn't really believe in the necessity of having a college degree. She said: "There are so many societies, so many charities, so many things you can do outside of school that I don't see why it is necessary to have a college degree" (Appendix V, Interview 21). In other words, her idea of contributing to society doesn't require her to have a degree. Instead, she argued that her activities at her church could help her contribute to society in a similar way. Yet, she does argue that having a college degree could be beneficial for her and her family's future financially.

To conclude, it has appeared to be very important that the students from both groups of Latinos have surrounded themselves with people that supported or shared their ambition to go to college. Even though the parents of the first-generation students haven't graduated themselves, they generally do understand the importance of a college degree as well. They believe that education will help their children live a better life. Furthermore, other people the students look up to, such as other family members and friends, have increased the determination of the students to persist in college as well. Nevertheless, some parents do still seem to represent conservative ideas about Latin American gender roles. Though, as mentioned, these students still have strong aspirations to get a college degree. In the paragraph below, I will discuss this resiliency in more detail.

5.1.3: High school Preparations.

In addition to the encouragement of family and friends, the amount of preparations for college the students from both groups have taken and have been able to take in high school have also influenced the students' opinion on the significance of going to college. The analysis has shown that there have been mixed experiences among the students from both the group of first-generation Latino students and non-first-generation Latino students regarding their preparations in high school for college.

Among the students from both groups, the majority of the students, however, argued that because their high school was angled towards college, they were constantly reminded of the importance of going to college. Vanessa, Bianca, Felix, Elena, Denisa and Ann all had positive experiences. For example, the non-first-generation student, Ann, mentioned she made a lot of trips to colleges and universities with her teachers to see what college was like, which has really pushed her to go to college (Appendix V, Interview 15). For Vanessa, who was enrolled in a private high school, because her mother was a teacher there, this has been the same. She even said that it was a given that the people in that high school would go to college (Appendix V, Interview 1). In addition, the first-generation student, Elena, whose mother didn't support her going to college, mentioned that her high school counselors did. She stated that this support influenced her determination to go to college in a positive way. She said: "My high school was really a college oriented place and they (my counselors) really wanted us to transfer and be successful. (…) That support really helped a lot" (Appendix V, Interview 10). Thus, even though her mother didn't install the value of getting a college degree into her mind, her high school did.

A couple of students mentioned that the lack of information about college in their high school made their transition into college more challenging. For example, Ener stated that he had seen no college representatives during his time in high school. For this reason, he had troubles understanding what he was getting into in his first year. Nevertheless, as mentioned, this student instead argued that his family strongly imprinted the importance of a college degree into his mind at an early age. Therefore, his attitude made his move to college easier (Appendix V, Interview 8).

Furthermore, some students mentioned they didn't yet have the strong determination to get a postsecondary degree in high school, because they didn't see the necessity of it during that time. These students mentioned that once they started to understand what they wanted to do with their life after high school, they started to value a college degree a lot more. For example, the first-generation student, Adriana said: "So, throughout my high school, you know, every time they would talk to us about SDSU or whatever, I never paid attention, because I was like I'm not going to go there" (Appendix V, Interview 12). Instead, she wanted to be a hairstylist. Only recently she found she wanted to do more with her life and in order to do that, she stated a college degree is a necessity. The first-generation student, Victoria mentioned something very similar. She stated that

although the systems were in place at her high school to smoothly transition into college, she wasn't interested in them. Again, it was only after her time in high school that she started to understand the necessity of a college degree. Instead of being dependent on a husband financially, she wanted to be able to live on her own (Appendix V, Interview 19). Additionally, Ora, also didn't know what she wanted to do after college, which caused that she barely graduated from high school. As mentioned, Ora's parents didn't see the necessity of their daughter getting a college degree. Once she figured out what she wanted to do with her life, she also understood the necessity of a college degree (Appendix V, Interview 13). Thus, in contrast to Elena, whose high school preparations made her understand what she wanted to do with her life, these students needed more time to understand the value of going to college and getting a degree.

5.2: An Encouraging Campus.

In this paragraph, I will discuss that Southwestern Community College has shown to be a college with a good inclusive campus and a positive learning environment for most of its students. Almost all of the students that participated in this study, both from the group of non-first-generation Latino students and the group of first-generation Latino students, perceived that the college accepts and appreciates all students from all ages, genders and backgrounds and that the institutional staff genuinely seem to care for the success and well-being of their students, which truly helped them persist. While there are some specified exceptions of negative experiences regarding the learning environment on campus, these are few in numbers. In the rest of this paragraph, I will talk in more detail about how the students from both groups have experienced their life on campus and in the classroom in relation to their intent to persist. In doing so, I will argue that the non-first-generation students and the first-generation Latino students have put their determined attitude into actions as well. By participating in class and by engaging in social activities, the students from both groups were able to generate closer connections to others with similar aspirations and goals.

5.2.1: Inclusion.

According to both the non-first-generation and the first-generation Latino students, discrimination is almost non-existent at Southwestern. In general, the students perceived the college campus to be open for everyone and a good place to freely express themselves as much as they want. Figure 5 shows that the level of hostility on the Southwestern campus has generally not influenced the students' intent to persist in a negative manner. Moreover, as will be discussed in this paragraph, almost all students from both the group of non-first-generation students and the group of first-generation students argued that they had not perceived any hostility towards their gender, ethnicity

or sexual preference on the college campus whatsoever. Furthermore, there have not been any significant differences in the rankings of the statements 11 and 33, which are related to the campus climate and belonging as well (*see:* Appendix IV).

Figure 5: The Campus Climate

Statement 18: The level of hostility I experience on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
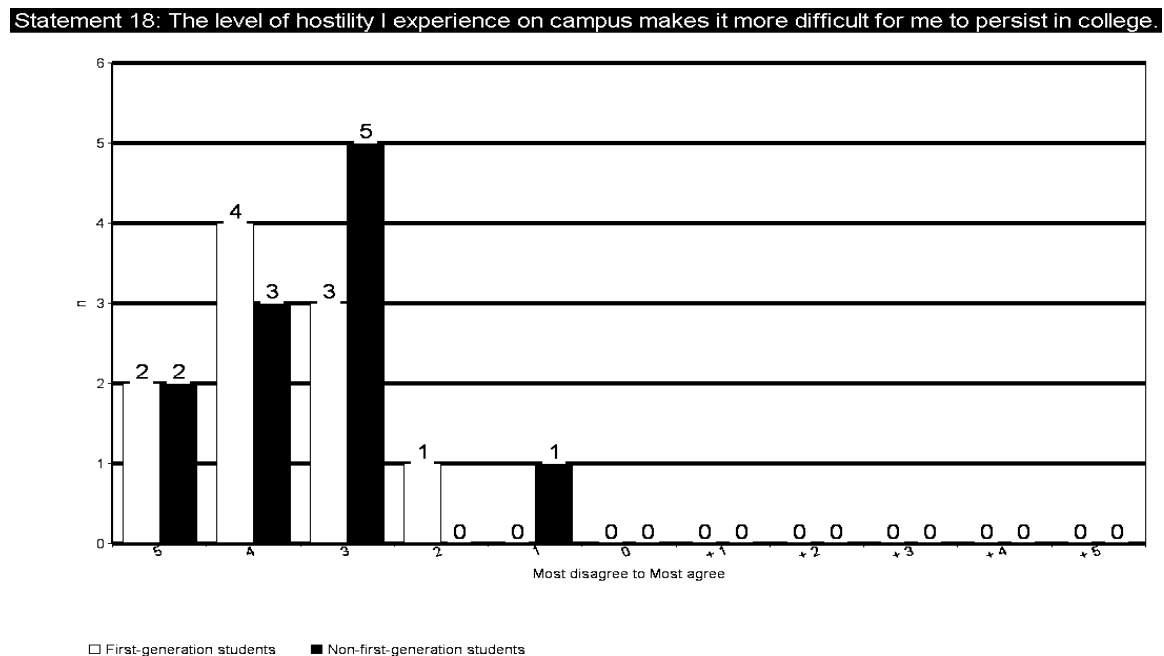
Regarding gender, there have also been similar experiences amid male and female students (*see:* Appendix IV, Statement 33). For example, Dina, a 19-year-old first-generation Latina firmly stated: "The school doesn't have a gender problem. You know, males are not preferred over females" (Appendix V, Interview 18). Veronica, another first-generation Latina echoed this. She argued: "I don't feel that in any of the fields that I am studying there is a glass ceiling for women. I feel like journalism doesn't have one. So I don't really feel like there is gender discrimination" (Appendix V, Interview 19).

According to, for example, Ora, a non-first-generation Latina, this common perception exist, because California is very progressive and the race towards gender equality is going strong (Appendix V, Interview 13). For this reason, gender discrimination has not seemed to be a noteworthy issue at Southwestern. This is perhaps best illustrated by showing the contrast in the experiences of the Latino students in the United States and Mexico. As mentioned by for example the non-first-generation Latina, Vanessa, this accepting nature of the campus is indeed very different from her home country, Mexico. She claimed that the patriarchal culture of Mexico would challenge her from succeeding in college. She stated: "In Mexico it would totally depend on if you are a boy or a girl, but over here, people don't really care if you are a dude, lesbian, boy or girl" (Appendix V, Interview 1).

The non-first-generation Latino, Guti, acknowledged this as well when asked about whether or not he could be himself in college. He stated that people in Mexico are more judgmental than in the United States. For Guti, the differences in his views and the views of the majority in Mexico were the biggest reasons that made him decide to attend college in the United States. "Sometimes you can't fight the majority and you have to migrate", he said (Appendix V, Interview 9).

In turn, the statement related to the influence of the level of diversity on campus on the students' intent to persist at Southwestern has not shown the same clear results as the statement about hostility on campus (*see*: Appendix IV, Statement 13). When looking more thoroughly at the words of the students on the topic of diversity, two dominant perspectives came to light. Firstly, many students generally appeared to feel appreciated and accepted at Southwestern, because the population at the community college is dominated by Hispanics. In the words of the first-generation student, Chris: "Most of the campus here is Hispanic, so Hispanics don't really get a lot of hostility" (Appendix V, Interview 3). In other words, being part of the Hispanic majority at the college, could, perhaps unconsciously, cloud the importance of diversity on the students' intent to persist in college.

Denisa, a 21-year-old first-generation Latina, who dropped out of a four-year university (UCSD) before coming to Southwestern, indeed showed me how much of a difference being part of the majority could make. She stated that the biggest reason she dropped out was that she did not feel like she belonged at that four-year-university, because of the lack of people she could relate to. She stated: "Maybe if there was somebody who was similar to me and (…) I would have had that connection, then I would have felt more comfortable to stay, and I would have felt like I belonged there, but I didn't have that connection with someone. So I just felt alone the whole time I was there" At Southwestern, however, she did feel like she belonged. (Appendix V, Interview 20). Several non-first-generation students also recognized this issue with belonging in places other than Southwestern. For example, Alejandro, a 31-year-old Latino illustrated this nicely with a story about a trip he made to a university in San Francisco:

> "I remember walking in Berkeley, and I saw so, so many Asian people. All of them looking at me and walking towards me. I just felt really weird, like I was a sore thumb there. I was walking and walking and walking and I see a lot of tables rounded up and there were people from a lot of different clubs, you name it, all kinds of clubs were there. And then I saw something I recognized. I saw someone that had a banner at the top of his table with 'Mecha', which is a student movement for Latinos living in South Bay. So, it is a pretty big club. I mean, when you go to any university you will find a Mecha. So, I go there and walk over there expecting to see fellow Latinos, but all of the kids were white kids with

dreadlocks. They didn't have enough members for a Latino club. How ironic is that"

(Appendix V, Interview 6)?

In other words, the lack of similar features in other students made Alejandro feel disconnected from that university. Furthermore, the non-first-generation Latina, Priscilla, mentioned her issues with belonging as well. When asked if I missed any statement that truly helped her persist in college, she similarly stated that the location of the Southwestern Community College was beneficial to her, because of the close proximity to Mexico and the large amount of Hispanics living in this area. She stated: "I know travelling like a half hour north, where I see a ton of white people, it scares the hell out of me, because they all stare and because it's different" (Appendix V, Interview 14).

Though, some students do truly seem to value other ethnicities on the college campus. The most obvious example is Chris, a 21-year-old first-generation Latino. This student agreed with the statement regarding the positive influence of diversity at the college campus the most out of all of the statements. When clarifying his decision, he stated that he found it really important to be able to deal with different cultures in order to provide himself a more global perspective (Appendix V, Interview 3). Furthermore, the non-first-generation Latina, Janet, even signed up for an African American support program instead of a Latino support program, because she found it interesting to learn and understand a different perspective and Veronica, a first-generation Latina, stated that she would still do her best in a class full of African Americans or Caucasian people and that if she wouldn't do her best, the lack of diversity had nothing to do with it (Appendix V, Interview 5).

To conclude, the students from both the group of non-first-generation Latino students and the group of first-generation students generally perceived the campus at the Southwestern Community College as a positive influence on their intent to persist. It can be stated that this is due to the fact that California is progressively minded and Hispanics are heavily represented at this college. In other words, because the students have been able to connect to people similar to them at Southwestern, the amount of discrimination they experienced is low and their feeling of attachment to the campus is strong. Although some students truly seemed to value diversity at Southwestern, other students appeared to struggle in places that had no such representation of Hispanics.

5.2.2: The Learning Environment.

In relation to a question about the learning environment at Southwestern, the non-first-generation Latino students generally mentioned the size of the classes at the college as beneficial for their intellectual development. For example, Janet, a 23-year-old non-first-generation Latina, talked about the importance of the size of the class in supporting the students. She stated that: "With more students (than around 30), you can't focus on the learning or the individual growth of the students as

much as we can at Southwestern" (Appendix V, Interview 2). Others talked about this as well. Bianca, who is a 20-year-old female from Chula Vista that dropped out of San Diego State University before enrolling at Southwestern Community College, argued something similar. She stated that it was impossible for her to participate in classes that were bigger than the ones at Southwestern. At San Diego State, she mentioned there were 500 people in her class, which drove her insane, because she couldn't participate in class (Appendix V, Interview 4).

The respondents, whose parents did not have a college degree, seemed to talk less explicitly about the importance of the class size and more about the positive influences of certain professors. Nevertheless, the general consensus in this group has been similar: the learning environment at the community college encourages the students to learn and succeed. Though, Denisa, the first-generation Latina that dropped out of a four-year-university, mentioned both. When comparing the community college to the four-year university, she argued that the difference is not necessarily the difficulty of the classes, but the way in which the classes are taught. She states: "Here, there are like 30-something students or less, while over there, there are huge classes with like over 100 students and it's like you're just another number to them (the professors)". For this reason, she felt there is a closer connection between the teachers and the students at Southwestern (Appendix V, Interview 20). Thus, similar to the abovementioned non-first-generation students, Denisa felt more appreciated and encouraged at the Southwestern Community College, because of the smaller class sizes. In other words, the more intimate setting of the community college has been ideal for both the non-first-generation students and the first-generation students to participate in class and grow intellectually and academically.

In addition, this more intimate setting is also demonstrated by the idea that the professors, perhaps due to the smaller class sizes, understand their students' background and stories. Furthermore, the lower level of competitiveness at the Southwestern Community College than at a four-year university has also seemed to play a part. According to both non-first-generation and first-generation students, classes at the community college are not competitive, but instead focused on having everyone succeed. As mentioned, Denisa, whom graduated 16th out of 600 at her high school, argued that students at a four-year university are seen more as a number than as a student with his or her own personal background and story. At Southwestern, however, Denisa stated that the teachers and the students show more competence, because everyone understands each other's story. Moreover, she said: "I feel like you can connect more with people here and everyone is pushing each other and everyone wants everyone to succeed" (Appendix V, Interview 20).

Dina, another first-generation student echoed this positive influence. She argued that: "once you come across a really decent professor who is more interested in your life than just your work, it's a really nice experience" (Appendix V, Interview 18). Non-first-generation students also

acknowledged this influence. For example, Ener, a 19-year-old non-first-generation Latino mentioned something similar. He stated that the professors were more respectful than he initially thought they would be. Instead, he experienced the professors to be very understanding and caring. He said: "They do understand that you do have a life and sometimes you have issues and it is not easy to get into school on time" (Appendix V, Interview 8).

Figure 6: The Learning Environment.

Statement 20: The learning environment in college discourages me to persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
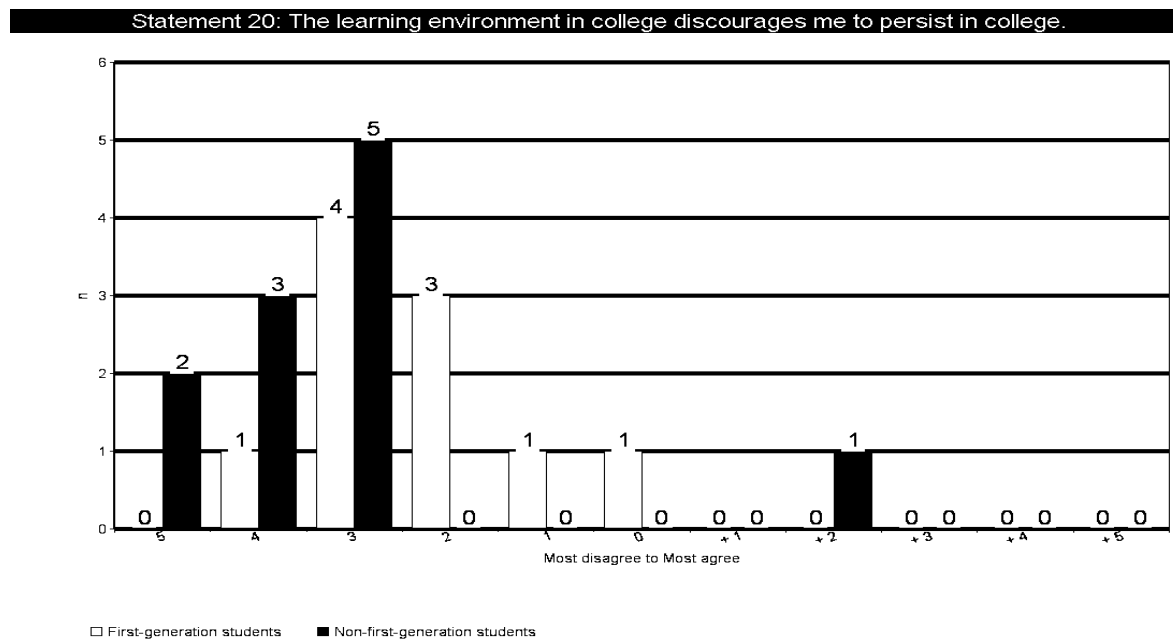
As mentioned by, for example, the 20-year-old non-first-generation Latina, Ora, these positive experiences with professors occur because professors at Southwestern understand that a community college is just a transitional phase for many of their students. She stated that all professors understand that almost all of the students want to transfer out or back to a four-year university (Appendix V, Interview 13). In the analysis, it could indeed be observed that nineteen out of 21 students already had some sort of plan to transfer. For this reason, professors aim to help everyone succeed with transferring out or back to a four-year university. This is illustrated rather nicely in the interview I had with Vanessa, the non-first-generation student from Tijuana. While interviewing her, we were interrupted by one of her professors. In this two-minute interruption, Vanessa was immediately told how great of a student she was, how her transfer to a four-year university was going and if she needed any help with that (Appendix V, Interview 1). The first-generation student, Denisa, mentioned another nice example. She stated that a professor in a class of hers, which could be considered an extra-curricular activity, even had a list on the right side of the

whiteboard with all of the people on it that had already transferred to a four-year university in order to encourage others to get their name up there as well (Appendix V, Interview 20).

There are numerous of other examples from both the non-first-generation students and the first-generation students that could illustrate these validating experiences from professors at the Southwestern Community College. Though, by showing the scores of statement 20 in the bar graph below (*see*: Figure 6), this is strengthened as well. Both the non-first-generation students and first-generation students I interviewed, generally believed strongly in the importance of a friendly learning environment on their intent to persist in college. In concluding remarks, the possibility to connect more with the professors present at the college and the validation the students receive in return from these professors, plays a positive role in influencing the intent to persist of both the non-first-generation students and the first-generations students.

5.2.3: Engagement.

Both the non-first-generation students and first-generation students showed that having the right kind of motivation and being able to connect with professors is truly important in the process of persisting. However, it appears that in order for the students to fortify that same motivation when more negative experiences have come their way, the students should translate their positive attitude into actions as well. For example, when asked about what helped her persist in college the most, the non-first-generation student whose father didn't feel the necessity of her going to college, Janet, perfectly stated: "It's all about the attitude". When asked for clarification, she argued she firmly believed in creating your own learning environment. She said: "You make what you want out of it. If you need help, then for example you go to an academic assist center where they can tutor you after class, after school or whenever you are available" (Appendix V, Interview 2). In other words, having the right kind of attitude also means reaching out to someone at the institution and making use of the institutional facilities that are dedicated to support the students.

In order for students to ask for help, the institution has to have an environment that facilitates such kind of support for the students. However, the Southwestern Community College did seem to have plenty of associations and support systems on campus that were dedicated to the students' success and well being. Solely for Latinos, there were multiple support programs available. As mentioned before, one of these Latino student associations is called 'Mecha'. However, there were plenty others. For example, the first-generation student, Chris, has attended a program called *Tolerantes Dolor Ante,* which according to him could be loosely translated as 'Mexicans Abroad'. He mentioned that the program is funded by the Mexican consulate and grants students money in return for making it through a whole semester. According to Chris, who struggled financially, that program has been one of his biggest motivators in his life in college (Appendix V, Interview 3). In

addition, the non-first-generation student, Felix, even stated that a Latino support program has helped him the most out of everything in college. During his clarification, he argued that the program aided him in making connections with other people and making him aware of the resources available on the campus. "I basically found something that would anchor me to the campus", he said (Appendix V, Interview 7). Other programs that were mentioned were *Puente* and *Ideas.*

The institution has also provided the students with personal mentors, advisors and counselors in order to support and encourage them. For example, Veronica, who's depression truly dispirited her, stated: "If you need help, there's always someone who can and will help you, whether it's like a peer or a mentor or a counselor or something like that. There's always someone there who will talk to you and who will help you out" (Appendix V, Interview 5). Several other students, such as Hannah, echoed this as well. While this first-generation Latina couldn't figure out what classes she needed to take in order to finish in two years, a counselor set up a semester-by-semester plan for her (Appendix V, Interview 16). Though, there have also been situational examples of students that did not have such positive experiences with counselors. In fact, Elena, a first-generation Latina, argued that administrational mistakes of counselors were the biggest reason she hadn't graduated and transferred to a four-year university yet. She stated: "I could have been done in two years, if the counselors had directed me in the right way. It's frustrating" (Appendix V, Interview 10).

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, these support programs and talks with counselors have shown to help overcome or nullify negative influences regarding the students' intent to persist in college. Yet, the general consensus from both the group of first-generation students and the group of non-first-generation students was that they didn't always see the use of the programs that are specifically dedicated to encourage the students. Out of all the students, only Chris and Janet claimed they were part of a support program. The rest of the students generally argued they haven't relied on such programs to help them persist until graduation. This could partly be understood due to the fact that some students haven't experienced anything significantly negative. For example, as Pablo mentioned, the only thing he needed in order to persist was his own motivation and determination. However, when asked about what made his college experience more challenging, he said: "I don't feel like we ever had to experience something that we have had to overcome, like financially or culturally. (…) My experience hasn't been one of struggle" (Appendix V, Interview 11).

Though, this lack in interest may also be clarified due to the fact that all of the students I interviewed, including Pablo, were still involved with the college institution in some other ways. Seventeen out of the 21 students I interviewed, namely worked for the college newspaper, The Sun. Furthermore, three others were part of the Associated Student Organization (ASO), while one was running for president in a student club. As will be discussed below, engaging in these activities appear to have had similar encouraging effects on the students' intent to persist that the Latino

support programs and talks with counselors have had for some students.

In the transcripts of the conversations with the students working in the newsroom, two arguments can be found that illuminate the positive influence that this extra-curricular activity has had on the students' intent to persist in college. First of all, many of the students at the newspaper knew what they wanted to do after they graduate college or university. They are aspiring journalists. Working in the newsroom thus gives them a taste of what's to come. As Elena mentioned: "In the newsroom, I'm doing what I love, I'm doing journalism and it's something that helps me strive and, because it's what I want to do. It just helps to me keep motivated, because I want to get paid for this eventually" (Appendix V, Interview 10). Jose has this aspiration as well. He stated that the newsroom enabled him to do what he always wanted to do, which is to tell stories that need to be told. In his own words, he stated: "If I actually get my college degree as a journalist and if I get to have a job as a journalist, that are also the stories that I belief that can actually contribute to society and move society around" (Appendix V, Interview 17).

The other argument is closely related to this. This argument entails that students in the newsroom have again surrounded themselves with others that have similar aspiration and similar determination. As mentioned before in this chapter, Denisa stated that she didn't feel she fitted at the four-year university she attended. However, Southwestern has been a completely different story for her. According to her, the newsroom has played a big part in this. She said: "Being a part of the newspaper is big for me, because I feel like I belong to something and I feel like I have a purpose. I'm actually accomplishing something and even though this class doesn't count for anything for me. It does not transfer. So I am here, because I want to be here". Furthermore, when asked about what she will do differently when she will transfer back to the four-year university, she mentioned that she would want to live on campus and enroll in more activities on campus in order to be more involved (Appendix V, Interview 20). Pablo, the student who said to have a story without struggles, also acknowledged the positive influence of working at the newspaper. He said: "I feel like, the Sun, the newsroom, it's like a tiny little hub in Southwestern college. (At Southwestern), there are people with a lot of ambition, who want to transfer to another university and get a degree, but there are also people who are wasting time. I think I surrounded myself with people with a lot of drive and aspirations to do something better" (Appendix V, Interview 11).

Furthermore, the student that was running for student president similarly argued that her engagement within activities at the institution influenced her academic endeavors in a positive manner as well. Ann, the prospective student president that always aims to sit in the front of the class, argued that through being engaged within such clubs, you get to meet a lot of people that are beneficial for your persistence. She said: "It's like a web to meet other people and from there you get

encouraged to be more involved in the school. And once you get more involved in the school, you get more support" (Appendix V, Interview 15).

In summarizing words, the facilities that could influence the students' intent to persist in a positive way are definitely available at Southwestern. Though, whether or not a student takes advantage of it, obviously, depends on his or her own attitude and actions. This paragraph has shown that the students I have interviewed have generally shown the right kind of attitude, because they knew what they wanted to do after college. Furthermore, they have reached out to others whenever they needed to. Though, during the interviews, I have also heard stories of students that I haven't interviewed, who found themselves on the other side of the spectrum. These stories showed the individuality of life at a community college for students that weren't involved in any sort of student activity outside of class. When on campus, they would come to class and leave straight afterwards.

For this reason, the students I interviewed from both groups of Latino students generally also argued they didn't have any friends outside of the club or activity they were enrolled in. For example, Vanessa discussed the difficulty of making friends in a community college. She said: "When I see a person, even if that person looks really nice, I'm probably not going to become friends with them, because I see them so little. And most people, not most, but a lot of them drop out and maybe you are not going to see them anymore. So, you learn not to depend on anybody else" (Appendix V, Interview 1). Furthermore, she stated that only because of the necessity of teamwork in the newsroom, you do get a chance to get to know those people a little bit more. Moreover, she stated that people, who don't persist in a community college, generally don't have the right attitude.

The students mentioned many other examples that capture the individualism of life at a community college. For this reason, it appears that the respondents in this thesis have generally had strong aspirations to get a college degree, which has made them to be been more engaged within activities and more determined to graduate than the average community college student. However, in the next paragraph, I will argue that sometimes students perhaps can't afford to be more engaged within student clubs or activities at the college.

5.3: Time Management.

When looking at the experiences of the community college students, the notion of 'time management' has often been brought up. In the rest of this paragraph, I will discuss the challenges that students have experienced with finding the necessary amount of time to truly focus on graduating or transferring from Southwestern. First, I will illustrate that first-generation students and non-first-generation students have out-of-college responsibilities that take away their time to study. Although this occurs more often with first-generation students, non-first-generation students aren't

excluded in this either. Furthermore, the students at Southwestern generally do perceive to be competent enough to get a college degree from their community college. Lastly, because a good proportion of the students at Southwestern still live south of the border, some students I interviewed also had to endure commuting across the border everyday.

5.3.1: Out-of-College Responsibilities.

For both the group of non-first-generation Latino community college students and first-generation Latino community college students, the combination of working and studying has been the most challenging to manage. Most students that had a job mentioned it takes away the necessary amount of time to study and, therefore, makes it more difficult for them to succeed in college. In general, the first-generation students, however, claimed to rely more on their own income than non-first-generation students, because they had to provide for themselves or for their families. For this reason, these students haven't always been able to put college before work. Nevertheless, there were also several non-first-generation students that mentioned their dependence on their incomes and students from both groups that stated to have no such out-of-college responsibilities, because they either claimed to live a stable life or because of the mitigating role of financial aid.

As will be illustrated in the rest of this chapter, financial aid has shown to be available at Southwestern Community College. Though, for a couple students, this aid hasn't always been sufficient either. As shown in figure 8, six of the ten first-generation Latino students placed the statement regarding the negative influence of their financial situation on their intent to persist in college at plus three or higher, as opposed to only three of the eleven non-first-generation Latino students. Among the first-generation students, two students mentioned they needed to long hours work besides college to help provide for their families, while three others argued that they wanted to work besides college to not be a financial burden for their families. Furthermore, one first-generation student needed to work long hours besides college, because she lived on her own and, therefore, had to pay all of the bills herself. The remaining first-generation students didn't have a job. However, of these four students, the 27-year-old first-generation student, Hannah, argued that she couldn't work and that she relied on financial aid, because she had to put all of her time besides college into taking care of her disabled parents (Appendix V, Interview 16).

Thus, more than half of the first-generation students stated that supporting their family financially and emotionally has been very important to them. Though, for the two first-generation students that needed to provide for their families and for the one student that lived alone, it has been crucial to survive. For example, the first-generation student, Denisa, demonstrated this. According to this student, her financial situation has been her biggest problem for not completing her first year at the University of California, San Diego. Because her single mom, who was working a

minimum wage job at the time, couldn't provide for her and her two little sisters, she needed to start helping out by working full time. This has been time consuming for her. She stated: "being a full time student and still working full time, it's extremely hard and you don't know which one to prioritize" (Appendix V, Interview 20). Susana, the first-generation student that mentioned she prioritized her church above college, also stated that her financial situation takes away the most time for studying. She argued that she works multiple jobs, because her father is an addict and, therefore, isn't able to provide for his family. For this reason, mostly her and her mother have been trying to pay the bills for the whole family of six. Moreover, she stated that she did have a good enough GPA to go straight to a four-year university from high school, but due to her bad financial situation, she didn't want to. Her financial situation prohibited her from moving away from her family (Appendix V, Interview 21).

Figure 7: The Financial Situation
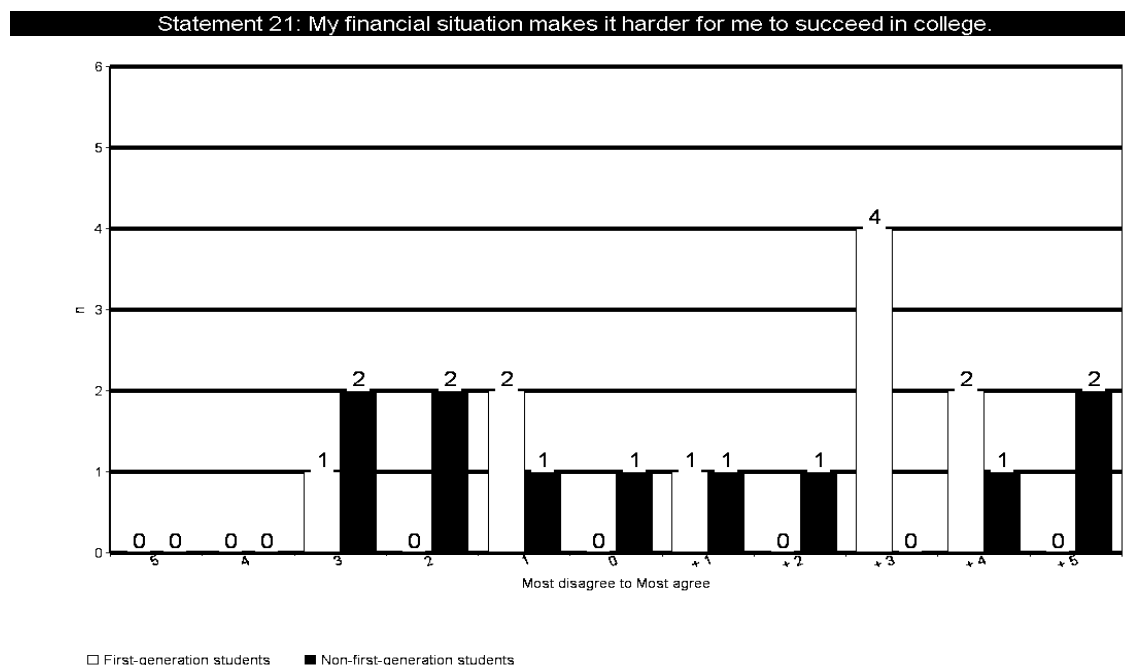
For other first-generation students, such as Victoria and Veronica, working full time has also been important, because they didn't want their parents to pay for their tuition. For example, Victoria argued that she wanted to pay for her tuition herself, because she had seen her parents struggle enough (Appendix V, Interview 19). For Veronica, this has been very similar. Because her parents were already helping her sister going through college and almost losing their house in the process, she argued she didn't want to ask her parents for help. Moreover, she stated: "So right now, I'm either going to stay here in San Diego and make my work my priority or go and get my education and help them reestablish their economic stance when I come back" (Appendix V, Interview 5).

As seen in figure 7, non-first-generation students aren't excluded in having financial worries either. Nevertheless, only three of the eleven non-first-generation students really seemed to struggle to put enough time into college, because of their financial situation. For example, Jose stated that even though he and his parents received financial aid, they needed to work long hours as well in order to sustain him and his brothers. Therefore, he had to take care of his little brothers at home, while his parents were working (Appendix V, Interview 17). The other two non-first-generation students that experienced difficulties with managing their time between work and college lived on their own. For example, Guti, who wanted to escape the views of his family in Mexico by migrating to the United States, mentioned the difficulty in this. He stated he had to work three jobs to be able to pay his own rent and bills. For this reason, he said: "if I want to go college, I need to work and if I want to get good work, I need to go to school. It's a vicious circle" (Appendix V, Interview 9).

The remaining first-generation and non-first-generation students have been able to focus solely on their performances in college. Out of these students, the two first-generation students, Chris and Elena, and the two non-first-generation students, Janet and Priscilla, stated they recently had to stop working in order to be able to put more time into college. For example, Chris mentioned that his grades were slipping due to his work. He said: "My grades went from an A and a B straight down to like a D within like a month" (Appendix V, Interview 3). As mentioned before, however, Chris has been able to focus on his education, because his Latino support program aided him financially.

Nevertheless, not everyone has been able to do so. For example, Jose stated that although most of his tuition is covered by financial aid, the books have still been way too expensive for him. In paragraph 5.4, I will discuss the students' experiences with financial aid in more detail. This paragraph can be concluded by stating that first-generation students are less often able to focus solely on college, because of their familial or financial responsibilities. Though, non-first-generation students that struggle financially have the same issues with managing their time.

5.3.2: Studying.

Students from both groups of Latino students generally did argue to be competent enough to get a college degree. Although the non-first-generation students appear to agree slightly more with the statements related to the cognitive skills of the students (*see:* Appendix IV, Statement 15 and Statement 27), this does not necessarily entail that they also feel more competent to succeed than the first-generation students. While examining the words of the students, this indeed appeared to be more nuanced. Instead, the results of these statements appear to mean that the first-generation students solely agreed more strongly with other statements, such as the statement related to their financial situation, which have been discussed in the previous paragraph.

Hence, both the students from the group of first-generation students and the students from the group of non-first-generation students argued that the courses at Southwestern Community College haven't been too challenging for them. For example, the first-generation student, Chris, stated that the courses in a community college are mostly general education courses, such as English, history, biology and math. For this reason, he mentioned that the difficulty level of the courses isn't what is challenging about studying at a community college. Instead, he fittingly said: "It's more just a matter of time and managing your time and finding that time to study in between all these midterms and finals" (Appendix V, Interview 3). Ora, a non-first-generation Latina, agreed that the courses at Southwestern haven't been too difficult. Though, she argued that she never had to worry much about time anyways, because she had enough free time and studying has always come easy for her (Appendix V, Interview 13). Thus, being able to study enough hours has seemed to be the most crucial factor when it comes to understanding the material of the courses at Southwestern.

Concomitantly, there have been three exceptions from students of both groups of Latino community college students, who did claim they needed more time to study, because of their problems with retaining the material. For example, the non-first-generation student, Priscilla, stated that she had to do a lot of studying to keep things in her memory. Furthermore, she stated that the amount of courses she had to take and the short amount of time she had to graduate did not make things easier for her. (Appendix V, Interview 14). Furthermore, the first-generation Latina, Hannah, similarly struggled with her intellectual capability. She found it frustrating that she was taking the equivalent math class that her little brother was taking in middle school (Appendix, V, Interview 16). Lastly, the non-first-generation student, Ener, argued that his learning disability made sure he needed to put a lot more time into studying as well (Appendix V, Interview 8).

Nevertheless, Priscilla was still one of the two non-first-generation students that placed the statement regarding her competence at plus three (*see:* Appendix IV, Statement 27). When asked why, she answered: "I can do it, I know I can do it, but I just have to make sacrifices" (Appendix V, Interview 14). In other words, she argued she couldn't have a social life or a job, because she needed to focus on studying in order to be successful in college. As mentioned, the 27-year-old first-generation student, Hannah, hasn't been able to focus on studying alone, because most of her time has gone into taking care of her disabled parents. However, this student still argued that she reached out to tutors to be able to overcome her issue (Appendix V, Interview 16). Therefore, the resilient attitude of both of these students has again shown to be essential for their success in college.

5.3.3: Commuting.

Amongst the students from both groups of Latinos, there are two different perspectives regarding commuting. As Vanessa stated: "Here people assume students are either Mexicans or locals"

(Appendix V, Interview 1). The interviews indeed showed that the students either lived at home in the Chula Vista area, or traveled across the border to college. Of the 21 students, eighteen were locals and three lived south of the border. For this reason, the students who lived in close proximity to the campus argued they weren't allowed to complain about commuting. For example, Felix stated: "I actually live pretty close to the campus, so if I complain, I probably don't have any shame at all. Plus I have a car" (Appendix V, Interview 7).

Vanessa, who lives in Tijuana, Mexico, however, argued that commuting takes a lot of time away. At the day of the interview, she stated: "Today I was actually late even though I got up two and a half hours before class and it takes me ten minutes to get ready. (…) I sat in my car for two hours just waiting at the border for the line to go" (Appendix V, Interview 1). Although Tijuana is directly connected to Chula Vista, crossing the border in a car is thus very time consuming. Nevertheless, according to Alejandro, who also lives in Tijuana, it again all depends on your own attitude and actions. He stated that he had gotten used to it (Appendix V, Interview 6). For this reason, he even disagreed with the statement about commuting (*see:* Appendix IV, Statement 14).

5.4: Limited Resources.

As demonstrated, the financial worries of the students have been a reoccurring thing throughout this chapter. In this chapter, the students that have struggled financially in their lives generally mentioned that they wanted to escape these financial worries by getting a college degree, which would give them a better chance of getting a well-paid job. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, these students had more troubles with focusing on college, because they needed to put a lot of time into their jobs. Although financial aid is available for every student at Southwestern Community College and it has appeared to mitigate students' problems, the resources that are available are too limited for some students. In the rest of this short paragraph, I will outline these students' issues with financial aid and the United States' system of education in general.

Among the non-first-generation students and the first-generation students the common perception has been that financial aid has been useful for their stay at Southwestern. For example, Adriana, Jose, Victoria and Hannah stated that their financial aid given to them by the federal government covers most of their tuition. Though, as these students claimed, the funding hasn't been enough. For example, they would still need to buy books that are 200 to 300 dollars each, which is a lot of money for them. Therefore, the amount of classes they were able to take each year is limited. Moreover, Jose stated: "It is crazy, especially is for us, since we come to a community college and we are moving to a four-year university and that is going to be even more expensive" (Appendix V, Interview 17). As mentioned, the goal of almost all of the community college students is to transfer

to a four-year university. For this reason, they stated that financial aid isn't enough for them to acquire the college degree that they want to acquire. As such, Denisa argued that she couldn't yet use the financial aid from the government at Southwestern, because she would need it more when she moved back to the four-year university. As mentioned, this student instead had to work long hours besides college in order to help provide for her family (Appendix V, Interview 20).

Still, as Chris mentioned, there are innovative forms of financial aid available at Southwestern. For example, his Latino support program at Southwestern granted him money per semester in return for staying in college. Though, Chris has been the only student that has made use of this program. This could be because other students, such as Ener, Veronica and Susana argued that the information about how to get financial aid and how to apply for scholarships should be more accessible and better distributed. Only because Felix got involved in the ASO, he mentioned he was familiar with the financial possibilities on campus. For this reason, he had already been able to receive a scholarship for the four-year university he is going to (Appendix V, Interview 7).

Nevertheless, for some students it still hasn't been enough. As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, their family responsibilities and their financial situation at home prohibited them from going anywhere else than the Southwestern Community College. As mentioned, Susana had good enough grades to go straight to a four-year university, but her situation at home made her want to stay to closer to home (Appendix V, Interview 21). Furthermore, Veronica said: "My expectation of college is four years of college and moving out, living in a dorm and I'm still in this two year school that is just a community school, (…) but for different reasons, financial or emotional, I haven't been able to do so" (Appendix V, Interview 5). Chris acknowledged this as well. He stated that funding is the biggest weakness in the Southwestern community. He stated: "Especially if you go further south, like close to the border, it's social class and not having the resources that keeps you back (from persisting in college)" (Appendix V, Interview 3). Even though financial aid may help the students go to college, some students' families rely on their sons and daughters to help pay the bills.

6: Conclusion and Discussion.

This final chapter of the thesis answers the research question posed in the introduction. In doing so, I will also give recommendations for future researchers to study in the field of student persistence and for colleges and other institutions to take into account when battling the barriers and strengthening the support systems of Latino students. In short, the intent to persist of both groups of students in this research has shown to be positively influenced by people, such as family, friends and others that install the importance of a college degree into their minds at an early age. However, at a community college, this determined attitude of the students needs to be turned into actions as well, because the students weren't able to generate many meaningful relationships with peers in the classrooms.

Finally, first-generation students more often have financial and family responsibilities, which ensues that they have less time to focus on college. Moreover, financial aid and information about financial aid hasn't always been sufficient. Still, the underlying process has been that the determined attitudes of the students appear to mitigate many of these negative influences. The most important recommendation for future research on Latino students at a community college is to reconsider differentiating between first-generation Latino students and non-first-generation Latino students. Because non-first-generation students, who struggle financially, have to overcome similar barriers at this community college as first-generation students, who struggle financially, the fundamental piece of the puzzle on Latino student persistence seems to lay in the social class of the students.

6.1: Conclusion.

The explorative research that is presented in this master's thesis has aimed to enhance the theory on minority student persistence at community colleges by providing a holistic description of the college experiences of first-generation Latino students and non-first-generation Latino students at a community college in Chula Vista, California. In other words, I have examined in how the intent to persist in college is formed for Latino community college students, whose parents have never been enrolled in college or who have dropped out of college, and I have sought to examine how this differs from Latino students, who do have a parent with a college degree. In this paragraph, I have connected my findings to the literature presented in chapter three of this research.

As discussed by Reyes and Nora (2012), first-generation Latino students were amongst others thought to have lower college aspirations and come from lower-income households than non-first-generation students. However, data collected in this research have shown that the participants in this thesis, whether they were first-generation Latino students or non-first-generation Latino students, all have a similar and strong desire to acquire a college degree at a university. Though, first-generation Latino students do indeed appear to come more often from lower-income households.

Nevertheless, seeing their parents struggle financially has generally formed their strong aspiration, because a college degree is thought able to overcome such financial struggles in the future. Non-first-generation students generally mentioned that they looked up to their parents, who managed to get a college degree. They wanted to follow in their footsteps. Similar to the first-generation students, these students realized what Sommers (2007) argued in his article: a college degree presents people a better chance of obtaining a well-paying job, which assists them to contribute to society. As mentioned, the non-first-generation students less often experienced the same financial struggles as the first-generation students. Still, the one non-first-generation, who's family also struggled financially during his upbringing, also claimed to be determined to get a college degree in order to have a better chance of living a more stable life in the future, since he had experienced his family's struggle.

Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), for example, stated that if students feel that other people care for what they achieve in life and feel others depend and rely on their actions, they would feel that they matter more, which helps them to persist in college. This research confirms that idea: the families of the first-generation and non-first-generation Latino community college students in this research generally understood the value of getting a college degree. For this reason, the families of both groups of students have validated their sons and daughters to go to college and persist by stating they are able to live a more stable life with a college degree, since they would have a better chance of getting a well-paying job. There does seem to be a gender issue at play here, however. Three female students, of which two were non-first-generation students and one was a first-generation student, didn't experience the same encouragement from their families. These students were not expected to go to college, because they could do other things, such as baking pastries or be a hairdresser. However, these female students argued to have a strong determination to succeed in college as well. Instead, these students mentioned that the validation they received from others, such as friends or high school teachers, has still made sure that they value the importance of a college degree.

Additionally, it has appeared that understanding what you want to do in life and what you want to study in college also plays an important role in the students' decision to enroll in college and persist as well. Two non-first-generation Latinas and one first-generation Latina that had no clue what they wanted to do with their lives, while they were in high school, struggled more with getting good grades than others. In turn, this appeared to have made them less aspired to go to college. Nevertheless, after high school, these students stated to found their passion in life as well. They stated they realized they could do more than, for example, be a hairstylist. In order for these students to have the possibility to realize this passion, they started to understand the necessity of going to college and getting a college degree as well. In other words, as stated by Rosenberg and

McCullough (1981), once these students started to realize they could contribute to something in their lives, they understood the necessity of a college degree, which made them more dedicated to achieve that goal.

The results of this research make me concur with Tinto (1975, 1993), when he argued that student entry characteristics affect the level of initial commitment to the goal of graduation from college. I have argued that the participants from both groups of Latino community college students have formed a strong commitment to their academic goals prior to going to college. Furthermore, Tinto stated that student retention is a longitudinal process of interaction between the individual's commitment to the goal of college completion and their institutional experiences that determines whether or not the individual decides to drop out. In other words, while students have a commitment to acquire a college degree before they go into college, their experiences in college are able to reinforce or weaken it. This research indeed demonstrated that the open, supportive and accepting campus environment, along with the intimate setting of the classrooms at Southwestern Community College, has fortified the students' commitment to the goal of college completion for both groups of Latino students as well.

At Southwestern Community College, the intent to persist of the students from both the group of non-first-generation students and the group of first-generation students is positively influenced in several ways. Stated by Hurtado and Carter (1997), minority students experience less hostility at very diverse campuses and at colleges where the minorities are represented in greater numbers themselves, because they have more positive social interactions with other students and faculty. At Southwestern, the Latinos are the dominant ethnic group. For this reason, both groups of Latino students mentioned they haven't experienced much hostility on campus. Moreover, students that have faced circumstances and locations with no such representation of Latinos generally stated they felt more at ease at Southwestern.

Furthermore, the classrooms at Southwestern are generally smaller than at a four-year university. For this reason, professors have been able to connect more with the students on an individual level and vice versa. There have been many examples of students from both the group of non-first-generation Latino students and the group of first-generation Latino students that argued to have close connections to some professors and counselors at the community college. Moreover, professors have shown, perhaps due to the more intimate setting, to understand the background and goals of the students at this community college. The students generally mentioned that professors understand that they often have other responsibilities than college. Moreover, they understand that the goal of almost all of the students in this research has been to transfer out or back to a four-year university in order to acquire a bachelor's degree, which the students cannot acquire at a community college. In other words, the students have felt accepted and recognized by

professors on campus at their community college, because of their positive interactions. As Rendon (2002) argues, institutional agents should more often initiate such validating interactions. It seems that due to the more intimate setting at a community college, professors have been more capable to validate the actions and existences of the Latino students by, for example, actively encouraging the students to transfer to a four-year university.

As mentioned, Kuh (2009) found that engaging within social activities on campus reinforces the students' institutional commitment. In this research, seventeen out of the 21 participants in this study worked for the college newspaper, because they were passionate about becoming a journalist of some sort. In turn, the people at this newspaper indeed argued to have pushed each other to stay committed to their academic goals. For this reason, it may be argued that students who are passionate about what they want to do and, therefore, have strong academic goals are more likely to engage within social activities that strengthen their academic goals further. Furthermore, Kuh (2009) stated that institutional agents also have as much a role to play in making sure students are involved in social activities at the institution. At Southwestern Community College, there appear to be enough student clubs, support programs, extra-curricular activities for students to enroll in. The students that participated in this study were all very engaged within the social activities on campus.

In this research, the students generally stated they had very few friends on campus besides the people they met through support programs and extra-curricular activities, because of the individuality of life at a community college and because most students in their classes leave campus straight after class. The extra-curricular activities demanded more teamwork than regular courses, which made the students more able to form closer connections to other students. As discussed, the students all seemed to relate to each other's stories and academic goals, which made the students push each other to commit to those goals. It, thus, seems that engaging in social activities on campus significantly strengthens the intent to persist of the students from both groups.

As mentioned by Bean (1990) in his Student Attrition Model and made indispensable by Nora and Crisp (2012), external commitments, such as family and work responsibilities, negatively influences the commitment to the academic goals of community college and Latino students. As discussed, I have indeed found that first-generation students have generally been very committed to their families and jobs, due to their own or their families' financial situation. This is in line with the findings of Reyes and Nora (2012), who argued that first-generation students more often have tiring jobs besides college and come from lower-income households. Six out of ten first-generation students mentioned to struggle financially, as opposed to only three out of eleven non-first-generation students. The students that struggled financially generally stated they weren't sure whether to prioritize their commitment to their families and jobs or to their college goals. While these students understood that getting a college degree is beneficial in the long run, they still have to

put a lot of time into generating an income in order to provide for themselves and for their families. The available financial aid has, however, generally reduced the negative influences of such external responsibilities on the student's intent to persist in this community college. For this reason, most students in this research argued that the most crucial characteristic for succeeding at a community college is the attitude that you have. Even though the students have experiences that shortens their time to focus on college and questions their commitment to their academic goals, they state that students, who don't succeed at this community college, aren't determined enough to succeed.

Furthermore, the academic level at Southwestern Community College hasn't appeared too challenging for the first-generation Latino students and non-first-generation students. Instead, the students argued that persisting at a community college has more to do with time management than with the difficulty level of the courses. For this reason, I concur with Bean (1990), who argued that the students' grades could be seen as an outcome rather than as a measure of academic efficacy. The grades of the Latino community college students appear to be the outcome of the interaction between the attitude of the students and their external commitments and responsibilities.

Still, the goal of most of these students is to transfer to a four-year university, which they know is going to be more expensive and more time-consuming. Since most of the students at Southwestern are locals, transferring to a four-year university requires them to commute further or live on campus. Consequently, the students wouldn't be able to help out their families as much as they need to. For this reason, financial funding hasn't always been sufficient for the students that struggle financially to help them acquire a bachelor's and a master's degree at a four-year university.

As argued by Nora and Crisp (2009), students who perceive to be in a college environment free of hostility, who have few or none environmental pull factors, who perceive to have positive social interactions with diverse peers and who experience supportive and engaging interactions with family, friends, the faculty and other staff that provide the moral, emotional, social and academic support needed to succeed in college, have the greatest probabilities to complete their educational program (Nora and Crisp 2009). In concluding words, I have argued in this research that the first-generation and non-first-generation students at Southwestern Community College have generally been provided with enough emotional and social support of their families, friends and others to persist in college. Moreover, this support has generally produced a strong commitment to their academic goals. Furthermore, this commitment or intent to persist has been reinforced by the many positive experiences on campus. The intimate learning environment, the low level of hostility on campus and the competence of the institutional agents have helped the students to persist.

Concomitantly, I argue that engaging within social activities has especially appeared to be important for students at a community college. Since the students generally haven't been able to have positive social interactions with peers in class, the support programs and extra-curricular

activities were deemed important. Moreover, the students at the newspaper mentioned they had similar aspirations, which made them push each other to succeed. Finally, first-generation students at Southwestern generally had more challenging times combining their external commitments with the commitment to their academic goals than non-first-generation Latino students due to their own or their families difficult financial situation. Nevertheless, the students' determination to persist in this community college has generally appeared to be resilient.

6.2: Discussion.

All research has its limitation. Qualitative research is not excluded in this. Since qualitative research relies on the competence of the researcher instead of on robust statistical techniques, it is important for the researcher to be transparent and reflexive (Bryman 2012). According to Reyes and Nora (2012), first-generation students generally have lower college aspiration than non-first-generation students. In this research, I have, however, argued that students from both groups have equally strong aspirations to go to college and get a college degree. Yet, it is likely that the participants in this research have a stronger determination than the average student, since a researcher needs the consent of the students to participate and students that agree to participate in such a study will most likely have different views than students that don't want to participate. Moreover, the aspiring journalists that agreed to do the interview with me were all very involved on campus, which has been discussed to strengthen their determination. Furthermore, they argued that they knew the struggle of getting people's consent and, therefore, wouldn't mind doing the interview with me. For this reason, it is difficult to generalize the results in this thesis.

Even though I haven't found revolutionary results in this research, I still think that this form of research has aided me to help enrich the literature on Latino student persistence. With the semi-structured in-depth interviews, I have been able to explore the experiences of the students at the community college in San Diego County. The active engagement with the students, which is enhanced via the sorting activity, has helped me to generate lengthy data. I wouldn't have been able to do so if I hadn't conducted a qualitative research.

For this reason, I have been able to make several recommendations that should allow for students to persist better in college and for institutions to retain the students more comprehensively. As mentioned, this research has, for example, acknowledged Kuh's (2009) theory that student engagement plays a very interesting role for the intent to persist in college. For this reason, I reiterate Kuh's recommendation that college institutions should continue to encourage students to become more engaged within the social activities present at the college. I also encourage institutional agents from middle- and high schools, as well as institutional agents from college

institutions to actively help the students with figuring out what profession they want to perform in life. For example, more information about the necessity of getting a college degree and more information about college programs itself could help to bolster the determination of the Latino students. More specifically, I recommend that middle- and high schools invest more in their relationships with colleges and universities. For example, the schools should arrange more visits from college representatives to talk about college and should perhaps organize more trips to the campuses of these colleges and universities to help the children value going to college.

Nevertheless, these institutions might not always have the right amount of financial capabilities either. As mentioned in the context of this research, Southwestern Community College is part of its own school district along with the middle- and high schools that are situated in this district (*see:* Figure 2) and, according to the International Student & Scholar Services at the University of Minnesota, a district often reflects the educational values and financial capabilities of the communities in which they are located.[30] For this reason, I encourage the local government of California, the federal government of the United States and other institutions to make changes to the distribution of wealth in order to help the Latino students that struggle financially, to break through such external barriers. This does not only mean that the funding for public education should be improved to the point that college is affordable for everyone, but also that the financial aid that the parents of these students receive needs to be upgraded. This could make the students more able to persist in college and, therefore, escape poverty, because it is generally argued that a college degree offers people a bigger chance of getting a well-paying job (Sommers 2007). Another solution to this problem could be that universities may need to adjust their curricula more to the needs of their students. In other words, giving students that have time-consuming responsibilities besides college, but at the same time do have a strong commitment to succeed in college, more flexibility to finish the program, might give them a bigger chance of graduating from that university.

Drawing on the results of this research, I also have some recommendations for future researchers to take into account when studying the college persistence of Latinos in the United States. As mentioned, Hagedorn (2012) stated that a 'persister' is defined as someone who stays enrolled in college until his or her program is completed and a 'non-persister' is someone who leaves college without completing it and without having the desire to return. However, the author also stated that scholars are beginning to incorporate elements, such as temporarily leaving college and transferring to other colleges and universities into theoretical frameworks. I argue that it could also

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[30] Guide to the Education System in the United States. Written by Antonella Corsi-Bunker at the International Student & Scholar Services for the University of Minnesota:
https://isss.umn.edu/publications/USEducation/2.pdf

be interesting for future scholars to incorporate the college aspirations of people who would have liked to be enrolled in college, but have never been able to, because of external responsibilities.

Furthermore, I argue that future scholars on Latino student persistence should perhaps reconsider focusing on the social class of the students instead of differentiating between first-generation and non-first-generation students. Even though Reyes and Nora (2012) argued that it is important that scholars should further examine the role of the achieved level of education of students' parents, I do not. These authors even stated that it could be interesting to further differentiate the groups of students. For example, they wanted to know the differences in experiences between students, whose parents have never been enrolled in college and students, whose parents have dropped out of college, as well as the differences in experiences of students, who only have one parent with a college degree, versus students, who have no parents with a college degree (Reyes and Nora 2012). In this research, I have, however, argued that first-generation students solely more often experience external barriers. Non-first-generation students aren't excluded in this. Moreover, the three non-first-generation students that endured a problematic financial situation, experienced to have the same barriers as the first-generation students that struggled financially. For this reason, the encompassing piece in the puzzle of Latino student persistence in San Diego County could lay in the social class of the student. I hope that with this research, I have contributed to creating more awareness for the Latino students that struggle financially. I can only hope that these students will receive more successful aid in the future to make them able to reach their full potential.

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Appendix I: The Creation of the Statements.

In this appendix, the process of creating the statements that the participants have sorted is demonstrated. These statements have been directly derived from student persistence literature and improved by two preparatory interviews and one focus group discussion with (former) Latino students. Ultimately, the final set of statements is said to cover the concourse on the topic of student persistence.

Step 1.

The first step of covering the concourse concerning student persistence, however, is reviewing the academic literature on this topic. I have been able to create many statements based on the literature from Tovar (2013), Nora and Crisp (2012), Reyes and Nora (2012), Kuh (2009), Hurtado and Carter (1997), Rendon (1994), Tinto (1993) and Schlossberg (1989) amongst others. The statements below are all of the statements that have been directly derived from this literature. These statements are:

1. My need for financial assistance makes it harder for me to succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
2. I have always had the aspiration to get a college degree (Reyes and Nora 2012).
3. My age makes it harder for me to succeed in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
4. My gender makes it easier for me to succeed in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
5. The academic support from my family helps me succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
6. The emotional support from my family helps me succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
7. The moral support from my family helps me succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
8. My family responsibilities make it harder to succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
9. My work responsibilities make it harder to succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
10. The amount of time that I need to study makes it more difficult to succeed in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
11. Non-curricular activities are a waste of time (Reyes and Nora 2012; Kuh 2009).
12. The conversations with my mentor help me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
13. The amount of stress I have, makes it harder to succeed in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
14. The level of diversity in college helps me succeed in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
15. Commuting to college makes it harder to succeed in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
16. The fact that I can be myself in college helps me succeed in college (Tovar 2013).
17. My feeling off acceptance in the classroom by other students helps me succeed in college (Rendon 1994).
18. Other students in the classroom listen to what I have to say, which helps me persist in college (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981).
19. The support from friends in college helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
20. The academic support from my friends in college helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
21. The emotional support from my friends in college helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).

22. The academic support from the faculty helps me succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
23. The emotional support from the faculty helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
24. The teachers appreciate me, which helps me persist in college (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981).
25. I feel that a college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981).
26. The institution cares about my presence at the college, which helps me persist in college (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981).
27. My experience of offensive verbal comments on the college campus makes it harder for me to persist in college (Hurtado and Carter 1997).
28. My experience of discrimination on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college (Hurtado and Carter 1997).
29. The difficulty level of the courses makes it more difficult for me to persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
30. The financial support from my community helps me persist in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
31. My grades make it harder for me to succeed in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2012).
32. The level of hostility I experience with other students on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college (Hurtado and Carter 1997).
33. The level of hostility I experience with the faculty makes it more difficult for me to persist in college (Hurtado and Carter 1997).
34. Participating in student clubs help me succeed in college (Kuh 2009).
35. Being involved with my faculty helps me persist in college (Kuh 2009).
36. The activities the institution creates help me persist in college (Kuh 2009).
37. The location of the college helps me persist in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
38. Campus support programs help me persist in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
39. My friends in college help me persist in college (Tovar 2013).
40. The cultural competence of the teachers helps me persist in college (Nora and Crisp 2012).
41. My determination to get a college degree helps me helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
42. My culture is accepted on the college campus, which helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
43. My ethnicity is accepted on the college campus, which helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
44. My perceived cognitive gains help me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
45. My commitment to attending this specific institution helps me persist in college (Nora and Ramirez 2006).
46. My conversations with the counseling staff help me persist in college (Nora and Ramirez 2006).
47. My self-esteem helps me persist in college (Nora and Ramirez 2006).
48. My acceptance of others helps me persist in college (Nora and Ramirez 2006).
49. My self-efficacy helps me persist in college (Nora and Ramirez 2006).
50. The collaborative learning environment with peers helps me persist in college (Nora and Ramirez 2006).
51. My need to get a good job after college helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).
52. The amount of time college takes to complete makes it more difficult to succeed in college (Tovar 2013).
53. I feel at home at my college, which helps me persist in college (Hurtado and Carter 1997).
54. My engagement within non-curricular activities helps me persist in college (Tovar 2013).

55. The support from my family and friends during my college transition helps me persist in college (Tovar 2013).
56. My level of acculturation in college makes it more difficult to succeed in college (Tovar 2013).
57. My high school friends make it harder for me to persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
58. The expectation I had of college life makes it harder for me to persist in college (Tovar 2013).
59. The college staff is committed to have me succeed in college, which helps me persist (Tovar 2013).
60. The interaction with my friends on campus helps me succeed in college (Tovar 2013).
61. My study habits help me persist in college (Tovar 2013).
62. My psychological state of mind makes it harder for me to succeed in college (Tovar 2013).
63. The quality of my college helps me persist in college (Tovar 2013).
64. My feeling of isolation in college makes it more difficult for me to succeed in college (Tovar 2013).
65. The academic level of the teachers helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2012).
66. Out-of-class discussions with peers help me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
67. Out-of-class discussions with the faculty help me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
68. Participating in religious clubs help me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
69. Participating in sports helps me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
70. Participating in tutoring programs helps me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
71. Participating in social-community organizations helps me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
72. Maintaining family relationships helps me persist in college (Reyes and Nora 2012).
73. Being involved in my community helps me make it through my educational process (Reyes and Nora 2012).
74. The amount of access to college information has helped me transition into college life (Reyes and Nora 2012).
75. The faculty concerns itself for my academic development, which helps me persist in college (Nora, Barlow and Crisp 2005).

Step 2.

In step two, the 75 statements have been reduced and labeled to categories to make sure these categories were somewhat equally represented in the final set of the statements (Van Exel and De Graaf 2005). This wasn't easy, since the literature had many interchangeable and overlapping concepts and theories. Though, seven categories that helped to reduce the amount of statements to a manageable size for the interviews could be outlined. These categories are: Cognitive; non-cognitive; support and encouragement from family, friends and faculty; validating experiences from peers and faculty; campus climate; involvement on campus and external environment. In order to make the set of statements workable for the participants in this thesis, the participants had to have a clear overview of the statements, because they could easily become disinterested in sorting the statements when there are too many of them. By removing the double statements and by placing the other statements into categories, only 40 statements remained. These are:

Cognitive:
1. The amount of time that I need to study makes it more difficult to succeed in college.
2. The courses in college are too difficult for me, which discourages me to keep going.

3. My satisfaction with my grades in college stimulates me to keep going.
4. My time in college has helped me develop myself intellectually, which helps me persist in college.

Non-cognitive:

5. I have always had the aspiration to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going in college.
6. My determination to get a good job after college helps me persist in college.
7. The amount of time college takes to complete makes it more difficult to succeed in college.
8. My desire to be enrolled in this specific college keeps me motivated to succeed in this college.
9. I can be myself in college, which helps me persist in college.
10. I feel competent enough to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going.

Support and encouragement from family, friends and faculty:

11. The academic support my family gives me, helps me succeed in college.
12. The emotional support my family gives me, helps me succeed in college.
13. Maintaining family relationships, while in college, is important to help me persist in college.
14. My friendships in college help me persist in college.
15. The academic level of the teachers helps me persist in college.
16. The college staff is committed to have me succeed in college.

Validating experiences from peers and faculty:

17. The conversations with my mentor help me persist in college.
18. Other students in the classroom care for my opinion, which stimulates me to persist in college.
19. My inclusion in discussions with other peers and teachers helps me succeed in college.
20. The faculty concerns itself for my academic development, which helps me persist in college.
21. A college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college.
22. The faculty concerns itself for my well being, which helps me persist in college.

Campus climate:

23. My age makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
24. My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
25. The level of diversity in college positively influences my stay in college.
26. The level of hostility I experience on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college.
27. The teachers in college are culturally competent, which helps me persist in college.
28. My ethnic/cultural background is accepted on the campus, which helps me persist in college.
29. I feel at home at my college, which makes me want to keep going in college.

Involvement on campus:

30. Extra-curricular activities are a waste of time.
31. Participating in student clubs, religious clubs or sports appeals to me.
32. I want to be involved with my faculty.
33. Campus support programs can help me succeed in college.
34. The learning environment in college is too competitive for me, which discourages me to persist in college.

External Environment/Precollege and pull-factors:

35. My family responsibilities make it harder to succeed in college.

36. My work responsibilities make it harder to succeed in college.
37. Commuting to college makes it harder to succeed in college.
38. My need for financial assistance makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
39. My access to college information before I enrolled in college has helped my transition from high school.
40. The difference in the expectation I had of college life and the reality makes it harder for me to succeed in college.

Step 3.

In this step, the statements have been checked for inconsistencies and made clear for the local context. With the help of two preparatory interviews with former Latino non-first-generation students and one focus group discussion with three male first-generation Latino students and two female Latino first-generation students, several changes have been made. First of all, the set of statements have been further reduced from 40 to 34. However, the interviews also made me aware that every statement needed to show a relationship with persistence in an explicit manner. Mostly, these interviews have helped me to better phrase the statements in relation to the context of San Diego, California. Derived from the article of Reyes and Nora (2012), I, for example, wrote 'non-curricular activities' on a card, while according to interviewee number one, Pedro (which is not his real name), people in San Diego often refer to such activities as 'extra-curricular activities', as can be observed below. The full transcripts are put on a flash drive.

> "MR: Like I said, I want to do a Q-study, in which I want respondents to rank-order statements. Do you have any adjustments to or unclarities with these statements?
>
> PE: Like do I think that some of these statements are unclear?
>
> MR: Yes.
>
> PE: Non-curricular activities? Usually we say extra-curricular activities".

Furthermore, interviewee number two mentioned that I should change 'campus support programs' into 'Latino support programs', since the former could be anything, such as tutoring, while he himself had seen that Latino support programs have really helped a lot of people he knew.

> "AP: Oh, yes. But maybe change 'campus support programs', because that can be like any tutoring, so maybe change that to 'Latino support programs'. Because I heard a lot of freshman that got in there early on really helped them get through it, because they struggled a lot and they had a family there to guide them. I remember a lot of them saying like: 'oh this is like my family'".

Furthermore, while conducting these interviews, I found that every statement had to explicitly mention the relationship with persistence on the card in order to have a consistent set of statements. For example, the statement 'non-curricular activities are a waste of time' changed after having these preparatory interviews into 'extra-curricular activities help me persist in college'. Also, the focus group discussion made clear the complex role the high school experiences of the students play in their actual college experience. For this reason, I have replaced the statement 'my access to college information before I enrolled in college has helped my transition from high school', which again was derived from Reyes and Nora's (2012) article, with a more open statement. Namely: 'my middle- and high-school preparations for college help me succeed in college'. All other changes can be observed below.

Cognitive:
1. The amount of time I have to study to get good grades makes it more difficult to succeed in college.
2. The difficulty of the courses in college makes it harder for me to keep going.
3. My intellectual development helps me to persist in college.

Non-cognitive:
4. My aspiration to get a college degree helps me to keep going in college.
5. My determination to get a good job after college helps me to persist in college.
6. The time college takes to complete makes it more difficult to succeed in college.
7. My desire to be enrolled in this specific college keeps me motivated to succeed in this college.
8. I can be myself in college, which helps me persist in college.
9. I feel competent enough to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going.

Support and encouragement from family, friends and faculty:
10. The academic support my parents give me helps me succeed in college.
11. The academic support my siblings give me helps me succeed in college.
12. The emotional support my family gives me, helps me succeed in college.
13. My friendships in college help me persist in college.
14. The academic level of the teachers helps me persist in college.
15. The encouragement from the teachers helps me to succeed in college.

Validating experiences from peers and faculty:
16. Conversations with mentors, advisors help me persist in college.
17. Other students in the classroom care for my opinion, which stimulates me to persist in college.
18. Out-of-class discussions with peers help me succeed in college.
19. A college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college.

Campus climate:
20. Peers and faculty members understand my story, which helps me persist in college.
21. My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
22. The level of diversity in college positively influences my stay in college.

23. The level of hostility I experience on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college.

   <u>Involvement on campus:</u>
24. Extra-curricular activities help me persist in college.
25. Participating in student clubs, religious clubs or sports helps me persist in college.
26. My involvement in the faculty helps me to keep going.
27. Latino support programs help me succeed in college.
28. The learning environment in college discourages me to persist in college.

   <u>External Environment:</u>
29. My responsibility towards my family makes it harder to succeed in college.
30. My responsibility towards my work makes it harder to succeed in college.
31. Commuting to college makes it harder to succeed in college.
32. My financial situation makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
33. The difference in the expectation I had of college life and the reality makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
34. My middle- and high-school preparations for college help me succeed in college.

Step 4.

The final step has been to randomize the statements. These can be found in table 1 and below:

1. My aspiration to get a college degree helps me to keep going in college.
2. The amount of time I have to study to get good grades makes it more difficult to succeed in college.
3. The academic support my parents give me, helps me succeed in college.
4. Conversations with mentors, advisors help me persist in college.
5. Peers and faculty members understand my story, which helps me persist in college.
6. Extra-curricular activities help me persist in college.
7. My responsibility towards my family makes it harder to succeed in college.
8. My middle- and high-school preparations for college help me succeed in college.
9. My determination to get a good job after college helps me to persist in college.
10. My intellectual development helps me to persist in college.
11. I can be myself in college, which helps me persist in college.
12. The academic support my siblings give me, helps me succeed in college.
13. The level of diversity in college positively influences my stay in college.
14. Commuting to college makes it harder to succeed in college.
15. The difficulty of the courses in college makes it harder for me to keep going.
16. The academic level of the teachers helps me persist in college.
17. Out-of-class discussions with peers help me succeed in college.
18. The level of hostility I experience on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college.
19. Participating in student clubs, religious clubs or sports helps me persist in college.
20. The learning environment in college discourages me to persist in college.
21. My financial situation makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
22. My friendships in college help me persist in college.
23. The time college takes to complete makes it more difficult to succeed in college.
24. The emotional support my family gives me, helps me succeed in college.

25. Other students in the classroom care for my opinion, which stimulates me to persist in college.
26. My desire to be enrolled in this specific college keeps me motivated to succeed in this college.
27. I feel competent enough to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going.
28. Encouragement from the teachers helps me to succeed in college.
29. The difference in the expectation I had of college life and the reality makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
30. A college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college.
31. Latino support programs help me succeed in college.
32. My responsibility towards my work makes it harder to succeed in college.
33. My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
34. My involvement in the faculty helps me to keep going.

Appendix II: The Ranking Table.

As mentioned, the participants have been asked to rank-order the 34 statements from 'most disagree' to 'most agree' in a ranking table equal to the one below. The participants were first asked for their consent to participate in this study and, then, to write down their information and characteristics. I figured this would help the analysis of the interviews. Besides asking them whether they were first-generation students or not, I also asked them to write down their age and gender. After I introduced myself and told them why I wanted to do this interview with them, I asked them to read through all of the statements and roughly sort the cards into three categories: statements he or she agrees with, statements he or she disagrees with and statements about which he or she is still undecided or neutral about. Next, the participants were asked to pick the one statement he or she agrees with the most and write down the corresponding number in the square in the upper right-hand corner of the table (+5). The participants were then asked to pick two other statements he or she agreed with the most after that and place them on the left of the previous one (+4). Afterwards, the participants worked his or her way through the table from right to left.

Ranking Table:

Interview number:

Age:

Gender:

Student: (First-generation/non-first-generation)

Most disagree: Most agree:

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix III: Student Characteristics.

This appendix shows the characteristics of both the groups of Latino students. As seen, the group of non-first-generation students consisted of five males and six females. Most were around 20 or 21 years old. There is one person who is older: Alejandro. The group of first-generation Latino student consisted of two males and eight females. Again, most were around 21 years old. Only one female was slightly older than the others. Unfortunately, there isn't an even number of males and females for this group. During the limitations chapter of chapter four, I have explained why. All the names shown below aren't the real names of the participants.

Non-first-generation.
- Interview 1: Vanessa, female and 20 years old.
- Interview 2: Janet, female and 23 years old.
- Interview 4: Blanca, female and 20 years old.
- Interview 6: Alejandro, male and 31 years old.
- Interview 7: Felix, male and 20 years old.
- Interview 8: Ener, male and 19 years old.
- Interview 9: Guti, male and 21 years old.
- Interview 13: Ora, female and 20 years old.
- Interview 14: Priscilla, female and 20 years old.
- Interview 15: Ann, female and 20 years old.
- Interview 17: Jose, male and 21 years old.

First-generation.
- Interview 3: Chris, male and 21 years old.
- Interview 5: Veronica, female and 21 years old.
- Interview 10: Elena, female and 21 years old.
- Interview 11: Pablo, male and 22 years old.
- Interview 12: Adriana, female and 20 years old.
- Interview 16: Hannah, female and 27 years old.
- Interview 18: Dina, female and 19 years old.
- Interview 19: Victoria, female and 22 years old.
- Interview 20: Denisa, female and 21 years old.
- Interview 21: Susana, female and 20 years old.

This appendix shows the results for the combinations of all ranking tables. In this appendix, the results of all 34 statements are presented in their own bar graph. As can be observed, the x-axis is equal to the one of the ranking table. Because the statements had to be sorted in relation to each other, the interpretation of these bar graphs is, however, slightly more different than normal. As can be seen in, for example, the bar graph of statement 1, both three of the first-generation students and three of the non-first-generation students placed this statement at +5. This, however, solely means this statement has the most influence on these students' intent to persist. It does not necessarily mean that they agree with this statement more than the people who placed it at +4.

Statement 1:
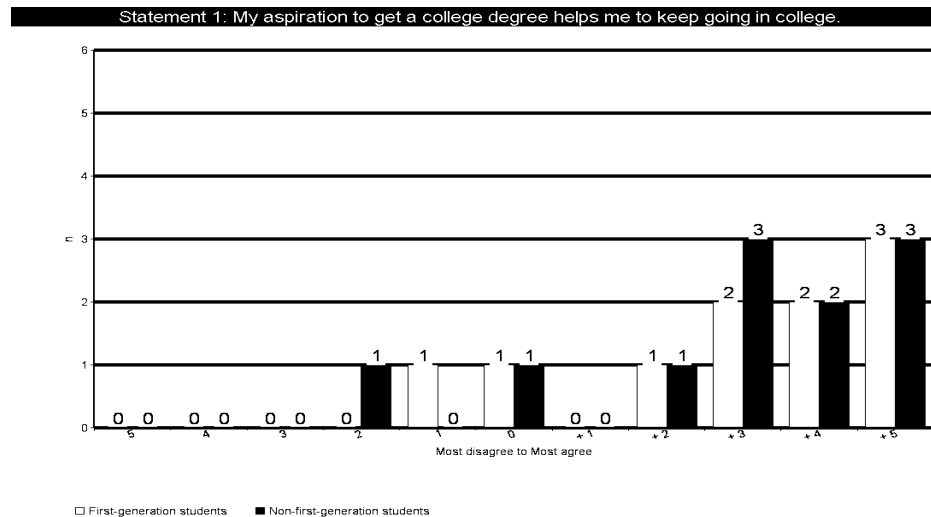
Statement 2:
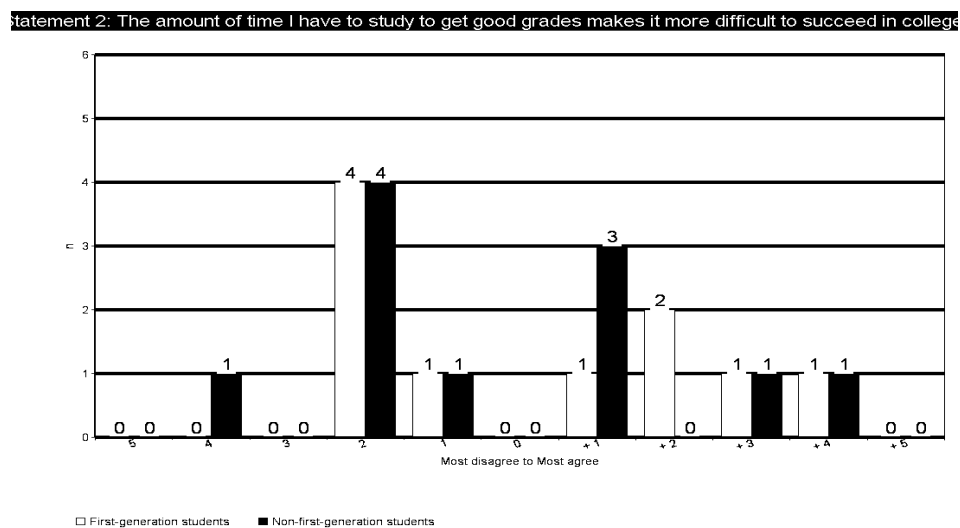
Statement 3:

Statement 3: The academic support my parents give me, helps me succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
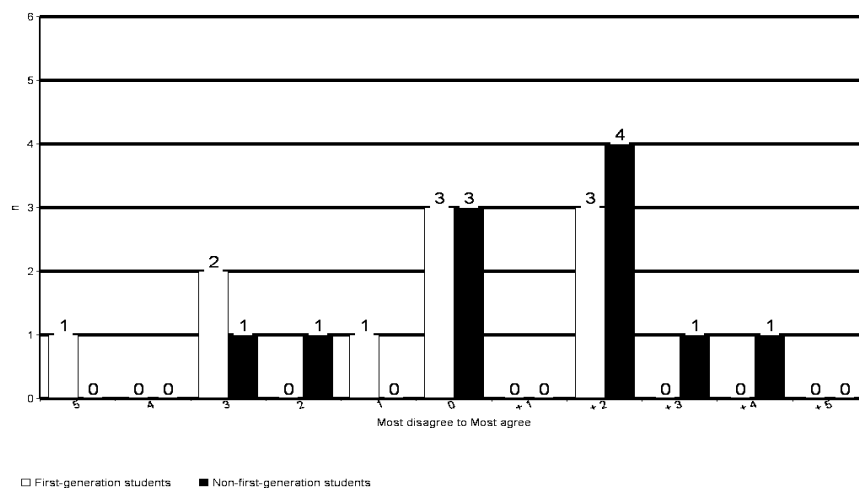
Statement 4:

Statement 4: Conversations with mentors, advisors help me persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
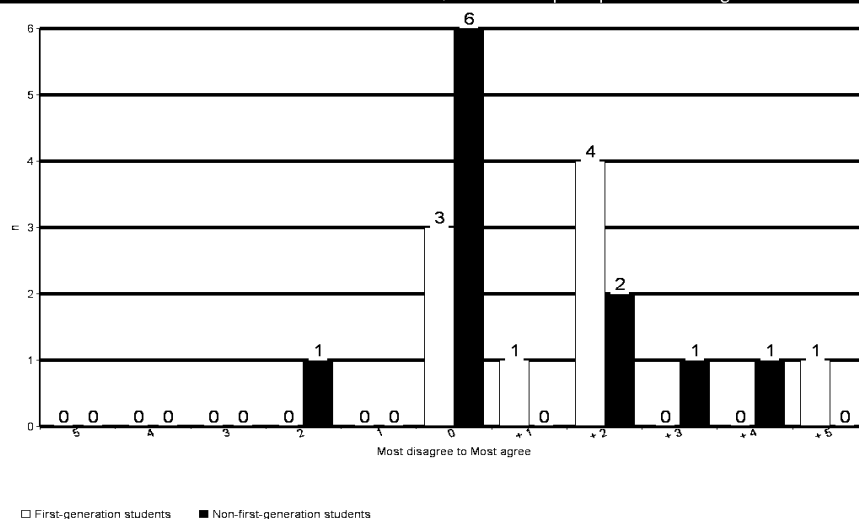
Statement 5:

Statement 5: Peers and faculty members understand my story, which helps me persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

91
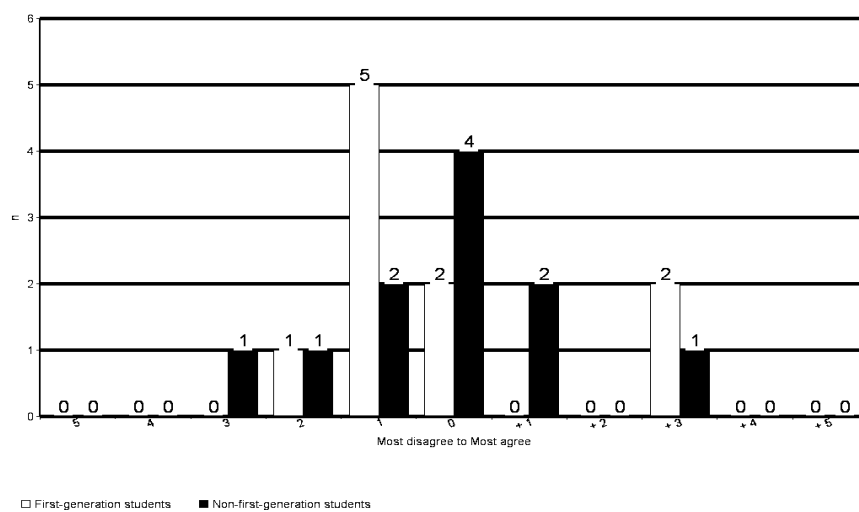
Statement 6:

Statement 6: Extra-curricular activities help me persist in college.

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
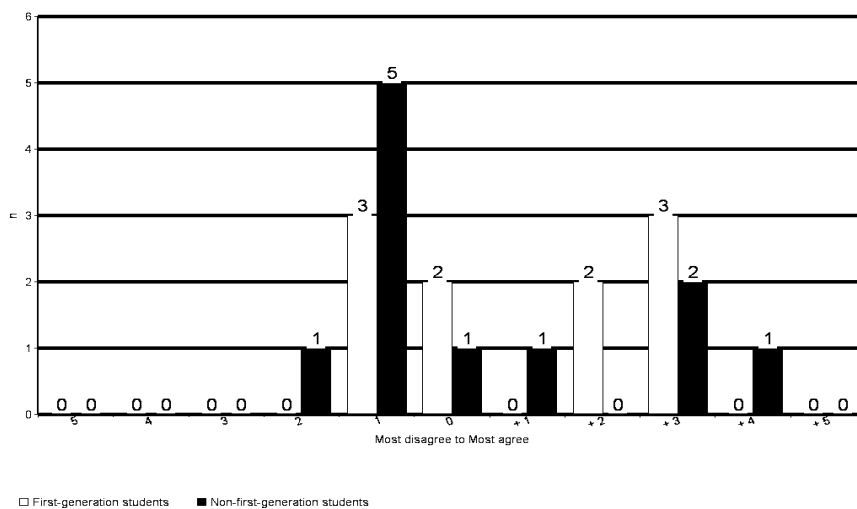
Statement 7:

Statement 7: My responsibility towards my family makes it harder to succeed in college.

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
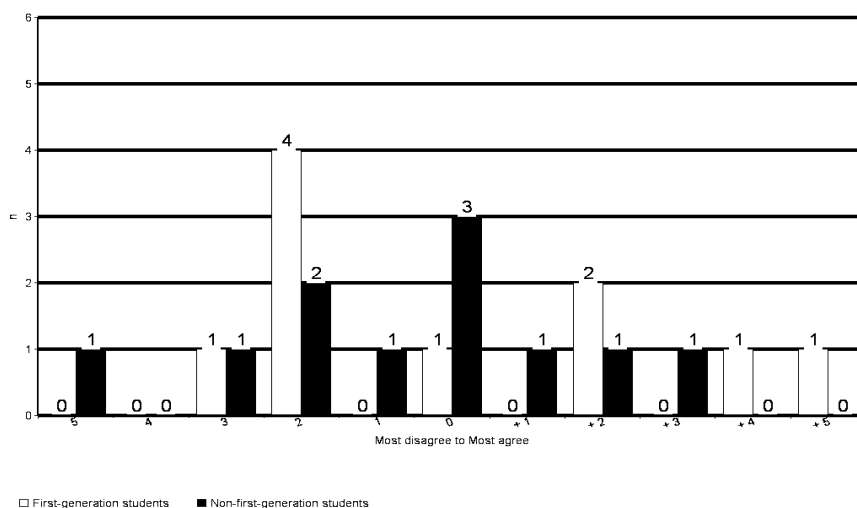
Statement 8:

Statement 8: My middle- and high-school preparations for college help me succeed in college.

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
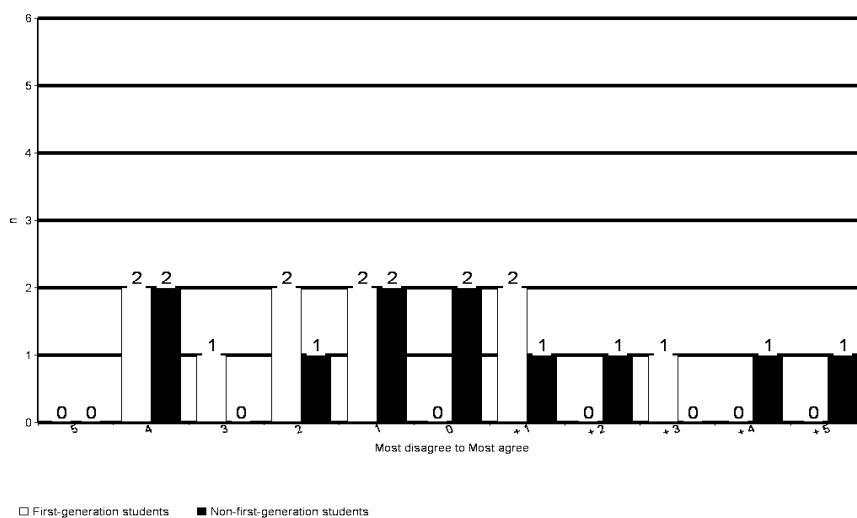
Statement 9:

Statement 9: My determination to get a good job after college helps me to persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree
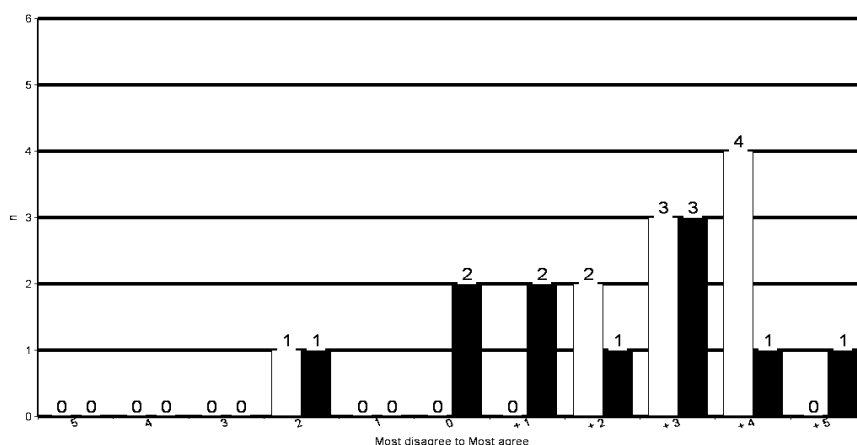
☐ First-generation students　■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 10:

Statement 10: My intellectual development helps me to persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree
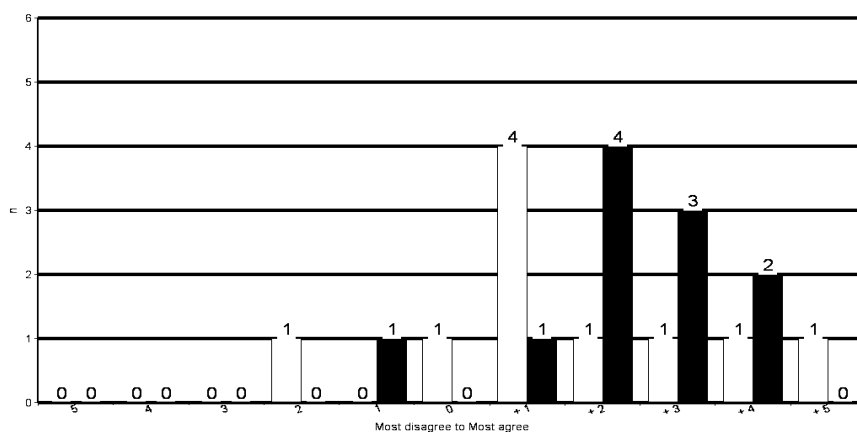
☐ First-generation students　■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 11:

Statement 11: I can be myself in college, which helps me persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree
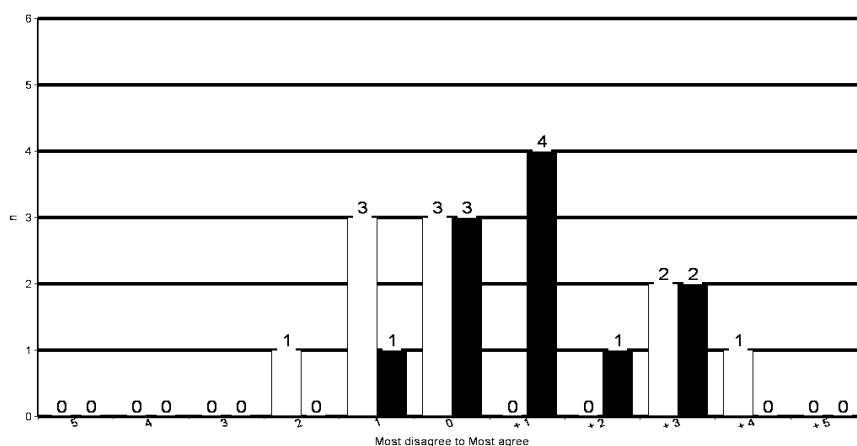
☐ First-generation students　■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 12:

Statement 12: The academic support my siblings give me, helps me succeed in college.
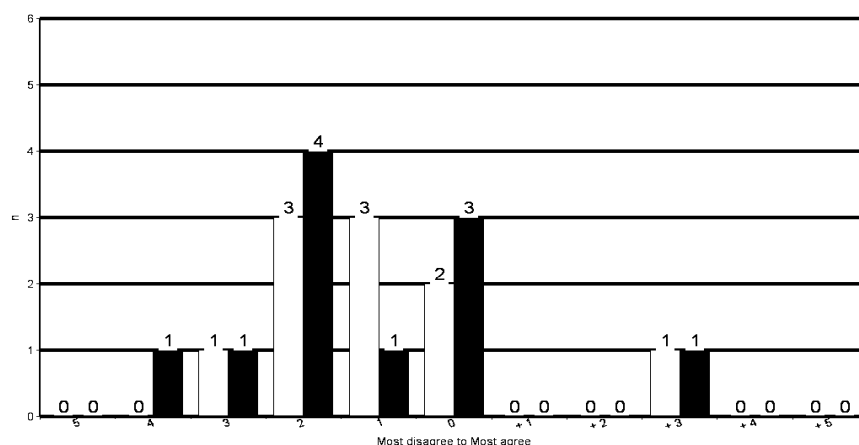
☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 13:

Statement 13: The level of diversity in college positively influences my stay in college.
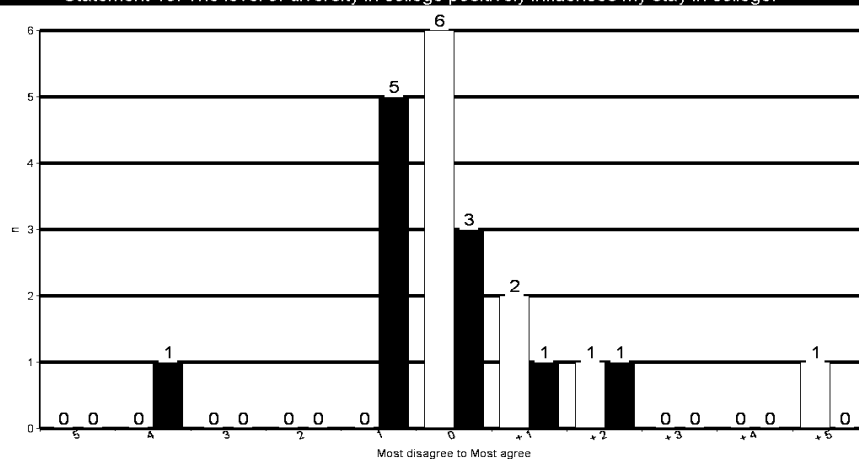
☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 14:

Statement 14: Commuting to college makes it harder to succeed in college.
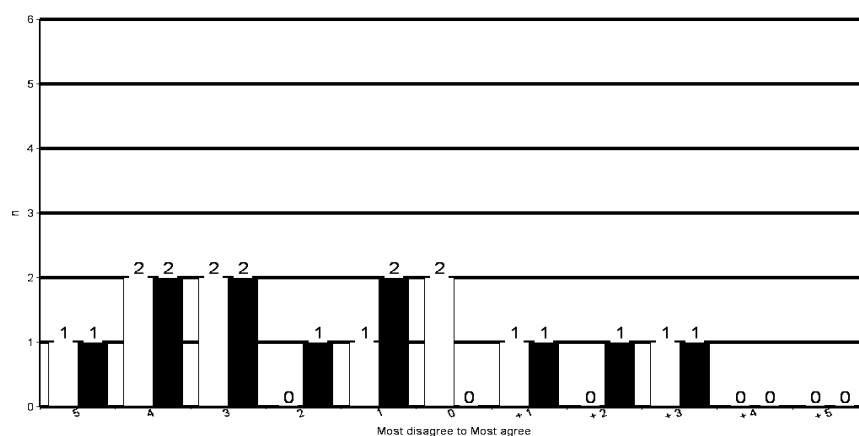
☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 15:

Statement 15: The difficulty of the courses in college makes it harder for me to keep going.

Most disagree to Most agree
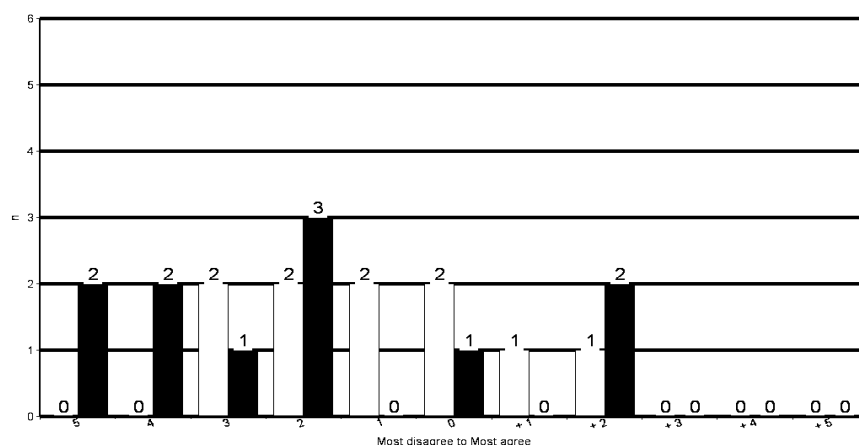
☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 16:

Statement 16: The academic level of the teachers helps me persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree
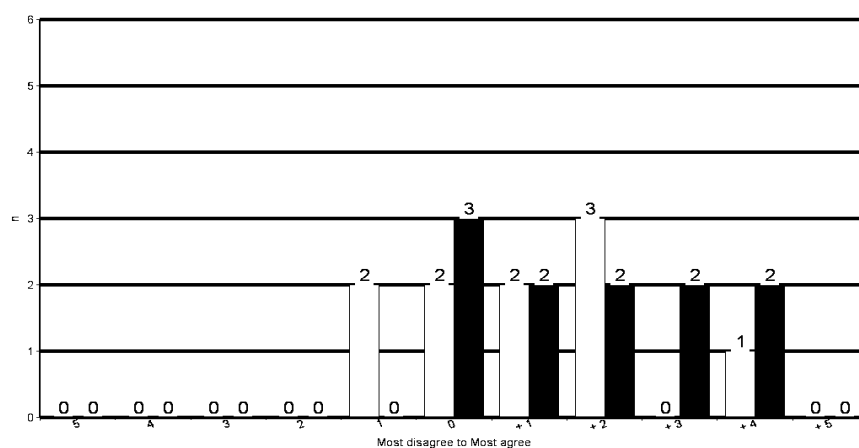
☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 17:

Statement 17: Out-of-class discussions with peers help me succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

95
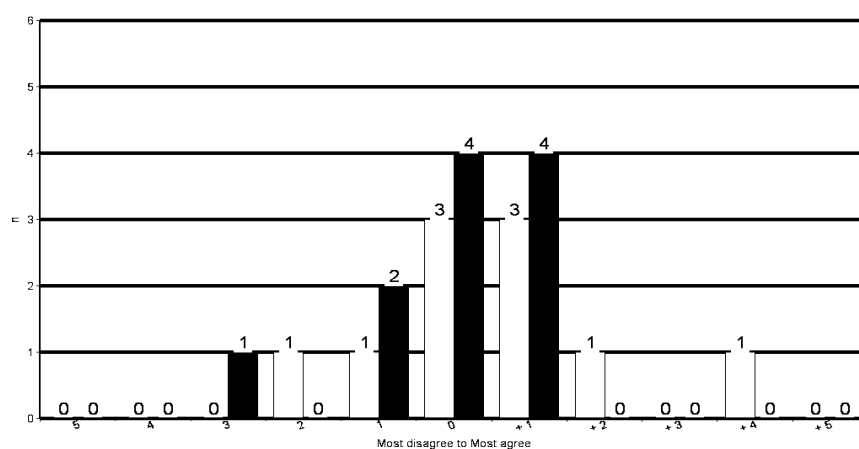
Statement 18:

Statement 18: The level of hostility I experience on campus makes it more difficult for me to persist in college.
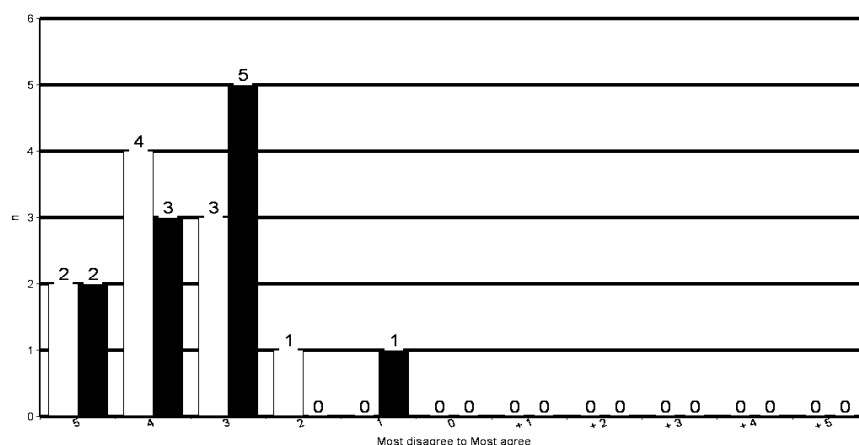
☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
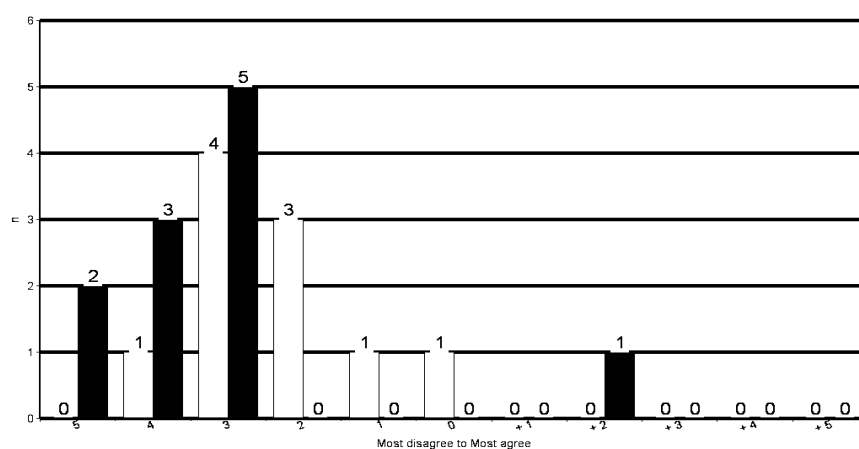
Statement 19:

Statement 19: Participating in student clubs, religious clubs or sports helps me persist in college.
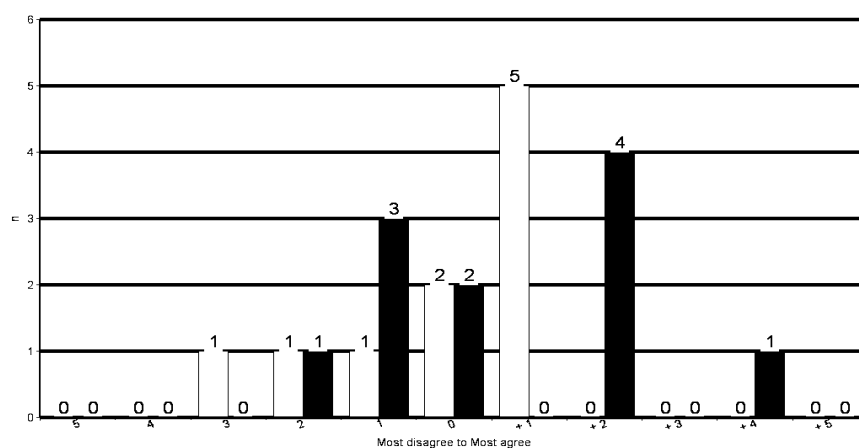
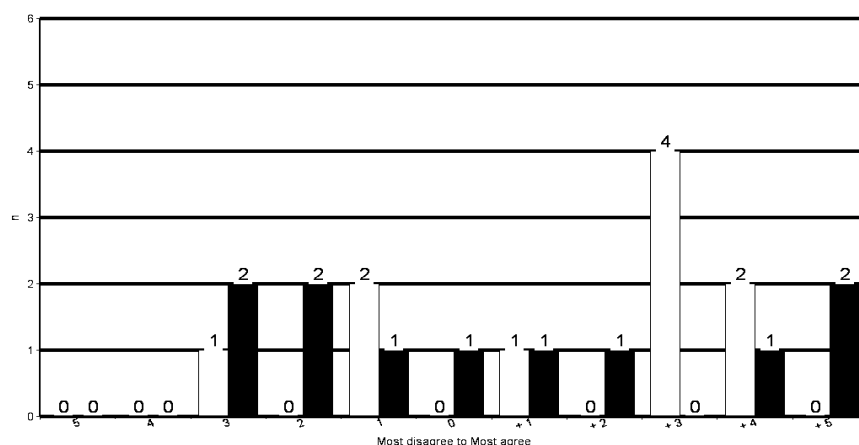☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 20:

Statement 20: The learning environment in college discourages me to persist in college.

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
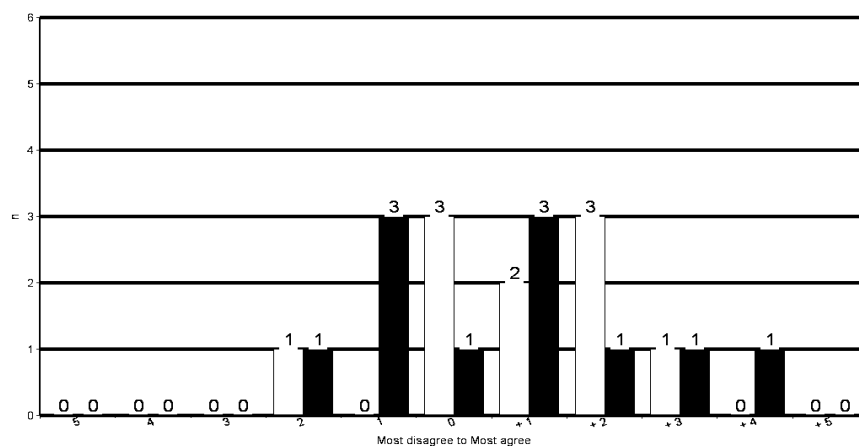
96

Statement 21:

Statement 21: My financial situation makes it harder for me to succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 22:

Statement 22: My friendships in college help me persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

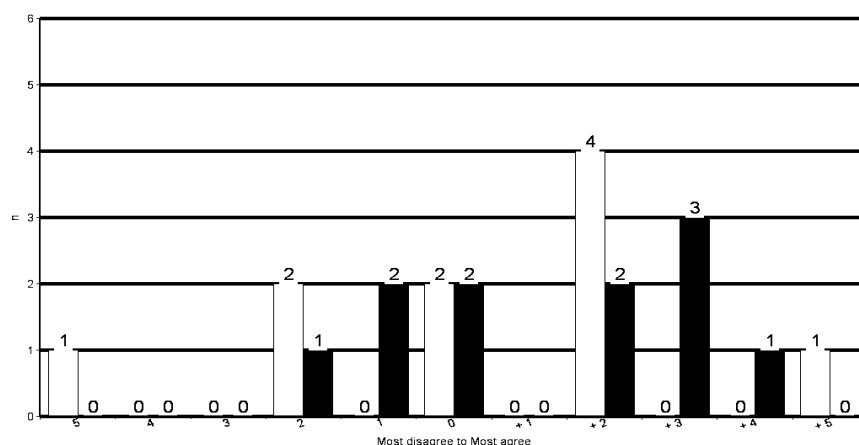☐ First-generation students ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 23:

Statement 23: The time college takes to complete makes it more difficult to succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree
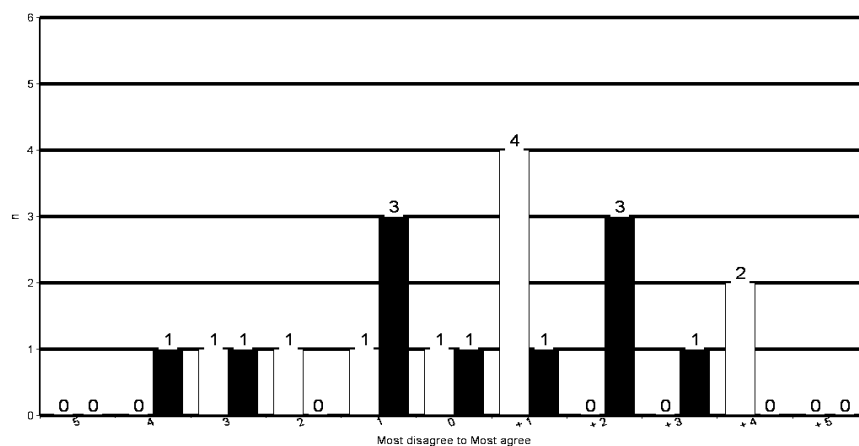
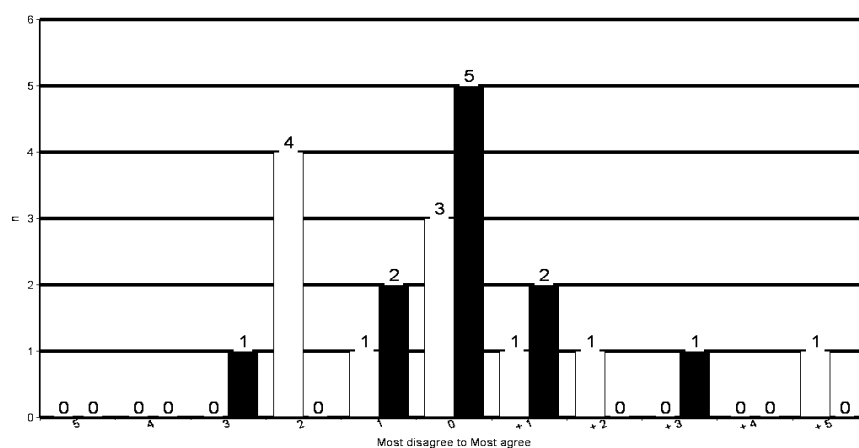☐ First-generation students ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 24:

Statement 24: The emotional support my family gives me, helps me succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

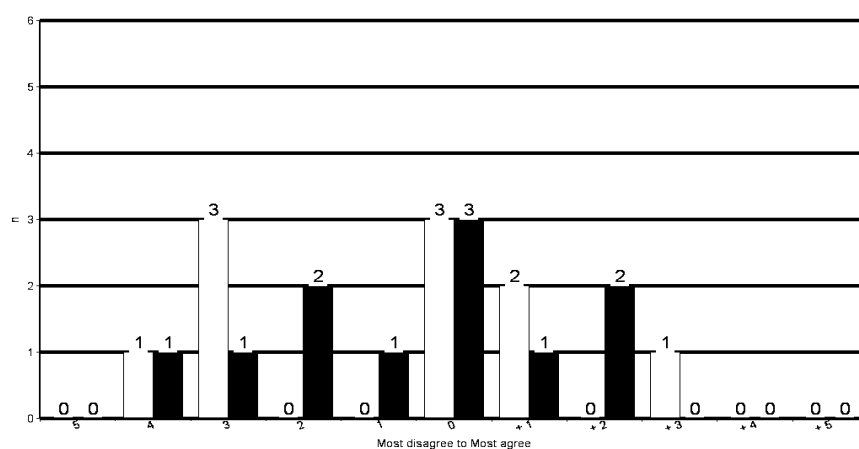☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 25:

Statement 25: Other students in the classroom care for my opinion, which stimulates me to persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

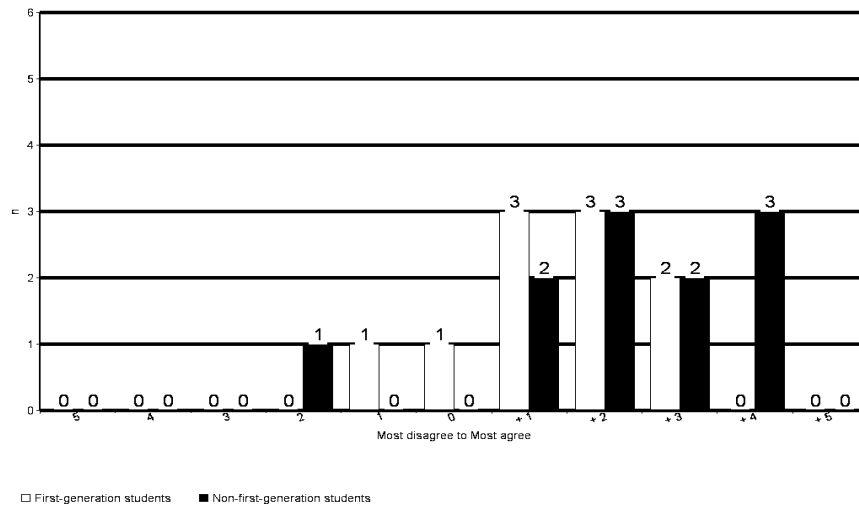☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 26:

Statement 26: My desire to be enrolled in this specific college keeps me motivated to succeed in this college.



Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

98

Statement 27:

Statement 27: I feel competent enough to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students　■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 28:

Statement 28: Stereotypes make it harder for me to succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students　■ Non-first-generation students
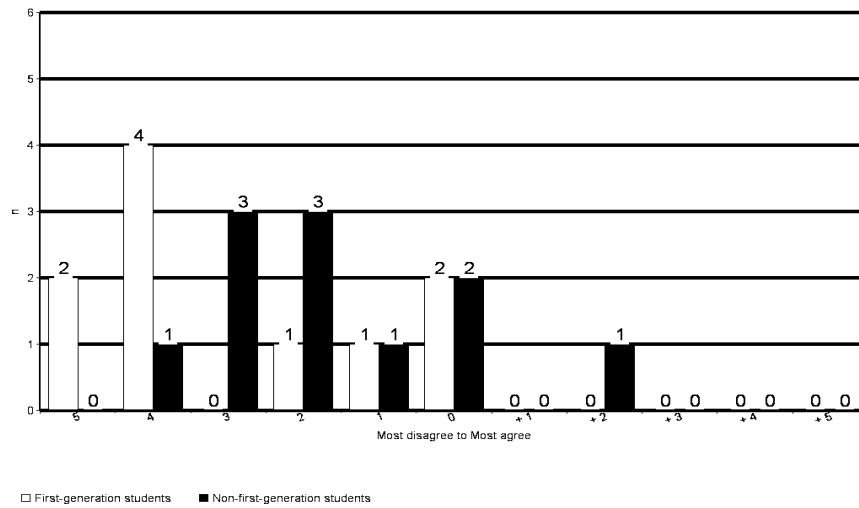
Statement 29:

Statement 29: The difference in the expectation I had of college life and the reality makes it harder for me to succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students　■ Non-first-generation students
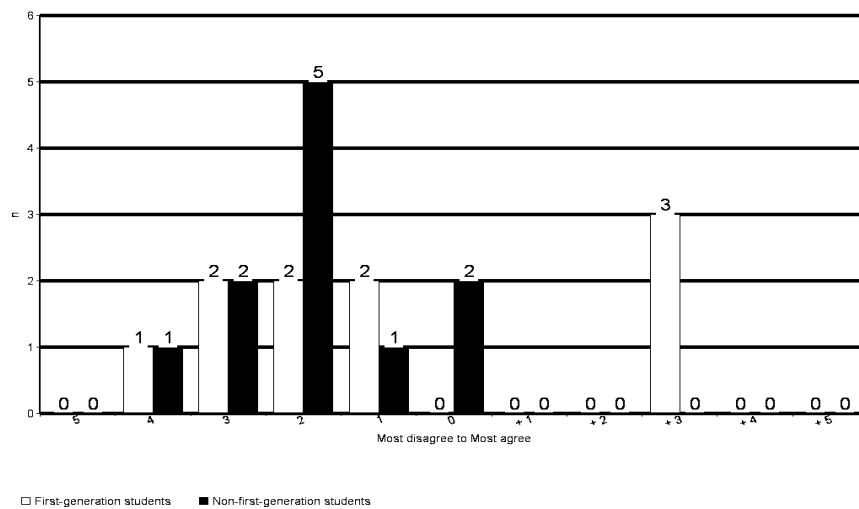
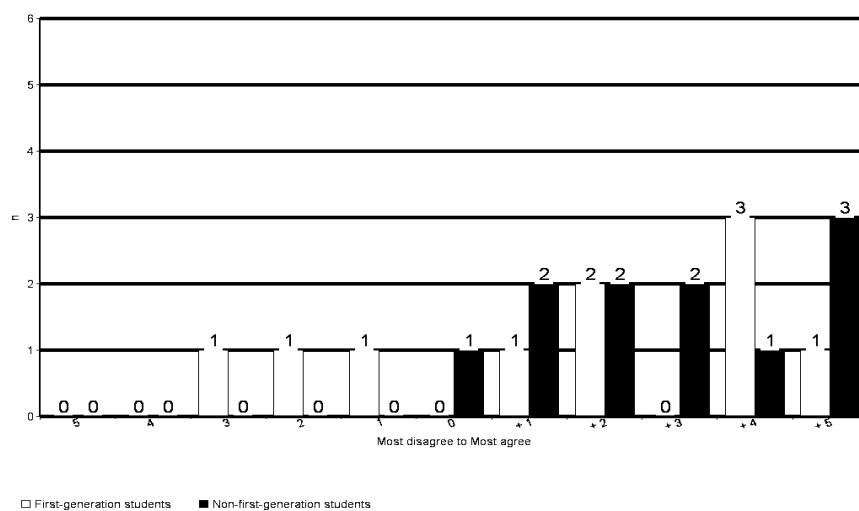*Statement 30:*

Statement 30: A college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

Statement 31:

Statement 31: Latino support programs help me succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
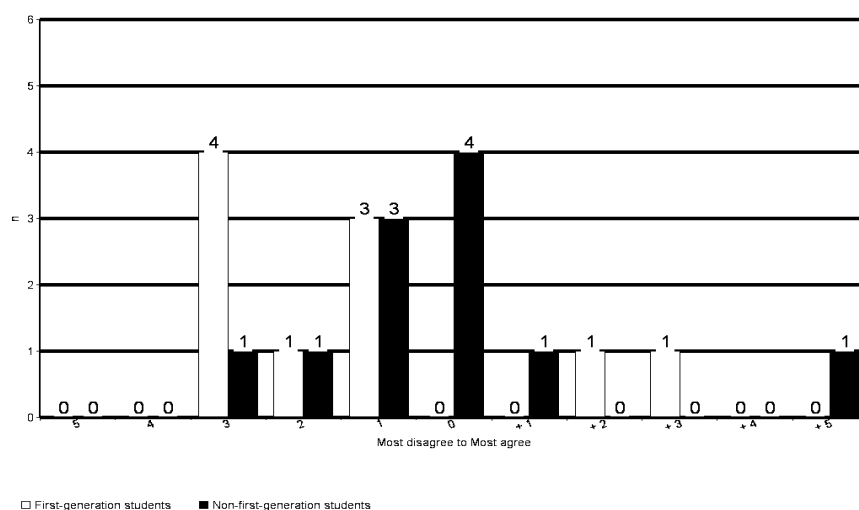
Statement 32:

Statement 32: My responsibility towards my work makes it harder to succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students

100
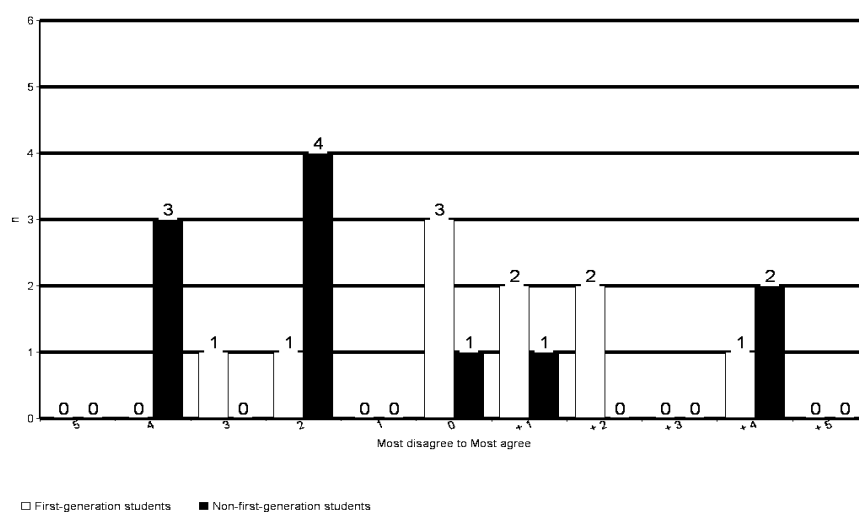
Statement 33:

Statement 33: My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
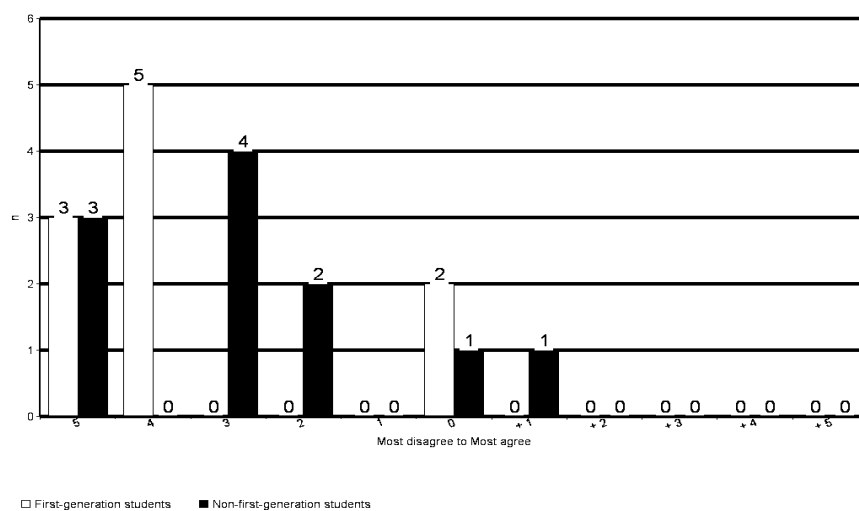
Statement 34:

Statement 34: My involvement with the faculty helps me to keep going.

Most disagree to Most agree

☐ First-generation students   ■ Non-first-generation students
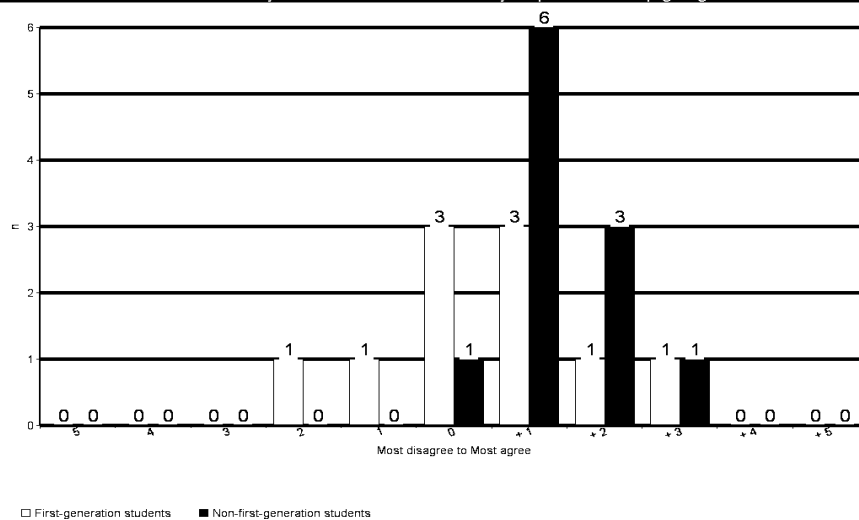
Appendix V: Interview transcripts.

In this appendix, I have displayed all relevant parts of the interview transcripts per interview. The full transcripts, worth of almost 200 pages, have been put on a flash drive along with the coding analysis done with Atlas.ti. In this appendix, 'MR' obviously stands for Mitchell Regterschot.

Interview 1: Vanessa

MR: My aspiration to get a college degree helps me to keep going in college. You agree with this one.
VG: Yes, completely.
MR: Could you elaborate?
VG: Well because, in the job market of today, if you don't have a college degree, the possibilities of you having a successful life are like zero. The jobs you can get without a college degree are, I wouldn't say not fulfilling, but kind of. You wouldn't be able to sustain yourself economically really well without a degree. So like, it's most of for the job market thing I guess. Like having the piece of paper that says I can do stuff is nice.
…

MR: Ha, well that's what you get when you're as white as I am. Okay, let's see. Number ten. Now I just need to find the statement. Okay, here It is: My intellectual development helps me to persist in college.
 VG: Yes.
MR: (wind blows away the statements).
VG: So my intellectual development, yes. Cause my family, well not my dad so much, but my mom was very helpful. She was an English teacher and she was really into literature and we always watched like TV, and I was raised on NPR, which is a public radio station. So I listened to news and that kind of thing. So I think, I don't know. It kind of sounds snobby to say: I think I'm intellectually developed. But yea I think so. My mother always wanted us to read from a really young age. When it was Easter or something, she didn't get me like a dog or something, but a book. So yeah.
…

MR: Okay, I think we can move on to the ones you disagreed with. Okay, number 33: My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college.
VG: Yes, definitely. Cause I'm a girl and with the macho culture.
MR: But this was one you disagreed with?
VG: Yea, I don't know. It would seem that it is a problem, but it would have been more of a problem in Mexico than it is here. In Mexico it would totally depend on if you are a boy or a girl. But over here, people don't really care, like if you're a dude, lesbian, boy or a girl or whatever. They really don't care. In Mexico they do care.
…

VG: The learning environment didn't discourage me at all. It just doesn't do anything. Like I said, this school is really individualistic. So, they really leave you to your own devices and your own affairs. Like, it is up to you if you want to succeed. Hey, there's my old math teacher. Hey! Miss Paige. Hey!
Miss Paige: Hey, how are you doing? Well, are you transferring soon?
VG: Well, next semester I'm going to stay here and then the other one I'm going to transfer out. But yeah, I'm getting closer.
Miss Paige: So, spring?
VG: Yes, spring. Next spring.
Miss Paige: Where are you transferring?
VG: Probably USC or SDSU.

Miss Paige: Nice. Okay nice seeing you.

VG: Yea, you too. You're a good teacher.

Miss Paige: Thank you, you are a great student. Good luck.

…

VG: Here it is, when I see a person, even if that person looks really nice, I'm probably not going to become friends with them, because I see them so little. And most people, not most, but a lot of them drop out and maybe you are not going to see them anymore. So, you learn not to depend on anybody else. Over there you had to depend on other people, but over here not really. We don't discuss stuff.

MR: Maybe a weird question, but do you have any friends here?

VG: I do! I had one in, she was a really sweet girl, but we stopped talking to each other, because we didn't see each other anymore. But you make new friends each semester, but they don't become best friends. My best friends are the ones from high school. I can't live a week without seeing them. But here I don't really have BFF's or people I can hang out with. Only maybe the people in the paper, cause they have been here forever and because it is a teamwork thing, so you get a chance to talk to them more. But in the other classes everybody is more like in their own head.

…

VG: Here people assume students are either Mexicans or locals. So most kids here, they live at home. And they live in the Chula Vista area, or they also commute on the freeway to school. So yeah, no. Like it's really rare for a kid to come and not be from around. So we don't get a bunch of internationals besides Mexicans. You're an oddity here. Your skin is like very white. You're getting a bit of sunburn.

…

MR: A statement that has really helped you persist in college, or one that makes it harder for you.

VG: No, I don't think so. Maybe one about how people are here, because they want to be here. Those who don't graduate, they don't want to.

Interview 2: Janet

J: Yes, I already have an associates in baking and pastry. So, If I did not want to continue on with my education, I did not really have to, because I can get a job in my field and go on through life, but my necessity to get a bachelor's degree has kept me in school.

MR: Where does that come from you think?

J: Well, my mother is an educator. I come from a family of educators, my grandmother was an educator. The director of schools in Mexico city. So the importance of education was very installed in my upbringing.

…

J: Yea, I recently stopped working at a restaurant, where I've worked for two years. It's just like ten hour workdays and I wouldn't get home until like midnights. And then I still would have to do homework and then get up to go to class at around eight o'clock. It was very hard to juggle everything.

MR: You recently stopped working you said?

J: Yes, I quit to focus more on school. School is my top priority.

…

MR: Okay, I think we're almost there. What about your parents by the way. What kind of academic support do they give.

J: My father didn't really feel the need for me to continue school, but he is happy in that I am doing good. That is mostly because he has seen the success my mother has had, being in school, so he is like: oh, be like your mom. And my mother says to do whatever makes me happy.

…

J: Well, no. The classes in my high school were 41 or 42 students and this is more moderate than that.

MR: And you do like that?

J: Yes, I do.

MR: Because?

J: Because with 41 or 42 students you cant focus on the learning or the individual growth of the student as much as we can and I mean, teachers can only do so much.

MR: So what do you think about when you do move to a bigger university with classes of 400 people.

J: Well, that's true, but again it's all about attitude. You make what you want out of it. If you need help, then for example you got to, like here they have an academic assist center where they can tutor you after class, after school, whenever you are available. And at a University you can find the office hours and go up to a professor and say: hey, I know you went through this in class, but I didn't really understand it. Could you elaborate? Or you join a study group. Or something.

Interview 3: Chris

MR: Okay, here it is, number 18: the level of hostility I experience on campus makes it harder for me to succeed in college.

C: Well, I mean, I haven't experienced any hostility personally anyway. So I disagree with that. At least not in this campus, or I think generally around this community. Like at the worst, around my neighborhood I've been asked.. you know.. people walk up to me and ask: Hey, do you speak English? When they're asking for help. I mean it is not really hostility, but it is kinda like a really bad assumption, but not on this campus. That was off campus. I mean most of the campus here is Hispanics, so Hispanics don't really get a lot of Hostility.

MR: yea, here Hispanics are probably the majority right now.

C: Yes, we are the majority I think.

…

MR: Okay, so let's start with number 13. The one you agree with the most. Let's see, which one was it. The diversity I think. Yes. Number 13: the level of diversity in college positively influences my stay in college. Could you elaborate on that?

C: On this particular campus, we actually have a lot of diversity. We have people from the middle-east, we have a black student union, we have all these Chicano and I think that really makes.. gives you a more global perspective without having to leave or actually go to those places. So I think that is really interesting. Yea.

MR: What kind of things have you experienced with other ethnicities or whatever?

C: Well you learn to deal with different cultures, different relations, which I think is really important and you don't learn that in a class necessarily, but you do learn it from your colleagues. And I find that really important.

…

MR: That's good. Okay, let's see. Number 31: Latino support programs help me persist in college.

C: Yea, we have a lot of those.

MR: Puente?

C: Puente. I'm not in Puente but yea that is one. Mecha, Ideas. All those people, you probably want to talk to them actually. I'm in one which is called Tolerantes dolor ante. It's Mexico that sends money over here for Mexican-American students and like if you are here for the whole semester, then at the end of it they will give you like 500 dollar or something like that, a scholarship.

…

C: The translation would be Mexicans abroad I guess. It's basically that the Mexican consulate sends money to fund education of Mexican-americans who currently live in the United States. So this program was started or right now it's kinda being run by the EOPS counselor. It's an extended

opportunity program services. So, it's also another program which helps students. Not necessarily Latino, but just in general. But this Latino guy is running the program and I think there is like twenty or thirty of us in that scholarship.

…

MR: Yes, so number 15 you also disagree with: The difficulty of the courses in college makes it harder for me to keep going.
C: Yea, for the most part it is just a matter of balancing your time, not the actual difficulty level of the courses. A lot of them are like general ed classes. But I mean, yea they can be challenging, but I haven't had a class where I was like: this class is just too challenging. It's more just a matter of time and managing your time and finding that time to study in between all these midterms and finals.
MR: And you don't work at the moment so you have more time.
C: Now I don't work, no. I left my job for school, because my grades started slipping. But I had to remain in the class, because I couldn't go to another class, so my grades went from an A and a B straight down to like a D within like a month. So that didn't work out. Like I said, it is more of a time thing.

…

MR: Well, is there any statement that I may have missed that you really want to talk about that helps you persist or makes it more difficult for you?
C: No, I think as a whole for the most part in this kind of community it is funding. Especially if you go further south, like close to the border, it's like social class that keeps you back or not having the resources and stuff like that. In San Isidro it was kind of hard growing up. They didn't have money. My parents came here when I was five. My dad has been a construction worker his whole life. So that is harsh for an income right. So, it is really good when you have programs like these Latino support programs that I'm in that will give you money or support you otherwise.

Interview 4: Bianca

MR: How is that looking for you? Do you worry about anything?
B: Not really, like I said, I went to San Diego state in my first year (?), so it was..
MR: You know what to expect?
B: Kind of. I think I do. And I'm gonna be more focused on my major and I'm pretty knowledgeable of the things of my major.
MR: Okay, what about the class sizes for example?
B: They don't bother me, however when I went to San Diego State, oh god, there were 500 people in my lecture class. So that drove me insane. I couldn't do it.
MR: Why not?
B: It's just that I like to be able to really participate in the class and with so many people that is not doable.
MR: Okay, and what about Chico state and their class sizes?
B: I think the student/professor ratio is better there. It is not like San Diego state. San Diego State is overpopulated.

Interview 5: Veronica

MR: Okay, let's start with the one you most agree with. Number 24: The emotional support my family gives me helps me succeed in college.
VJ: Do you want to ask me about it, or do you want me to tell you about it?
MR: Just tell.
VJ: Um, both of my parents have my and my sister's education before anything else and they know that like through hardships, economics, family, you know whatever it is, education is going to get us

through. Because we always had to struggle because my parents didn't get an education. And it sucks. So their emotional support is what keeps my sister and I going through college.

MR: Okay, so that's why they supported you to get a college degree. Because they don't have a college degree themselves and know how tough it has been?

VJ: yes. Exactly. Well, to go to college and to actually have a degree and to be able to have an intellectual conversation and to be able to stand on ground and not worry about money, and not worry about different things in life, because education is the foundation of everything.

MR: Have you experienced anything like that?

VJ: What do you mean?

MR: Like with your financial situation.

VJ: Yes, like my whole life I remember, like we've always been.. well , we've had less money than like my peers or the rest of, well not my immediate family, but like my cousins or whatever it is. For example, right now, I mean my dad makes good money, but I mean like half of it goes to like another.. He pays child support so right now we're battling to losing our house. And right now my dad doesn't have a job. Well different situations like that and like my sister is living in Mexico and she is studying there. She is a doctor actually, but she still needs to pay her tuition and my parents are helping her out, so helping her out has made us losing our house even more. So now my parents are battling, well either putting my sister through school or well losing our house and now that I'm transferring, well anytime I'm thinking about transferring I know that my parents will want to help pay for my tuition and education. And it's going to make it even more difficult for myself and my parents. Because the same situation will apply to me.

…

MR: What was the diversity in your high school.

VJ: Oh it was diverse, latinos, African americans, Asians, caucasions. People from all over.

MR: Was your high school environment similar to this environment here?

VJ: A bunch of students from my high school actually came to this college. Some of them have already transferred, some of them have gone to university directly. But some of them are still here, so I mean it is kind of the same thing, the same environment.

MR: And the classes for example?

VJ: The diversity doesn't affect me. I would still do my best in a class full of African American or Caucasian people. Or if I don't do my best, it is not going to be because of the lack of diversity, it is going to be because I decided not to go to class.

…

VJ: This school is very laid back, it's relaxed. If you need help, there's always someone who can and will help you, whether it's like a peer or a mentor or a counselor or something like that. There's always someone there who will talk to you and who will help you out.

…

MR: Where do you want to transfer to?

VJ: Well, I want to leave San Diego for the same reason, because I don't like to see my parents struggle, but I know that I wont ask them for money. But at the same time I feel obligated to stay and help them pay. So right now, I'm either going to stay here in San Diego and make my work my priority or go and get my education and then come back and help them reestablish their economic stance when I come back.

…

VJ: I mean, like I don't know. Like all my friends now, they're all graduating. So, like my expectation of college is four years of college and living and moving out, live in a dorm and doing that, and I'm still in this two year school that is just a community school and I'm looking to transfer so that affects me and seeing that makes me kinda want to go to college even more, but at the same time all my friends are graduating, so what's the point at this time.

MR: Could you elaborate a bit more if you can?

VJ: I want to make sure I answer it correctly.

MR: What was your expectation of college. You said like living in a dorm…

VJ: Yea, like living in a dorm, leaving your house, probably living like a few hundred miles away from your parents. I grew up in san diego, so like north cal, or new york or Connecticut, or whatever it is. So, that hasn't happened and I'm still here. And if I go to, let's say if I go to SDSU or UCSD, I'll still be living at home, so my expectation of university now, isn't what I always imagined before.

Interview 6: Alejandro

AF: My dad is, I think he is the first generation to get like a degree. So, my grandfather on both sides used to be like, they used to work like at NASCA, where they build like uh, ships. That's a pretty good job. Especially if you didn't get a degree. My grandma had a pension, which is really rare these days. On my momma's side, my grandfather was actually a farmer. He was a Bracero, you know they come here and work and come back. So yea, my parents know from them the importance of having an education. My big sister, she is 34 and I love her to death and she always tells me to get a degree and those stuff. My two best friends, they're engineers and every time they like, when I post something on facebook that I'm going to Santa.. or something and then they tell me they are proud of me. It's really important to me to have those people happy I guess.

MR: Could you tell me a little bit more about your sister and how she helps you, motivates you?

AF: Oh man, she is really assertive. I hope she doesn't hear this. She is really assertive, she has a really strong personality, like half our family is really strong, half our family is like gentle I would say, so she is really strong molded. She has a non-profit organization that helps out the sea, ocean. So she talks about not having pollution. The main thing she said was having particular fish not die and that people cant fish those fish. But the cool thing about this non-profit is that is aimed at Latinos. So she pretty much build an entire empire around herself. And she has done that by calling people and getting grants. She is living the American dream in a way, so she herself wants me to be successful and want to be the best person. She saw me at my worst growing up, because having ADD and being young, going to high school, you always fall through the cracks and you just pass it. And then college.. How do you call it…. I've done college for more than ten years on and off. So I come a semester, I flunk everything and get out. I come back and get really good grades and I get out. So she saw me at like my worst. She knows that I could do good, so she knows that I could do better, so she knows that as my sister she's supposed to push me I guess. She is supposed to give me that extra push. Now it is a little different.

…

MR: Do you live in the neighborhood?

AF: No I live in Tijuana.

MR: Oh, okay.

AF: So, you talk about commuting, I know about commuting. Right now the government started a program, called the centre program, like five years ago. It's a program, where you go through a screening process and you talk to the people and you get prescreened to be non-terrorist or whatever basically, or non-smuggler. So once you get it, there's a small amount of people who got it, so I don't know how many thousands of people cross the border every day, you should check it out, it's probably like a million, I don't know. So you have like all these people crossing the border everytime, and I woke up at seven this morning I think. And then I wake up, dress myself and go to the border before nine. And I just cross walking. There's no wait for me. But you can see that there's people waiting there for like two hours and I've done that before. You know that program has helped me immensely, because beforehand I remember getting up and just you know three hours every day were lost. Like eh.

MR: Wouldn't the statement then need to be somewhere else?

AF: No, I don't think so, because I got used to that. It is a very big part of my day, and you're right it partly should be somewhere else, but it is not, because I have adapted to that. I had to be, what's it called, when I had to be in two hours of line, you just did. Just role with the punches.

…

MR: But you're still going. Okay, stereotypes make it harder for me to keep going. Number 28.

AF: Let me tell you a funny story. I went to Berkeley a couple of years ago. It was funny, because when I was there, I was invited, I was in this club and they invited me to go with a lot of other people, so sure, we went there. We actually stayed for three days or something. We visited different schools, but I remember walking in Berkeley, and I saw so, so many Asian people. All of them looking at me and walking towards me. I just felt really weird, like I was a sore thumb there. I was walking and walking and walking and I see a table. And a lot of tables round up and there were people from a lot of different clubs, you name it, all kinds of clubs were there. And then I saw somebody I recognized, somebody that had a banner at the top of the table with Mecha, and mecha is a student movement for Latinos living in South Bay. So a pretty big club. I mean, when you go to any university you will find a mecha. So I go there and walk over there, and from afar and I see the people break out, and I can see the members and all of the kids were white kids with dreadlocks. They didn't have enough member for a Latino club. How ironic is that. That's the only reason that is relevant, because I had to go outside of my community to see that. But over here, you see this guy in class that is very white, or very black, but then when you talk to them they say: oh, yea, I'm like one fourth Mexican, or half Mexican.

Interview 7:

F: Hmm. When I graduated high school when I came to southwestern, I participated a year long in learning community experience called "… on campus''. So I was able to take part in a program that basically guided on p…mentoring?? They gave us a class for English so we could improve our writing skills. I was never … or anything but it was a huge help to be able to learn with expecting of you in college. We also took a class of personal development so we kind of just learned basic studying skills and the climate of the UC and things like that. Because right now we are in in the transfer institution and we hope to go to University. Aside from that we got a mentor sign, someone on campus that could like, you know, help us along our path. And at the end we were able to take a university tour in Northern California. So I found lots of friends, made some connections. And I basically found like something that would anchor me to the resource on campus.

…

MR: the final one. Communing the college makes it more difficult succeeding.

F: I actually live pretty close to the campus, so if I complain I probably don't have any shame at all. And I have a car, like not my own and it's all, sometimes it almost kills me but I'm fine. Still breathing.

…

MR: they prepared you well for college?

F: yes. So, at this point, I mean I have a good GPA? And I'm actually going to a scholarship ceremony later. Things are looking up, just got to keep moving forward. Keep passionate and excited about it.

Interview 8: Ener

MR: So let's start with the one you most agree with, which is number 8: My middle and high school preparations for college helps me succeed in college.

EN: The reason I say that is because, is that still recording? The reason I agree with that one the most is because I always like to plan things out and get things ready. I always started talking about high school when I was just barely starting middle school and then I started talking about college when I was ending middle school and starting high school. And I think the reason why that is was because I was worried about being a nobody and being out on the streets. I wanted to have my own job, be

like my father who is a dentist. He has his own buildings, offices and I wanted to be successful like him as well as my other family members. Some of them were in the military and that is another thing. So they inspired me early on to get things ready and that is why I believe that if you start preparing at a very early age, you will be perfectly set until you start college, then you will be fine. Because in middle school I first found out that okay, this is what I want to do. I was like okay, then around the end I got a little bit more specific. Then in high school I started planning out like okay what do I need to do in order to get that specific career. Well, this is what you need to do. Okay. Well first I need to pass high school. Okay. Around the end of high school I started to think what courses must I need to take and what colleges do I need to go to. Okay, it's not specific to any colleges. Perfect.

MR: Was that information available at your high school?

EN: The information that was available at my high school was… I would give it a zero. Let me explain myself here. I never saw a Southwestern representative at my school. Because that is what I want to do her in the ASO. I want to talk to the students over there and let them know what is going on. Because when I came here I was blank minded. I mean, yes they do offer an online orientation, but that doesn't really help. It only lets you know about how to set up, but it doesn't let you know about the services that they have, how and what they provide for you. What qualifications are needed for that services to provide for you and so on and so on. I came there and they saw many things that I had no clue what they were all about. So that is one thing that has always been on my mind. Preparation and preparing in middle school and then in high school and then you'll be set.

MR: So the next one, we kind of talked about this one already as well. Number 1: Your aspiration to get a college degree.

EN: My aspiration.. Well its pretty much, I guess I'm kind of repeating myself. The aspiration, the initiative and the dreams to be able to become successful like my family, that is pretty much it.

Interview 9: Guti

MR: Okay, number 11 is the next one. I can be myself in college, which helps me persist in college.

G: That is one of the things, the big difference in culture. For me latinos, Mexican americans and Mexicans in general and my colleague here will agree I think, because in mexico it is sometimes more judgmental I feel like. They're more bullies than americans. It's not that they're trying to be hostile, it's just more because of the culture. The culture there is more like, and it's not that I'm talking bad of my country, because I love it and I will come back to it, but it is more like…. There's an analogy that a Japanese business man used, which goes: being a bucket and you put crabs inside. So what happens it is the crabs trying to go out, but when one tries to go out, the other ones pull. For example like fish, when you go fishing and you put them in a bucket and its full, they start pushing each other to try and get out, that's what I can say about that. It's hard and you deal with cultures. And when it's your own culture and you're trying to help them. But it's the majority. Sometimes you can't fight majority and you have to migrate to the states, Europe, asia.

…

MR: Okay, let's move on to number 32: My responsibility towards my work… yea you mentioned it… makes it harder to go to college.

G: Same, if I want to go college I need to work and if I want to get good work I need to go to school. It's a vicious circle. I actually work, right now, 48 hours a week and 18 credits. So, it's fulltime student fulltime worker time. But I think it is a good method in a way, because it teaches u what to need outside. Sometimes I think students just study, study and study and I don't think they realize what is out there. And if you're just gonna work, you're not going to succeed and escalate into the system. I like it, it's hard, but personally I think that's what compliments both worlds in some way.

Interview 10: Elena

MR: Cause like you said this college is not too challenging.

E: Yea, it's not that challenging. I mean I could have been done in two years, if the counselors had directed me in the right way. I took the assessment exam in Northern California and when they transferred my scores from Northern California to here, they transferred the numbers wrong. So I actually started at a lower level than I needed to be. So that was a waste of time for me to sit a whole semester her and I wasted three or four classes that I didn't need to take. So, you know, I could have been done by now. It's frustrating. Yea it's definitely frustrating, because you want to finish and you want to get a college degree and continue on with your life, and you're kind of just in this rowboat and staying in the same place.

…

MR: You mentioned (during the ranking) that a lot of the things you disagree with involves your family. For example this one, number 3: The academic support my parents give me help me succeed in college.

E: Yea, my mom didn't want me to go to college. My mom actually lives in Northern California and I lived with her from pre-school to high school, and I just, she didn't want me to go to college. And I decided to move with my dad, because my dad was kind of neutral about the subject. He didn't really care if I didn't, but also didn't really care if I did. Either way.. So I moved with my dad and I attended college down here. But you know, I pay for my own tuition and I'm putting myself through school. You know, they don't give me money. My dad doesn't give me money, and it's just something that you know, I'm on my own for.

MR: Because they haven't gone to college themselves?

E: Yea, it's funny, because I feel like, I mean. I a sense they didn't graduate from a college, but they definitely, my mother has a real-estate license and my dad is an IT-technician and they both had to get certified for it and I don't think… I think they, well my mom just wanted me to get like a good thing, like a real estate license. Some sort of quick certification like a hair salon stylist or something quickly, but my dad… I don't think they see it the way I do. I think they think of it as a waste of time. They're like you're not going to get a lot of money out of it.

MR: They think you don't need a college degree to be successful?

E: Yea, I think. I don't know if it is because they're like: oh you're awesome, you can just go and do things or..

MR: Maybe that's a difference in time or whatever, a difference in generation. Thirty years ago you could, but probably not anymore.

E: Yeah. I feel like you need a master's to get anywhere nowadays, if you want to make over 60 grant. I guess maybe they're comfortable with the wage that they make and they think that they're living a good life, which is good, but I have higher ambitions than that.

…

MR: But here it does says with statement number 6: Extra-curricular activities help me stay in college.

E: Well, yea. Because at the same time, the newsroom I'm doing what I love. I'm doing journalism and it's something that helps me strive and get me to like what I want to do, because it's like what I want to do. It just helps me keep motivated, because like I want to get paid for this eventually. So, it does help me.

Interview 11: Pablo

MR: Okay, is there any statement that I've missed that you can think of right now?

P: Well from answering the question I try to get the intention that you try to find where I get the most of my support from, whether it's from my school or friends or teachers. Or family. Uh, yes so I don't feel I rely on support programs. I feel like I push myself. The pressure I put on myself is more in

my head from either myself or from friends that do well in college or from people that I look up to. That's important.

MR: Okay and to summarize what makes it more difficult for you in college?

P: That's another thing that I thought about when I was doing this. I feel like I have a very boring story, my family is from middle class. We are Mexican, but we kind of look white, so I don't feel like we ever had to experience something that we have had to overcome, like financially or culturally. Yea, I see we do live in an interesting region. I was actually writing this article called the political equator about the dynamics between San Diego and Tijuana. So I see it as an interesting place and I see other people who have struggled. Like I said, other people who wake up at three in the morning and have to come here or who aren't as financially stable as my family or who have suffered from any kind of discrimination. So I see that and I understand it, but you know theoretically. My experience hasn't been one of struggle.

...

MR: Okay, number 10. Yea you mentioned developing yourself. Cause number ten is: My intellectual development makes me persist in college. You do feel that you are developing yourself intellectually here at this college?

P: Uh, the way I understand this statement is if I want to keep growing intellectually and academically, I have to stay in this environment and I have the resources available for that growth. And I see that now I'm 22 and I graduated high school back in 2011 and I see my friends who dropped out of college, who decided to get a full time job and not stay in college. I see that their intellectual growth was a little held back. And I don't want that for myself. I have this unyielding curiosity that I want to fulfill. I feel like if I ever am going to fulfill it and keep growing intellectually, I have to surround myself by similar people I guess. I feel like the college environment is a good place to do that.

MR: In this college as well?

P: Here in the newsroom yes. I feel like, the Sun, the newsroom, it's like a tiny little hub in Southwestern college, because in a community college there is all kinds of people. There is people with a lot of ambition who want to transfer to another university and want to get a degree, and there's people who are wasting time, there's people who, there's all kinds of people. Yea, I think I surrounded myself with people with a lot of drive and aspirations to do something better.

Interview 12: Adriana

MR: And I think we can put this one right up there as well. Number 30: A college degree can help me contribute to society, which makes me want to persist in college.

AM: For sure.

MR: How do you imagine that?

AM: You should be. You know if you're educated you're a better person. I'm not saying people who don't have a degree are less people, but you are less ignorant and you know more what's going on and it can help you help others. You're going to have the means to help other people.

MR: So maybe talk a little bit more about what you perhaps would want to do?

AM: Well, like currently I'm helping this guy with the foundation he has and helping disabled children. So I think with what I do, more like it could be public relations. But it is again, he can help spread the word out so people know what is going on and people can get help. And help programs or whatever be more known to other people.

...

MR: Okay, number 21 might be sensitive to talk about. My financial situation makes it more difficult to succeed in college.

AM: Yea, well currently I live in Tijuana and I cross everyday. So that's why I was late, I was 20 minutes late. Uh, it sucks. I mean it's cheap and I like living there, but going to school here and

working here it is hard and you just spend a little bit more, because for example I have a sentry card. So that means I cannot just cross anything. So if I want to buy food here I have to eat it here. It's not like I can take it home. It's not like I can bring from home or anything. So that is then like going to school is also a pain in the ass, because I don't get fapsa (grants). Pretty much all I get is the bog, which does help out. It pays for most of the tuition. You only pay a little health fee, but not all of it actually. But you know the transportation and everything that implies being here is a little hard.

MR: But you did want to come to this college here in the United States.

AM: Yea, definitely, there is no way, I mean, like I'm not in the city of Mexico. The money they have down there (Tijuana) is just ridiculous, yea it's bad. Like, I have friends that are journalists, actual journalist. Like editors in chief from actual newspapers over there. And they told me like Cholos, the soccor team offered me a job there. And they offered me like 600 bucks a month and I didn't take it, because that's a little bit of money. For someone who has to pay bills here in the states, 600 dollars isn't that much, it's not enough. And he was like, oh I'll take it and he was like the editor in chief of this newspaper and I was like: why would you take this job and he was because 600 is a lot. To us that live here it's a lot, he says, but for me no.

MR: In Mexico its cheaper.

AM: It's cheaper, but then again they do earn less money even if they have degrees.

…

MR: Okay, let's talk a little bit more about this one. 29. Yea for example your high school, did they prepare you enough for college? You mentioned you agreed with the preparations in high school statement.

AM: Yea, I think I might have put it in the wrong place, but no it's not like that. What they teach you in high school is shit. Once you get here they pretty much make you take all the general ed classes, and I was like why did I go to high school for. I mean, are they just preparing us to wake up early and get to school in time? I have never really thought about going to college, I was actually going to be a hairstylist. So my hit was beauty school that is not like college. So, throughout my high school, you know, every time they would talk to us about SDSU or whatever, I never paid attention, because I was like: well I'm not going to go there. Like I'm not even trying to go there.

MR: But they did talk to you about it.

AM: Yea, once you're in like your sophomore year, they start preparing you to take like the test. But to me that was irrelevant.

Interview 13: Ora

MR: Okay, so let's start with number 1: my aspiration to get a college degree helps me to keep going. Where has that come from?

O: My parents, like I said, they have the basic college degree, but I think it is really important to get that and because none of my family has gotten further than that it always has been an aspiration of me to be the first one not only to for them, but for myself. I want to move forward in life and I want to just …. And everybody in my family just kind of stands around and like: oh you're going to marry some guy and they're going to stay home and have kids and I'm like: I don't want that. So, I think, obviously a very good way to do that is to get your degree and I'm lucky enough that I have found something that I really wanted to do.

MR: And where do you think that aspiration for journalism has come from?

O: I always have been very good at writing. Like when I was little, my teachers would be like, oh you're level of writing is higher than you should be. I was like whatever you know. But they just kept saying throughout my whole time in school and I didn't really know what I wanted to do and then I looked at all the majors and all the courses and It just made sense. This is my first semester here at the newspaper and I really like it. It's really interesting and you're really learning a lot.

MR: Okay, have your parents always pushed you to get a college degree?

O: Uh, no. they were very supportive, but after I got out of high school I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I like didn't do anything for a year. I didn't work, I didn't do anything and my parents have always been very supportive. They never pushed me to go in like a certain direction, they were just, you know, as long as you're passionate about it and you like it and you complete it then that is what matters.

…

MR: Okay, this is kind of similar as well. My gender makes it harder for me to succeed in college. You disagree as well.
O: Well, I think, everybody in the US is racing towards gender equality. I don't feel like my gender affects me at all. Obviously there are still things that people have to work on. Like right now we are doing the sexual harassment and sexual assault article. And that is something that needs to get better and we need to work on, but I don't feel that me being a female affects me or that I felt like I needed to be a male to achieve something.
MR: You have never experienced anything like that.
O: No, not in school.

…

MR: That was the main reason you chose for this college?
O: Uh, not this college. I chose this college because I live here. But yea I didn't really know what to do, so I came to community college to kind of like find my place and find what I really wanted to do, cause for me there is really no point in pursuing something that you are not really passionate about. I know a lot of people that are kind of pressured into becoming a doctor or a lawyer and they do it, but they don't like it. I understand where their parents are coming from, they want them to be successful, but if you're not passionate about what you're going to do, then you're not going to try your hardest. But yea, I mean, I am really happy I chose to come to a community college, because it has really helped me realize what I wanted to do and I'm still very excited to move on with this major and

…

O: Like I said, it is a positive vibe here. When I first got here, like all the teachers, the counselors, the students. I think that is really important, like how you feel, if you're going to be in a really negative atmosphere, you're not going to feel comfortable going to that place or that community. But yea I have always felt safe and I have always felt like I belonged and comfortable and accepted. So yea, it makes you a lot more comfortable and it makes you want to come to school. I am excited to come to school, whether it is to the newspaper or to other classes, because I think it's really interesting to, you know, not right now, because it's the general ed classes, but like I said, when you get to the university, where you get into the classes that you really want to be in and the classes where you'll learn what you want to learn, I think that is going to be a lot more productive.

…

O: Not the competitiveness. It was for me, because like I said, Spanish is my first language. So, like first and second grade it was like bilingual classes. I don't know why, I know a lot of people struggle with it. I know it's a lot easier for kids to catch on to the language than like adults. But it always came easy for me and I feel really blessed for that. Cause I know that others have to work twice as hard for it to get like that information. Like my teachers get mad, because they're like: oh you don't study for the test. But I wouldn't need it. I literally like cram like the night before the test and I'll just have to get everything. So I never really had to worry about like studying.

…

O: yea, at first when I got here, the teachers were really helpful. The students were really reliable. Everyone has the same, well I don't want to say background, but they have gone through things that you have gone through yourself. So you feel like you are not alone. They are trying to get an education, they are trying to better themselves. So I think that is really pretty, you know you're not going through it alone, you know there is other people that are going through the same thing that

you are going through. So, it helps you even to strive more. You see all of these people that… you know, even if they do dropout or whatever, I know that I need to do better than them, I need to like not do what they did.

Interview 14: Priscilla.

MR: Is there any statement that I have missed that really helps you persist or makes it more difficult for you?

PR: Uh, I think specifically in this college, because we are so close to the border and we have more Hispanics and it is more diverse, I think it is nice. Maybe if I was somewhere else, maybe up north. I know travelling like a half hour north where I see a ton of white people and it scares the hell out of me, because they all stare and because it's different. You know?

MR: No, I don't.

PR: Oh, because a little up north, it is where those clam things is at. It's like one of the biggest clam things in the US. It always scares me, but maybe I'm like…. I think about it too much. But like, I'm glad that I live here so close to the border and so close to where I grew up as a kid. It also sucks that they have a lot of problems with like the cartel related things. And it's really dangerous. I mean, Chula Vista is not a whole lot safer, but it's safe enough to be living my life.

…

MR: Okay number 2 is kind of similar again, but still different I think. The amount of time I have to study to get good grades makes it more difficult to succeed in college.

Pris: Yea, I feel like. I guess It also depends on the professors, but to be able to retain things, I feel like I have to do a lot of studying. I'm not someone with like those photomemory things. Like, you just look at something and you retain it. I have to really try and keep things in my memory, and on top of that having to take so many courses and to be able to finish in a certain amount of time is really difficult. You don't have social life because of that and I cant get a job because of that, because I really need to focus on one thing at a time.

MR: Uhu, but still you feel competent enough to get a college degree, cause number 27 is the next one: I feel competent enough to get a college degree, which helps me persist in college.

Pris: Like I can do it, I know I can, I have to give up having a job. Almost every other kid my age can do both and I can only commit to one, I can do it, but you know, you just make sacrifices.

Interview 15: Ann

MR: Uh, yea you mentioned your history professor told you to go see clubs on the campus. So here is number 19 as well. Participating in student clubs, religious clubs or sports helps me persist in college.

Ann: Yea, participating in student clubs.. I haven't participated in religious clubs or sports, but participating in student clubs is all linked. So from the student clubs you can be an officer. I am an officer in an ICC rep and secretary for the history club, so with that being said you attend meetings and with that you will be able to go to meetings and trips and stuff and from there you get to meet other people. It's like a web to meet other people. And from there you get encouraged to be more involved in the school. And once you get more involved in the school you get more support. It's like more people and attractions. It's like amazing. And you get a whole different perspective about how the school is and you learn to respect it more. From there it helps push me from whatever I learn and take from this school and put it in the next school that I'll be going to.

MR: What for example would you like to change about this school with the ASO?

Ann: I think, just to change I guess, not basically this school, but change how other schools look at us. I want to make sure that we make as much positive impacts as possible outside of the community. So we can be known for good and not just a school that losers go to. Cause I had that mentality before.

MR: Yea, do you think other schools look at you like that?

Ann: Yea. They kind of like oh you are in Southwestern… you know what I mean. It is looked down upon. But now I don't see anything bad about it at all.
MR: So what would you do then?
Ann: What would I do then.. Just involve more people into the community. Volunteer at events. Raise money to donate at different organizations, you know what I mean. Just to earn that title that we do good things for other people.

Interview 16: Hannah

MR: Okay, let's move on to number 24 then, which is maybe sensitive to talk about, but the emotional support my family gives me helps me succeed in college. You disagree with this one.
H: That one is really hard. Both of my parents are disabled. Like I said, I have two younger siblings under the age of twelve. So I have to, when I get out of class I have to get straight home. I have to make sure my mom feeds the kids. I have to make sure my mom and my dad take their medication and I have to help with paying the bills and I have to help remind them with appointments and stuff. And it's just emotionally draining and it sucks. That's the biggest thing with the emotional support (Starts crying).
MR: Okay, I'll move on for now.
H: Thank you.
…

MR: Okay thank you. Okay number 4: Conversations with mentors/advisors help me persist in college. Why is that?
H: Yes.
MR: Could you talk a little bit about it?
H: Well, I think it has to do with being able to ask for help in class like If I don't understand something I can go to the teacher or professor and ask if he could help me understand it better. Getting help from tutors for like math. I really struggle with math, so I'm always asking can you repeat that, can you show me how to do it in a different way. Another one would be the counselors in the EOPS center. They do this thing for semester by semester plan and it shows what classes you need to take in order to get your degree and that is really really helpful.
MR: Could you talk a little bit more about what they do?
H: Uh, what do you mean?
MR: In your case for example.
H: First they make sure that I am still in a journalism major. So that way they know what classes I need to take and then they review my transcripts against the classes that I have already taken. So, what they do is they make a grid of what classes I need to take and what classes, on my transcripts they already have the classes that I have already taken, so I don't retake the same class twice.
MR: Any bad experiences with that?
H: With EOPS no.
MR: And tutors, etc?
H: With tutors I would say sometimes, especially when I go for math they get a little frustrated. Because they show me different ways to do a math problem. But I still don't understand it. So I have to keep asking them until they get frustrated. So I have to keep asking them.
MR: But eventually… how is the math going?
H: Uh, it is still pretty hard. I still go to the math center. Sometimes I even ask my friends to help me.
…

MR: So do you think your high school prepared you enough for college?
H: No, I honestly don't think they did. As far as academically speaking a lot of the teachers were, I'm not going to say they were bad at their job, but they didn't push me hard enough to be able to adapt to the difference between college classes and high school classes. Because there is a huge difference. One of the biggest ones, I don't remember the first time, one of the first classes I went to the teacher

said, you know what, you're not in high school anymore. I am not your mommy and I am not going to babysit you. You are going to have to remember your own due dates and with high school it's like: oh you have this due three weeks from today. And they will ask you if you have done your assignments and ask you about how it is going, are you working on it. With college they don't really do that.
…

MR: If you could summarize what helps you persist, that would be great.
H: Being able to talk to people who understand my situation and not just say: Oh you need to move out of your house, you need to get a job, you need to do this, you need to do that. Honestly, that one is the biggest one, because I feel like I am being judged for my choices and a lot of them aren't even my choices. They are decisions that I have to make in order to balance out the scale, because I cant just leave my family and focus on college, but at the same time I cant just leave college and go with my family. So, being able to tell people that, blowing off steam to my friends, a lot of the tutoring that EOPS, who actually give you money to buy books. So I don't have to worry about buying the book for this amount of money, but still pay the bills. So that one. Being able to ask my teachers for help during class, after class is also a big help. That community feeling that we have of a tight knit group also, it really helps. I mean, I barely know these people, but they already feel like family to me.

Interview 17: Jose

MR: Okay, and to summarize what makes it more difficult, or more challenging for you to persist.
JO: The financial situation. Like how college isn't free, when education should be. If you really want to learn, if you really want to be educated. Then here it is, go and take it. If you don't then don't. don't waste your time, what are you doing. So if you really want to have an education, it shouldn't be like you have to pay 10.000. You should encourage me to get into college and not discourage me by making me pay more money. So I belief that financial aid-wise here in Southwestern, even though we have kind of help, it could be much better. And in a 4 year university it should be way more better. It's too much money and not anyone can afford that.
MR: You're hoping Bernie Sanders will win?
JO: Hopefully. Haha. It's the first time I will vote and I will vote for him. If he does make college free, the opportunities for everyone will be great, because there would be more people educated, which means that the society would be better. People would be more respectful, people would be more understanding of things. It could make a chance, because more people would have that chance to learn and have the aspiration. It's not like they would have the assurance that when they go to college, you WILL get a very good job. But by being able to get an education you have a bit higher chance of getting a good job than other people. So, I belief money wise it could be a big change. It would really help everyone.
…
MR: Okay, number 30. Also kind of related. A college degree can help me contribute to society.
JO: Yes, well it's kind of a myth. Well it's not, but it can be seen as one, because some people will say that when you come out of college, nowadays it's really really hard to get a job. But I belief that a college degree really does help you to get a job and persist to contribute something to the society. For example as a student journalist I always like to pursue and get into stories. And you never really know what story you will get. And actually learning in college, like this guy has a journalism degree and this guy is working hard, and get something about that, a really hard story. For example, this story about soccer, you know the fifa-gate story.. yea all that stuff. It's hard, because soccer is part of the society and the money that is laundered there is hard, because I think it does move the society.
MR: And the panama papers and stuff.
JO: Yes, like that and all that stuff. If I actually get my college degree as a journalist and if I get to have a job as a journalist, that are also the stories that I belief that can actually contribute to society and move society around.

Interview 18: Dina

DP: my parents always wanting to vic….. live through me. Just the way that they view school is a lot different. Because all the way they were freezed. But I have been raised here all my life and my goals since I can remember was: go to college and get a good job. It was never, run off, get married, get pregnant. No. Just go to college and do things on my own.

MR: that's good. And then, you've placed here: my gender, number 33. My gender makes it more difficult. You've placed it right in the middle. Is that also because of your parents in the gender role?

DP: Yes, specifically I don't see this college having a big scandal. Of course there is the whole white privilege thing but that's completely different at this college. It's really not a gender problem. The school doesn't have a gender problem. You know, males are not preferred over females. It's a diversity problem in the United States. It's discrimination and racism.

Interview 19: Victoria

MR: Okay, it is: I feel competent to get a college degree, which helps me to keep going. Again it is related.

VS: Yea, I mean it is my determination and my aspiration. I don't really feel that I am not competent. I can do it and I am going to.

MR: So what was your middle and high school experience like?

VS: I actually wasn't a really good student belief it or not, but that was because I was like an angsty teenager. Like, I don't want to go to school, like fuck that, you know what I mean. That is all for men, you know what I mean.

MR: It's all for men?

VS: It was just being like super angsty, rebellious. You know that type of thing. It wasn't like… oh it's so normal to go to school and get good grades. To me that was lame in high school, but now I am all about it.

MR: Do you think you have been prepared enough in high school for college?

VS: You know, I definitely think that the systems were in place if I were to have followed them. But I didn't, because I wasn't a good student. I had to be taken out of normal school in order to get my high school diploma. I had to do independent studies. So I was not a good student, but as far as the systems being in place, like If I would have followed them, I would have been prepared enough, but I wasn't. It was my doing and not the system if that makes sense.

MR: So why weren't you a good student, just because you were rebellious?

VS: Yea, to me back when I was young and dumb. So I was like why should I get good grades, what does it even matter, it's all just like brainwashing and stuff like that, so I was like I don't want to do this. I am also definitely a person that If you tell me to do something, I am not going to do it. Even if I know that is good for me.

MR: Why do you think you are so rebellious?

VS: My parents think that I have always been like that. There is no event that I can link it to, I think that is just how I was born. I think that's where it came from, but now I feel like since I have gone to college, and there is not so much like: oh you have to do this, blablabla. It's pretty free reign, because you can choose what you want to study and I like that more, because I can follow my interests. Instead of having these set classes that you have to do.

MR: Pick your own interests. Uhm, but how did that change happen… from being rebellious to being all about learning?

VS: I just… there came a time in my life after high school that I just really learned that you… in order for me to be independent, I needed to be able to be independent, you know what I mean. And for that a college degree is very important, I think. So that I can sustain myself, you know what I mean. I don't have to be dependent on other people. And from there on I found that I really liked learning, so I keep branching out my interests like I said. So yea. But I am still kind of rebellious (points at pink hair).

Interview 20: Denisa

MR: Okay, then we can start with number 4: conversations with mentors/advisors help me persist in college. Why is that?

DA: Because I feel like talking to them about my concerns or how I want to succeed in college or what my goals are has helped me become what I am today. And them encouraging me and telling me I can do it and telling me the steps I need to do to graduate or get my degree has played like a huge part in me being like; yea, I can do this.

MR: So what is it that you exactly do here in college?

DA: Uh, there is two things. I am trying to get back into UCSD. I started my first year at UCSD and then I went back the second year, not enrolled but still as a student. And I talked to the dean and I told him about my story and what I can do to try and get back, because I felt like I didn't deserve to be at that school. I was like: well, I am a minority at USCD. There is a lot of Asians at that school and I always felt that I didn't belong there. And that was part of why I didn't feel comfortable going to that school. I felt like, I would look around and I felt like I didn't deserve to be there. I felt like other people deserved my place. And at home my financial problems and everything in my home and the dean was like: don't worry, we are going to get your UPA up. He was like don't worry about it, just worry about passing your writing test. He was like if you pass your … writing test then you can come back into USCD and we will work with you. So, he gave me hope that I'll be able to get back into school and here actually Dr. Branscomb is also someone who gave me that light of hope, because he makes school really fun. And I enjoy learning with him. And he is also like: What are you doing here! You deserve to be over there. He's like: I am going to help you, he is like, I am going to help you, show me the writing thing that you need to do so that we can get you back into school. He's like: You deserve to be there, you gotta be back there. You gotta get on it, show me and stuff. So, he is like part of the biggest reason that I am here at Southwestern. If not for him I probably wouldn't have come back. This is on and off my third semester, but these past two semesters have been classes with him and I just love his classes.

…

MR: Okay, let's see. Which number is this? 21? Yea, okay. You talked about this a bit already, but the statement is: My financial situation makes it more difficult to succeed in college.

DA: Well, that was my biggest problem for not completing my first year at UCSD. I went there straight out of high school. And my parents got divorced, so I kind of had to step up living with my mom and my little, my two little sisters. My sister was in high school and my baby sister was in elementary school still and my mom works a minimum wage job, and I felt like it was my responsibility to like be the next person, even though my dad does help a lot with child support. He gives more than enough, more than he is supposed to. But also like I don't like to take advantage of him and he has always raised us to be like really independent. So I thought I would be the one to step up and be the one to be there for my sisters and still to this day, I am the one that buys all the groceries, I am the one that cooks, I am the one that does like a lot of stuff. I am the mom in the house. I feel like my mom, she is my daughter. She became like the daughter, because the divorce was so big on her. It kind of caused her to fell in a depression. She kind of rebelled, like now she is a teenager. She wants to go out, she doesn't care for cleaning the house, she doesn't care for like feeding my little sisters. So I have to be the one to take care of my baby sisters. That's another big part.

MR: Yea, that is this one. Statement number 7: My responsibility towards my family makes it harder to succeed in college. So that's is also a reason of why you stopped going to UCSD?

DA: Yea, so my second year I completely worked full time, so that I could provide for my family. I have been trying to make it work, like coming to community college, but being a full time student and still working full time, it's extremely hard and you don't know which one to prioritize. If I should be more in school, I would love it if I could just focus on school, but unfortunately I cant. And now that I have to be in work, it's like do I study a little bit more or do I get some rest or do I get a little bit more hours at work so that I can help my family.

MR: So what would you want to do in life?

DA: I would love to be a broadcast journalist. I love it.

MR: Good, that's why you are here. Again the next statement fits in perfectly. Number 9: My determination to get a good job after college makes me want to keep going.

DA: Well, the biggest part is the financial problems. I think in families and students here in college, especially here in Southwestern, a lot of the students are like low middle-class. My thing has always been since I was in elementary that my dad has always been pushing us to get A's. When we got B's, we were in trouble. Cause of the same thing, because he has to work two jobs and he has to do all of this extra stuff to try and provide for our family. So he didn't want that for us, he wants us to have a nice and stable job. And do better than him in life, so that is why I am trying to get a really good job that I am passionate about and that I like for the most part and get paid for it.

…

MR: Nice. Okay, I think we can move on to this one. Yea. Number 18: You don't experience any hostility here on campus?

DA: Not here. Not even at UCSD either.

MR: No? But you said you didn't feel like you belonged there.

DA: No, I guess in a way that kind of is. But nobody personally would ever tell me anything or treat me if I was less, but everyone is like in their own zone. Like they're… At UCSD you are not the only A student anymore. In my class or in my high school, I graduated 16th out of 600 or something. And that is from a really good school. So like I am a really good student, but then when you go to UCSD, I think they are the top UC school: It's like you are no longer the top student. You are like competing with all the A students. I felt like being a minority and not being able to relate to somebody there, I didn't feel like I belonged there.

MR: You didn't meet any other Hispanic people there?

DA: I met some, but it was hard. I was like in my own bubble. I am shy at first, but then after you cant get me to shut up. But I don't know. I regret…. I feel like if I met other people, like if I talked to them, if I made those friendships or connections even with the faculty or someone earlier on or the biggest part if I had lived on campus, I would have not had to deal with all my problems at home and I would have been able to focus on my studies.

MR: Yea, but then your financial situation comes into play again.

DA: Yea.

…

MR: That's a good mentality to have. But again, still at UCSD, you felt like you didn't belong there. Is that because of the lack of recognition in other people, of your background I mean.

DA: Maybe if there was somebody who was similar to me and I could have felt more comfortable to reach out to them, or they could feel comfortable to reach out to me and I would have had that connection, then I would have felt more comfortable to stay, and we both are in the same place and I can relate to somebody and I would have felt like I belonged there. But I didn't have that connection with someone. So I just felt alone the whole time I was there.

MR: Uhu, and you don't particularly want to be enrolled in this specific college. Because number 26: My desire to be enrolled in this specific college makes me want to keep going. You disagree.

DA: I would love to go back. But I love this school. I prefer this school, but I know that I am not going to be able to graduate from here. My dream has always been to graduate from UCSD. I'm supposed to graduate this year, I mean my class is graduating, but I am technically still in my first year according to my credits. I would love to go back to UCSD one day.

…

MR: Any other things that you would do differently or change?

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DA: Definitely being involved. That's a huge thing. So here like being a part of the newspaper is big for me, because I feel like I belong to something and I feel like I have a purpose. I'm actually accomplishing something and even though this class doesn't count for anything for me. It does not transfer. So I am here, because I want to be here.

MR: Extra-curricular?

DA: I guess you could call it that. And In a way it helps me polish up my skills, because I want to do broadcast journalism and at UCSD they only have communication. So my major is going to be communication.

MR: And then live on campus this time?

DA: Yea, this time I would definitely live on campus.

MR: But then your financial situation, do you have like financial aid or something?

DA: For Southwestern right now no.

MR: And when you do move?

DA: I want to use that money when I go back to UCSD. So I am trying not to use the financial aid and try to just pay it here myself.

…

MR: What about the learning environment in both the university and this college. Statement 20.

DA: I don't think that It discourages me. If anything I feel like in encourages me to want to do better. And everyone here has a story, especially here at Southwestern. Like some people, they're already born rich over there at UCSD or they have already been brought up to be the best, like the top 1 percent in their classes and in school, and I feel like you can connect more with people here and everyone is pushing each other and everyone wants everyone to succeed. At least in this environment here in the newspaper, everyone wants everyone to succeed and everyone is really helpful. They are like no you can fix this part here or like you can edit this or edit that. You develop friendships, which helps them in their lives too.

…

DA: I went to two high schools. Hotai was pretty good. I mean I was always striving to be at the top. I took a lot of AP classes. I graduated 16th out of 600 students. I graduated… I always tried my best. I was very involved in school. I was in literally every sport that you could think of. I was in soccer, drag, cross country, dance and regular dance. Like I did everything. And that is what made my experience like really fun. And I was able to do both. Because at the same time you feel like you belong to something, you kind of schedule out your time more. Like say if I have cross country after school, I know that I had an hour to do my homework. Versus like just having school, I would be like oh I have the whole day to do my homework and then I pretty much end up don't doing it.

…

MR: Uh, what about your family. How have they supported you? I'm not sure if we have talked about this already, I'm sorry.

DA: Kind of. Well, my dad is big on us, like I said, on us getting a college degree and graduating so we can get a really good job. My mom, her side of the family, it's like they don't really care. They're more like towards the money. They just care about the money, they don't care about like knowledge is power and what we can do with ourselves and like creating a difference in the community. So my mom has never really been to this day, like my little sister is trying to do her homework until late at night and she is like go to sleep and I am like she is doing her homework. She is not very encouraging or she doesn't understand. And now she is going back to school, she is actually in school right now, so she is like oh D, I have to do all this homework and now I have this four hour class and I am like: yeah welcome. Now that she is going back to school, I think that she kind of understands it and she actually got out of school last, like the beginning, we started school in January for this semester. But she didn't finish, she got out of school, because she didn't finish the classes, they failed her. And right now she is doing one class. But is already really hard for her. So she kind of understands now how hard it is. Times like five more classes for what I am doing.

…

DA: Uhhh, apart from the newspaper I don't really feel like I have a lot of friends here. Because they just go to school and then it's school, work, school, work. So one of my other classes, no I have two other classes and I don't think I really talk to anyone. Apart from school stuff, like when we are in class and talk about assignments or whatever, but I don't think I know anything about them.

MR: But like you said, they have like the similar aspirations as you and they are very serious about getting out of here.

DA: Some people still like they have to be here, but they don't. It's a privilege to be in school and that is what I didn't understand before. I thought that I had just gotten in and that I was lucky, but it was a privilege for me to be in school, even here. Because me from last year, I had to work full time. Like I didn't have any other choice, like my income was the only income and it still kind of is, my mom is kind of unemployed right now and she has been for seven months now. So I am the only person that is providing for my house. But I feel like I can do both now. I have been able to manage my time a lot better so that it doesn't stress me out anymore and I am focused and I know where I want to be and I have goals and I know what I need to do to get them. So I'm more organized and prepared versus me of a few years ago.

…

MR: What do you think about the difficulty level of the courses here compared to UCSD for example?

DA: I feel like they're not easier, but more helpful if that makes sense. They are not easier like in content, but they are more helpful, because the classes are smaller. There are like 30-something students or less versus over there, there are huge classes with like over 100 students and it's like you're just another number to them. It's not like you are a student. Even though you can come to their office hours, they have so many students that to me I always felt like a number there, versus here, they can be like: hey D, what is going on here? Oh you missed an assignment here or like what is going on or why aren't you doing so well? You know, I feel like there is more of an, a closer connection between the teachers and the students here than over there.

…

MR: Okay, maybe you should check it out if you want if you have time of course. So is there any statement that I have missed that you would like to talk about that really helps you or makes it more difficult for you or one that you would like to talk more about?

DA: I think that when I'll go back that what will help me more or if I could have told myself before, like the old me, is to be more involved, to be more involved with the teachers, with the content. Like if I had questions is should ask them and not be content with that I didn't know it. I should actually do something about it. And develop more friendships, be on campus as much as I can like even though I was there like literally the whole day. Like actually do something on campus, not sit and do nothing or be on my phone or I don't know. I would isolate myself. So actually be involved with the sports or be in sports or something to become a part of the school. I feel like it's fun and not like torture to be all those hours in class or whatever. Oh and also, take out loans. Because if money wasn't an issue a lot of the stuff would have been prevented. But that's okay. Everything happens for a reason. Take out loans and live on campus.

Interview 21: Susana

MR: yes, so here is number 7. Why is that?

S: my responsibility towards my family? Because since my parents have no education. They can't get good jobs. So they cant rely on just … so when we have 5 kids and my two parents and so I had to start working since I was 16. As soon as I turned 16 I got a job and so yeah, I have been really dependent on my family. Because my father became an addict and so it is just me and my mother paying all the bills. So until this day it's just her and me.

MR: you said you had 4 siblings?

S: I have 4 siblings.

MR: are they younger than you?

S: I have two younger and two older. Right now they finally got jobs because they are old enough. But it is still in transition to them, working. Getting more hours.

MR: what about the older ones?

S: The older ones. One is in LA and one lives with us. But they don't really contribute. So it is mainly my mother and I. My father recently got back with us, so he is helping out but yeah.

MR: what do you think about your siblings not helping out?

S: well, the younger ones I understand. Because you know, I was the one who told them I don't want you to work because I want you to be in school. There is nobody in my family had been to college, or high school even in Mexico.

…

S: As I mentioned at my story I had to work since I was 16. And which obviously, I was working 30 hours in high school and then after high school I would go to work and would get home around 9 / 10 pm and then I would do homework and then I would wake up again and do the same thing all week. I did that for 4 years. And then I became a manager. And so I was working 40 hours a week. 14 credits and I was working with max too in college. And so right now I have 3 jobs. And I have 12 credits. And I'm a teacher at my church on Sundays. I help out with the .. on Thursdays. I mean the only day I don't have a day off. So work is really difficult for me because since I have 3 jobs. One is here with max and the other two are ….. I recently got that job. And the other one I am a vender, which I do that in my own time.

MR: Okay, how do you combine it all?

S: Okay, I have a planner. That's this one here. I brought it up for a reason. I have chaotic weeks, look. This is my planner. I have the vender I have here. The time, location, I have all my homework, my personal to do list, my work to do list, journals. And that is, I really, my schedule goes something like this:

Monday, I work one job and then I go to church after that I go to do homework which ends my job around 6 pm. And then the Tuesdays and Thursdays I have school from 7 – 9. I have work 9.30 – 2.30 and then I have school 3 till 6.30 pm and then I have church, both days, tuesday and thursday until 9.30 pm. You see why I leave my house at 6.30 and get home at 9.30 pm. And then Wednesday and Friday I did the same thing, one job, another job and then have like this evangelism thing with the youth in my church.

It's one week and the other week I don't. I stay home and do homework. And then Saturday's my day off. I have a whole bunch of math and chemistry homework that I do so the whole day is homework and then also I have prayer at 7 am. And Sundays I am a teacher and then I have the afternoon for homework and myself.

…

MR: yes, definitely. What would you say… do you have a priority? School or?

S: my priority is church. My teaching, those little 10 little kids, depend on me. That I will teach correctly, and not something that the parents will dislike or something that is not in the bible. To me, church will always be my priority.

MR: okay, and where is school?

S: It's actually in between. Because for me it is church, my family. My family is actually second. Well it depends on what is going on in church. But you know, side by side and then it's work and school side by side. But I will always prefer school before work.

MR: Okay. So, what do you want to do after?

S: I came into college thinking I want to be a business major, international business and business administration and get my masters degree and do things internationally. But as the years continued, I want to continue with my business degree but I want to build like a charity with kind of like, what is it called? Like counselors but as a personal experience I didn't get enough help from my counselors. And I honestly I am very discouraged with counselors. So I want to make like this business with this place that follows, you know goes searching for kids/people like me who don't know anything about college and anything. And I want to personally like motivate them to succeed; to you know you can

do it, to find the resources. To give them the right addresses, because even with the help here in college you don't know a lot until somebody tells you about it. So that is what I want to do with my business major.

…

MR: are you looking to transfer by the way?

S: I was. I was supposed to transfer this week. I mean this semester. But my counselors messed up so I have to take another year. They told me I needed one more math class but they said you can transfer without it. But no. So I would have done other things if I would have known in advance. I might, because I don't really see the necessary of having a degree if I have achieved so much without a degree already and I am only 20. I see it more of, if you really want it you go for it that degree. Obviously it helps a lot. I know it does. But at the same time I feel like I am wasting time, effort and money. Coming to college, and I don't have a degree or anything and I am already doing so well.

…

S: Oh yeah but the college degree. I really don't believe we need one. I really want one and it is very beneficial but at the same time I am really just, I guess you can say tired of working and studying and not going anywhere. I have been in college 2 years. I was supposed to transfer last semester but because of my counselors, really discouraged me. It makes me really..

MR: frustrated?

S: so frustrated. And I really kind of want to go to ministry school. That's why.

MR: ministry school?

S: like get my degree and to be like a pastor, something like that.

MR: so what do your parents think about you being in college?

S: they are very proud, yes they are very proud. They motivate me, because they didn't even go to middle school. They probably went to elementary and didn't even graduate the elementary and all my family also. So, the fact that in both sides of my family, both generations I am the first one to be in college, they are very proud. Especially because I am working, you know, I am teaching at my church. I am in a club and I am the vice president and the secretary and I just.. I do so much. They are very proud.

…

MR: why this college btw?

S: why this college? Because it is close by. Because it is a typical tradition from my high school that is across the street to go from that high school to this college. I didn't want to go to University. I had the opportunity to go to University right away. But with my financial situation I didn't want to. Also, because I didn't know what to study. So, I chose this college. And I didn't want to go anywhere else because there is a lot of traffic going there. And because Max was here.