The Persistence and Ethnic Identity of Latino Fraternity Members at Predominately White Institutions in the South: A Qualitative Approach

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ABSTRACT

The present study explored how Latino fraternity members at Predominately White Institutions in the Southeast perceive their affiliation affects their collegiate persistence and ethnic identity development through an interpretive qualitative research design. Torres's Bicultural Orientation Model served as the framework. Participants solidified their ethnic identity during their college careers. Fraternal interactions and their college environment enhanced or helped them solidify their ethnic identity. Latino fraternity members perceived their involvement enhanced their academic persistence through various aspects of brotherhood and academic expectations. Implications for advisors and future research are discussed.

Keyword: Persistence, ethnic identity, Latino fraternity members, predominately White institutions, qualitative approach, Latino students

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my entire family, especially my mother, Olga, and father, Rafael, for bringing me to the United States to become who I am today. I dedicate this to my better half and *she-ro* Diana; to Robin, may your wings take you near and far; and to all my future children. To my immediate family, extended family, friends, children, and reader, may this serve as an inspiration for your success, whatever success may mean to you. If I, did it, so can you!

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Student involvement increases student persistence and assists in the student's overall development (Astin, 1984; Kuh et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975). College student development can be complex and depends on many factors. Fraternity and sorority life keep students engaged on campus and in their community (Garcia, 2020). These organizations are often a home away from home, especially for students who are part of underrepresented populations (Adam, 1999). According to Torbenson (2009), over time, the number of cultural minority students has increased in US colleges, and it was only natural for ethnic Greek-lettered organizations to arise to create cohesiveness between these groups. Ethnic Greek-lettered organizations, in turn, have helped students create a self-image with various positive qualities (Case & Hernandez, 2013). One of these qualities is their ethnic identity, which develops over time with many environmental factors (Garcia & Dwyer, 2018). The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, US. Moreover, it is vital to recognize that this ethnic and social identity is complex and carries many labels, such as Latino/a/x, Hispanic, or Chicano/a (Rios, 2008). These social labels are deeply explored in chapter two; however, the term Latinx will be used as an inclusive term for this dissertation,

while Latino is specific to a male and Latina to a female. Additional specific definitions can be found at the end of this chapter.

Student organizations exist for multiple reasons, from social purposes to academic encouragement. As the number of Latinx students in the United States has significantly increased over the last 20 years, it paved the way for the rise of Latinx Greek Lettered Organizations (LGLOs) in US colleges and universities (Excelencia in Education, 2019). The Latinx student enrollment increase helps to enhance their ethnic identity as minority students gravitate to one another (Garcia et al., 2018). Cultural and ethnic Greek-lettered organizations started in the early 1900s with African American Greek-lettered organizations across the United States (McClure, 2006). Furthermore, limited studies show the experiences between LGLOs and their members' ethnic identity development (Guardia & Evans 2008; McClure, 2006). While few studies examine these two topics, they carry many limitations: location and institution type (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Nuñez 2004; Sanchez, 2011).

Latinx Student Persistence in Higher Education

According to *Excelencia* in Education (2019), a Washington DC non-profit organization dedicated to accelerating Latinx student success and a significant education policy influencer, Latinx students' college enrollment has increased over the last ten years. Furthermore, the Latinx population is the largest minoritized group in the US, as 18.5% of the US population identified as Latinx during the 2020 US census (2021). Moreover, the Latinx population in the United States is predicted to more than double by 2050 (Krogstad, 2014). Despite the Latinx expected growth, the number of Latinx earning two- and four-year college degrees is not proportionate to other ethnic groups

(Excelencia in Education, 2019). In 2019, Latinxs made up approximately 13% of the entire US college undergraduate population (Excelencia in Education, 2019). Noguera, Hurtado, and Fergus (2012) completed a review of the widening gender gap across race and Latinx origin college students. This gap was more pronounced at the bachelor's degree level, with Latinx having the most substantial gap and Asians having the slightest difference. As a result, statistics show that the Latinx education pipeline is not as promising as everyone else's, yet their overall population is expected to increase.

Furthermore, Noguera et al., (2012) found dismal results for Latinx in the education pipeline. Latinos are being outperformed by their female counterparts in both graduating from high school and college. According to Noguera et al., (2012), there is equal representation among Latinas and Latinos at the graduate school level, while Latinos have slightly higher numbers at the doctorate level. According to the Pew Research center, while the Latinx educational levels of K-12 and post-secondary continue to rise, they tend to be lower than other groups in the US (Krogstad, 2016; Noe-Bustamante, 2020). At the master's level, Latinos have the same degree attainment rate as Native American and African American males (Noguera et al., 2012). These numbers represent the Latinx population of students in the US education pipeline and the gender gap within the Latinx community.

Like many underrepresented populations, Latinx students face many adversities in attaining a post-secondary degree in the United States. Many come from low socio-economic backgrounds and tend to have added responsibilities for sustaining specific family affairs throughout their collegiate career (Brown et al., 2003). Moreover, Latinx college students may face low academic expectations, discrimination and cannot find

support from Latinx faculty or staff due to their small existence on college campuses (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Valencia, 2010). Being accepted to college is the first hurdle Latinx students overcome; getting adjusted to campus life and persisting through graduation are among the more significant challenges they face (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1996; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Furthermore, due to their population increase in the US, the Latinx educational achievement is an essential benchmark for assessing contributions to the United States' economic and civil health (Brown et al., 2003; Padilla, 2001). Thus, research on the college Latinx student experience that positively affects their retention and persistence in post-secondary education should be performed for higher education institutions to adequately serve this growing student population (Kiyama et al., 2015).

Ethnic Greek-lettered Organizations & Ethnic Identity Development

Active campus involvement positively affects student persistence, retention, academics, and graduation rates (Astin, 1984; Kuh et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975). Through student organizations and fraternity and sorority life, students continuously stay engaged in their respective college campuses. Greek-lettered organizations date back to the early 1800s; however, they differed from what we see today as they were exclusively for wealthy White males (Torbenson, 2009). Greek-lettered organizations are often safe spaces, especially for students far away from home and hold an oppressed identity (Guardia & Evans 2008; McClure, 2006; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013). Since then, ethnic-based Greek-lettered organizations have expanded throughout the nation (Torbenson, 2009).

Based on Phinney's theory of ethnic identity development (1993), students explore their ethnic identity in three stages, (1) *Unexamined Ethnic Identity (Diffusion-foreclosure)*, (2) *Ethnic Identity Search/Moratorium,* and (3) *Ethnic Identity Achievement*. Where and when they achieve the last stage, *ethnic identity achievement,* depends on their environment and acculturation levels. LGLOs serve as a home away from home and provide social and scholastic support through graduation, which may catalyze Phinney's identity development stages (Adams, 1999). Ethnic Greek-lettered organizations have helped students create a positive self-image while academically retaining them (McClure, 2006; Ross, 2000). Researchers have shown Greek-lettered organizations help facilitate the ethnic identity of African American students; however, there are very few studies that focus on the ethnic identities of Latino fraternity members (Guardia & Evans 2008; McClure, 2006; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013). Ross (2000) and McClure (2006) concluded that members who are part of historically African American fraternities and sororities have a well-defined history and are more in tune with the struggles of the African American population in the United States. Moreover, researchers have found that students who are part of LGLOs in specific areas of the United States tend to have a more defined sense of ethnic self, suggesting these students are more academically successful than those who are not part of these organizations (Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Nuñez 2004; Sanchez, 2011).

Moreno and Banuelos asserted that for Latinx students to navigate their undergraduate careers successfully, they must merge their identity with their institution (2013). Furthermore, they indicated that LGLOs allow this to happen as these

organizations provide benefits beyond the social components that other general student organizations provide (Moreno & Banuelos, 2013). LGLOs and other ethnic Greek-lettered organizations imitate a family-like environment supporting and encouraging members to succeed in college (Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Torbenson, 2009). The literature suggests that these student-led organizations fill the support void universities have as they catalyze their on-campus student engagement without letting go of their cultural values and beliefs (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Guardia, & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Nuñez 2004; Sanchez, 2011). While these studies show an increase or enhancement in ethnic identity when participating in an LGLO, they carry many limitations.

Nuñez (2004) focused on a Latina sorority in a Predominately White Institution (PWI) and found a positive correlation between participating in an LGLO and their ethnic identity. Guardia and Evans (2008) focused on a Latino fraternity at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Southeast of the United States. Sanchez (2011) focused on the Latino fraternity members at a PWI in the Southwest. Delgado-Guerrero and Gloria (2013), Delgado-Guerrero et al., (2014), and Garcia (2020) focused on various Latina sororities at PWIs in the Midwest. Moreno and Banuelos (2013) focused on Latina sororities and one Latino fraternity at PWIs in the West of the United States. Finally, Orta et al., (2019) focused on a Latina sorority in a prestigious PWI in the Southwest. These researchers suggest that LGLOs provide a positive impact on the Latinx college student experience. Therefore, there is a need for researchers and educators to assess these organizations through different lenses to understand how they may enhance student support and student persistence. The literature lacks studies exploring the ethnic identity

of Latino fraternity members at PWI's in the Southeast of the United States; thus, the present study adds to this literature.

Statement of Problem

Few research studies connect the collegiate experiences of Latinx Greek members and their ethnic identity development, a vast gap still exists. The Latinx student population will significantly increase over time, and thus, they will populate US colleges and universities. Therefore, keeping track of Latinx students' educational achievement in the United States is vital to effectively evaluate this population's influences on its economic and educational development (Brown et al., 2003). As a result, research on the college Latinx student experience that affects their persistence and overall student success in post-secondary education should be performed for higher education professionals to serve this rising population more appropriately.

Purpose of the Study

The present qualitative study explored the perceptions of Latino fraternity member's ethnic identities at PWIs in Georgia as there is a lack of research in this specific area. The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, USA. LGLOs are complex organizations that differ from the mainstream predominantly White fraternities and sororities (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Nuñez, 2004; Sanchez, 2011). The study focused on Latino fraternity members at PWIs in the South, specifically in Georgia. No research has emerged to explore this

population's ethnic identity development at a PWI in the Southeast of the United States or the state of Georgia.

Research Design

Using a constructivist approach, the present study sought to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia through a basic qualitative research design. As noted by Merriam and Associates, "The overall purpose [of basic qualitative research] is to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences" (2002, p. 38). Thus, a basic research design was appropriate for this study as the primary purpose was to uncover and interpret these experiences (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to the scope of the study, purposeful and criterion sampling techniques were implemented. Patton (2015) described criterion sampling as the best method in obtaining participants who must meet a specific set of standards. Furthermore, Patton (2015) noted that "Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research; thus, the term purposeful sampling" (p. 53). These two sampling techniques were used in this study to ensure the sample provided rich qualitative data about the experiences of individuals who share specific criteria.

Research Questions

To help interpret and understand the unexplored lived experiences of Latinx fraternity members warrants a qualitative investigation. The following research questions served as a guide for this study:

RQ 1. How do Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity?

RQ 2. How do Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their college persistence and ethnic identity at Predominately White Institutions in Georgia?

Data Collection

The data collection was completed through interviews, and it started as soon as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was approved. Seidman (2013) indicated that at the root of interviewing "is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make out of that experience" and "that at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (p. 9). The determination to uncover and understand the stories of Latino fraternity members' worth at PWIs drove this study. Seidman's (2013) three-interview approach was used; however, one 90-minute semi-structured interview was conducted instead to prevent participant dropout. A $15.00 gift card was given to all interviewees to help recruit participants.

Active attempts to recruit from all available PWIs in Georgia with LGLOs were made. These post-secondary institutions include the University of Georgia (UGA), Kennesaw State University (KSU), University of West Georgia (UWG), Georgia Southern University (GS), and Valdosta State University (VSU). While these five institutions vary in size, they are considered PWIs in Georgia and have at least one Latino Greek-lettered organization. This maximum variation for this specific population strengthens the proposed study's validity and reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants were recruited by outreaching their respective fraternity and sorority life offices and using various already established connections. Additionally, an online Qualtrics survey was implemented to ensure inquiring participants met the criteria to participate in the study. To provide different experiences, participants must have the

following requirements: (1) be part of a Latino fraternity; and (2) currently attend one of the mentioned PWIs or have graduated within one year from their respective institution.

According to Patton (2015), there are no rules that dictate sample size, except for the following: the study's purpose, information usefulness, credibility, and available resources. Because the study intends to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, ten participants were interviewed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Furthermore, Latino fraternities tend to be small, with an average of fifteen members per chapter (Garcia, 2020); however, most Georgia LGLOs have five or fewer active members; therefore, this small sample size was appropriate for this study.

As previously noted, specific terms may have multiple meanings throughout different academic and social realms. The following terms are used throughout this dissertation study.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation. Is the product of cultural learning that occurs as a result of contact between the members of more than one culturally different groups (Casas & Pytluk, 1995).

Ethnic Greek Lettered Organization(s). A college student organization with Greek letters as part of their name that historically focuses on issues and culture of specific groups of people. While these organizations may focus on one or more culture(s), any student can join the organization regardless of their social identities (Torbenson, 2009).

Fraternity and Sorority Life. A term describing college students' lifestyle or a set of student organizations with Greek letters in their name. Often interchangeably with *Greek Life* (Torbenson, 2009).

Greek Life. A term describing college students' lifestyle or a set of student organizations with Greek letters in their name. Often interchangeably with *Fraternity and Sorority Life* (Torbenson, 2009).

Hispanic(s). A term used to describe an individual or a group of individuals who speak Spanish. Researchers may use this specific term or sometimes use Hispanic and Latinx interchangeably to identify the same population. While this study focuses explicitly on males of this social identity, the literature review may interchangeably use these terms to refer to the same community (Casas & Pytluk, 1995).

Hispanic Serving Institution(s) (HSI). A term used to describe a higher education institution with an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students of at least 25% Hispanic students (US Department of Education, 2020).

Historically White Fraternities and Sororities. A college student organization with Greek letters in its name that historically only allowed European-White Americans to join due to educational segregation and racism. At this time, any student, regardless of race or ethnicity, can join these organizations. May also be referred to as *Mainstream Fraternities and Sororities (*Torbenson*, 2009)*.

Historically African American Fraternities and Sororities. A college student organization with Greek letters as part of their name that historically focuses on issues that affect the African American community. While these organizations may focus on predominately one heritage, any student can join these organizations regardless of race or ethnicity (Torbenson, 2009).

Latina(s). A gender binary term that describes individuals from Cuban, Mexican, Puerto-Rican, South, and Central American heritage who identify as female but do not

necessarily speak Spanish. The word may also describe a group of females only. Researchers may use this specific term or sometimes use Hispanic and Latino/x interchangeably to identify the same population type (Salinas, 2020).

Latino(s). A gender binary term describes individuals from Cuban, Mexican, Puerto-Rican, South, and Central American heritage who identify as male but do not necessarily speak Spanish. This term may also mean a group of individuals who identify with these heritages but consist of both genders within the binary gender spectrum. The word may also describe a group of males only. Researchers may use this term or sometimes use Hispanic and Latino/x interchangeably to identify the same population type. While this study focuses explicitly on males of this social identity, the literature review may interchangeably use these terms to refer to the same kind of community (Salinas, 2020).

Latino Greek Letter Organization(s) (LGLO). A college student organization with Greek letters as part of their name that historically focuses on issues that affect the Latinx population. While these organizations may focus on predominately one heritage, any student can join these organizations regardless of race or ethnicity. The term was originally coined with the word *Latino*, rather than any other terminology for this identity (Torbenson, 2009).

Latinx. A non-gender binary term describes an individual from Cuban, Mexican, Puerto-Rican, South, and Central American heritage but does not necessarily speak Spanish. An inclusive term that does not adhere to the traditional gender binary system. Recent researchers have started to readily use this specific term to encompass all

individuals within the gender spectrum. This term may also be interchangeable with Hispanic and Latina/o to identify the same population type (Salinas & Lozano, 2019).

Mainstream Fraternities and Sororities. A college student organization with Greek letters in its name that historically only allowed European-White Americans to join due to educational segregation and racism. At this time, any student, regardless of race or ethnicity, can join these organizations. May also be referred to as *Historically White Fraternities and Sororities* (Torbenson, 2009).

Predominately White Institution (PWI). A term used to describe a higher education institution with an enrollment of majority of White students and have embedded practices based on Whiteness (Bourke, 2016).

Student Retention. A term used to describe a college student who stays in the same institution from one year to the next. Retention is defined as an institutional effort (Oseguera et al., 2009).

Student Persistence. A term used to describe a college student who stays in the path of college degree completion, but not necessarily in the same institution they started their collegiate career. Persistence is defined as the outcome of student behavior (Oseguera et al., 2009).

Significance of the Study

Persistence is required for degree completion, regardless of the type of post-secondary degree. Latinx students have lower retention and graduation rates than their White-European counterparts (Excelencia in Education, 2019). Moreover, Latinos tend to have even lower retention and graduation rates; thus, higher education institutions will benefit by updating the student success practices for this growing American population

(Pérez, 2014; Pérez & Taylor, 2016; Pérez & Saenz, 2017). Guardia and Evans (2008) suggested that being part of an ethnic Greek-lettered organization enhances and increases their member's ethnic identity by reinforcing a similar cultural atmosphere they experience before attending a higher education institution. Thereby, being involved in these organizations creates an excellent persistence and retention tool for post-secondary institutions. The conducted study attempted to provide an insight into understanding this underrepresented population for higher education professionals to progress Latinx students to degree completion through LGLOs. Researchers have identified ethnic exploration, and organizations like these that may help increase the success of Latinx college students (ASHE, 2013; Torres et al., 2009). Thus, this study's results may incentivize higher education institutions to intentionally diversify their fraternity and sorority life to increase their overall Latinx student success rates. Finally, the results may provide a further understanding of how to maintain Latino students in college as there is an education gap in Latino students compared to Latina students and other collegiate student groups in the United States (Pérez, 2014; Pérez & Taylor, 2016; Pérez & Saenz, 2017).

Organization of the Study

The organization of this dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the problem and rationale for the study, and the research questions. Chapter two consists of a literature review of the critical topics and conceptional framework of the study. The literature review includes relevant ethnic identity development theories of Latinx students, the factors of Latinx student persistence in higher education, and an overview of fraternity and sorority life, ethnic Greek-lettered

organizations, and LGLOs. Chapter three overviews the study's methodology, including a discussion of the research sites, data collection, and analysis procedures. Chapter four presents the results of the research study, including participant profiles and excerpts. Chapter five showcases the findings and explore the thematic analysis. Chapter six concludes the study and discusses practical implications, limitations, and future research recommendations.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide additional guidance to the study, a review of the existing literature was essential. While the Latinx student population has increased over the last two decades, few studies have understood how Latino Greek-lettered Organizations (LGLOs) affect their collegiate persistence and ethnic identity development. Moreover, the studies between LGLOs members in Predominately White Institutions (PWI) are slim (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Garcia, 2020; Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Nuñez, 2004; Sanchez, 2011). As a result of this gap, the present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, USA. Consequently, chapter two consists of a relevant literature review to explore these topics.

Using a Latinx college student lens, a review of relevant ethnic identity development theories are reviewed. Additionally, the complicated terminology for this social identity was explored. Then, PWIs were explored as an environmental factor in the development and success of Latino students. After that, additional persistence factors of Latino college students were surveyed while focusing on student life. Lastly, a review of

fraternity and sorority life will be conducted to end with ethnic Greek-lettered organizations and LGLOs, emphasizing the state of Georgia, USA.

Conceptual Framework

Many scholars have studied and expanded the racial and ethnic identity development: Black identity (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), White identity (Helms & Cook, 1999), Asian American identity (Kim, 2001), Native American identity (LaFromboise et al., 1990; Grande, 2004; Horse, 2012), Biracial identity (Osei-Kofi, 2012), Multiracial identity (Wijeyesinghe, 2012), ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990; 1993) and Latinx identity (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Torres, 1999). According to Patton et al., (2016), these works are primarily grounded on personality theories (Erikson, 1959; Marcia, 1966) and social identity (Tajfell, 1981). According to Phinney (1990), ethnic identity development is one of the three main frameworks around social identity theory. Furthermore, the plethora of research on these topics rests in four social sciences: counseling, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Patton et al., 2016). College student development lies in the psychology and counseling area, which reviews the ethnic identity of groups or individuals. These identities are composed of many factors that contribute to the development of someone's ethnic identity, and because of its fluid nature, it has been hard to have a collective definition of ethnic identity (Cokley, 2015).

Nonetheless, it is essential to distinguish the differences and define ethnicity and race, as they can be complex social identities, especially in the Latinx community (Taylor et al., 2012). Latinx or Hispanic is an ethnic group and is not a racial description either. According to Patton et al., (2016), "ethnicity means a pattern of culture, traditions, customs, and norms unique to, but also shared within, an ethnic community.' (p. 130). In

contrast, race is socially constructed with a subjective grouping based on privilege and power (Patton et al., 2016). In short, "Ethnicity refers to an organization of people with their cultural, racial, and linguistic characteristics, whereas race refers to inherited physical qualities" (Bernal et al., 1993, p. 34).

Moreover, ethnic identity "is a multidimensional concept that can change for an individual over time, develops from sharing culture, religion, geography, and language with individuals who are often connected by strong loyalty and kinship" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 134). These factors differ across the different parts of the nation and impact Latinx college students' ethnic identity development. Furthermore, as someone's ethnic identity develops over time, the levels of acculturation may also change. Acculturation refers to the variations in values, behaviors, and beliefs that result from desired or undesired alteration to the dominant society (Berry, 1993; 2005). According to researchers, ethnic identity and acculturation play a vital part in developing someone's ethnic identity as they both have internal and external factors that vary independently (Sodowky et al., 1995; Torres, 1999). Therefore, these components play a pivotal part in the various ethnic identity development theories explored in this literature review.

Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity

Jean Phinney was a pioneer theorist of ethnic identity development. Phinney's work was based on James Marcia's prototype of ethnic identity development (Marcia, 1966; Patton et al., 2016). Marcia's work was grounded on Erickson's developmental stages, and his model allowed him to empirically study the experiences of White men (Patton et al., 2016). In contrast, Phinney based her theory on the growing commonalities across different adolescent minority groups (Phinney, 1989, 1990, 1992). Phinney's

(1993) model is a three-stage linear model of ethnic identity development: (1) *Unexamined Ethnic Identity (Diffusion-foreclosure)*, (2) *Ethnic Identity Search/Moratorium,* and (3) *Ethnic Identity Achievement*.

According to Phinney (1993), phase one - *Unexamined Ethnic Identity (Diffusion-foreclosure)* is when there is a lack of interest in ethnicity, and there is no questioning of the majority group about their identity. This phase has two subtypes: *diffusion* is when their ethnicity is not an issue, and there is no interest in exploring it, while *foreclosure* is when views of ethnicity are based on the options of others, but also without exploration. In this phase, Latinx college students may not be interested in knowing or exploring their ethnicity or have created an image of their ethnicity but are uninterested in exploring it. According to Patton et al., (2016), "adolescents who accept negative attitudes displayed by the majority group toward the minority group are at risk of internalizing these values" (p. 135). The internalization of these negative attitudes became apparent as minority students who explored their ethnic identity had higher self-esteem (Phinney, 1995, Phinney & Alipuria, 1990).

Stage two is an *ethnic identity search or moratorium* (Phinney, 1993). In this stage, individuals become exposed to cultural issues that allow them to question and face their ethnic background. Adolescents start their ethnic exploration as they experience discrimination or harassment by the majority group. Oppression and racism tend to cause minorities to move on to stage two. Furthermore, they may experience anger toward the majority culture as it is now seen as an oppressor (Torres et al., 2003). In this stage, Latinx college students may start to research their heritage and discuss their roots with a

family member, reflecting on what it means to be Latinx but are not necessarily committing to the identity.

As Latinx college students struggle to find themselves in US society, they must be in the dominant culture. Their oppressive, discriminatory, and racist experiences lead them to move through the different stages until they reach the last one. The third and final stage is where students accept a healthy bicultural identity (Phinney, 1993). Individuals in this stage have a clear sense of their ethnic identity and have a confident demeanor (Casas & Pytluk, 1995). As minority individuals go through these stages, they may experience separation from the dominant societal norm, making minorities gravitate to one another (Phinney 1993). This natural segregation helped create minority-based student organizations and, eventually, LGLOs in US colleges and universities.

Phinney's (1993) work expanded through various areas, which helped established a significant portion of the ethnic identity development literature. Phinney's theory has been used for college students; however, the linear model makes Latinx students move through sequential stages. These stages do not account for various environmental factors contributing to ethnic identity development, limiting this theory, especially for college students. While Phinney (1993) established the groundwork for ethnic identity development, two additional models have appeared to help study the complex Latinx ethnic identity: the Latino racial identity orientation model (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001) and the Bicultural Orientation Model (BOM) (Torres, 1999). Furthermore, as this literature review focuses on the Latinx community and their ethnic identity development, as previously noted, it is important to denote the terminology used in the literature and how the population may identify themselves in the social realm and the academic text.

Hispanic, Latino/a/x, and Chicano/a Terminology

For the Latinx community in the United States, the terminology used to describe their ethnicity and race identities can be complex. The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Report quoted a Latinx higher education administrator and a Latinx college student from two separate studies that depict the complexities in the terminology of this social identity:

> My identity depends on whom I'm talking to. It depends on which setting I'm in. If I'm writing, I call myself a Chicana. If I'm in a group of people who are in the community, who are the people who really are involved in community affairs like arts, those kinds of things, writers, literary people, Chicana is what I use [because] it's more politicized in those circles. At home and talking to other people, I would say Mexican American, and with people who speak Spanish, I would say Mexicana. Within the university, [because] these terms are used all the time — Higher education administrator.
>
> If people ask me what ethnicity I am, unless they ask me what country, I will just say Hispanic or Latino depending on whom I'm talking to. If I know that the word "Hispanic" bothers people, then I'll say Latino. But if they ask me from what country, then I'll say [the] Dominican Republic. I see being Dominican Republic more as my culture than my ethnicity... If they're asking about my ethnicity, I would say Hispanic. If they were asking me about my culture, I would say Dominican —College student (ASHE, 2013, p. 26).

These experiences show the uniqueness and diversity of individuals who identify with this social identity describe themselves. In addition, researchers suggest that “social

identity development involves a fluid process of social construction and is contingent on contextual factors" (ASHE, 2013, p. 28). This fluidity is evident as 51% of this group primarily use their country of origin to identify themselves, while 24% identify as either Hispanic or Latino/a. Furthermore, more than 69% of Latinx believe they all have different cultures rather than a shared culture (Taylor et al., 2012). This diversity in terminology also exists in the academic literature. In the higher education literature, the term most often used is Hispanic or Latino/a/x, even though most of the captured experiences are from individuals whose ancestry is from Mexico as a direct result of migration waves (Salinas & Lozano, 2019; Torres, 2004; Urbina & Wright, 2015).

The mentioned social identities are often used interchangeably but have different meanings. The American government created the term *Hispanic* during the Nixon administration. According to Casas and Pytluk (1995), this term aimed to group everyone who spoke Spanish and had ties to Spain. The term includes everyone whose national origin is from the Spanish-speaking countries of South America and the Caribbean (i.e., Columbia, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, etc.), the countries of Central America (i.e., Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama), the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean (i.e., the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico) and Mexico (Casas & Pytluk, 1995). The term does not include Spain even though the U.S. Census Bureau (2020) "defines Hispanic or Latino as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (para. 1).

The term Latino/a was then introduced to include everyone in South America and the Caribbean who do not speak Spanish but share cultural similarities. These countries

include Brazil, French Guiana, Suriname, Haiti, and other Caribbean islands. Latino/a is more inclusive and tends to be more favored over Hispanic in the college-educated because it removes the Spanish colonial power associated with the U.S. government made up the term – Hispanic (Oqueano, 1998; Salinas, 2020). Furthermore, the word Latino/a is derived from the more extended version of *Latino Americano/a,* which uses the Spanish gender binary endings that Spanish speakers are accustomed to using. In contrast, Hispanic uses the English rules (Shorris, 1992). While the gender binary provided comfort for some, scholars and activists were not, which resulted in the recent creation of the term Latinx.

Latinx was introduced in the mid-2000s to reflect Spanish grammar, language, phonetics, identity, and religion (Salinas & Lozano, 2019). The term created comfort and discomfort in the community as it attempts to integrate individuals who may not identify themselves within the gender binary of male and female (Salinas, 2020). Furthermore, according to Salinas (2020),

> The term Latinx continues to evolve and challenge how academics and activists perceive social identity for people of Latin American origin and descent. Given that the term Latinx has gained popularity in most academic and activist spaces, the usage of the term has not explored the myriad complexities of how it has been constructed and reproduced within higher education spaces when referring to Latin Americans. (p. 151)

As such, it may still be too soon if individuals may use this as a personal identifier instead of Latino/a or Hispanic. Salinas (2020) conducted a recent study with college students and found that while some identify themselves as Latinx, they only do so in an

academic setting and use Latino or Hispanic in a non-academic setting. These results are consistent with earlier excerpts from the ASHE report (2013), as they both depict a change of social identity terminology depended on the audience.

Lastly, Chicano/a is also utilized in the literature as another Latinx social identity. A Chicano/a is a Latinx individual who can trace their heritage to Indo-Hispanic or Mexican ancestors who live or lived in the Southwestern part of the United States (Delgado & Palacio, 1998). In addition, the term can also be inclusive to describe any Mexican heritage individual who lives in the United States; however, the term is mainly used in the Southwest and West coast. Furthermore, as previously noted, the higher education professional above identified herself as a Chicana; therefore, we could infer that she is Mexican American from those parts of the country. On the contrary, those with Mexican linage or heritage on the East coast tend to use Mexican, Mexican American, Latino/a, or Hispanic as the term Chicano/a has a more profound representation of the native Mexican American people who used to live in the Southwest of the United States (Delgado & Palacio, 1998).

In conclusion, while the purpose of all of these terms was to depict the same social identity terms that meant to be inclusive at different times in history based on common language and culture, it left out the race component. As previously noted, the US Census Bureau (2020) denotes that race is irrelevant on whether a person fell in this social identity, but this was not the case in the early 1900s. According to the Pew Research Center, Mexican was used once as a racial category in the 1930 census but was dropped right after. In the 1970 census, the term Hispanic was added to the census to lump everyone who spoke Spanish (Brown, 2020). To this day, because these terms

attempt to conglomerate people into a category and various immigrant generations exists in the US, the Latinx community has a wide range of terms to identify their social and ethnic identity. Moreover, racial terminology for the Latinx community is complicated because, at times, they can identify with at least three of the race terms used in the census (White, Black, or American Indian/Alaska Native) due to the European colonization that occurs throughout history (ASHE, 2013; Salinas, 2020; Urbina & Wright, 2015).

As noted in chapter one, for the purpose of this study, Latinx will be used when referring to the general population. In contrast, Latino or Latina will be used to depict specific gender segments of the population. Likewise, Latino/a/x and Hispanic will be used interchangeably throughout the study or as directly mentioned in previous literature. Lastly, as previously noted, because racial identity in the Latinx community is complex, Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) devised an identity development model that attempted to consider race.

Ferdman and Gallegos's Latino/a Racial Identity Orientation Model

Ferdman and Gallegos developed a racial identity orientation model for Latinx individuals (2001). As mentioned earlier, Latino/a/x/Hispanic is an ethnic group, not a racial group. As a result, the authors noted that while race is an essential factor of social and ethnic identity development, it is not the most prominent factor; therefore, it was a challenge to create these orientations (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Their model captures specific intricacies related to the Latinx community compared to Phinney's original model. Ferdman and Gallego's (2001) model uses typology using patterns and orientations instead of foreseeable stages like Phinney's model. According to the authors, the "lens" people use to experience the world is vital as that is "how they see the wider

issues and context of racial groups in the United States and how much they want to keep out" (Ferdman & Gallego, 2001, p. 50). The researchers updated their model to incorporate developmental concerns that Latinx may confront later in life, but it did not fundamentally change the orientations (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2012).

Appendix A shows the six orientations of Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) model, along with the lens they use to see race. These orientations include *(a) Latino-integrated, (b) Latino-identified, (c) subgroup-identified, (d) Latino as other, (e) Undifferentiated/ Denial,* and *(f) White identified*. These orientations help to conceptualize the way Latinx see themselves and the world around them. Individuals in the *Latino-integrated orientation* have the widest lens, which allows them to understand the Latinx complexities and how their identity integrates with other social identities. These individuals have a strong sense of others and themselves, including the positive and negative attributes associated with being part of the Latinx community. Yet, the authors acknowledge that while their race identity is important to them, it is not the only identity (Ferdman & Gallego, 2001). Lastly, because these individuals have the widest lens, they have a broad perspective to help educate others about race.

Individuals in the *Latino identified* orientation make a conscious or unconscious decision for history, culture, and other ethnic markers to be part of their lives. They tend to identify themselves as Chicano/a and *La Raza,* which means "race" in Spanish. According to Ferdman & Gallegos (2001), *La Raza* is a critical aspect for Latinos/in the United States as it represents the union with former indigenous people while not conforming to the mainstream White American culture. Furthermore, individuals in this

orientation tend to see race as rigid categories while seeing Whites as barriers or allies, depending on their behavior (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001).

Those who identify in the *subgroup identified* orientation identify within their ethnic subgroup or nation of origin (i.e., Salvadorian, Cuban, Colombian, etc.). Individuals in this orientation have a narrow lens as they tend to see their subgroup as superior to any other Latinx subgroup. Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) concluded that these individuals "do not view race as a central or a clear organizing concept; instead, nationality, ethnicity, and culture are seen as primary" (p. 52). Because they have a narrow lens, they see Whites as their own category and not central to them, but they acknowledged that they could produce barriers as they now live in the United States and not in their country of origin.

Individuals who identify in the *Latino as other* orientation may an undefined identity and may not commit to a group. Individuals with this orientation may not be aware of specific Latinx culture, heritage, or background. They may prominently see themselves as people of color without differentiating themselves from other subgroup minority groups (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). As a result, they identify as a minority and do not follow either Latinx cultural values or White American values. On the contrary, the *undifferentiated/denial* orientation is "colorblind" (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2013) as they do not see race as a meaningful category and, thus, no racial identification. These individuals have a close lens as they accept the dominant norms and attribute their own behavior as their own barriers. According to Ferdman and Gallegos (2001), they do not seek to be part of any Latinx group as they rather see each person and themselves differently as defined by their individual own racial or ethnic identity.

Finally, the last orientation is *White identified*. In this orientation, individuals view themselves as White and see the White race as superior to other Races. These individuals completely assimilated to the White and mainstream US societywhile disconnecting from their Latinx heritage and community. Because they have a tinted lens, they see Whites as a way to *Mejorar la Raza* or improving the race as "they view intermarriage with Whites positively while viewing marriage to darker groups negatively" (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001, p. 54).

Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) model helps us understand the Latinx as a social identity while considering race. Likewise, Phinney's (1993) model uses sequential stages for ethnic identity development, and while it has been used in college students, it is not specific to Latinx college students. As a result, utilizing Phinney's model as a framework, Vasti Torres and Phelps (1997) created the Bicultural Orientation Model (BOM) of Ethnic Identity, specifically for Latinx college students.

Torres's Bicultural Orientation Model of Ethnic Identity

The BOM model is a cultural competency framework used in working with Latinx college-aged students and with participants similar to those in the present study. Torres and Phelps introduced the BOM model via a pilot study (1997). Torres later validated the BOM model using various quantitative approaches from multiple PWIs in Georgia, Florida, and Texas institutions (1999, 2003). To understand ethnic identity development, acculturation must be considered (Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Torres, 1999). The BOM model intersects acculturation and ethnic identity into consideration and splits it into four quadrants. The four quadrants of the BOM model are *Hispanic orientation,*

bicultural orientation, Anglo orientation, and marginal orientation. See appendix B for a visual representation of the BOM model.

> A person with a high level of acculturation and a high level of ethnic identity has a *Bicultural Orientation,* indicating a preference to function competently in both the Hispanic and Anglo cultures. A person with a high level of acculturation and a low level of ethnic identity has an *Anglo Orientation,* indicating a preference to function within the Anglo culture. A person with a low level of acculturation and a high level of ethnic identity has a *Hispanic Orientation,* indicating a preference to function within the Hispanic culture. A person with a low level of acculturation and a low level of ethnic identity is considered *Marginal*, indicating that he or she is not able to function adequately within the Hispanic or Anglo cultures. (Torres, 1999, p. 286)

Acculturation and ethnic identity are viewed as two separate constructs in the BOM model. As such, this two-dimensional model considers various aspects of the students, including their environment. The underlying theme present in acculturation studies is the "cultural conflict between two distinct groups and the psychological consequences of such conflicts for individuals" (Phinney, 1990, p. 502). For Latinx college students, interactions of their ethnic culture and the perceived new culture or campus are such conflict. This two-dimensional model thus creates two separate continuums, and where they meet in the middle is where students fall into that Orientation. The BOM model showed individuals differences and separated students who have maintained high levels of ethnic pride from those who have chosen an Anglo Orientation and have lower levels of ethnic identity. In essence, as Latinx students make

choices about their adaptation to the majority culture (acculturation) and the maintenance of their culture of origin (ethnic identity), a distinct orientation develops incorporating both cultures (Torres, 1999). As previously noted, the labeling of this social identity is complex and has evolved; therefore, Torres updated the *Hispanic Orientation* of the BOM model to *Latino Orientation* in 2012 (Torres et al., 2012).

Torres (1999) continued to work with Latinx students and their ethnic identity development. In 2003, she conducted a qualitative study on the factors that influence ethnic identity in Latinx students during their first year of college. Two themes emerge from her research, (1) situation identity and (2) influence in the change of identity development (Torres, 2003).

The first theme consisted of the student's environment and upbringing, which influenced the students' ethnic identity. Family and immigrant generation status, along with their self-perception of this status, were significant influences. Students who were raised in a diverse environment tended to have a stronger sense of ethnic identity. Moreover, all ten participants credited their families for the perception of ethnicity. Furthermore, speaking Spanish was a significant factor in their upbringing environment as it allowed them to "participate in culturally relevant activities at home" (Torres, 2003, p. 538). The two participants who were not bilingual tended to be on the Anglo orientation, thus more acculturated to the mainstream culture and a low sense of ethnic identity (Torres, 2003). The first theme of the student's environment was expected to arise in the participants of this study.

The second theme was the influence of identity development change, which focused on cultural dissonance based on environmental changes and relationships. The

cultural conflict that occurs during the first two years of college is the most important to forming the student's ethnic identity. Furthermore, peer, staff, and faculty relationships students build during their first two years of college significantly helped them acclimate to their new environment and have a stronger sense of ethnic identity (Torres, 2003).

To further explore how cognitive development influences the ethnic identity process of Latinx students, Torres, and Baxter Magolda (2004) conducted a study a year later. Using a constructivist approach, the researchers recruited twenty-eight students from different ethnic backgrounds and attended seven distinct types of institutions. The researchers found that Latinx students' ethnic identity was positively influenced when they reconstructed social knowledge. The process of rebuilding knowledge results from the dissonance between previously formed beliefs and exposure to a new environment or facts (Torres, 2003). Similar results were expected for the participants in this study.

Torres conducted a four-year longitudinal study to show the effect of ethnic identity development and self-authorship (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). This study allowed researchers and administrators to understand the Latinx journey toward self-authorship as it deepened the understanding of culture and made meaning of their identity (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). This holistic model for Latinx student development allows for external factors of Latinx students (i.e., identity defined by a family, dichotomous view of culture) to clash with environmental factors (i.e., recognizing racism, understanding positive and negative cultural choices) that lead to self-authorship (i.e., creating an informed Latinx identity, integrate cultural choices in daily life) (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

Torres continued to study the ethnic identity development of the Latinx population. Torres et al., (2012) conducted a study to explore the influence of adult experiences on the development of the ethnic identity of Latinx adults. The researchers found two themes: (1) the influence of the environment on identity, which focused on managing environment changes in the context of identity within the different environments, and (2) revolved around life circumstances that caused significant changes in an individual's identity, such as marriage, job relocation, or any other significant life changes that prompted the revelation of one's sense of self. The research team adopted the term *looping* to illustrate how the process of re-evaluating one's identity can be cyclical in nature and likely to happens throughout adult life, not just during collegiate years (Torres et al., 2012). Lastly, researchers noted that individuals identified as *Bicultural Orientation* of the BOM model were more likely to experience *looping*. In contrast, those in the *Latino-oriented Orientation* experienced it less (Torres et al., 2012). The present study explored the experiences of Latino fraternity members in Predominately White Institutions, which might trigger *looping* depending on the participants' BOM orientation and past experiences.

The formation of ethnic identity is essential in minoritized students. An earlier study found that ethnicity was necessary as much as religion, and it was more significant than political orientation (Phinney & Alipura, 1996). Moreover, ethnicity is considered more important to students of color than students who are part of the majority. Consistent with the BOM model, as students try to resolve the differences between their origin's culture and mainstream culture, the conflict and uncertainty between the two cultures can produce acculturative anxiety (Phinney & Alipura, 1996).

These studies and the BOM model set the foundation for understanding the ethnic identity development of Latinx college students. Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) model of Latino identity development offers ways to conceptualize how Latino students take on simultaneous cultural or ethnic identities as it allows for the possibility of identifying in one or more of these forms. Additionally, while this model considers race, it uses typology, and it does not show how someone moves between these and is not specific to college students. As a result, Vasti Torres's (1999, 2003, 2004) work filled this gap as it was created and validated specifically for Latinx college students in PWIs in the United States.

This study aimed to explore the experiences of Latino fraternity members' perceptions of their ethnic identity at PWIs. Therefore, the BOM model was used as the main framework for the present study while using Ferdman and Gallego's (2001) typology system to conceptualize their identities while adding the term Latinx as an additional identity option as it is not included in this typology.

As the Latinx population in the United States increases, research that studies Latinx college student persistence in post-secondary education should be performed to serve this growing student population effectively. As previously noted, student involvement positively affects the persistence of college students (Astin, 1984; Kuh et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975). Many factors contribute to the development of ethnic identity and persistence of Latinx college students, including environmental factors. Therefore, it is important to discuss key persistence factors of the Latino college student, including their academic atmosphere. As the study was nested in Predominately White Institutions, a

review of PWIs and campus climate as a factor in Latino student persistence is discussed, along with other key elements of college persistence for Latinx students.

Factors of Latinx Student Persistence

A review of the literature shows that college Latinx student persistence is best supported through various institutional means and include many factors: positive campus climate, ethnic and cultural identity, familiar and social support, and student involvement (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Castillo et al., 2004; Castillo et al., 2006; Gloria et al., 2005; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996; Jones et al., 2002; Kiyama et al., 2015; Oseguera et al., 2009; Peltier et al., 1999; Pérez, 2014). For the present study, the Latino student involvement through LGLOs was used to explore the persistence at PWIs in the South. Persistence is defined as the outcome of the student's behavior, while retention is an institutional effort (Oseguera et al., 2009). As such, the study focused on student behavior through experiences that keep them engaged in higher education due to their LGLO affiliation.

Persistence is necessary to earn a college degree. Research shows that students involved in extracurricular activities and meaningful interactions are more likely to persist until degree completion (Kuh et al., 2010; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2019). Yet, Latinx students are not exposed to the norms and expectations to attain a college degree and have not developed the positive foundation passed on from one generation to the next (Urbina & Wright, 2015). College admittance is the first step to their academic journey. Latinx students will experience many dilemmas regarding if education cost is beneficial and worth the financial risk or if their parents can support their educational endeavors. Study habits, social and cultural adjustments are other

factors that may prevent students from attaining a college degree (Kiyama et al., 2015; Urbina & Wright, 2015).

While the Latinx population in the United States continues to increase, there is a discrepancy between the number of matriculated female and male Latinx students in US colleges and universities, suggesting the Latino college student is disappearing (Pérez, 2014). Studies have shown that Latino students are less likely to earn a high school degree, enroll in a post-secondary institution, and graduate than other minority groups (Fry, 2002; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The present study explicitly targeted Latino fraternity males in PWIs aimed to target this underrepresented sub-population.

Predominately White Institutions and Campus Climate

Latinx students experience uneasiness in predominately White campuses more than their White-European counterparts (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Kiyama et al., 2015; Pérez, 2014). According to Delgado-Romero & Hernandez (2002), "many of these [Latinx] students experience social, cultural, and academic difficulties when they arrive on predominately White campuses, leading to troubling attrition rates throughout the education system" (p. 144). In addition, sentiments of discomfort, isolation, and alienation come from experiences in which Latinx students attempt to balance their academic and cultural values with the mainstream culture of a PWI (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Recognizing the cultural perspective and sense of belonging of the Latinx student experience is essential in understanding their persistence and academic success in college.

A sense of belonging is vital as students learn to navigate a college campus (Kiyama et al., 2015). According to Garcia (2020), a strong sense of belonging affects a

student's well-being, promotes academic success, and motivates positive behavior. The roles of privilege, race, and ethnicity play a big part in the sense of belonging (Johnson et al., 2007). Furthermore, Strayhorn (2008) found that students who were part of the minority, including Latinx students, had a lower sense of belonging than their White-European counterparts. Vaccaro and Newman (2016) took it a step further. They developed a model to show how the development of privileged and minoritized college students' sense of belonging is developed among these groups. These studies show how the campus climate and environment are an essential part of the overall success and persistence of Latinx students.

Pérez (2014) and Pérez and Saenz (2017) conducted studies that depict the experiences and struggles of Latino college students at highly selective PWIs. They discovered that Latinos navigate their environment and learn to cope with these changes through qualitative inquiries. Pérez (2014) found four themes that allowed Latinos to succeed in their respective PWIs: (1) *Affirming identity through language;* (2) *Engaging in acts of resistance;* (3) *Honing navigational skills, and* (4) *Reconceptualizing achievement*. These themes depicted the academic and social experiences at two selective PWIs while showing Latino men's varying lengths to reconceptualize their experiences to be successful at a PWI. While these results are in prestigious and selective PWIs, these Latino college experiences may be the case in all PWIs.

Pérez & Saenz (2017) explored the last theme from Pérez's (2014) study – *Reconceptualizing achievement* for Latino students in selective PWIs. Through qualitative methodology, they found that Latinos at PWIs reconstructed and embodied success in three different ways: (1) Academic thriving, (2) Intrapersonal thriving, and (3)

Interpersonal thriving (Pérez & Saenz, 2017). Academic thriving depicted academic learning and the internal drive to excel academically. Intrapersonal thriving addressed the positive and negative experiences that allowed the student to maintain a positive internal outlook in their academic endeavors regardless of their experiences. At the same time, interpersonal thriving is derived from social connections and a sense of belonging (Pérez & Saenz, 2017).

All types of higher education institutions may have issues relating to campus culture and climate that impact student success and persistence. Nonetheless, PWIs have unique challenges correlated with perceptions of hostile campus climate, diversity, and racial issues that ultimately affect the enrollment and the student persistence of Latinx students, as well as other students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Locks et al., 2008; Nuñez, 2009).

Cultural and Ethnic Identity

Cultural and ethnic identity are essential factors affecting Latinx college student persistence (Castillo et al., 2006; Castillo et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2002). As Latinx students experience hostile environments, along with racial and diverse on-campus issues, these negative perceptions become their reality. As a result, Latinx students experience a cultural dissonance between their own culture and the dominant campus culture (Museus, 2008). According to Museus and Quaye (2009), this cultural dissonance creates an additional stressor for college students. They need to learn to navigate their collegiate experiences with this added layer, which is a potential barrier to student persistence.

Castellanos and Gloria (2007) identified ethnic identity and cultural consistency to be significant factors to a strong sense of connectedness to a college campus, thus impacting the college persistence of Latino students. These researchers also found that student perceptions of their culture, knowledge, values, behavior, and traditions played a big part in their cultural and ethnic self. Students who were likely to showcase their cultural background with a high ethnic identity tended to be more likely to experience discrimination on their campus (Archuleta et al., 2006). Being supported and surrounded by individuals from the same background provides an opportunity for students to overtly explore their cultural norms and their identities outside of their own perceived cultural self (Guardia & Evan, 2008; Kiyama et al., 2015). At the same time, Latinx students who do not seek cultural diversity could obtain additional benefits by being part of racial and ethnic minority groups. In contrast, those who intentionally do not participate in student minority groups avoid self-segregation and to embrace other cultures (Museus & Quaye, 2009). These depictions align well with Torres's (1999; 2003) BOM model, as they depict the bicultural tendencies Latino students face while being surrounded by the people of the majority or at PWIs.

Finally, according to Museus and Maramba (2011), some students of color commit *cultural suicide to fit into the campus culture,* which disconnects their cultural heritage and identities to conform to the campus culture. *Cultural suicide* predominately happens in PWIs because of the students wanting to belong on their campus. Yet, research has found that cultural and ethnic identity development supports student persistence, especially when students are part of culturally based student groups, including Latino Greek-lettered Organizations (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013;

Garcia, 2020; Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Nuñez, 2004; Sanchez, 2011).

Familial and Social Support

Latino students rely on family and peer support as they persist through college (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gloria et al., 2005; Kiyama et al., 2015; Peltier et al., 1999). The familial influences have been shown to affect the ethnic identity development of the Latinx college student, and thus, it is an integral part of their life (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Moreover, Torres (2004) discovered that most college Latinx students self-identify with the country of origin of their parents, showing how significant family ties are to their ethnic self. Although most Latinx parents are unfamiliar with college life, Latinx college students rely on parent moral and emotional support to navigate their collegiate experience (Sanchez et al., 2006).

Guardia and Evans (2008) found that Latino Greek members had an almost instant connection with other members as they shared similar identities. The social support that came with being part of an LGLO became an integral part of the members' academic success (Guardia & Evans, 2008). Additional researchers had similar findings and found that their LGLO became a home away from home at their respective college campus (Castellanos & Gloria 2007; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Garcia, 2020; Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Nuñez 2004; Sanchez, 2011).

Pérez and Taylor (2016) explored factors needed to nurture and sustain Latino success in higher education. They uncovered that familial capital promoted students to define success at the academic level and the community level. They also noted that

college preparatory programs contributed to their success at the college level, which came with family support. In addition, sustaining their cultural identity through their collegiate years and their social support contributed to their success. The students' social capital developed through their social support groups, including Latino Fraternities, allowed them to learn from older students and persist through their collegiate experiences (Pérez & Taylor, 2016).

Student Involvement

Peer support groups through student organizations and involvement are vital to the persistence of college students, including Latino college students (Astin, 1984; Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002; Kuh et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975). Latino student organizations and fraternities offer various benefits, including, but not limited to leadership, social outlets, networking, and general development of practical skills (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002; Garcia, 2020). Ethnic-centered student organizations empower students and help students create a sense of cultural identity while creating a safe space (Guardia & Evan, 2008; Sanchez, 2011).

Luedke (2018) found that Latinx student organizations create a family-like environment and support each other as they maneuver through their collegiate experiences. This family-like atmosphere enables Latino students to learn from each other and reaffirm the value of their culture while providing ways to connect back to their culture (Villalpando, 2003). In addition, and as previously noted, Pérez and Taylor (2016) indicated that social capital through student organizations and other peers became a prominent reason why Latino college students were successful at PWIs.

Similarly, Garcia (2020) found similar results in Latinx students who were part of a Latino fraternity or Latina sorority at PWIs. Garcia's (2020) study conceptualized how Latino fraternities and Latina sororities students make meaning of their sense of belonging at a PWI. The study revealed that being part of a campus subculture was more significant than feeling part of the campus as a whole (Garcia, 2020). These results continue to solidify the need for ethnic Greek letter organizations in US colleges and universities. Therefore, a review of fraternity and sorority life will be explored in the next section, focusing on ethnic Greek-lettered organizations, Latino Greek-lettered organizations, and exploring the LGLOs that exist in Georgia.

Fraternity and Sorority Life

Fraternity and sorority life in US colleges and universities mirror the higher education movements throughout history (Sasso et al., 2019). While Europe may have student organizations, fraternities and sororities are unique to the United States (Torbenson, 2009). As students became more independent through the lack of *in loco parentis*, student authority led to organized student organizations. The early secret societies were academically inclined as they held primarily educational debates (Baird, 1912). But fraternities came out of the need to meet outside of the classroom due to the rigorous 18th and 19th-century curricula (Sasso et al., 2019). Students adopted Greek ideals and letters to symbolize their societies out of the classical educational preparation, including Greek text. The first modem conceptualization of a Greek-lettered organization was Phi Beta Kappa, which was established at the College of William and Mary in 1776 (Baird, 1912). With time, fraternities became prominent student organizations and part of the US colleges and universities' culture.

According to Sasso et al., (2019), Women's education in the early 1800s was different. Women were not afforded the same education opportunities as men and could not enter public higher education until 1862. Early sororities were considered women's fraternities and were almost always associated with the campus they were established. The word sorority did not come about until Frank Smalley, a Syracuse University professor, suggested as they were founding the second chapter of Gamma Phi Beta (Simonson, 1963).

There have been multiple studies debating the effects of fraternity and sorority life affiliations on students. Some studies have suggested adverse effects (Maisel, 1990), while others suggested positive effects on college students (Pascarella et al., 2001; William, 2008). However, other researchers have found no substantial difference between Greek and non-Greek affiliated students in levels of moral reasoning, cognitive development, intercultural effectiveness, the inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, and psychological well-being (Martin et al., 2011). Most of the studies and research about fraternity and sorority organizations have centered on the negative aspects. Studies showing alcohol abuse and consumption are highly available (Meilman et al., 1999; Fairlie et al., 2010). Some studies show adverse effects on racial and favoritism attitudes (Well & Corts, 2008).

In contrast to that, many studies suggest being part of a fraternity or sorority heightens student development at different levels. Moral development (Mathiasen, 2005), life goals and pursuits (Aborwitz, & Knox, 2003), attitudes towards authority (Fairlie et al., 2010), intellectual development, gender affirmation, and sexuality development (William, 2008) has seen to be enhanced by being affiliated with Greek-lettered

organizations. The presented studies have merit, yet they have their limitations. The participants were mainly of White-European descent and were part of the historically White fraternities and sororities, leaving most minoritized students out of these statistics and, therefore, out of the literature. This gap in the literature continues to lead researchers, and this dissertation study to continue to learn about the experience of students who affiliate themselves with ethnic Greek-lettered organizations.

Ethnic Greek-Lettered Organizations

According to Torbenson (2009), the vast expansion of Greek-lettered organizations occurred in three major waves. The first wave was from the 1700s through the early 1900s and consisted of the mainstream fraternities and sororities, which mainly entailed the elite students and were very exclusive. The second wave constituted African American students and Jewish students in the early 1900s. The third wave was the massive rise of the rest of the ethnically based Greek-lettered organizations around the 1970s. Latinx, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other minority groups started to diversify campuses around the nation. It was only natural for them to create their own Greek and non-Greek organization for their purposes.

Historically Black Greek-lettered organizations were established in the early 1990s to form cohesion within their ethnic group and aid each other during these difficult times (Whaley, 2009). These organizations started on historically Black colleges and universities, starting with Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Inc. in 1906 and ending with Iota Phi Theta fraternity, Inc. in 1963 (Ross, 2000; Kimbrough, 2003). Historically Black sororities were also created to emulate similar purposes as their male counterparts within

the same time frame. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. was the first nationally Black sorority of its kind in 1908 (Ross, 2000).

Asian American Greek-lettered organizations started in the early 1970s with Zeta Epsilon Tau in California, though the majority spurred in 2000 (Chen, 2009). According to Chen (2009), the creation of these Greek-lettered organizations became prominent in establishing unity and exceptional academic support. Many Asian Americans felt unaccepted in the mainstream fraternities and sororities because of the segregation in the 70s and 80s; these circumstances made them turn to these venues. Their focuses tend to be on community service, cultural perseverance, and academic excellence as their top priority while in school (Kimbrough, 2003).

Native American Greek-lettered organizations came after; however, this did not make them any lesser than other ethnic-based Greek-lettered organizations. In fact, according to Kelly (2009), they have created the best organizations that have combined education, culture, and community. There are six Native American Greek-lettered organizations primarily centralized in the Southeast of the United States. The first of its kind was Alpha Pi Omega at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Torbenson, 2009). Ethnic Greek-lettered organizations, including LGLOs, are relatively new and have little to almost no research on them, putting a significant gap on the empirical data found in mainstream fraternities and sororities studies.

Latino Greek-lettered Organizations (LGLOs)

Latino Greek letter organizations can be dated back to the 1900s; however, considering who was the first Latino Greek-lettered organization can be debatable. Some sources site Iota Phi Alpha as the oldest fraternity with Latino membership est. in 1931

(Guardia & Evans 2008; Kimbrough, 2003; Miranda & Figueroa, 2000; Miranda, 1999; Miranda et al., 2019; Sanchez, 2011); however, their establishment did not necessarily mean an American-geared Latino-based fraternity. While Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc., founded in 1975, claims to be the first Latin-based fraternity that caters to contemporary Latino living in the US (Peña, 2020).

The origins of a Latino student organization that adopted Greek letters for their name can be traced back to Sigma Iota, which was founded in 1904 at Louisiana State University (Baird, 1912) and Phi Lambda Alpha, founded in 1919 on Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Miranda et al., 2019). According to Miranda et al., (2019), Sigma Iota and Phi Lambda Alpha joined to create Iota Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. in 1931; however, they were not established as an American-Latino-based fraternity; they are a fraternity that happens to have Latinos as the bulk of their membership along with the ideology of Pan-Americanism. Pan-Americanism is the principle of political and cultural cooperation among all South America and North America (Phi Iota Alpha Website, 2020). This focus made Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity a Greek-lettered organization for perceivably international students with strong ties to Latin America who may have relocated back to their countries at the end of their studies. Additionally, Iota Phi Alpha charted the Union Latino Americana (ULA), which created various Latino-American Greek-lettered organizations in different Latin American countries (Phi Iota Alpha Web site, 2020). Therefore this focus on unifying the Latin American countries outside the United States almost excludes this organization as an American fraternity as it diverges from the typical purpose of domestic ethnic Greek-lettered organizations that were being started around the same time.

Furthermore, according to the Phi Iota Alpha website (2020), the organization became inactive by 1979 and re-emerged after 1984. However, according to Peña (2020), Lambda Theta Phi's founders found no evidence to suggest any other Latino-based fraternity ever existed in the United States. Phi Iota Alpha was incorporated in 1931 as Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity, not Latin or Latino fraternity. While Lambda Theta Phi was est. and incorporated as a Latino Fraternity/*Fraternidad Latina* at Kean College in Union, New Jersey, in 1975, yet according to Phi Iota Alpha, their last member in New York graduated in 1976 (Phi Iota Alpha Website, 2020). Finally, Phi Iota Alpha did not have many organization records before its reestablishment in 1984, claiming its secrecy for this lack of documentation. While these may be mere coincidences and linguistical differences, these facts may raise doubts and shed light on the first Latino-based fraternity organization in American history.

Due to the lack of documentation and perceived prior existence, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. claims to be the first Latino fraternity, and the catalyst of the Latino Greek movement as the surge of LGLOs started after 1975 (Peña, 2020). Kimbrough (2003), Guardia and Evans (2008), Miranda and Figueroa (2000), Miranda (1999), Miranda et al., (2019), and Sanchez (2011) agree that the Latino Greek movement did not start until the mid to late 1970s. The largest by numbers and chapters are Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. and Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. These two organizations were founded in 1975 at Kean University (formerly Kean College) Union, New Jersey (Peña, 2020; Torbenson, 2009). To date, there are more than 26 Latino/a Greek-lettered organizations recognized in the United States (Miranda et al.,

2019). Not all organizations have been successful and expanded nationwide; some are regionally based and are only located in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

The expansion and creation process are not easy tasks as it takes a significant amount of effort from potential members and substantial institutional support (Miranda et al., 2019). Without institutional support, these retention-and-persistence-capable organizations cannot expand and establish chapters in new institutions. The first west coast Latina Sorority was Lambda Theta Nu Sorority, Inc., est. in 1986 at California State University, Chico. The first Latino Greek fraternity founded on the west coast was Gamma Zeta Alpha Fraternity, Inc., at California Polytechnic State, San Luis Obispo, in 1987 (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009).

As time went by, LGLOs ratified the *Nacional de Hermandades Latinas* (CNHL) (National Council of Latino Fraternities and Sororities) in 1991 to help coordinate many of the LGLOs (Kimbrough, 2003; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). However, in 2000, the CNHL merged with the prominent national LGLO umbrella organization called the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO) to unite all Latinx Greek-lettered organizations (Kimbrough, 2003; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). This national effort sought to provide help to many Latinx-based fraternal organizations on different campuses; however, many Latinx-based and other ethnic Greek-lettered organizations live in a conglomerate of a variety of Multicultural and other ethnic Greek-lettered organizations. The on-campus umbrella organization they all fall into is typically the Multicultural Greek Council or the Unified-Greek council (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Sanchez, 2011). These Multicultural Greek-Council hosts all fraternal organizations that are not historically White or Black (Kimbrough, 2003).

While NALFO councils still exist throughout the country, most college campuses are PWIs and do not have a vast number of LGLOs. Therefore, making this umbrella organization almost null at the campus level, as per NALFO regulations, four NALFO LGLOs are needed to establish this umbrella group on any campus (NALFO, 2020). Many ethnic Greek-lettered organizations are maintained through alumni-volunteers who have full-time jobs and often leave organizations with fewer resources than those with organizational-paid employees (Workman & Ballinger, 2019). These fewer resources have, at times, created setbacks as eight LGLOs have left NALFO in the past twelve years (NALFO, 2020). In 2014, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. and Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. decided to leave NALFO.

> Lambda Theta Phi believes NALFO has also failed to guide on key issues facing Latin[x] Greek organizations, including unity, risk management, leadership development, and advocacy. Although Lambda has supported NALFO during the past few years as it worked through these challenges, it has now become clear that the future viability of the organization is in question. (Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. Press Release, 2014, para. 1)

Nonetheless, NALFO still provides support and unity at the national level, as it was intended to do since its inception (NALFO, 2020).

A review of different LGLOs websites revealed that Georgia has sixteen chapters of different LGLOs, but not all of these chapters are active. The largest by the number of chapters is Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc., as they have six active chapters (Lambda Theta Phi, 2014; Peña, 2020). The second largest is Lambda Upsilon Lambda, with four active chapters in Georgia (Lambda Upsilon Lambda, 2020). They are followed

by Sigma Lambda Beta (Sigma Lambda Beta, 2020) with two active chapters, while Lambda Sigma Upsilon (Lambda Sigma Upsilon, 2020) and Phi Iota Alpha (Phi Iota Alpha, 2020) have one active chapter, respectively. The first LGLO established in Georgia was Lambda Sigma Upsilon at the University of Georgia in 2006. The latest LGLO chapter expanded was Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. at the University of North Georgia 2019 (Peña, 2020). Since 2006, various LGLOs have been established throughout the state, and most of them exist in PWIs. Still, some of them live in two Georgia Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), in which the sum of non-White students is above 50% of the entire student population. Chapters in MSIs were not targeted in this dissertation study due to the focus on PWIs as a campus environment.

Summary

Limited studies exist that suggest connections between LGLOs, their ethnic identity development, and persistence. Ross (2000) and McClure (2006) established that students who were part of historically Black fraternities and sororities understand the African American struggles in the US. Moreover, Latino Greek letter affiliated students also tend to have a more defined sense of ethnic self, and like any other student, they need to learn to navigate their academic environment to succeed (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Garcia, 2020; Guardia, & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Nuñez, 2004; Sanchez, 2011). Since most LGLOs are in PWIs, Latino fraternity members must learn to navigate their environment with different acculturation and ethnic identity levels. These components are the two main components of the Torres BOM model, which sheds light on how Latinx college student experience their bicultural self in a PWI environment (1999). Academic environment and campus

climate ultimately affect student persistence (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Kiyama et al., 2015; Pérez, 2014). As previously stated, there is limited research on Latino Greek-lettered organizations and their members; thus, there is a need to continue to explore the effects of Latinx student organizations to empower and study the needs of this increasing student population in the United States (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Garcia, 2020; Sanchez, 2011). Therefore, this study attempted to expand the knowledge of this ever-increasing population by exploring Latino fraternity member's lived experiences in PWIs in the South. Moreover, using Torres's (1999) BOM model and Ferdman and Gallego's (2001) typology system and adding the term Latinx as an additional identity option, the present study explored how they perceive their affiliation affects their collegiate persistence and ethnic identity development.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Active campus involvement positively affects student persistence and overall academic success (Astin, 1984; Kuh et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975). Students maintain high student engagement levels through Greek-lettered organizations and create a safe space, especially for minority student groups (Guardia & Evans 2008; McClure, 2006; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013). The Latinx population has increased over time, giving birth to LGLOs in many American post-secondary institutions (Excelencia in Education, 2019; Torbenson, 2009). The need to better understand the Latino student experience and LGLOs is worth exploring. The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study had two primary functions (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, USA. According to Merriam and Associates (2002), a researcher who seeks to understand and methodically process these experiences while taking participants' worldview perspectives into account is conducting a basic qualitative research design. Therefore, to best explore these topics and dissect human experiences, a qualitative research design was best suited for this study. In this chapter, the methodology for the research study will be described. The research design will be explored along with the research questions, research site, data collection, and analyses, culminating with validity and trustworthiness sections.

Research Design

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the basic qualitative research design is the most commonly used qualitative design in education as it seeks to direct meaning from participant constructed experiences. The present study sought to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and college persistence at PWIs in Georgia through a basic qualitative method. This qualitative research design was appropriate for this study as the primary purpose was to interpret their experiences and understand how they made meaning of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the capture of experiences is best done through open-ended questions rather than quantitative surveys; thus, the researcher was part of the study as he interacted with participants to collect data (Maxwell, 2013).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this dissertation study.

RQ 1. How do Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity?

RQ 2. How do Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their college persistence and ethnic identity at Predominately White Institutions in Georgia?

Research Setting

Participants were recruited from all available PWIs in Georgia with LGLOs: University of Georgia (UGA), Kennesaw State University (KSU), University of West Georgia (UWG), Georgia Southern University (GS), and Valdosta State University (VSU). All institutions were represented in the sample of this study except for VSU. While these five Georgia institutions vary in the number of student populations, they are all considered PWIs and have at least one Latino Greek-Lettered organization. Having

this maximum variation to recruit from all available participants of this already small population strengthens the study's validity and reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Consequently, making these post-secondary Georgia institutions are ideal recruitment sites for this research study.

UGA is located about an hour and a half east of Atlanta, Georgia, in Athens, Georgia. In fall 2019, UGA enrolled 38,920 students, including all undergraduate and graduate students (UGA Factbook, 2020). A gender gap exists as there are 6,021 more female students than male students. Most students are Georgia residents, enroll full-time, and fall within the 18-24 age range. Notably, 66% of the entire student population identifies as White, and as previously noted, there has been minimal student diversity growth in the last ten years (Yoganathan, 2019). Furthermore, UGA has two active Latino Greek-lettered organizations governed by the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) under the UGA Office of Greek Life.

KSU is located about 30 minutes northwest of Atlanta, Georgia, with two campuses in Kennesaw, Georgia, and Marietta, Georgia. In fall 2019, KSU enrolled 37,807 undergraduate and graduate students (KSU Enrollment Profile, 2020). Contrary to UGA, KSU has a small gender gap as there are 581 more males than females. Most KSU students are Georgia residents, enroll full-time, and fall within the 18-24 age range. Like UGA, KSU has over 20,000 students who identify as White, 54% of the entire student population. Lastly, KSU has three active Latino Greek-lettered organizations and falls under the MGC in their Fraternity & Sorority Life Office.

UWG is located in Carrollton, Georgia, and is about an hour west of Atlanta, Georgia. In fall 2019, UWG enrolled 13,238 undergraduate and graduate students (UWG

Composition of Student Body, 2020). UWG has a notable gender gap of a 2:1 woman to men ratio. Most UWG students are Georgia residents, enroll full-time, and fall within the 18-24 age range. Like UGA and KSU, 51% of UWG's student population identifies as While. Lastly, UWG has one active Latino Greek-lettered organization governed by MGC under their Fraternity and Sorority Life Office.

Georgia Southern Univeristy is located Southeast of the state, with two undergraduate campuses in Statesboro, Georgia, and Savanah, Georgia. In fall 2019, GS enrolled 26,054 undergraduate and graduate students (GS Factbook, 2020). GSU denotes a gender gap, with 58% of the population identifying as female and 42% male. Like UGA, KSU, and UWG, most students share Georgia residency, full-time status, and the same age range. Like the other noted Georgia PWIs, GS's student population comprises 60% of students who identify as White. Finally, GS has two active Latino Greek-lettered organizations, and both are part of their Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life's MGC.

Lastly, Valdosta State University is in Valdosta, Georgia, the Southwest part of the state, and is minutes from the Florida/Georgia state line. In fall 2019, VSU enrolled 11,270 undergraduate and graduate students (VSU Enrollment Update, 2020). Like GS, VSU also denotes a gender gap in the overall student population as 67% are female, and 33% are males. Like the other research sites, VSU students are predominately Georgia residents, most students enroll full-time, and their average age range is 18-24. VSU's student population is composed of 51% of students who identify as White. Furthermore, VSU has one active Latino Greek-lettered organization in their MGC under the VSU Fraternity & Sorority Life office. These facts help ensure the study's target population was present at these Georgia PWIs.

Data Collection

The qualitative data for the present study was collected through virtual open-ended interviews. Furthermore, in this section, data collection protocol, sampling procedures, participant selection, and consent are covered.

Approval to Conduct Study

Valdosta State University (VSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought and approved. See Appendix C for VSU's IRB exempt approval paperwork.

Consent to Participate

Participant recruitment began as soon as VSU's IRB was approved. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distance protocols, interviews were conducted through Zoom, and all IRB required paperwork was sent via email. An electronic interest form was created to ensure participants met the criteria necessary to partake in this study. The consent terms (Appendix D) were embedded into this same electronic interest form. The electronic interest form also allowed participants to self-select a pseudonym to maintain anonymity. Participants provided their consent by participating in the study. In addition, at the beginning of each interview, the researcher read a shortened version of the informed consent; this ensured participants knew the confidentiality, benefits, and risks associated with the study. See Appendix F for the consent script.

Sampling Procedures and Participant Selection

Because interviewing involves a relationship between the interviewer and the participant, how interviewers gain access to potential participants can affect the beginning of that relationship and every subsequent step in the interview process (Seidman, 2013). As such, the researcher emailed the research project advertisement

(Appendix E) to the five Fraternity and Sorority Life offices to inform them of this study. The researcher asked to forward this advertisement to all LGLOs members on their respective campuses. In addition, he sent this advertisement directly to all the chapter presidents found on their respective websites, as well as outreached each chapter through social media accounts. These approaches enabled participant recruitment.

Furthermore, the study's scope, criterion sampling, and networking sampling applied a purposeful sampling technique to recruit participants. These two sampling techniques were used in this study to ensure the sample provided rich qualitative data about the experiences of individuals who share specific criteria. At the same time, to provide a variety of experiences within this population, participants must have the following requirements to participate in this study (1) be part of a Latino fraternity; and (2) currently attend or have graduated within one year from one of the five mentioned Georgia PWI. An electronic interest form was implemented to ensure that inquiring participants met the noted criteria to participate in the study and capture potential participants' contact information while providing them with the study's informed consent. The electronic interest form was part of the research project advertisement (Appendix E).

Lastly, according to Patton (2015), there are no rules that dictate sample size, except for the purpose of the study, information usefulness, credibility, and available resources. Because the study's goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, ten participants were interviewed on a first-come, first-serve basis until data saturation was reached (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Additionally, the same size was appropriate as Latino fraternities tend to be small, with a

typical size of 15 or fewer members per chapter (Garcia, 2020). Though, in Georgia, most LGLO chapters have less than seven or fewer active undergraduate members.

Interviews

The researcher scheduled interviews as participants submitted their electronic interest form and met the required criteria to partake in the study. The purpose of interviews was to ensure that rich qualitative data was collected. The interviews were conducted using the Zoom platform due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and social distance guidelines. Zoom interviews have been described as a valuable tool to collect qualitative data in research studies. According to Archibald et al., (2019), Zoom interviews are generally regarded above other conventional interviewing methods, such as telephone, face-to-face, and other videoconferencing services.

Seidman (2013) indicated that at the root of interviewing "is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make out of that experience" and "that at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (p. 9). As such, the stories of worth in this study are the Latino fraternity members' experiences at PWIs in the South. Seidman (2013) suggests a three-interview approach to collect rich qualitative data. The first interview "establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. Moreover, the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them" (p. 21). While keeping Seidman's (2013) approach in mind and to prevent participant dropout, the researcher conducted one 90-minute semi-structured interview instead of three 30-minute interviews.

The interview protocol and open-ended questions (Appendix F) were guided by Seidman's (2013) approach to capture context, the reconstruction, and the meaning of experiences to obtain rich descriptive data during the interviews. Questions 1-11 asked participants to identify and describe the experiences that shaped their identities – the context. Questions 12-28 asked about their experiences and involvement in their LGLO, focusing on their ethnic identity development and persistence – reconstruction and meaning of experiences. This semi-structured and flexible interview process explored essential areas to discover answers to the research questions (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

Maxwell (2013) denotes that data analysis and data collection should be done simultaneously in qualitative studies. The Zoom interviews were recorded, and each interview was transcribed automatically through the Kaltura video cloud platform. At the end of each recording, the Zoom application stores the recording on the computer. The processing and storing can sometimes yield errors and, thus, potential loss of data. To prevent possible loss of data, the researcher also audio recorded the interview using an Apple iPhone. The researcher edited the auto-transcription from Kaltura to ensure transcript accuracy. After that, Maxwell (2013) suggests reading the transcripts and actively write memos. These memos and notes captured the researcher's analytical thoughts, reflected on the research's purpose, and developed initial coding categories and relationships (Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Furthermore, the researcher actively listed and read the transcripts multiple times and engaged in pre-coding and jotting (Saldaña, 2016). Moreover, after each interview, the researcher video-recorded himself to capture his thoughts and reflect on them using the Kaltura video cloud platform.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) depict how to analyze data for a basic qualitative research design:

> The analysis of data involves identifying reoccurring patterns that characterize the data. Findings *are* the reoccurring patterns or themes supported by the data from which they were derived. The overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding of the participant's understanding of the phenomenon of interest. (p. 24)

Therefore, the researcher developed preliminary codes by manually coding four interviews to create a codebook. All transcripts were coded using Microsoft software to create codes. This first round of coding enabled the data to be coded into various categories. These categories denoted reoccurring patterns and themes, which enabled thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2016). The finalized codebook was tested with the remaining six interviews. Data saturation was reached at the fourth interview as no new code modifications occurred.

A matrix (Table 4) was created to display themes from the coded data into a visual representation. The categorical coding matrix showcases all themes, statements, and descriptions in corresponding columns and rows (Maxwell, 2013). Organizing the data in such a manner allowed the researcher to visually make connections between and within participants' responses and answer the research questions. In addition, Table 3 and table 2 display the participants conceptualize social identity using the BOM and Ferdman & Gallego model respectively.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity in qualitative research is a controversial topic. Researchers have argued, "that any concept of validity that referred to a 'real world' was incomparable with a constructivist approach" (Maxwell, 2013, p.122). However, all research should be rigorously conducted, and the academic community should have confidence in how a study was conducted and produced credible results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2013) defines validity as to how the researchers ensure the accuracy of research findings. As noted in Maxwell (2013), there are two main types of validity threats to a qualitative study (1) researcher bias and (2) reactivity. The researcher continuously sought to identify bias as data was collected and analyzed by completing the mentioned video memos to reduce these effects. Furthermore, the following sections denote how the researcher sought to combat these validity threats and increase trustworthiness.

Researcher Bias

Transformative learning is a unique style of learning in which learners challenge habits of mind. According to Mezirow's perspective, people go through life, and when something happens that could change their life, and they critically reflect on it, they may come out with a transformed perception and, therefore, their new reality (1998). Mezirow created a ten-step process and cycle in which transformational learning is facilitated (1998). Transformative learning is an individual internal road that lies in everyone. Therefore, using Mezirow's (1998) ten-step transformation learning theory and transformational cycle, the researcher will explore his personal bias in researching this topic.

In October of 1998, the researcher was awakened by his grandmother in the middle of the night. He recalls hearing something like, "wake up; there's someone here to see you." The researcher couldn't believe his eyes. After six years of not seeing his father and two years of not seeing his mother, they were both there - standing arms agape in the living room. His parents brought the researcher and his older sister to the United States from Acapulco, Mexico, within a week. The researcher didn't know how much his life would change or the repercussions these actions would have in his life, but he knew he wanted to be with his parents, just like any other nine-year-old child would.

The researcher's first week of school in the United States was his (Step 1) *disorienting dilemma*: the inability to sustain order and equilibrium (Mezirow, 1998). A well-behaved student who loved school could not do homework or participate in class due to an obvious language barrier. His fifth-grade teacher informed another student that he was being transferred to another classroom with Spanish speakers as he was not doing any academic activities. The researcher was nervous because he felt that "change" was constant during this time, yet he was happy to be with others that shared his native tongue. To his surprise, he was also shunned and ridiculed by other Spanish speakers because he was "not like them." According to them, the researcher's Spanish was "too proper," and he did not share the similar stereotypical things that other Mexicans like. "You're from the city, and we're from the country [rural areas of Mexico]. You think you're better than us," they said. The researcher's *self-examination* (Step 2) started after the social isolation that followed. He felt guilty and ashamed for "not being Mexican enough and not being American at such a young age." As he continued, a *critical assessment* (Step 3) was made as he intentionally made the decision to assimilate entirely

and tried to remove as much of his "Mexican-ness" as he could to be accepted by the majority of American White peers; however, it was not until college that this transformative learning experience came to its actual fruition.

Step 4 of Mesirow's transformative learning is the *Recognition* of one's discontent and process. During his collegiate career, the researcher decided not just to join and LGLO but also to bring the first LGLO at GSU because he recognized something was internally missing but did not know what it was. Being exposed to other college-level and like-minded individuals challenged the researcher to rethink his "Latino-ness and Mexican-ness." He dialogued with other individuals [fraternity brothers] that shared a similar experience, which allowed him to process and recognize his discontent while *exploring* (step 5) different proper self-fulfilling roles. Through this discord and his newly found fraternity brothers' mission, he set a *plan of action* (Step 6) to expand this organization to help others like himself who had similar experiences. Through older brothers, he *acquired the knowledge* (Step 7) that it was "ok" to be his "authentic ethnic self." As time progressed, he implemented this plan in college and through various *new roles* (Step 8) as a higher education professional. These higher education administrator roles enabled him to help underrepresented students like himself succeed academically and explore their identities.

Today, the researcher has built *competence and self-confidence* (Step 9) in who he is, his role and has *integrated* (Step 10) his multiple identities into his life without the shame and guilt he once felt. He is a servant leader who is a driven-motivated-family oriented-educated male of Mexican descent, social justice advocate (Martinez, 2016; Urrieta 2009), and an agent of change (Freire, 1997; Giroux, 1983; Mclaren, 1994). The

active participation in his community and a specific ethnic Greek-lettered organization allowed him to increase his awareness of his "Latino-ness" and interest in further researching this topic.

The researcher's life experiences have influenced the pursuit to study Latino fraternity member's experiences and ethnic identity development at PWIs in Georgia. Furthermore, the researcher is an alumnus of a national Latino fraternity, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity Incorporated or Lambda for short. He is considered a founder brother/member of the Georgia State University or Gamma Pi chapter. During his undergraduate experience, they were the first Latino-based fraternity at GSU in 2009. Georgia had two other Lambda chapters at Kennesaw State University and the University of Georgia during that time. Due to the small number of members across the state, everyone knew each other. Lambda believes Latino Unity is essential to create cultural, social, and political awareness in the Latino Community and American Society (Peña, 2020). Lambda is committed to uphold and enhance Latino unity through social movements. Since its inception in 1975, the organization has molded to the current times and has expanded into various other Georgia higher education institutions (Peña, 2020). That said, it was essential to remain reflexive of the researcher's position and the influence this identity had in the study (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Moreover, at the end of his master's program in 2013, the researcher knew he wanted to conduct this study. As a result, he purposely removed himself from undergraduate activities, and at this point, he does not know any undergraduate fraternity brothers from the research sites. This separation helped reduce any negative influence he may impose on participants as he did not interview members he knew.

Lastly, Using Torres's BOM model, the researcher self-identifies as bicultural, and he suspects that potential participants could identify with this orientation as well. Furthermore, his personal experience as an immigrant may also pose a threat as, at times, he has felt that he is "not from here nor from there," meaning, while the researcher has lived most of his life in the US, he does not feel "American" enough. At the same time, he also thinks he might not be "Latino enough." This personal perception is mentioned in the literature, and he suspected it might arise in the participant interviews. Nonetheless, he attempted to stay objective through the data collection process and as the data was analyzed. The researcher recorded video memos to combat this bias to reflect on his assumptions and biases to ensure he stayed impartial as he analyzed data and conducted interviews.

These assumptions and experiences were crucial as a qualitative researcher because he could assume that his understanding of the participants. Through the video memos, he was mindful of how he approached this topic to ensure his personal biases did not occur during this study. Nonetheless, a clear advantage was that participants may have been more likely to be truthful and share their experiences with the researcher as they share similar identities. This full disclosure allowed the researcher to have this at the forefront of his mind and collect rich content for the study (Maxwell, 2013).

Member-Checking and Triangulation

Maxwell (2013) suggested the respondent validation or member-checking process strengthens a study to gain validity. As noted by Maxwell (2013):

> This [participants feedback] is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the

perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your biases and misunderstandings of what you observed. (p. 126-127)

Therefore, member-checking was implemented by transcribing all interviews and asking participants to review them for accuracy and clarification. Participants provided feedback and confirmation.

Furthermore, Patton (2015) asserts that "triangulation, in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's blinders" (p. 674). Therefore, data was triangulated between each of the research sites and compared with each other. "Such comparisons can address one of the main objections to using qualitative methods for understanding causality – their inability to explicitly address the counterfactual of what would have happened without the presence of the presumed cause" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 129). The presumed cause might have to be part of a specific LGLO or a specific PWI in the study. Lastly, as another form of triangulation, the codebook and findings were reviewed and commented on by peers and mentors. These activities attempted to target the noted validity threats, thereby increasing the reliability and trustworthiness.

Limitations

There are limitations to the study. This dissertation study only targeted Latino fraternity members and left out Latina sorority members' experiences and non-LGLO affiliated students. Furthermore, the study targeted current LGLO undergraduate members and recent alumni but left out alumni older than one year post-graduation.

Participants were only recruited from Georgia PWIs, leaving out other LGLOs from Georgia Minority Serving Institutions and other institutions outside the state.

Interviews were only done with students who self-selected into the study by responding to an ad. These participants may have different characteristics and college experiences than other Latino Georgia students and those who qualify but chose not to participate in the study. Their experiences and engagements were limited to students' available experiences at their respective institutions and LGLO.

Delimitations

A delimitation of the study is that interviews were conducted in a virtual manner instead of face-to-face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, while qualitative research is not generalizable, the researcher attempted to have maximum variation and capture all sections of this small yet significant population by interviewing participants from all available Georgia PWIs with LGLOs. Maximum variation is another strategy for promoting validity and reliability as it "purposefully seeking variation or diversity in sample selection to allow for a greater range of application of the finding by consumers of the research" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 258). Therefore, while the findings of this study are limited to Georgia LGLO members in PWIs, readers may be able to adapt the results in other parts of the South similar to the state of Georgia. However, it is important to note that all possible Georgia PWI's with LGLOs were represented in the study except for VSU and that participants came from one LGLO.

Another delimitation is that while the study of ethnic identity development is complex and interwoven, the present research focuses on only one aspect of developing a specific sub-population of Latino students in the South. Furthermore, the data collected

was a snapshot of their reconstructed experiences at that particular time. Therefore, persistence until graduation was not measured; instead, their perception in relation to their LGLO involvement was captured due to the qualitative nature of the study.

Researcher Interviewer

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) denote that reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher's values, background, and previous experience and how these could influence the research process and findings. As such, it is essential to know how the researcher interviews participants. According to Maxwell (2013), "…the researcher is the instrument of the research, and the research relationship are the means by which the research gets done" (p. 91). As such, because the researcher is part of a Latino Fraternity, this might influence how participants respond if the researcher is not mindful. As a result, the following sections will explore the role of the interviewer as the researcher.

The researcher was born in Acapulco, Mexico but lived most of his life in the United States. His K-12 education was mainly in this country; therefore, English is his second language. He self-identifies as having a mixed culture or using Torres's (1999) BOM model as bicultural orientation. While the researcher can fully manipulate English and Spanish, subtle linguistical differences may arise during the interviews depending on the participant's ancestry and preferred language. If the researcher knows the person also speaks Spanish, he starts speaking Spanglish, a form of speaking English, and sporadically adding Spanish words. For data consistency and interpretation, all interviews were conducted in English. It is important to note that some participants used Spanish words or spoke Spanish, but the researcher moved the discussion back to English when needed.

The researcher's parents pushed education to him as they knew this was the only way to succeed, which led him to embark on his collegiate journey at Georgia State University in 2007. With hard struggles, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree in summer 2011. Due to his extensive collegiate and extra-curricular experiences, he sought to work in higher education/college student affairs. His interest and love for psychology/counseling never left him, which is why he obtained a master's degree in 2013 from the University of West Georgia's counseling program with a concentration in college student affairs. This program brought his two main interests together and compiled them into one degree. He enjoys studying the human mind, its complexities, and its connections to college student development at different levels.

Furthermore, the researcher has close to ten years of professional experience as a higher education administrator working with various student groups, including other Latinx students from multiple backgrounds. The researcher's background in counseling and profession should help the researcher while conducting interviews. As many of the interview skills noted by Siedman (2013) are the same skills taught in counseling and are those which he implements consistently in his line of work: "listen more, talk less and ask real questions; follow up but don't interrupt; explore, don't probe; avoid leading questions and ask open-ended questions" (p. 81-87).

Finally, the researcher is a first-generation Mexican immigrant, doctoral student, and member of a Latino Greek organization seeking further enlightenment in college students' development and Latino college students in the American higher education system. While the researcher's identities were not intentionally hidden, participants might be able to know his influence on the LGLO world. That being said, it was essential for

the researcher to have a reflexive position and the effect this may have during the interview process (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). While validity threats cannot be entirely eliminated, having a thoroughly planned research methodology and ways to combat these threats are the essence of a sound qualitative study (Maxwell, 2013).

Summary

A qualitative interpretive design was implemented for this dissertation study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity development and understand how their membership affects their college persistence at PWIs in the South. Participants were recruited from all available PWIs in Georgia that has LGLOs, and all possible PWIs were represented in the sample except for VSU. Virtual interviews through Zoom were conducted and transcribed. The qualitative data were coded using Microsoft office software and creating a codebook. Interpretive thematic analysis was implemented by observing reoccurring patterns and themes. The findings are presented to interpret the researcher's understanding of the participants' experiences and phenomena from the coded data and emergent themes (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). Chapter four provides the results though participants' profiles that depict their experiences, while chapter five showcases the study's findings.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Student involvement through student organizations affects persistence and academic success (Kuh et al., 2010). Fraternity and sorority life keep students engaged while on campus or in their communities (Garcia, 2020). Due to the Latinx population increase in the US, their educational achievement is a crucial standard for evaluating contributions to certain aspects of the country's health (Brown et al., 2003). Therefore, research on the college Latinx student experience that positively affects their persistence in post-secondary education should be performed to effectively aid this student population (Kiyama et al., 2015). Ethnic Greek-lettered organizations and Latino Greek-lettered Organizations (LGLOs) help students create a positive self-image with various developmental qualities (Case & Hernandez, 2013). One of these qualities is their ethnic identity, as it develops throughout life and during students' collegiate careers (Garcia & Dwyer, 2018). The present study reviewed the perception of this quality and persistence to provide insight into the Latinx student population.

Furthermore, researchers suggest that LGLOs provide a positive impact on Latinx college student experience. Therefore, there is a need for researchers and educators to assess these organizations through different lenses to understand how they may enhance student support and student success. The literature lacks studies exploring the ethnic identity of Latino fraternity members at PWI's in the Southeast or Georgia; therefore, the

present study adds to this literature gap. Through a basic qualitative research design, this study sought to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and college persistence at PWIs in Georgia. The following research questions guided this dissertation study.

RQ 1. How do Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity?

RQ 2. How do Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their college persistence and ethnic identity at Predominately White Institutions in Georgia?

These research questions provided the groundwork to conduct interviews with ten participants. Each interview was scheduled for 90 minutes; however, most interviews lasted between 102 and 155 minutes. Each participant shared their lived experiences through their lens. The open-ended interview protocol was based on Seidman's (2013) standard to capture their context to understand their worldview (Appendix F). The latter questions of the interview helped participants reconstruct and make meaning of their experiences. Using various excerpts and using their personal lens, the ten participants are described below.

Aang: "Half Guatemalan and half Peruvian, but also American."

Aang graduated from YellowStone University (YSU) and described his academic standing during his collegiate career as good. He finished his undergraduate career with a 3.3 GPA and a Bachelor of Information Systems. His mother is from Guatemala, and his father is from Peru, but he was born and raised in Georgia. Because he moved around, the community he initially grew up in was diverse, from the people to the environment. For some time, he lived in an "underserved community at the time, more ethnically diverse

community. We had a lot of Latinos living around us. We had other ethnicities living around us that weren't predominantly White."

Aang attended a predominately White middle and high school, but these were more diverse than his primary school. He remembers interacting well with others, and he took advanced classes where he was exposed to different friend groups from various ethnicities. "I feel like I got a get a melting pot of my own throughout my whole academic career." He was enveloped in the American and English-speaking community rather than the Latinx community due to his environment and the people surrounding him.

> For some reason, my mom decided only to speak English with my sisters at home and me. Obviously, she speaks Spanish fluently, but she never really forced teaching Spanish with us at home. So, I struggled to learn Spanish when I was younger, and I was very embarrassed even to speak it because I couldn't I didn't understand it. And so, and of course, all my family speaks the language. It's seen as a weird dynamic there. Even nowadays, the Spanish that I have is not the clearest, but I have become fluent…I grew very American, I feel. And all my friends spoke English.

He credits his girlfriend and her family to learn Spanish and expose him to the Latinx community and culture during his early years. "I met her when I was in middle school or high school, or getting into high school." Aang self-identifies as a heterosexual male. He feels very comfortable with his sexuality as one of his half-brothers was gay during high school. "I was exposed to someone close to me being part of the LGBTQ community."

Aang stated he knows the difference between ethnicity and race, but he struggles to understand the concept when it comes to the Latinx community. According to Aang, he self-identifies as a Latino but has struggled to maintain this identity if one doesn't appreciate their own culture and family origins. When he introduces himself, he shared that he makes it a point to say he is half-Peruvian and half-Guatemalan.

> … I know it gets a little murky when it comes to Latinos because I know there's a question about race and ethnicity. But for me, ethnicity is a group of people, shared beliefs, shared ideals, shared ideologies, and shared cultures… I'm still unclear whether Latino means an ethnicity or not. But from what I understand, I believe that I belong to a community of people from the same general region as my family; granted, I grew up in the United States. I speak English, and in many ways, I'm American, but in a sense, my roots are in the Latino community there in my, you know, my parents' homelands… I definitely try to respect that in many ways, and I tried to stick to that identity as much as they [my family] can just because I feel like it's really important always to keep that. I know many people around me who have lost, in a sense, their Latino ethnic identity. They ascribed to just being Americans and Americans in the sense of being like a White person… I've always believed that I am half Guatemalan and half Peruvian, but I guess I am also American. But, you know, I think my ethnic identity is that I have Guatemala and half Peruvian [but] overall American.

For Aang, race depends on "…certain regions that group of people kind of originates from...I feel like the way that society has kind of constructed it is based on different, a lot of different things but mainly tones of skin or certain cultural attributes."

He recognizes that for the Latinx community, race is more confusing. For him, the race question in questionnaires and surveys is one of his most complicated ones.

> I think nowadays they just put *Other* because I don't believe that being Latino or Hispanic is a race. I guess I just had to settle for being White a lot of the time because there is no other option. I'm not Black. I'm not Asian, and I'm not Native American. So, I don't know what race to identify with, to be honest. If I guess that if Latino is a race or Hispanic was a race, that would be my race. But yeah, I think growing up in America, I believe you are more inclined to identify as White just because that's the heaviest influence, and that's the kind of culture that I grew up around. But nowadays, if there's an option not to choose something, I will select *Other* because I don't think there's a race that really identifies me as a Latino or Hispanic.

He realized that being Peruvian, Guatemalan, and Colombian are different, but they share many cultural practices and values. He credits his girlfriend for going to college and for supporting him throughout his collegiate career. At the same time, he always knew he wanted to pursue higher education "because of the opportunities that I know that my family, my parents had come here for that, immigrated here to America for like to give [me the] opportunities." He really enjoyed being a student at his university.

> College was really great. Honestly, I enjoyed it in every aspect. I think just the independence that you gain when you go off to college…I was lucky enough to live on-campus during my first year, and then I worked for the housing office during my sophomore and junior years. And then, [my] last year, I got my own

apartment with a couple of my fraternity brothers. So, it was a perfect time, honestly. It was time for a lot of kind of personal development…

During his first year of college, Aang felt how he felt during his elementary school as his environment became extremely White.

> You will honestly see a considerable number of students, and the majority of them will be White. So, me being a Latino, felt a little bit like an outsider...I began my freshman year by going to the Latino club events and getting exposed to different community opportunities within the college community…As I got more exposed to the college community and, more specifically, the Latino community [at YSU], I felt more comfortable. Eventually, I found my kind of people after I joined the Latino fraternity, which helped me out a lot to establish myself within the Latino community, even at a PWI.

Aang joined various college student organizations during his first year of college, including a Latino fraternity.

> We were the only active Latino fraternity on campus. The fraternity had a lot of the ideals and values that I have. As a freshman, I was given the opportunity to join a group of outstanding gentlemen who were academically successful and did well for the community. That really appealed to me.

He attended a recruitment event during his first year, and he enjoyed their company as they were very courteous and welcomed him. He decided to participate in an informational meeting the following week, "and I just really hit it off well with the brothers that were in the fraternity at the time; they were part of the chapter. And that's something that I couldn't really find very often during my freshman year." The men held

high academic standards, and he felt they were involved in the Latinx community. "And for me, that kind of checked off all the boxes. It was really everything that I was looking for in a group of people… I could see myself clicking with whether it was from now or 20 years from now..." He became part of the Latino fraternity in spring 2017, his second semester, as due to organizational policy, students cannot join their first semester in college.

Aang felt the desire to be part of a group of people like him and share his ideals and values. "I think a lot of it was just a desire to find a group of people that I knew were always going to be there." He spent a significant number of hours per week doing a variety of events.

> …like community service, fundraising, and even some social activities that we had to put together at, at the university, to kind of meet some requirements. But even aside from that, in order to join the fraternity… that, I think that we spent a lot of the time just getting in study sessions with the brothers at the time.

Overall, he felt more involved in college as a member of his fraternity and felt a higher level of commitment to his education and the organization. Aang shared that

> The chapter size or the size of a specific group of members at our university is small. You know, we at the most nine brothers at once. And, you know, when I first joined their only three brothers in the chapter at a time…I think I felt more involved than I'd ever felt because it felt something that was directly mine that I had a direct influence on the outcome of whether it'd be the growth of the chapter, whether it be inducting new members in recruiting new members, or

pulling off event planning and executing them, or just creating ties with other organizations across the campus.

Aang mentioned many memories with the Latino fraternity; however, one of his most memorable was during his new member presentation, where many members from various parts of the state came to see him and his line brothers (members of the same LGLO that get inducted the same semester). Joining a Latino organization and being a PWI gave him the encouragement and desire to represent his ethnicity and break stereotypes. Moreover, being involved in his LGLO while being in a PWI allowed him to become more open and accepting of everyone regardless of their identities, as one of his chapter brothers was from a Vietnamese background. His chapter brothers were from various parts of the world or from different Latinx heritages. The understanding of ethnicity and race became more pronounced as his fraternity brothers surrounded him. "Every other fraternity brother in my chapter was Mexican. And so, I was the only one who isn't Mexican. So, I kind of got even more exposure to the Mexican community, and I have more appreciation for that." He also denoted that the experiences he shared with his fraternity got him closer to the Latino community in general. Being part of his Latino fraternity gave him the opportunity to:

> … create bonds that really go past even ethnic boundaries. But at the same time, it strengthens that appreciation for those as ethnic roots that we have. Because we all share the same ideals, you'll kind of share a very similar culture; whether we come from the same place or not, we go through the same struggles. And we, you know, I think that we go through the same ups and downs together when you're a fraternity-like this. So, it's, I think that it definitely helped me open my eyes to the

> different ethnicities in the community within my own brotherhood with the fraternity. But also, just finding the connections between on finding the similarities and finding the ability I really sympathize with the different struggles that each kind of community was facing.

Aang denotes that being in an LGLO heavily motivated him to stay and eventually graduate college.

> I think it just motivated me 100%. I believe that I knew that I would always have it in me to graduate college. But there were definitely times throughout college where I doubted myself and struggled … and having that support system of brothers that were going through the same struggles are, you know, we're willing to help no matter what it took, are willing to take an hour out of their day to stay with you.

Furthermore, the opportunity for Aang to become a leader within his LGLO felt reflective of his own ethnicity because of the hard work ethic it took to run the chapter, just like his family runs their business. “My older brother came from Peru in many ways; he is a leader in many of the things that he has done. My dad owns his own remodeling business and manages a group of guys as a group of workers.” This connection shows the impact and relationship his LGLO has impacted his ethnic identity. Aang shared that his fraternity bonds go beyond the ethnic and organizational boundaries. “We viewed each other as brothers as men that were going through the same struggles; students that we’re trying to achieve academic success and represent, give back to the community and represent our values and our ideals.”

Anthony: Seven-year Bachelor's Degree, a DACA Warrior

Anthony graduated from St. Elizabeth University with a Bachelor of Arts in History with a 3.2 GPA. His academic journey was unique as he transferred from a South Georgia community college and self-identifies as a Differed Action of Childhood Arrivals or DACA student, which resulted in finishing his four-year degree in eight years. He shared that he was on the dean's list almost every semester, and due to his immigration status, he was rarely a full-time status student. He was born in Acapulco, Mexico, and was brought to the United States when he was twelve years old to a small town in deep South Georgia. His immediate and some extended family lived in this same town for more than 20 years, but he recently moved to Tampa, Florida, with this girlfriend. His community and K-12 education experience were highly predominately White, but overall felt welcomed. His family works in the "… agricultural industry… My dad has a pine straw business. He works with landscapers and pine straw."

The ethnic makeup of his high school was:

> …predominantly White; maybe around 60% or 70% were White, 40% African American, and maybe 10% were Latino. The number of Latinos increased over time due to the agriculture business in the region. Also, the county was big, but there was only one public high school.

Anthony self-identifies as a Latino and Mexican American, but he doesn't recall living in Mexico. For Anthony, being Latino means speaking the same language and sharing "other traditions, the culture, food, and even a bit like religion in there to know about with some of the dates, like the 12th of December in our particular lady, our lady of Guadalupe." Furthermore, he believes that being a Mexican American means:

> An infusion of keeping some of those traditions that you have at home and your environment. You learn different stuff by living in America. Things you learn by going to school, interacting with Americans, and maybe doing more traditional American activities, such as being in a high school band. Now you do get mixed cultures and messages. So, I started to learn the way people are around my town. Overall, I think that's definitely an infusion of both American and Mexican cultures.

He firmly adheres mostly to this social identity as he recently went to Mexico for two weeks and felt like he was a complete foreigner. He is aware of the term Latinx, and while he does not use it for himself, he respects when others use it, especially in the higher education environment. He credits his fraternity involvement for bringing him diversity in knowing the difference between Latino and Mexican American. However, being DACA, he felt secluded growing up.

> Being DACAmented, you are reminded that you're not necessarily American at all or anything in this country. Like if your parents don't have documents, you're always in fear. Just a few days ago, there was an ICE Patrol unit in my hometown. I saw someone post this on social media, and right away, I called my parents to let them know. So, there's always that fear of what immigration status you have. Even if you are involved in these American general activities, like going to college or working, there's still uncertainty. It's interesting because the people around you don't act differently towards you, but sometimes it can be weird when they find out your status. Living in the South of Georgia can be challenging. Many have narrow-minded ways of thinking, and their views are hard to change.

Furthermore, Anthony believes race is mainly based on the color of people's skin and, it's challenging for Latinos and some Mexican Americans to identify only one of the Races listed in surveys or the census.

> I think here in America, from what I've experienced, your skin color defines it. Whether that be and White or Black or anything in between. Like when you go through any census or questionnaire, it is hard to say, [but] now from what I've studied it because I'm a wealthy [in knowledge], I studied world history and anthropology. So, I took Latin American studies and learned that there are more racial labels in Latin American countries, including "Mestizos." All Latinos are generally packed in that one label. Whether that be European, Latino, more indigenous, or any other blend of both, and even African descendants. Those are Mestizos.

Furthermore, he stated that race differences in Latin American countries came out of fear during the colonization of the Americas.

> Originally [it came] from African descent, European and Mexican ancestry… But the way that are country's structure, power, and their respective caste system, basically folks were not equal. There is still much discrimination against indigenous people in Mexico, same with African Americans and African-Latinos... I think Mestizo would be kind of my area or my identity. Of course, I can't select this as in the US, it's more about your skin color, not about [being] Latino.

Growing up, Anthony's friends were predominately African American and Latinx. Still, he noticed the diversity decreased the more rural the school was while it

increased closer to the city. He felt his ethnicity and race were strongly related to his language and immigration status, along with what he was able to do with this DACA status:

> … you start noticing that this [speaking Spanish] is a cultural thing that only Latinos do, like Mexican stuff we did in school. You didn't see that a lot. I don't know if it's mixed up with my immigrant status, but I've always feared being arrested or my parents being arrested and then figuring out what would happen if we got deported. So, I do think, and that's always been in my mind. So since early, maybe third, fourth grade, I understood that Spanish, for the most part, is not spoken at school. It's a language that you don't use at school because once other people start using it, you can either find friends or enemies. Another big one [an event that made him realize his race or ethnicity] was getting my driver's license. So, at 17 or 16, I tried to get my permit as my friends did, but I was not allowed to because I didn't have the proper immigration paperwork to get one. So, I think that was another big one.

He credits his parents for influencing him to attend college. His academic journey was met with many obstacles, but that didn't stop him from earning a bachelor's degree. During the last two years of college, Anthony moved to Savannah, Georgia, enrolled in St. Elizabeth University, and that's where he met and joined his Latino fraternity.

> I definitely was introduced to it [Latino community] pretty quickly and invited. Once I joined the fraternity, which is that same semester I got there. It was good to be in the Latino fraternity. It was a lot of work because the chapter was small in numbers. So, a lot of the work was sometimes left to a handful of brothers to get

stuff done and organized. But it did feel good knowing that there were other Latino students in various organizations.

Anthony got involved with the on-campus Latino club called [Latino on-campus student organization] and SUYA, which advocates for DACA students. But the fraternity proved the most welcoming, which made a significant factor in deciding to join, especially as he moved to a new city

> They were very welcoming, friendly, helpful, and hardworking. I think that was a big thing. The guys who were going to join the same semester were also hardworking, and I liked that. One of my line brothers was also DACA for a while. He was firm, vocal, and worked a lot with everyone else in the chapter. He was a brilliant and hardworking guy. And same with every one of them, not just him. There were five of us when I became a brother. So, they were all hard workers, and we all looked similar but different. There are two Mexicans, one Filipino, one Bolivian, and one Caucasian American. So, our diversity was very interesting. I learned about their various cultures.

Anthony joined his fraternity in spring 2016 and was active until he graduated in 2020. During these years, he was swamped and was the president of the chapter at one point. His most memorable experience was the multiple road trips he took throughout the state in which he got to meet brothers from all over the state.

> Yeah. I think it was a lot to do with the trips and the times that we spent together, like when the brothers were there, whether seeing the chapter brothers from UGA or in the Atlanta area. Everyone was always welcoming as we planned sleepovers to stay over the weekend. I think a big one was actually in a time of need when

Hurricane Matthew hit Savannah, Georgia, and Savannah was closed down for like a week or two. That was like in 2017 or something like that. Five of us drove to UGA for those weeks, and the fraternity brothers welcomed us with open arms. And yeah, we just kick it there; we were obviously refugees due to the storm; we didn't see ourselves like that as we lived with our UGA brothers. Doing this with them was very memorable. But, with the guys, we've gone to New York with [Latino on-campus student organization], like we've all shared that trip. We've all traveled to different parts of the US as we all went to various [national] fraternity conferences. We went to Miami and then Kansas City. So those are all memorable. I think it has to do with the trips and the quality time we spent together.

The fraternity influenced his overall sense of ethnic identity, not just while he was in Georgia but also when he moved to Florida.

I think [the fraternity] fills it [sense of ethnic identity]. I think it feels nice knowing that there's a group of other men that are trying to make the best out of their college experience. We all share our pillars and values, like academic excellence, brotherhood, and stuff like that. So, I think it's important that we're all in the same struggle working hard and we're there for each other. Not just in your school but throughout Georgia, Florida, and the nation. It's good to know that there are students who are also working hard as you, that for the most part, they might also be first-time college students. But I do think it reinforced that ethnic identity and relationship with others like ourselves. But again, the fraternity is more than just Latinos; it's very diverse. So again, it's like they say it's a

mixing pot, and that's what it means to be American. Many cultures come together and ultimately intertwined, just like in my fraternity.

Furthermore, Anthony shared that through different and shared experiences, he and his fraternity brother learned the diversity between them. This exposure allowed him to be exposed to other identities that he might not have otherwise.

Yeah. Like I said, some of the brothers that were on the DACA program and were Mexican American. One of the brothers [who] is DACA, [that] I joined because I knew him and of his status. He would go to church. He'd be like, 'hey, you want to go to church?' And we would go to mass... My Filipino brother, his parents are business owners like my parents. They're also busy. So, I know that they're very demanding of him because that's how my parents are with me. Also, knowing that two of my fraternity brothers are gay, which I was not exposed to anyone who was gay before. And then my Caucasian friends and my LB [line brother] are White. I know some of the food he brings comes from his grandmother, and the food she cooks is southern American cooking some of that stuff. And then him learning about some of the things that are normal to us; it was all very interesting. Same with my Filipino brother and his family does versus what my family does. And even in my experience, going to church. We have a big Filipino church community here. But knowing that he's Catholic, like me, but they're also a little different. We've talked about how our churches are similar and different at the same time.

Ultimately, Anthony exclaimed and noted that his Latino fraternity helped him stay in school and eventually graduate, as his fraternity members pushed each other for academic achievement.

> I think it did. Like I said that peer support, a fellow college student supporting you and knowing that we had to keep up with our grades to keep my fraternity, you know, it's a motivator. Plus, I felt proud of my fraternity's academic accomplishments because I was part of them. So, you also want to show it in your grades. Also, knowing that many of the guys' parents are very supportive of what we do, that felt good. So, I think definitely, being part of our fraternity just helped us push through it.

Lastly, Anthony noted that he highly enjoyed his Latino fraternity experience and that if he had the opportunity to do it again, he would do it.

> [my Latino fraternity experience was] great, excellent. I really have gotten the most out of it. I'm trying to get more and more involved still, you know, even though I'm a couple hours away from my home, my chapter, but even at Tampa. I hang out with the guys [in Tampa]. It's easy to meet more people through the fraternity and try to get a little more involved. So, I think it's great anywhere you go.

Caleb: Americanized White Latino

Caleb is a college senior at St. Elizabeth University. He plans to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in physics. His mother and father are from Mexico and have been in the US for about 25 years. He was born and raised in Georgia. He described the neighborhood he grew up in as suburban and predominantly Black. As a result, Caleb

attended a very diverse high school. He shared that his high school student population was "80% Black and a combined 20% of Hispanic, Asian, and White." Because of his environment, Caleb recalled past experiences where race was at the forefront of his mind.

> … I guess at a young age... You can honestly tell the difference between different Races, in my opinion, because you could see all the Black [classmates]. Because I had some other Hispanic friends who said they were Black as well, but I told them, "No, we are White." But they didn't want to believe me…

Furthermore, Caleb defined race as "your origin like where [you] descended from." He states that "Europe[an] and Middle Eastern people, are some areas [where] there are White people [are] from." With this definition, Caleb self-identifies as White. He attributes this concept to times when he had to complete paperwork for school purposes or other documents with demographic questions. As it pertains to ethnicity, Caleb identified as Hispanic. He also believes his family would also identify as Hispanic. Caleb defines ethnicity as "where you're from. Like, you're Middle Eastern, you're from Latin America, you're from Spanish. It tells more about where you're from."

Furthermore, Caleb believes race and ethnicity are similar and have some differences. He explains these differences as:

> Ethnicity can tell you more about your culture and different norms, and I guess the race is more general. For example, Americans are White, and some Mexicans are also White, but their experiences growing up and beliefs and how they see things are entirely different. And when you look at race, you won't be able to

know that, but once you include your ethnicity, you can get a more extensive understanding of people's culture or the area they grew up in.

Additionally, Caleb described the difference between Latino as being "from Latin America" and Hispanic as someone of "Spanish descent." He identified as Latino and expressed his discontent with the term Latinx.

> I also don't like that [Latinx] term. I haven't used it personally, but I understand that people like it, especially the ones who identify with other genders and want to use it, I guess. But Latino, it's for everybody. That includes males and females.

Caleb had conversations about race with family members who have questioned his White racial identity but not his Latino identity.

> I guess some are just telling me that I wasn't White, but after I explained it to them, and after we looked up the definition, it always ended to say, and they concluded afterward that I was White and Hispanic. Nobody really argued about me being Hispanic or Latino as well. So, my race is White.

Caleb credits his parents for influencing him to attend college. He chose to enroll at St. Elizabeth University as a more cost-effective choice. Additionally, Caleb affirms that of six other siblings, "three of them have graduated, and I have another sister who's still in college." Caleb's parents seem to be reassuring and understanding in nature as they provided many opportunities for him.

> They're [Caleb's parents] just always supportive, always expected more of us. And, I mean, seeing how hard my dad worked and seeing how much my mom did for us, I just knew I could do more. I felt like I had to do more. Just out of respect for them, having gone through all they went through to provide us a better life.

During his first two years of college, Caleb had a different experience than his junior and senior years. He describes his first two years as highly involved and engaging. He stated that he saw less student engagement in his junior year because of a state-wide institutional consolidation that occurred. His senior year experience was much like his junior year as the COVID-19 pandemic brought a halt to all face-to-face student activities.

> I felt like there was a lot of stuff to do. A lot was going on. Everybody would participate and stuff. There were different clubs with packed events. People would just be participating in everything, like for any event. Then, in my junior year, everything just died down. There were a lot of changes that were being made...And then in the junior year and the beginning of this [senior] year, since we had COVID, it's just been a completely different experience. So, classes are hybrid. And it just feels like we've been doing assignments, turning them in, not learning much. So, that feels strange to me; like the very few activities, there's not that much participation. And I don't know if it's because of Coronavirus or because people are, I guess, not as involved as they used to. But, overall, it's been a good experience.

Caleb was involved in intramural sports. He credits his involvement to the Director of Multicultural Affairs, who "had asked [him] to go see her in her office during the year, and … she told me about the different clubs and organizations that they had." He participated in soccer, pickleball, tennis, volleyball, dodgeball, and kickball. However, there was a decrease in participation because the most recent events have "smaller events."

During his first year of college, Caleb joined various college student organizations, including the [Latino on-campus student organization], and a Latino fraternity. Caleb says the [Latino on-campus student organization] "had a lot of events. So, specifically targeted towards like Hispanic or Latino students." As it pertains to the Latino fraternity, Caleb had been interested with a classmate to join the fraternity during their freshman year but did not join until his last year. While his interest to join had initially decreased, he joined the fraternity because he was motivated by the chapter president.

> I was always interested in it [the Latino fraternity]. I don't know. Just seeing how much dedication the president had for the organization and how much he wanted to do for the community. It just made me feel like I was going to be like something that would be helpful. Like a good thing to be involved in or a part of. At first, that was the reason why I didn't want to join because I didn't know if I would be able to bring that same level of commitment or the same level of enthusiasm to the organization, but after that, I got to talk to him, I decided to join. And it wasn't until I joined it that like really started to make sense to me. Right. You can be as involved as you want. But, yeah, it was just seeing him and how determined he was really that made me know it was something to be part of... because you won't just feel that way for or do that much for something that isn't worth it.

Caleb joined the fraternity in the fall of 2020. Since joining, Caleb feels like the fraternity has provided him with a sense of support that he hadn't felt before. He sees how "everybody's just supportive [and] how this really is like a brotherhood." For

example, he says he witnessed how "if anybody ever needs any help, they post it in the [group] chat we have… and we just see nothing but support… It just feels like a brotherhood, really." Caleb especially remembers that he was most impacted when he saw fraternity brothers offering a place to spend the holidays.

> I joined like right before Thanksgiving...that weekend before... like for Thanksgiving and Christmas, they were messaging like if nobody had someplace to go to their house and, I don't know to me that just showed me that the brotherhood was really there... to invite people that you don't know into your house like they're family. It just made me feel like if I ever need any help, I know I can have people who are willing to help me.

Despite the overall decreased programming on campus, Caleb feels more satisfied when engaging on campus on behalf of his fraternity. He believes this sense of satisfaction may come from being part of the planning process versus "just attending to the events." Caleb also shared that his most memorable experience in the fraternity, thus far, has been the induction or new member process. He describes the process as:

> just excitement from going through it… Some[thing] I look forward to… And I would encourage anybody else to try to get to join any fraternity for that matter too, just so that they can see what it's like and get involved, to bond with people, to be able to have like family outside of their actual family.

Throughout his high level of engagement with the fraternity and other organizations, Caleb met classmates that shared similar interests. Caleb shared that his line brother's parents are also from Mexico. The chapter president has mixed ethnicities from Mexico and the United States. Caleb shares that a group of interested gentlemen

they are currently working with self-identified as Black, White, a Puerto Rican, and someone with Dominican Republic ancestry. He also described his non-fraternity college friends as diverse.

> They're [international students] mostly. One is from Nepal. There are some Indians; some are White or Asian. Yeah. I guess some more Hispanic too. Just different, I guess. Just a mixture of different people. Yeah, I met them mostly through soccer, I guess. Some just through classes and others through like the Honors program.

Caleb noted that his group of friends or any other friend group did not play a role in influencing his ethnic identity other than his parents. He credits his college success and persistence to his parents' struggles, motivating him not to disappoint them. He claims that being Hispanic or "of Spanish descent" is not essential to him. "I don't think it's that important. Honestly, I don't think it has more of an effect on me. It's not something that it's just not something that I don't know; I guess that affects me as much." Caleb also states that his indifference to racism and prejudice is not essential to him. Even as he relayed an incident on campus about "somebody said that they burned a book. For some reason, it was related to race." Caleb affirms that he doesn't "care enough to look into it or be offended [by] it." He also clarifies that he does not believe to be color blind as it pertains to race.

Caleb says he has always been set on attending college. He denotes that his fraternity has not affected his beliefs. He believes the only mindset changes he may encounter are "[losing] some cultural norms that I grew up with, but I think that's mainly it."

> I mean, I guess I've seen it especially happening with my parents. I think as years passed by; they became more Americanized. Like I said, just seeing how we were treated growing up as opposed to how my younger sister is treated. Like, seems more Americanized now than before. And so, if anything, it'll just be even further Americanized... Just me. As I grow up, now I'll start, maybe sticking to like the American norm.

At the same time, he stated he had to maintain and possibly pass on certain cultural aspects or at least "learn about it." He emphasizes that learning the Spanish language is vital for him to pass on as he is bilingual.

> And especially the things that I find to be like more, most important. For them to get to know about it at least. If not, like participate in it, or at least have that choice to know what it is. Like, especially the speaking Spanish and all. I know there are some people who are like the third generation, like Americans. So, like they were... their parents were born in America. And like even second-generation American-born, they lose a lot of the culture. They can't speak the language. Or some can't speak the language, and that's to me, to some extent, it's sad not being able to speak the language where your family descended from.

Fidel: "The Typical Mexican Family"

Fidel is a Junior at Maximus University and is majoring in cybersecurity with a 2.9 GPA. His mother and father are originally from Mexico and have been in the US since 1978. He is now 26 and was born and raised in Texas but moved to Georgia at the age of eight. His father works as a crane operator, and his mother works at Sam's club.

He described the neighborhood and community he grew up in as a "typical Mexican" household.

> I guess just the typical Mexican, you know, just content with what they have. They had a better life. They have a better life now than what they had back in Mexico. They were just content. Like growing up, my parents were just content. Like oh, we have a house now... Just work. Just work and provide, work, and provide, work and provide. I guess you could say, I guess it wasn't...like the community I grew up, like especially family community, wasn't much like for higher education or whatnot, to be honest. They were just like the typical Mexican family, like parties, a party on the weekend, you know, do stuff together.

He lived and attended most of his K-12 experience in Hall County, which has a large Latinx and Black student population with a small White population. He described his experiences in high school as "mediocre" because the teachers would not push for academic excellence.

> My high school experience was, I would say, mediocre, to be honest. More anything because I still see it happening, to be honest. There's a lot of... there's not a lot of push, especially for minorities to go to Higher Ed. Like, one has to be the one to be like, "Hey, I want to do this." "Hey, can I do this?" "Where can I get information on this?" and whatnot... growing up, I remember Mr. Jones and Kaminsky, two of the five counselors that we had there. They were the ones that mostly pushed for you to like, you know, "Hey! It didn't matter where you come from. If you put your mindset to it, you can achieve it. You can go to this college, and you can go to that college." If it wasn't for them, like nobody else would push

you like this. The teachers, you could tell who cared and who didn't. It was just the way it was.

He experienced racism during his high school years. He was part of the school's baseball team and the soccer team. He dropped the baseball team because of the racism he experienced.

> I made the baseball team one year, but I didn't feel the vibe because most were White people playing baseball. And it was very uncomfortable. The way, I guess the way they spoke to me. To me, more than anything, I didn't feel a part of that team. But I played the soccer team for all four years… One time we were going to play Rabun County, and then when we got there. You could tell that they were all friends. They were like they knew each other they were playing for a while. And then the other team was making, I guess, jokes. And then one of the guys who played on my team said something like, 'we came down to a play, a little wetback playing in the team now. They can't even get players to play.' I was like, okay. And the coaches heard it but depending on who said it, they may have or may not have gotten in trouble. If it was a good player, you can tell they wouldn't say anything to an all-star player. They would ignore it.

Furthermore, Fidel defined ethnicity as "Your ethnic background. Where you come from, for example, I consider myself Latino and Mexican American because I have Mexican parents. I am Mexican, but I was fortunate enough to be born here, so I am also American." For him, to be Mexican American means "that you stand firm for your roots. But you value where you are right now, where you were born, and what you want for yourself." While Hispanic to him is someone who has "decedents from Spain. You have

some connection, root connection to the Spain Spaniard entity rather than Latin America, Mexico, South America." He has heard the term Latinx and doesn't use it to describe himself but respects everyone who may use it as he understands that the word is about being gender-inclusive.

Fidel stated that the race factor is interesting and confusing for the Latinx population, especially when he started to apply for jobs.

> It's interesting because a lot of time in job applications. I was confused. Like why White why is my race White? I was just like 'there's no slot for me. There's no slot for me to put.' There is no slot I guess, for us to put like Mexican. race or our own entity was just put White. I remember when I first applied from my first job, I was probably sixteen. I asked the lady at the front counter, what do I put here? I'm not that I'm not that and I'm not that what do I put here. And I don't know. She just didn't want to tell me, or she just didn't want to go into like that about or be like that conversation. Are we supposed to put this or this what you supposed to put? But she was just like, 'what do you consider yourself?' And I told her Mexican American, but there is no spot there. I am not White I don't consider myself White. That's not my race. So, I ended up leaving it blank.

Fidel initially said he would check the White box in questioners but didn't feel comfortable doing so. At this point of his age and life, he selects the "other" category and expects his children to do the same. His understanding between race and ethnicity was not entirely clear. "My opinion would be that Races are their own entity identified as a group. And ethnicity is your cultural background or what you represent, what you like to represent in which you believe you are."

Fidel credits a neighbor he had while he was growing up. The neighbor would speak to him about making the right choices and spent a lot of time talking to him. He chose to attend Maximus University as it is more convenient due to his family obligations as he is a father of two. Additionally, Caleb referred to a friend who was the catalyst to return to college as an adult learner. During his time at Maximus University, he has been involved and has felt discriminated against due to his social identity.

> In the summer of 2019, I had an opportunity of being an orientation leader… you can tell how the teachers [administration] how they teach you [with a] bias level. But one of the instances that I remember was when I had the task of leading the parents of the students. And one of the parents was questioning a lot of things. She questioned [the] majority of the things I said and everything. Like any other parents were okay. What stood out from this situation from this parent was that she wanted to hear from somebody else of her color. In other words, I picked up on the fact she didn't trust my information. The same information was provided by a person [who looked like her or White European background], and she was okay with it. She was content with that; I don't know if it was just a sense of security or somebody knowing more content or even somebody from the administration's point of view saying it the same thing I said. But it didn't justify the fact that that's how I felt…One supervisor did acknowledge the issue. He pointed and acknowledged that I was correct [about the information I was giving out].

Fidel continued saying that there were times he felt that the predominately White campus made him bite his tongue when questionable things would arise.

> I've had to bite my tongue on different occasions in different positions, different conversations that I've had with different students. Just in general, as in a group setting type of thing. Because I've learned from a person. Everything has a time and place. That has been hard for me. Time and a place, especially at the university, because there's always a time and place to react… my first two years, it wasn't that bad because I was surrounded mainly by a lot of the same ethnicity people. My second year when it was like a little bit more intense. So that's one. I got, I guess I got more involved in different clubs. In different, administration was involved.

Fidel shared that he was not involved in student activities until he joined his Latino fraternity during his second year of college. During the time of the interview, he was the vice president of diversity and inclusion within the Interfraternity Council. He shared that:

> In that role, because it's new, I guess it's kind of hard to determine what I want to do with like obvious help in different directors help and the Director of Multicultural Student Affairs. They helped out. This role mainly was created just to unify more schools within Greek life. Greek is available to anybody who attends any of the campuses.

He has been a member of his Latino fraternity for three years and has enjoyed the family aspect of the organization.

> A sense of comfort level with them. To be honest, I took with my fraternity brothers, like the one that I crossed with and whatnot. Like I can go with them and talk about anything whatnot and they will tell me what's wrong with you. What

are you doing? Stuff like that and in the sense of a unity that we have for each other… I decided to join because of their core values and education. Academic excellence was at the heart of the it. You strive to become a better man, a male role model.

Fidel noticed that the brothers of his organization would speak as if they have known each other for years but in fact, they had just met.

[When] we were just starting, and I asked this dude, how long yall know each other. Actually, [we just met] tonight…The sense of comfort, the way they were speaking, I guess among each other. You would think they've known each other for six or ten years.

Fidel noted two fond memories of being part of his Latino fraternity, one in which they encouraged each other not to quit and another instance in which they were hanging out and becoming brothers of their organizations.

It made me feel a sense of joy to have that type of impact on somebody then I don't even know. No knowledge of what they're going through their personal life. For them to actually take, heed my words and take them into consideration and be like, you know, he's right. Let's just do this. Let's just accomplishes and move forward [establish the chapter].

Throughout student engagement with various organizations, Fidel felt like his Latino fraternity had the biggest impact on his ethnic identity as the organizations allows for clear communication mediums aside from in person conversations to discuss topics of this nature.

> The fraternity actually has helped quite a bit to be honest, like more and more like how they help and what they help in what they stand for. It has helped me to identify what race I am or what ethnicity or why I think that way [I do] even though it's inclusive we accept anyone who identifies as male. [We] allow them to understand that the Latino heritage has helped the fact that, you know, they, just hold different chat rooms on different days about stuff and then you're more than welcome to attend [participate in the conversation]. You can opinionate and say why you think this way.

Fidel reaffirmed that his fraternity and being around other members aided in his sense of ethnic identity. He and his fraternity brothers had conversations about race and ethnicity.

> It has contributed so much such that I know why I think this way why I think I'm Mexican American. You know, from where and how come I picked that. There are brothers that are from Puerto Rico. There are bros from different [places] Dominican Republic, Mexican, African American, brothers up north, which is interesting. But it's pretty cool. I just find it interesting that they find our heritage and our culture meaningful... being reaffirm and accepted that this is what I am, and nobody can change it, it just reinforced what I already thought… My chapter brothers, we had discussions about it [race or ethnicity issues], especially like, you know, there was one recently. It was off topic. It was not about race whether you will be okay to move into a more I guess you could say more upscale neighborhood. Or stay within your neighborhood realm for your offspring, for your child. Why allow them to suffer? Like why? Why allow them to go through

the same struggles that we did. Knowing how hard it was, why do that? Why not given the, given the opportunity to have less of a struggle, needless to say, is not going to be given to them at like a silver platter? But I'd choose to live a nicer neighborhood knowing that there might be more White people or people not like us.

Fidel didn't know he would go to college one day, and the fraternity has influenced him to persist even when things have gotten tough for him academically. Based on his experience, his fraternity has influenced him to graduate.

I don't think I would be academically wise and as involved as much as I would if I wasn't in the Latino fraternity to be honest. Like it gives me, like seeing the fact that I see other brothers, the involvement they have within the fraternity like see them progress with their academic excellence in academic and career. It makes me strive to be like, okay, maybe that will be me one day. Maybe I can be that way or maybe I will be that way… We do some [activities to have] academic excellence with other chapters by just like you study sessions or checking up and see how they are doing, everybody has a different major, but two heads are better than one... And I know one of my chapter bros, he attended, like a study session with [another state university] so that was pretty interesting.

His experience in the fraternity has been "Mind-blowing…being the fact that there are different levels of perspectives of a fraternity is mind-blowing how we can overcome those perspectives and be like we're actually this type of thing [identity]". When asked if he would join his fraternity again, he responded he would, and in fact, he would encourage his sons to investigate the organization once they're in college.

Gilbert: *Tejano*, "A Merge Between Hispanic and Caucasian"

Gilbert is a college sophomore who attends Reiki University and is pursuing a Bachelor of Science with a major in Biology. His mother was born in Texas, and his father was born in Mexico. His father moved to the United States as a baby and was raised in Texas. However, Gilbert was born and raised in Georgia. The community he grew up in was predominantly White community and rural. He described the population composition as "70% White and 30% Hispanic." Gilbert described his scholastic involvement as conflictive, especially because of his teachers. He told his high school experience as primarily negative, and because of this, he was not involved in many clubs or organizations. Gilbert attended predominately White middle and high schools and felt "left out" from the Latinx community.

> It was a public school. And they didn't have much money...It started off like a chicken house. And then they stacked another one on top of it and then just kind [of] like converted it into like actual floor and what not. So, it's literally like two farmhouses stacked on top of each other. But just turned into school...There's honestly, it is a majority White population...But like the Hispanic, I feel like a lot of them are Guatemalan and mixed.

Additionally, Gilbert recalled occasions in which race and ethnicity influenced his decision-making. He particularly remembered the disassociation with the Hispanic student population and peers early on.

> I had an all-White friend group. I wasn't really friends with Hispanics. [I] feel like I came to not like them that much because they kind of like ostracize me. Like on the bus they would like bully me and call me names and things like that. And so, I

> just grew to not like them. And I think it also had to do with me being accelerated classes and when I was the only Hispanic in my honors classes throughout all of school as well... But I asked what the deal between everyone was and not talking to me. And this classmate I saw now in college said that they [Hispanic peers] thought I was racist. So, I thought that was interesting because I never went out of my way to [do that]. I would try and talk to them, but they wouldn't talk to me. So, it was very one-sided, or I guess. But I didn't talk to a lot of Hispanics.

Gilbert defined ethnicity as "like what culture you took in because your environment plays a huge factor." With regards to the difference between race and ethnicity, he added, "I don't know, that was really confusing… I've always found that confusing. But I've noticed that ethnicity has to do more with culture because it says Mexican on there, um, I guess that's the only way I've been able to piece it together." Posteriorly, he added that "maybe ethnicity has to do with like the actual color of your skin." Gilbert identifies as *Tejano* "a subcategory [of Hispanic] because you have Hispanics who go to different places. I guess they could come up with their own ways of saying... Like *Tejas* [Texas in Spanish], we just include the word *Tejas* in the word *Mexicano*." He further clarified that this ethnic identity is:

> Kind of [a] merge [between Hispanics and Caucasians]. You get a lot of Hispanics that you would call Whitewashed. And I think that's a better way of saying Whitewash that your *Tejano* or at least based regionally off like where my family is from. Because the culture there's kind of collided and a lot of Hispanics, they're just talking English, even though they're Brown.

Gilbert commented that his parents would likely identify as Mexican, whereas his younger siblings would not emphasize the topic. Gilbert remembered his mother told him he was also Mexican when he didn't know he was.

> There's actually one time where I guess I didn't realize I was Mexican. And I'm probably someone at school told me. I don't really remember the background...My mom was doing something, and I didn't like it. And we're at home. And I was like 'mom,' I was like, 'don't do that or I tell everyone at school that you're Mexican.' And she was like 'What? She's like, do you not realize that you're Mexican too?' And I was like 'What?' So, this is when I was a pretty young so that was one of my first the first ones that I was ever like recall [ethnicity].

Gilbert feels attached to his Texas heritage or *Tejano* more than any other social identity. Therefore, he explained the difference between *Tejano* and Mexican ethnicities as "*Tejano* is more kind of like fused with Caucasian culture... It's just like maybe they [Mexicans] cook things a little bit differently… Like we're all still Hispanic. I don't think there's like a major difference." As a result, Gilbert identifies as *Tejano* "because of the ring to it. I like acknowledging that they're from Mexico or Texas because that's something I look forward to every year. But that's just me." He also suggested that "Mexican [is] just such a gritty, dry word." From his experience, the term Mexican has a negative connotation. "People are talking down about Hispanic; they'd say that 'that dirty Mexican or something.' It's been like correlated to a racist remark for me." Gilbert was unsure of the full definition of the term Latinx but noted it was for gender equality. "In my mind, I'm thinking of it as like this generation like now. That's like not focusing on

like machismo aspects. Like where women are actually able to do more," which based on that, he would use the term Latinx to identify himself.

Moreover, Gilbert identifies as White, and he said his parents would also identify with the same racial identity. While defining race was unclear to him, he believes his racial identity is tied to his ability to speak English and where he resides.

> Based off like region, maybe where you're at, where your people are from, I guess, because I'm in America, but there's no option to be to be Mexican when I'm choosing race is only says White. So, I guess based on regional location. But that still doesn't make sense because there's no Mexico... I need to go do my research.

In addition, he attributed his decision to identify as White due to a class he took during his schooling years. He said, "We [in class] were discussing the human race. Like and we traveled the seas and found like America and stuff. That was on the first time. That's when I realized like there are different Races of people because they've kind of delved into it. Now that was really the first, just my history classes."

Gilbert experienced Racism as he was growing up. He was partaking in a soccer match in which he "[didn't] know why they wouldn't put [him] back in the game." He thought "it had to do more with like, he [the coach] was racist in some way. [Gilbert] didn't know why [the coach] did what he did. There wasn't any good reasoning." Gilbert clarified that his coach and teammates were all White, and he was the only Hispanic on the team. Aside from his negative experience with teachers and coaches, Gilbert mentioned other instances in middle school where he felt discriminated against by other Latinx classmates.

> And I guess like when it came time to it, they [Latinx classmates would have like *quinceañeras* [a traditional Mexican fifteen birthday celebration of coming to womanhood] and stuff like everyone was getting to that point where they're having their little parties and dances. I remember going to my like my cousin…But when it came time for other people my age that were having *quinceañeras* I didn't go to single one like not a single *quince* like I was invited to. Nobody [of Latinx decent] really talked to me [in high school]. I don't know why. On the bus to like, there were these there two I don't know if they're Guatemalan or Hispanic. They were sitting next to me on the bus. And like for no reason, I would just sit there and mind my business because I was anti-social. But they were like pick on me and *'hey, [obscenity] que estas haciendo'* (Hey, [obscenity], what are you doing?) And they would be all like really on me and it was uncalled for an I would be like. Why do they why would you say that? Like I'm just sitting here. No, there's no reason for it. That's one of the first times that I was like I don't know... And they would go out of their way to just not talk to me, even though they were the only kids on the bus who looked like me.

Gilbert credits his friends for influencing him to attend college. While Reiki University was his first option, Gilbert would have enlisted in the military alternatively. During his first year of college, Gilbert felt more involved than before.

> I mean, I try and stay involved in some activities. Not really involved in the Latino student association, but one of my fraternity brothers is part of and like whenever he needs help with like ideas or stuff like I'm there like that. But I'm not really involved… I've been e-mailing to the radio club. I want to get a part of

> the that's a new club that's coming up that has to do with actual like tell it like communications via radio broadcasting like... I'm also the involved in the fraternity. The FSL, the fraternity and sorority counsel… I am a delegate…I get involved with other fraternities like tomorrow…They're doing a clothes drive…I did go to the head like a church club for a bit like that. I try and outreach everywhere. I'm trying to associate connection with the gym because I heard they got dodge balls. So, I'm trying to get my toes everywhere. [I] also talk to MSA. The Multicultural Affairs. They got me a [job] position at United Way.

He credited his increased involvement to his fraternity. "I'm way more involved like way more. I honestly don't think that I would have ever had the confidence to reach out to like all these other people…confidence has been a really big thing in my life... so I couldn't have done it without my fraternity." He also expressed that "the fraternity has had the biggest impact on my persistence like them being there for me whenever I was going through something rough."

Gilbert decided to join his Latino fraternity because he attended presentations from predominately White Greek-lettered organizations and was convinced they were in it just for the fun of it. Unlike in other Greek organizations, the brothers of his LGLO were all professionals.

> Whenever I would talk to, a brother, [he] would always be in his suit, he was always professional, always straight to the point. And like when I saw him like, I really looked up to him because like, I was like this dude, like he's doing everything that I want to do. And not only that, but I noticed that like with the White fraternities, I had already experienced, like having White friends before.

> And I knew that there was like a culture gap between us in that like they just didn't understand me completely. So that's why I like, went out of my way to do that because I know that we have similar backgrounds and I wanted to expand my horizons. I don't want any more like it's been stuck with friends who don't get me.

Gilbert joined his Latino fraternity during spring 2020, which happened to be his second semester of college. Since joining, Gilbert felt like the fraternity has boosted his confidence and professional skills.

> Becoming [a brother] is an enlighten[ing] experience…And like, that's one thing that I remind myself like when I do interviews now, like I interviewed with like a bunch of bros who helped me and if I can go through that [again], [then, what] I go through from that point on is child's play. It gives me the confidence because I've done it [hard interviews] before and owe that to my fraternity."

Furthermore, Gilbert expressed that he tries to emphasize that he is a Tejano at his university. He is intentional about his attire. He claimed he had worn a sombrero to various student activities. Gilbert has accomplished this as a result of joining his fraternity as he can "express [himself] more and be more comfortable with who [he is]." He has felt comfortable enough to express his identity at school. At the same time, Gilbert has also encountered discrimination at his university. A friend's car broke down, and a number of his Latinx friends went to the parking lot to help "… [when university] police pulled up and asked if they were all brothers and sisters… It wasn't bad, but it's just something that I still think about…I was like, 'No, just because we're all brown doesn't mean we're brothers and sisters.'" Gilbert said he did not escalate the situation to a university administrator because he perceived the remark ignorant. Despite this

encounter, he says his ethnic perception has become more important since attending college and being part of his Latino fraternity. As a result, he realized that:

> I want to give my children more. I felt like with my family like we eat like more burgers than we do like tacos. Like I just want to give more Hispanic things to them. Like the language, the food, the traditions… like the *tres reyes magos rosca* [three wise men bread] where I had to bring tamales afterwards. I want to be able to do that.

Language is also a critical aspect of Gilbert's identity. Previously, he asked his family members to only speak Spanish around him to learn the language. Instead, they "just brushed it off." However, in college he has been able to practice his Spanish skills in different scenarios such as translating for a local organization through an internship or when he's doing his "fraternity salutes [fraternity tradition] …I know like I feel so badass when we say it in Spanish… it just feels right." Additionally, Gilbert stated, "I don't think anyone that I hang out with could have really changed how I see myself." He said he is set on identifying as *Tejano,* which is a synonym for Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, and Latinx.

> It means like, I'm going to eat good. Food is like a big thing for me…Also, this is more of values, but I think my parents treat everyone that comes into their house as their own child. But I felt like all my relatives do that. So, I'm thinking it's a Latino thing, but now you take them in as your own, take them under your wing. Kind of mentor each other… for Latinos, I think family comes first. Like in every situation. But family is really important with Latinos, and I can say, for me, doing what's right, it's like doing what's right and being a hard worker.

Furthermore, Gilbert noted that his Latino fraternity brothers had significantly impacted his college persistence, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they served as a strong support group for him during this challenging time.

> The support group [aspect]. And like I had mentioned, they understand if I'm going through something like that, like depression or whatnot, whatever it may be. Like, they'll hear me out like, um, unlike my parents used to do and what not like whenever I flunked out, when COVID hit, and I was working at a *pollera* [chicken factory] after that spring semester and we had that big talk about that. 'Hey, like What's wrong? Why are you? You know, what happened?' And like, the fraternity served as a really good support group for like just made me want to go back to school. Like they talked to me over the summer. I was like as just helps me realize that like, yeah, like it sucks working in there. They're working all day long, just doing the same thing over and over again. And I could be reading or sitting down like doing an assignment; not physical labor. So, the fraternity has had the biggest impact on my persistence like them being there for me whenever I was going through something rough. That way I can continue my college education. There would have been like I probably still would have gone to school because it's sucks so, much to work in a factory. But like having people tell you that place sucks too, like this just reinforces that feeling.

Jacobo: "… we embrace each other's Latinoness"

Jacobo is a graduating senior at St. Elizabeth University and is majoring in marketing and business with a 3.2 GPA. He stated that his home background was "untraditional." He was adopted along with his younger sister at the age of seven. His

biological father is half Mexican and half White American, and his biological mother is White American. The family that adopted him had other adopted and foster children. He has an African American younger brother along with another sibling. This mixed household allowed him to have ethnicity and race at the forefront of his mind at an early age.

> Then going into my adoptive family. It just it was an interesting dynamic. It is a different shifting, especially like culture. You know, we were in a traditional family. They're like. We're all adopted, and we all come from different backgrounds. And my sister and I were both, you know, White you know, Latino, and then and I have like another little bro. His adopted and he's African American and my parents are White we just all embrace our differences. And to give it a little bit, whenever my little bro was younger, he would even think he was Mexican too.

He lived and experienced his K-12 at Houston County. The student population was mainly of Black and Latinx descent. He described his experiences in high school as a "pretty good time" as he was highly involved in many different activities and organizations.

> In high school, at least I did sports I did like cross-country. I played soccer, I did swimming and then club, I was in the BETA Club. I went to CEA [fellowship Christian Athletes], you know what that means. He experienced racism during his high school years. He was part of the school's baseball team and the soccer team… I also was a part of more things; I think I was a part of a club named optimize like something. We did a lot of volunteering and stuff. [I don't know] if

you'll count this. I was also part of our we call it the nakedness. It was a student group that we went sports and cheered and all this, like the student section. Oh, shoot, you're making me have flashbacks of high school, but I was also a part of the theatre program, and it was one of the best in the state. When we won championships like for our first act, I was also a part of our dancing team and theater… I'm very passionate about it. So even like my high school, as an institution, I have the amount of pride that I have for it on for my family. The school is generational. My mom and I went to the school. My brother went there; my family's from where I am from. So, if you are in Warner Robbins and your family goes back, your family will have a lot of pride in it. So, when I was at that high school, my pride in it was great. Yeah, I just liked to be involved, honestly. I feel like I have the leadership skills to be applied.

Furthermore, Jacobo defined ethnicity as 'ethnicity is trying to separate from my nationality and my race and stuff the definitely I would say the definition is kind of close to culture because I mean, yeah, it could be a people, a group of people who share the same culture." He identifies as Latino due to his mixed ancestry. "I am not going to say I am Mexican. I'll probably be like; I'm of Mexican descent because I'm not from Mexico. And my dad is, I am half Mexican because of my dad. And that's what I would say." For him, being Latino means that:

…you're aware of like your roots, your ancestry…. your roots, being about the organization as knowing [where you] came from and now you're here because you're here because of them, the people before us. So, like along those routes here to bring you on by partly that's on something like the culture, the culture

traditions all of that is being passed down. So, there's something that you carry along with you.

Jacobo has heard about the Latinx terminology, and while he accepts it and uses it when speaking in large groups to include all genders. For Jacobo, race is about skin color, but he believes that we're all one human race. At the same time, he acknowledges there are differences between race and ethnicity.

race to me. I'm going to say by the color your skin but I'm that type of person. I don't really believe that because racism, racism [is] a real thing. And I mean, we all have different Races. But really like just the human race. All of these terms are all made by humans, normally we are just [people]. These will have categories for everything. And it just I feel is just separates people. Like there's division whenever we bring race… race to me is like when we talk about race, we're talking about like, I feel like we talked about like the outside of this you know what I mean, is by appearance. But when we talk about ethnicity, it's what's inside of us. Is that culture being those traditions is the knowledge that's passed on.

Jacobo recognized race and ethnicity issues early on in his K-12 experience as he was adopted by a White American family and had an African American adoptive brother along with his half-sister.

…in elementary school, I think I was just oblivious more towards like notice things, but towards more like middle school like race and ethnicity as to what it comes to as to when it comes to like issues. Since my brother he is African American. I know there's many times I will always have to lecture him like you can't do certain things because like outside people might view it as some like

different. Like onetime like, you know, he's walking around late night with his hood on. Just walking around like people and can view that as like sketchy and you don't know if they'll do, I don't know at least that way. And then, of course, for my sister and I back to, you know, race and ethnicity issues. So, both of our biological fathers, they're both undocumented. And so, we're always like knowledgeable. I guess deportation on I guess I knew about that whenever I was younger in elementary school, but I guess I didn't piece it together as I like race, ethnicity. I just like, oh, they're being deported from people. That were in my neighborhood and like ICE would come through and deport like half of the neighborhood.

Jacobo recognized he was a White Latino as his adoptive mother made a point to remind him of his heritage.

I've always carried like the [Latino] identity and even as even after I was adopted, like my biological mom all like she always like, we're always embraced that you are Latino. And [you should] always embrace like the background that you come from, even though she was White but that was something that she's always like, pressured for us to do. And like I remember like even when it came down to like filing like on test papers, make sure you put Latino on there. So, I've always carried that with me. But it wasn't until like maybe like eighth grade that I really like wanted to dive deeper into the culture.

Furthermore, due to his background and lack of Spanish language manipulation, he questioned if he was Latino enough.

…I guess yeah, I guess there is like ‘yo’ as I’m not with my biological family. And I'm like I'm not getting that experience, a full experience of coming home speak Spanish having these different Latin cuisines that are that are made, or the traditions is something I feel like I lacked on. And I guess I even though like yeah, like this is like my dad and the passing of that it makes you question am I Latino enough? Am I Latino enough you know what I mean? have you ever seen those videos that question are you Asian enough? like they have a counsel of people and yea I’m 1/16th Asian. But I know sometimes it makes you feel like am I Latino enough?

Jacobo joined his Latino fraternity early in his collegiate career. He noted that the fraternity had had a significant influence on his life.

[LGLO] is really is like my life. Like it’s been my baby since I’ve joined on barely are so like when I whenever I first came to college, I was like, yeah, I’m not going to, I’m not going to do Greek life. I don’t want to be part of like a White fraternity. I don’t want to really want to be like surrounded around like the culture that is like stigmatized like around it. And then like when I came across like one of our one of my bros Chapter bros. We just had a conversation and wasn’t even about like the fraternity were just like I stand with immigrants like that campaign. And I could just relate because like I said, my dad, my dad's undocumented and he's an immigrant himself. And it’s just like, oh, I want to do more for the Latino community through that way. And so, like when I joined, like the fraternity as part of it was about being part of that platform, standing up for the Latino community, the immigrant community. It really just a thing within the

organization. They are really I'm always just inviting. It's an inviting environment where we embrace each other, each other's Latinoness.

Jacobo was active in other student organizations, and he had been a member of his organization for three years while being the only active member on campus.

When you're having a good time, time flies and. Like, I just like I said, I have a lot of love for the organization. I guess up here, like it is, I love it so much. And even though like for a big part of it, I was the only undergraduate. For many years. Only undergraduate. And but I still just, I ran with it. Even though bros weren't there, I have my alumni around, but the amount of support I've had from bros all over the state all over our region, all over the country has been crazy. Yeah.

Jacobo stated various reasons why he joined and why he loves his Latino organization. The amount of support he has received from the members of his fraternity has been significant.

I think, of course, I love it because like just being immersed in the Latino culture. But I think honestly like what I needed was like, yeah, I have an older [step] brother, and I meet him. I have a connection based; I'd like to say when I first came to be with the family who he is going off, gone off to college. So, we don't really have that much like interaction with each other like that. But I think the mentorship that I've gotten from, like the fraternity, like the older bros. I think it's something that I needed, and they helped me run. Like mature. Like whenever I did things, you know, my big [brother] would pull me off to the side and say 'look. I love you before I hate you, but you can't be doing all this and

> that. And this is ways that you should; you should learn to grow up to be, to be a better, gentlemen.' I think those worries and like the whole mentorship. And then two is the support system that the fraternity has given. There have been times where I have financially struggled, and I've had Bros [help]. They will help helping pay for like my car insurance, or I can help you pay for this month's rent, part of it. So, like on average, I've had like a lot of support financially. And then when we talk about like mentally, the amount of support, like I said, like, you know, there was times I was the only undergraduate bro here. But bros, were like keep going strong, we know you got this or just checking up on me like outside the fraternity like 'how's your day going bro you doing good? How, how's your schoolwork you able to handle it along with the other many organizations and stuff that you're involved in.'

Jacobo reaffirmed that his fraternity helped him solidify and strengthen his Latino side as he questioned this identity during his high school years. Furthermore, Jacobo stated that because he didn't speak Spanish and felt rejected by the Latinx community at times, being part of the fraternity allowed him to feel connected again.

> I've always carried along that I was [a] young White Latino. And joining [my LGLO] itself, not really like other organizations, that would solidify me not having to question like 'oh I'm not Latino enough.' I think [my Latino fraternity] itself is what solidified me not having to question.

Jacobo recognized that being so deeply involved in his fraternity allowed him to choose the path of higher education as a career as he wants to earn a master's in student

affairs or higher education administration. Furthermore, Jacobo mentioned that the fraternity affected his collegiate persistence.

> The fraternity kept me like in college, like [to] keep me going so I guess the fraternity has definitely been like that catalyst on me wanting to be part of a platform that's helping the Latino community. Also be like self-aware that yes, like I am, I am a first-generation college student, and I am breaking barriers for like my family and I'm setting standards for the future for my family. So, I like that persistence of me going to college and to graduate is, is because to break those barriers and to be better for the future.

Jandro: White American is my Ethnicity

Jandro is a sophomore attending Reiki University and is pursuing a degree in engineering. His GPA is 3.44, and he aspires to transfer to the Georgia Institute of Technology. He was born in Florida but has lived in Georgia for most of his life. His family moved around several times during his K-12 experience. His parents are both from Guatemala but have lived with his mother as his parents separated during his high school years. The community he grew up in "was mostly White and rural." He described his family and community as primarily poor.

> I was with public schools, wasn't too rich to be in private so public schools. Elementary, and so you know I grew up with this community, that were just kids as kids, we didn't care really. Later in time, it was with poor community that I realized that where I came from. That was because of high school. These kids all the older kids had certain things that I did not have, and I was like where do you get these things? And then I look it up and see the price tag and I was like, 'Whoa,

that's $165. Like sneakers that you [are] wearing. I get my sneakers from like Walmart, for $20.'

He described his high school experience as very divisive as his classmates were made up of various cliques. Jandro attended a predominately Latinx high school as "mostly, Mexicans. Latino, mostly Hispanic, mostly our kind. It was like let's say 30% White, 20% Black and 50% us, Latinos-Hispanics."

> … some rich kids they were famous because they were rich, but they were like, they were big, you know, that everybody would know them. The famous kid who plays football or famous kid who plays soccer or basketball. And so, these kids had actually like money and once, I try to be friends with them, but like they pushed me they saw me less for the clothes or stuff that I'll be doing. So, I just stayed reserved and stayed to myself. Like people would see me and see that I am getting good grades. And I guess people who wanted good grades would stick with me and study with me to achieve a better grade within their period. So, but yeah, it was poor kids that came with me I saw them they would have ripped up clothes or like nasty color. It was like they didn't care about their look, they cared about education and knowledge. There was like the cool kids that we know that would house parties and the neutral ones the just tag along so they wouldn't get in trouble. And then there's like the lower class, the bad class, who would just do good stuff but get pushed or picked on because of the color [of their skin] or what they were saying. Or stuff like that.

Jandro felt like the color of his skin impacted his high school experience. He was not involved in any student activities or sports, but he played soccer at the community

level. His friend group was diverse: “It’s a mix. That’s a complete mix. My friends were Hispanic; some were Latino, some were White, some are African American.” Overall, he had mixed feelings towards his overall high school experience.

> It was okay. So, it was okay. It was it was really good. I kind of liked it and kind of, I did not like it… I would compare, like I would see the movies like in our high school, you all grown you all cool you’re the main character and from me, from my high school I felt like I was never the main character; I will just be looking out the side, stepping aside from this big crowd, like I wasn't the main character. I just feel like a third-person or just seen in the life of someone who is just like big and famous, waned, cared, cherished. I was just aside from that, so it was because of ethnicity. Cause he was White like the main character of what I’m trying to say like he was White. They would be like ‘There goes Nick. Good game Nick. Great job on this Nick’ and then I'll just pass by hearing that. He felt like he was the main character throughout the whole school year. I just don't feel like that you know.

Jandro felt discriminated from his White classmates during the 2016 presidential election. “All these people who are supportive with Trump were very discriminative against us because of color. And so, I felt ashamed. I felt like bad because of that because of our color; I was like I am not White…”

Jandro defined ethnicity as “… a cultural background, not every ethnicity or every ethnicity say, would be the same because not everyone has the same cultural background, experiences, or ritual or stuff they do in a certain way. I would classify that as ethnicity.”

Jandro identified as White with regards to his ethnicity and race. Being White is associated with the location and the knowledge he has of the country in which he resides.

> …I do know where my family comes from. But then again, I do know what the history of United States is mainly no more of this, [or] than I know more of this, you know what I mean. So [I think] White would takeover, Hispanic and Latino or Hispanic and Latino takeover White. Because I come from like from, I was born here, you know, and I know more stuff from here my parent came from. So, I feel like I classify as White.

Jandro was unsure of the differences between race and ethnicity. He was able to articulate that ethnicity came from a "cultural background, but I just don't know where race comes from… racism is just like the discrimination of skin color... So, I think to me; race is just to be able to determine the color of the skin." As a result, when asked how he racially identified, he said, "I'm brown, or like skin color, I'm brown." He further explained that he would select Black and White under the race question in any questioner.

Jandro commented that his parents would likely identify as White as race but Guatemalan as their ethnicity. He had not heard much about the term Latinx "... but I know that Latinx is like a generation of Latinos and then called Latinx or if I am not mistaken." He realized that ethnicity was influential during his high school years.

> So, I think the high school level where ethnicity, and Trump came up as president. It's just sent me that my ethnicity mattered you know where I came from. I didn't really pay much attention when I was like, a little kid in elementary that wasn't a thing. Many kids didn't come to each other and talk to them [each other]. Where

are you from? They would just talk, like do you want to play tag or something like that. But it was later on through the stages of education [it] made me realize, oh, snap like this matter where I'm from like, I didn't know that they didn't matter. But now it does. And so that played out in my high school years.

Jandro shared that he did not go to college after graduating from high school; instead, he worked full-time, and that experienced allowed him to solidify his White ethnic identity.

My job it was my job after high school, I didn't go to college right after high school. I took a job on and so I became a store manager, [an] assistant store manager. So, I was working with different other people from different ethnicity. But I was working with one who had the same ethnicity as American White. And so, we're just working, and it just made me realize that you know I was like hey we are the same, and he was just really cool. When I was talking to him, he was actually pretty cool. So that's pretty much it when I realized that I was set with this ethnicity like this should be White.

Jandro credits his older brother for influencing him to attend college. He enrolled at Reiki University because his older brother was also enrolled at this school. During college, he has grown and developed such that he stopped feeling like he was not the main character of his life.

I think that was during high school, Once I stepped in college and it completely blocked everything going around me it clearly made me like, narrow down my vision and seeing my goal. And it made me feel like, okay, you know, I'm in here, let's go, let's go achieve this goal.

He was president of an organization but in spring 2020, he decided to join his Latino fraternity. He credits that he was able to connect with all their members and that is why he joined. “I can relate with it fit in and be part of myself, have no filters and just try to fit in pretty much. Fit in it felt like home, a place where I belong.”

In addition, Jandro mentioned that he joined for personal gain and to develop connections across campus and connect with his older brother. Ultimately, being part of his Latino fraternity has made him feel closer to campus.

> It was for a little bit of selflessness, but it was mainly for to develop connections... So, I can talk to the people with that as well. My brother was in the fraternity, and I wanted to get in closer with him, so I joined that with [him]. Also, as well, I like the aspect of brotherhood. And so, it made me feel comfortable knowing that I have brothers that there are to help each other and not talk bad about each other and just have, you know, inspire and push elevate their hopes up, self-care whatever they mean, and support as well.

Furthermore, Jandro expressed that one of his fondest memories was the time they were giving back to the community as that is important to him.

> [It] was the food drive that’s an experience I’ll never forget…We were giving out food and it was great giving but at the same time sad seeing all these people. I need to know. If we could just help the world. I would try to help everybody. But we just limited to certain extent. You can only do so much because but yea it was a great experience given away, help them eat something for Thanksgiving was a good job. So that's what’s we did give food to those who didn't have food on Thanksgiving; it was great.

For him the fraternity allowed him to be proud of his ethnic identity as his brothers have embraced him as who he is.

> [the fraternity has made me] To be proud of. To accept it, how can I tell you to love it. To cherish it. and to go with it. Basically, it's to let you know like hey you can't change it but at least learn how to learn to go with it and learn to love it and that's pretty much what it is. How it has impacted me.

Overall, he has had a positive experience in his Latino fraternity. It has increased his moral compass as it has helped him "to do the right things, make the right decisions, or do things that are supposed to be proper to the situation."

Furthermore, he denoted that his Latino fraternity allowed him to see himself beyond the bachelor's degree and to persist through this undergraduate degree.

> Oh yeah, my persistence increased like a lot like over the years all the way to even graduation or master's degree in engineering they push me to go further into college to continue pushing… part of that fraternity push[es] for excellence, like academic excellence. So, like if I were to commit, to, commit to, let's say, for example, getting this BA degree. I'm going to commit myself to study in order to pass this class. So, it's that educational academic excellence that they encourage us to have for the best for ourselves. So that's why I'm pushing to if I were actually going to stay in school, it [the fraternity] will push me to do better in school, to do good in school.

Leandro: "I yearned that brotherly love by Someone who looks like me"

Leandro is a senior at YellowStone University and is majoring in graphic design. He is expected to graduate in fall 2021 and currently has a 3.55 GPA. He self-identified

as a Differed Action of Childhood Arrivals or a DACA student. He was born in Mexico City and was brought to the United States when he was five years of age. His parents, also from Mexico City, moved to Clayton County, close to Atlanta, Georgia. He and his family have lived in this county for 15 years. He was the first one in his family to graduate high school and the first one to go to college.

The ethnic makeup of his community and high school was highly predominately Black:

> …honestly [there] weren't any Hispanic people. There wasn't a big sense of Latino community unless we drove to certain parts of the county itself. So, like I mentioned before, we used to live in Forest Park, which was a predominantly Hispanic community, but we moved away from there because my parents just wanted something a little more secluded away from everything. And so, they went to Riverdale, which was a predominantly Black community. And so, I've always grown up with Black individuals and PLCs [People of Color]. And so, even like there like you didn't see any type of Caucasians or, you know, any Asians of that sort. So, it's mainly Black people and Hispanic.

During his high school years, he became well-known to his classmates and started his own business in decorating shoes. As he went through high school, he realized that he wanted to have a career in arts, which led him to be highly involved in the yearbook, the National Art Honor Society, and the Future Leaders of America (FBLA) student club.

> I was always very energetic, charismatic, and so, I didn't have trouble finding friends. I was, I think so, sometimes when like I didn't even talk, I was like that quite popular kid like you know, and I may not have talked to you, but you knew

who I was just by naming me. So, that's what I was into. Back in high school. I was that's when I started getting into like customizing and restoring shoes. So, I use to advertise myself through that. And then that's how more people came to know about me. And they were like 'hey can you go ahead and do my shoes' and I'll give them a price. And then we would agree to disagree on and after that, we discuss. So, that's how high schools was for me.

Leandro was exposed to race and ethnicity early on in his K-12 experience. He shared an instance in which his seventh-grade teacher asked him about his ethnicity, and he didn't know what to say.

I looked at her [teacher] confused and I honestly did not know what she was talking about. She asked me how do you not know? And I was like, well, I was thinking she was talking to me about a color or a literature term or something like that. And she told me that ethnicity is not just dealing with your color or anything like that. It's your cultural background. And so, at that moment I knew I was like, well, I'm Hispanic person, you know, I am of the Latino community

Today, Leandro feels that "Ethnically well I am Hispanic male and then I am of Latino descent, and then I identify as a Mexican immigrant because unfortunately, I don't have legal status. And so, I consider myself a hardworking Mexican immigrant." Furthermore, he self-identifies as Hispanic and believes his parents would also identify the same way. For him, the term Hispanic is a:

…general term for Hispanic is someone who knows Spanish. And so, even countries like South America, they're not considered Hispanic. They consider Latin because they are from Latin civilizations. So, Hispanic is someone that

knows Spanish for me. So, I know Spanish. I am a bilingual speaker. So, Spanish is my first tongue. So, that what Hispanic is.

Furthermore, Leandro can denote that race is part cultural and part color of skin as he has met other Latinos with different skin complexions and differs depending on the context.

race? I feel like we can't really define race because someone who may be, may look like they're an African American can actually be like a Dominican or like Cuban. You know, I don't think you can really define race. Just because we've all, we all come from different cultural backgrounds. We all come from different places. And just because we look a certain way doesn't mean that we're that specific race. If I, you know, if you can follow along with what I'm saying. So, I honestly don't know how to define race outside of the typical oh, I'm Caucasian, White or I am from [Asian pacific] Islander or like a when you take a test or you take any type of like survey or whatever, it always has. How do you define race? And the typical answers you see are always White, Black African American, or PC Pacific Islander, et cetera. So, I feel like those are just labels. You know, like I feel like I don't even have a race because yeah, I can say I'm Mexican, but that's where I'm from. That's not necessarily a race… in Mexico, we were colonized by Spaniards. And Spaniards obviously were people of White ancestry, and so, uh they always told us to fill in the White portion. So, they've always told us to fill in the White portion when it comes to the race and then when it comes to ethnic background, they obviously don't have Hispanic on their so, for race they wanted

> they want to label me as White, but I don't honestly feel like I have White because I have some type of color on my skin, so, yeah.

Growing up, Anthony's friends were predominately African American and was not exposed to much Latinx culture. There was a point where he only listened to rap music and disliked all the traditional Mexican music his family would listen to. It wasn't until he reached middle school where he met other Hispanic peers who could speak about their shared characteristics.

> … honestly, for one, I hated Mexican music. You know, I cannot stand it when my parents used to like to play it in the car and we're going to go get groceries or just do any type of uh chores, not chores but errands. Yeah, so, we're going to go do any type of errands like they would listen to their music on like *el Patron* [Mexican radio station]. Oh, that's horrible music. You know. I was more of a oh yeah, lets listen to a Drake and this, this, and this. So, I felt like when I was in elementary school, I was more Americanized to listen to those type of things. But once I got to sixth grade and I started learning more about the things like the satire that I used to watch [on YouTube]and stuff like that. I became more interested [in my own culture]. I'm like, oh, like, Mexican. But does that mean? And so, I started looking more into like soccer. I started looking more into like *corridos* you know those type of music, *banda*. And then I was like, you know, these things aren't as bad as I thought, you know, and I just start listening more to the lyrics and you know what they meant and started liking more Mexican food.

He credits a high school art teacher for influencing him to attend college. Leandro felt like he was successful in majoring in graphic design. Aside from being a teacher, Mr.

[teacher] also had a business on the side, and Leandro wanted to follow his steps. Furthermore, being undocumented, he thought he would not attend college; however, when President Obama instituted the DACA program, he qualified. This enabled him to participate in college as this program would allow him to work after he graduated. Leandro looked at many Georgia public and private institutions, but ultimately, he decided to attend YellowStone University as it had the most affordable out-of-state tuition. As a DACA student, he must pay out-of-state tuition, and because of this, he had to work full-time most of his college life to pay for his school.

> Financially speaking, [YellowStone Univeristy] was like the best school to go to, just because I knew that I was going to pay out-of-state tuition. And so, I knew I didn't want to be a bigger burden for my parents because of like the pricing. And so, that's why I came to the [YellowStone Univeristy] because it was the lowest school as far as out-of-state tuition. And not just that, I felt like it was a smaller school. So, in regard to me thinking like, oh, I got to go to a school that known, a lot of people go there. I realized they'd going to a smaller school isn't so, bad because you get that one-on-one connection with the professors.

Leandro noted that during his first two years of college, he was not that involved. The only reason he had a traditional college experience was because he joined a Latino fraternity.

> Well, for the first two years, I want to say I didn't really have a college experience all I did was go to school and go to work. And the only reason I even had a college experience, I want to say was through my fraternity that I am a part of. So, I ended up meeting them at something we have here called *bienvenidos* and it

typically for all Hispanic or Latino descent students. And it's pretty much a way in which you make them feel comfortable for being first generation students that come here, and you pretty much teach them, like, what the college lifestyle will be, how to get accustomed to it, where it where your classes are.

Leandro was not used to feeling a minority among a predominately White crowd. As soon as he started his collegiate career at YellowStone University, he felt othered while on campus.

Well, honestly, you get, you do get eyeballed a lot. So, like I used to walk in, in my class and I would be like is it just me? For some reason it didn't, it didn't feel like that when I was at my other school. You know I went to predominantly Black schools, you know I felt like we were all the same. You know, we were all people of color like just talking to the homies and stuff. And it didn't feel like out of the ordinary. But for some reason, when I walked in my school here, I feel like I had to watch what I said, I feel like I had to act a certain way. Not necessarily to fit in, but just like not create any tension or any trouble. Also, felt that like, you know, I felt like a little bit of intimidation in a way because, you know, I'm Hispanic at a predominantly White school.

Landro credits the Latino fraternity he joined for getting him out of the house and meeting a variety of people on campus through different activities. At the same time, he recognizes that his fraternity allowed him to explore more his social identity by teaching others about it.

So, I'm currently the current chapter president for my Latin fraternity. And as I said, like the main thing that got me involved more on campus was the fraternity

itself because I got to meet like a lot of individuals that I feel like I wouldn't have gotten exposed to had I not joined. And I'm always I've always been the type of person like I didn't like going out to events and stuff like that. Like I'm a stay-at-home body, you know, I go to work. I go to school and that's it. That's my typical routine. But after I met these gentlemen, I feel like they pretty much started and helping get out of home basically. And started being more of going outside, getting to meet new people, interacting with people and stuff like that. I am also, the current Chapter President, not of Latin fraternity, I am the current president of the [on-campus Latino student organization]. But that's also, been very big in my college career because I've gotten in touch with my cultural roots. I've helped other people, you know, learned a little bit more about themselves, where they came from, you know, the type of foods that they typically eat, the type of music that they hear, you know, things like that. And I feel like I've helped a lot of people.

Leandro met various fraternity and student organizations during their on-campus student organization fair. He was tempted to be part of a predominately Black fraternity, but the Latin fraternity caught his attention and felt welcomed by the brothers. He decided to join them and became a member in spring 2018.

I met the brothers of that fraternity that I saw. And I was like, oh man, like, you know, I don't know if this was faith or whatever. And then I am feeling welcomed with them or whatever. And so, like Yeah, I like these dudes. So, the chapter president at the time he gave me his phone number. And after that, he always kept me involved. So, he like we got an ATL United games going on. Hey, got this

going on come out and support. Oh, we got tabling here and there. Hey man. We got this social issue we are trying to create awareness about you should come out and support. Bring, bring like clothes you don't mind getting dirty or whatever. We're going to be painting or doing markers and stuff. And there's this and that and they always kept me around so, was you know what I like this. I like this sense of brotherhood that I'm receiving. And so, that's like one of the main reasons why I joined. And then I kept up with the interest group and then later on became a new member for them in Spring 18… Aside from that, it was just the fact that the people that I was getting involved with look like me or I felt like I could relate to them or if I had a problem, I felt like they were the people to like to go to. Just because, you know, they were older. They've probably been through the same things I've been through or even more. And the fact that most of them are first generation students really caught my eye. I've never had an older brother and I've obviously never had a younger sibling either. So, you know, me being me only child, I felt like I yearned that brotherly love by someone that looks like me, sounds like me [and] talks like me.

Leandro's most memorable memories of being part of his Latino fraternity have been a mixture of his becoming a brother and the experiences that came after.

My most memorable. It honestly would have to be that whole Interest Group and going towards induction and after induction post induction… I remember that my pledge master and my assistant pledge master like we would hang out every single day. You know, we always had bonding moments. And then we would go out to the pool and got with each other to have cook outs. A number of things that

we did or used to do. And obviously post induction. It was like my new member presentation show like all these people coming out to see me, you know, and I've never been like the center of attention, the sole center of attention. And then when I join my Latin fraternity, I was a solo. So, I didn't have line brothers so, here again, I was put in a position where it's just me, you know, besides being the only child, it's just me being the only brother again. So, you know, I've always been that kind of lone wolf. But at the end of the day, I can see that there's other wolves around me there to support me. You know, you're only as strong as your pack is. So, after my new member presentation show, I felt the love from all these people and they all came out and to see me, all came out to support and all the brothers in the area came out to support. And it just it was just a nice experience overall. So, yeah, that's my most memorable memory that I have.

While Leandro had explored his ethnic identity in high school, the fraternity influenced his overall sense of ethnic identity by confirming his experiences and exposing him to other diverse individuals.

I think the Latin fraternity has helped. But I've always kind of knew after high school, I kind of always had an idea of who I am, where I come from. And the importance of my roots and, you know, how I identify myself as. But yeah, the Latin fraternity has definitely helped out like [to] meet different individuals from different backgrounds. Even though they may be of the same Hispanic or Latino culture descent. But yeah, it has helped me meet like a different number of different individuals learn about them their customs they way talk. Because even

though we all may speak the same language, as far as like per se, like Spanish. There are different dialects.

Leandro explained that having people that look like him and share similar struggles has allowed him to stay in school and pushing himself to graduate.

> Well, the number one thing that has motivated me is just the fact of seeing different brother's graduate. So, I've been lucky enough to attend at least three of my brothers' graduations prior to after joining. So, it's just this is that moment of like dang, like they made it. If they made it. I can make it, you know. They motivate me on a daily. Some of these alumni still to this day I talk to them every single day…And he [fraternity alumni] himself is just like me. You know, he had immigrant parents. You know, he grew up trying to get a better future. He had his struggles coming up. And just like the fraternity helped him grow these leadership skills, leadership roles they built him into the man he is today. Aside from just the fraternity itself, you know, it's those bonds, your relationships with other people. And I feel like that's something that I can relate to him and that I can relate as far as like everything else that's going on around me. So, the fraternity has definitely helped me shape some of these things. They also, pushed me to do good in school…

Neftali: "Having Brothers Helped"

Neftali graduated in fall 2020 from Maximus University with a bachelor's degree in business administration with a 3.79 final GPA. He was born in Guatemala and moved to the United States at the age of eight. His parents were also born in Guatemala, but his father moved to the US first, followed by his mother. He has three other siblings that

were born in the US. He was raised mainly by his grandmother in Guatemala and can speak a Guatemalan dialect because of it. His family moved around between Florida and Georgia but eventually settled in Dalton, Georgia. In the community he grew up in, Dalton was “predominately Hispanic.”

> So, it's [a] public [high school], [it was] predominantly Hispanic. So, in Dalton, I went to Dalton high school. So, their, the population is not very diverse, but at high [school], well, diverse as in other regions other than Hispanic, there were predominantly more. Mexican ethnicities rather than other Latin American countries or other countries in general. So, I ain’t see a lot of, so, it was either Mexican American or White. There wasn't a lot of diversity per se.

Neftali’s high school had 1600 students and he graduated top 5% of his class with a final GPA of 3.85. He took a couple of Advance Placement classes but didn’t pass the credit bearing tests. He wasn’t as involved as others, but he was heavily involved in the schools Junior Reserve Officer’s Training Corps (JROTC) program.

> So, academics [I] think I did well. And I like that about high school, that I could do all the academics in the world. I was also involved with the JROTC program where they talk a lot about military environment and culture and discipline. Well, I guess that's one of the things that they mainly talk about. And yeah, I was also involved in the engineering programs. I didn't do a lot of actually; I didn’t do any sports outside of JRTC. I think I did raiders drill. then I can talk a little bit about each one is also raiders is more like athletic, where you compete against other JRTC programs to see who's who can carry a jug of water for the longest or fastest or something like that.

He was involved in this program because one of his extended family members was also part of it. He also thought joining the US military would lead to permanent residency as he was initially undocumented when he arrived in the US. Ultimately, he ended up enjoying this program and did it for his four high school years. “I ended up liking all the different areas like there’s such a broad component to it. So, it wasn’t just one thing that you could focus on. It was, yeah, it was a lot. Like summer camps.”

Neftali ultimately realized that he was not able to enlist because of his undocumented status. He was eventually able to adjust his immigration status and earned permanent residency through a family petition. This status allowed him to attend college and pay in-state tuition, which made him leave his military enrollment plans and enroll in college.

Neftali defined ethnicity similarly to nationality while at the same time noting their complexity when using various social identities that may encompass the Latinx population. He self-identifies as Latino and recognizes the term Latinx. He pointed out that the Latinx term is for more gender-inclusive purposes but prefers Latino for himself.

> [Ethnicity is about the] Background, like where do you come from basically. So, nationality slash ethnicity is to me synonymous. Again, I can totally be wrong, but not per se where you were born but where is your family predominantly from? So, like for me, ethnicity would be Guatemala. I am from Guatemala. [My] ancestors and my family are from there. But I guess yeah, So, my ethnicity it is that my nationality. So, that's why they’re synonymous… [Being] Guatemalan I don't think that's an ethnicity. Hispanic. I mean that that's not an ethnicity either. So, Latin, Latino.

Neftali's understanding of race was complex and was able to articulate the social construct of this term. At the same time, he spoke about the complexity of race in the Latinx population. He believes that there is no box he can check when asked about his race, but if he must select one, he chooses White.

> How do I define race? Is more, I guess racism, basically the construct of its division between Whites, non-whites. Yeah, basically. So, could be a White, Asian, Black. So, race is one, White is definitely a race. But then you have Asian as a race or Black or yeah… Yes. White or White to non-Whites. But non-Whites being having like a broader section where it's divided more into other Races but predominantly. Yeah, like the way I see it, it is that Whites versus non-whites. Whites, and non-Whites… [how do you racially identity yourself?] That's a hard one. So, per the paperwork. It would be White, but there's no label for my race. Because so, yeah, growing up or even to this day, it's White, Native American, Black. And I don't think I'm any of those. I don't fit in any of those boxes. A 100 percent. I don't think I'm White, but I also don't think I'm Native American or Black. So, yeah, I don't, so, most of the time it's just White racially. But honestly, yeah, I don't think there's that race label that applies too.

Furthermore, Neftali was able to speak on the differences between race and ethnicity based on his experiences and background.

> So, race is to me more of a social construct. Well, everything is but more systematic. So, ethnicity, on the other hand, is a little bit more basically. There's no boxes. You can check off from that. So, that's the way I see it. Anybody can define their ethnicity the way they feel the most appropriate for them. Whereas

race, you literally have to choose which one you most identify with and not be able to voice what you think you, you identify with. So, for example, I initially said I'm Guatemalan, right? And then I said I'm Hispanic or but then those are cultures. The Guatemalan culture, ethnicity is where I come from, et cetera, et cetera. But predominantly Latinx. It covers all of those spectrums. So, Hispanic, being able to speak Spanish, Guatemala, and being a Latin American region. So, Latinx covers all that that. But race. It doesn't. race doesn't cover that I don't think Races either. You're White, you're Black, you're Asian, you're I don't know. Other Races. Native American. But that's not a region. It's more of its more based on your skin tone or skin color. That's what I think that is yeah.

Neftali realized and embraced his racial and ethnic identity during his college years rather than his K-12 experience. He believes his knowledge on these topics came from education.

So, my own [ethnicity] would have to be like college years embracing where I come from. So, the entire time I was in middle school and elementary, middle, and high school. I don't think I prescribe to an ethnicity because again, I felt like it was a race thing. Not in that race and ethnicity where the same thing. But it wasn't until early on in college where I started to learn more about ethnicities, Races. And what do you mean to identify or prescribe to one or the other or any of them. That I actually embraced my ethnicity as a Latin American and as Guatemalan and as Latino… So, that to me, in understanding race, ethnicity is as a consequence of education. So, I know all of high school, we never touch on those topics, or we didn't even have those conversations in high school or

elementary, middle school. And anytime growing up, not in the household, not in the schools. So, I wasn't really educated in that aspect, So, I didn't know what to identify as.

Neftali felt that his ethnicity and background were different when he arrived in this country as he was placed in English as a Second Language class and was moved out of regular classes.

That happened way early on. So, in the third grade, I had to repeat the third grade because I didn't understand the language. However, because I came to Dalton, there were other people like me in the same situation trying to learn English. So, when we would separate from the larger group, from the larger class, that's when I knew I didn't fit in with everybody else. When we were literally taken out of the classes to go learn English in the class, we'll continue on with their curriculum. Then, I knew at that point, yeah, there's something going on here even though I didn't understand what was going on. But I knew I didn't fit in… I would also see how students would be selected for the honors programs. While most of the time, I would not, or my peers would not. And it came down to understanding language. So, at those times, we as well as myself, like if that was because I was not born in the US, already understand the language enough. So, that's when I started questioning a little bit more my ethnicity, but in the ethnic background.

Neftali credits a sergeant major he met during his JROTC years for influencing him to attend college. He enrolled at Maximus University because it was the most convenient as he received a scholarship that helped him move out of Dalton and pay for his tuition. "I know we had Dalton State College like 10 minutes away. But I didn't want

to go to that college because I felt like I would be attending a community college or a university or get the whole college experience."

Overall, he enjoyed his experience at Maximus University, but it was difficult at the beginning due to financial and family concerns. Furthermore, he noted the diversity of his classmates and professors as he transitioned from year to year until he reached his major business classes.

> I think it was great. It was turbulent at the beginning, at the beginning. So, freshmen and sophomore years where super hard financially and junior, senior year are much easier. Because the finance component was gone. Like I was basically able to not worry about finances while being in school and finding ways to continue my education. So, as far as like the environment, classmates, I saw a lot more professors that were minority compared to all of my elementary, middle, and high school years combined. So, that was shocking. So, my peers were also. So, my freshman and sophomore years, I had a lot of peers, Hispanic or Latino or Latinx. By my senior year, I remember for sure that I was the only Latino in the entire class, a business class. Literally everywhere I looked, there were all White, male and female. Classmates, no, no minority. My junior year I had a couple, like one to two friends. And those are the people that are hung out with in class or sat next too. But see you, you're definitely was shocking to not see a minority or a more diverse population. As I initially saw my freshman and sophomore years.

Neftali expressed that during his collegiate years, he felt "Proud. Proud because of the people that surrounded me. So, that I found pride, a lot of pride, being Latino. More

pride than I ever felt. Being Latino than my prior years in K-12." Furthermore, he noted that his Latino fraternity made him feel proud to be who he is.

> It was the people that surround me, and they were they were proud [of] being Latino. They basically defined a little bit what it is to be Latino regardless of any in any background, So, to speak. So, yeah, I guess going back to my organization [Latino fraternity], we were very close together, but I guess what brought us closer is, is that being proud of where we, where we come from, embracing who we are. So, those people, like those, those peers encouraged me to feel that same way. So, it was kind of contagious. [It] felt right. Felt yeah. Proud. Being Latino at the university because of the group of people that we knew we were yeah…The fraternal organization that, uh, that we, we establish at the university. We're proud. I know they're proud because we voice [it] all the time what it means to be Mexican, what it means to be Chicano, what it means to be Guatemalan. So, those are things we vocalize where in the past. It's just been like, okay, your Guatemalan, awesome awesome sauce; cool fact, really. But now it's more like, oh, tell me more about you. Tell me more about what that means. And so, asking those questions made me realize how much I've endured and how much I've gone through. Which also leads me to be empowered because I know it's been a rough patch, a rough ride entire way, and we're here. So, accomplishing things. So, yes, my organization I guess the organization helped me with that. As well as other people see you, people in power that we're able to do a were able to accomplish things that I had never seen in my entire life that made me proud as well of my ethnicity.

Neftali joined his Latino fraternity in the summer of 2019 and has been an active brother for over two years. He wanted to join his Latino fraternity because of the brotherhood and leadership he saw in the brothers of this fraternal organization.

> I thought because it was one of the coolest things at like in the world. That was my initial thought. Like, it would be great, it would be cool. I mean, there is really no reason why not join a fraternity in general. But this one, particularly because of the Brotherhood, the type of bond that I saw when I was introduced to like other brothers that I saw from them. And then the leadership aspect, I was blown away by all the things that a lot of these brothers were able to accomplish. Not just like there were a majority. If not all the brothers that I knew had some sort of position somewhere or had accomplish something. So, that's why I was like, that feels right. I'm going to go do it…the influence that basically other members of the other brothers had. Their stories. Their story is what motivated me. Yeah. I think obviously the peers that we're at [that] time interested in joining the fraternity was also a big reason of why I joined.

Neftali expressed that one of his fondest memories was when he learned that he was an official brother of his organization.

> It was the day I found out I was a brother. That's never going to go away there are definitely other experiences. But I think that one has been the most memorable. Because I knew at that point, I made it into, into the fraternity; that I had brothers. So, growing up. I mentioned I had siblings, bloodline brothers, but I didn't really feel a connection to them as much as I found that connection with my fraternity brothers. And that to me was that's probably why like I will remember forever the

night with that or the day that I became a brother because I knew I had accomplished something in the sense that I had brothers. And they had earned my respect. So, we're like we're brothers, like they're from this point forward. Like there's no there's nothing that could say otherwise. Yeah.

Furthermore, after Neftali joined his Latino fraternity, he realized that he needed to be more open and vocal with his blood siblings, increasing his emotional intelligence.

In my experience with my fraternity, I learned to vocalize my feelings, my emotions, and at the same time be okay with hearing other people emotions and feelings. And I think that got us closer with my bloodline brothers. Every, every now and then we have a heart-to-heart conversation where we just talk with all three. So, I guess individually, I've tried to stay away from that statement that was part of my culture. That men should not express emotions, stuff like that. I wouldn't say that's the case anymore. But definitely growing up, that was more separation between us, my brother than I was closer to them. I guess the other one the other two. There were too young.

Neftali felt that his fraternity encouraged his persistence and the persistence of other brothers because he became a mentor to the younger brother in his chapter, and he didn't want to disappoint.

I knew a couple of brothers where we're looking for guidance. So, to some extent, I was being a role model to a couple. So, as a brother, I knew I couldn't let them down. And the connection that we had; I knew I couldn't disappoint them. And they cheered me on along the way, even when I had, you know, little breakdowns when things got really stressful. They were there. So, I guess that helped in the

> perseverance knowing that no matter what, I think at some point, I knew I thought I wasn't going to graduate. So, I thought I was not going to graduate that semester. But even at that capacity, I knew I could still graduate later on or continue with my education because the brothers were there, encouraging me talking regardless of what was going on. So, that definitely played a role in perseverance. Having brothers helped.

Rigo: Chicano After Experiencing College

Rigo is a junior at YellowStone University and is majoring in sociology. He hopes to graduate with a bachelor's degree as he has earned an associate degree already. He was born and raised in Athens, Georgia but his parents are both from Mexico. He shared that he has a stepfather who he considerers to be his full father. Most of his family live in Georgia, but some are in Mexico, and some are in Texas. He has one other sibling who was also born in the US. His family has worked in poultry and landscaping since they arrived in the US. Rigo described his community as predominately of Latinx descent.

> …my vicinity was more on the working poor side. Pretty much everybody around me didn't really have, I would say, like a job that makes a lot of money. Definitely would say most of the community was either, was pretty much, they had a bunch of Hispanics, Latinos, Latinas. But I would say most of them were pretty much all the kids I grew up with were pretty much Mexican American.

Rigo attended the public education system. He described his high school as pretty diverse as "a good 40% of those were African American, and the other 40[%] were Mexican. Or, you know, or of students who identify as a Hispanic and very little population of White people."

Rigo's overall high school experience was positive. He was involved in soccer and the agricultural club.

> [My] overall experience in high school for me was pretty fun. But at the same time, kind of boring. Given to like, when I was in classes I pretty are pretty much just do my work and just look forward to going home. I didn't really skip class or do drugs, or anything of that nature… [the] agricultural Club [was] where we pretty much just talked about farm work, talked about animals, talked about plants. I was also part of the soccer team for all four years. And yea that's pretty much it. And then I was also part of another organization outside of high school, which was a soccer org.

Rigo defined ethnicity to your ancestry, most specifically where one's parents originated. "I would define ethnicity as your background as if like as where your parents are coming from, your roots. I think that's what I would describe as ethnicity." When asked about his ethnic identity, he conceptualized his definition as:

> Well, my parents are definitely from a Mexico. They crossed. They came to the United States way before I was born. But I will say, given that I grew up with the American culture and celebrating their holidays and eating their food and all that nice stuff, I would definitely say that I also grew up with the Mexican culture as well. You know, celebrate the culture as well and their religion too. But I would identify as, I have had a dilemma with both of these terms. I will say it's between Chicano and Mexican American.

Furthermore, Rigo elaborated about the difference between these two social identities and described that the two are interchangeable but noting some differences based on US regional use.

> I would say they're like interchangeably exchanged, is that a word? I think people use these two terms in the same way, but I definitely think one has more history than the other one. To me, Chicano is mostly a term used on the west side. That's like, mostly in California. And then and I could even say probably even in Texas. But they also have a whole different type of identity there. But the only problem I have these two is that for me, Chicano is a term that has a lot of struggles and has a lot of social injustices behind it. Given that California, all that area in the West and the Southwest was pretty much area that belonged to Mexico and was taken over by America. So, then that term is not really used over here in the South or Georgia or in this area. And it really just depends on the day which one I resonate more with. And then to me, Mexican American is just pretty much your parents came from Mexico and you were pretty much raised in America.

Rigo's understanding of race was directly correlated with the physical characteristics a person possesses. When asked about his racial identity, he depicted the racial struggle most Latinx experience in the US.

> Boy, if I had the chance, I would definitely I would definitely say Brown. Most of the time I've being click[ing] in the White box. So, I know that's a really good question. But if I were to have that question somewhere, like on a survey, I will have a dilemma between choosing the White box. Or right now I'm seeing that they're starting to introduce like Latino, Latina, Hispanic. Or I've even seen like

> Native American or Indigenous American. And I definitely think there will be a dilemma because I will be more keen to click the White box… The dilemma here is [that] I don't look like White people you know what I am saying? I'm a little on the darker side, but definitely have some more sun on me. And that's the dilemma. I just don't think I look White... I pretty much grew up being told that I should click the White box.

Rigo explained that the differences between race and ethnicity were based on culture and physical characteristics. "I definitely think the difference between these two is that one does more about your background and where your family is coming from. And race is more of what everybody can see; visually see your characteristics."

Rigo realized his racial and ethnic identity during his K-12 experience. He believes speaking with classmates who shared the same identity allowed him to think about his social identity.

> I would say meeting people that look like me. And they would say, you know, I'm Mexican. And I was like, oh, that's pretty cool. You know, I think I am going to identify as Mexican as well… definitely it will come from the students saying, "*Oh! mis papas son de Mexico*," [Oh! My parents are from Mexico]. So, I'm going to say I'm Mexican. It made a lot of sense to me.

At the same time, Rigo recognized that starting college allowed him to explore these concepts and adopted the Chicano label. If given the option of picking between the two, he stated he would identify as Chicano. Furthermore, Rigo has heard about the Latinx term, and while he appreciates the inclusive nature, he does not use it to identify himself.

I would definitely think the switch [to Chicano] happened when I entered college. That's when that's when it happened. Because that's where I started learning more about ethnicity and certainly more about race. And I learned more about my culture and things of that nature.

Rigo credits his football coach as being the most influential person before coming to college. At the same time, he acknowledged that he didn't have many folks to look up to.

That's a really good question because I didn't really have any person I looked up to or anything of that nature. But there was one teacher that I just absolutely adored because he was just so, fun, so, so, charismatic, so, joyful, and really funny. And his name was coach Cannon. He was a White football coach.

Rigo did not intend to attend college as he thought "that college was for White people." Nonetheless, he eventually decided to attend YellowStone University because of a first-year scholarship he was able to receive.

I definitely would say that they [the scholarship staff] saw potential in me that I wasn't seeing. I want to say that it was a constant, dedication, and commitment to make me go to college. It was definitely them helping me out, fill out the applications, find out how to apply for college, all these things, and I never knew about.

Overall, he has enjoyed his experience at his university as he has met a variety of people from different walks of life.

It's really fun…it's a really eye-opening experience because you meet a lot of great people. A lot of people who think differently than you. People that challenge

your thoughts. You meet people with great ideas. You also attend events and workshops that help you develop some skills that help you learn about things that you probably weren't thinking about. They definitely put you out there. They make your experience different. It would be like events that student orgs create. That pretty much express their culture. Yeah. I would say that.

Rigo joined his Latino fraternity in the summer of 2019 and has been an active brother since then. He decided to join because he built relationships with members of the Latino fraternity.

And I definitely would say it was because, of growing a really strong relationship with one of the members there. It would also be because of the group of the fraternity members that were trying to join a fraternity. Because of the interested Gentlemen. Those were another reason why I wanted to join the fraternity… I would definitely say one of them was more of a mentor-influencer. And then the other one was more like a family type of connection…It'll be like a brotherhood that I could rely on these guys for anything. They would have my back. We would hang out a lot. Have a lot of events together, study together, have a couple of drinks here and there. I would definitely say that… I will say it was part of the wanting to network, as well as trying to build leadership skills. And I will also say it was probably having a sense of belonging to a family or belonging to something, or in this case something else.

Rigo felt more engaged as a member of his fraternity than before. "… they're the reason why I enjoy coming. I enjoy coming to school because they're here and there. They're doing the same struggles, and they're trying to study or trying to get good

grades, so, yeah." Furthermore, Rigo expressed that he had at least three experiences that were significantly memorable to him.

> I have three [experiences]. One being getting super drunk for the first time with some of my brothers. The other time would be getting lost in Atlanta with one of them. And the other one will be when I got a flat tire, and they all came to help me out. Yeah. For the one getting drunk, which is pretty much this is the first time I go to a bar and they just slingshots my way. So, I was like, I'll take this as a challenge so, just go through those drinks [and] the rest is history. But they weren't like pressuring me to drink or anything. There were like, 'hey, you want to drink here, here it is.' They're really understanding. They were like, 'you know, if you don't want to do this, that's okay. It's all your own will.' They even took care of me when I got super drunk. They gave me a place to stay. It was just, you know, that brotherhood and the one about getting lost in Atlanta. It was actually when we came out of a workshop for this, being a mentor for the program HoPe [Hispanic Organization Promoting Education]. And we wanted some *tortas* [Mexican sandwiches]. And so, we went to go look for a place. And then our phones died. We didn't know how to get back to where my car was. And so, we just got lost and we ended up in Fox News. At the entrance of Fox News somewhere in Atlanta and we were like "what the heck" …. And then the other moment, I was simply riding through town, and I hit a Dang nail. And I was stuck in the middle of the road, and I called one of my brothers and I said, "hey man, I need some help" and he literally stopped what he was doing and tried to see what was up and check and see if everything was okay and he helped me out.

Rigo felt that his fraternity encouraged his persistence and graduation goals through modeling.

Yeah. I would say it has. And how is by seeing the fact that, you know, my members are still here, still in college… I definitely would say seeing other brothers obtaining their degrees and wanting to go for more definitely influenced me to do the same thing.

Summary

Each of the ten participants shared their individual perspectives of their social identities, fraternity experiences, and how this membership affected their perception of their ethnic identity and college persistence. These fraternity members also shared experiences that shaped their understanding of race and ethnicity while in college and before entering college. Their experiences were diverse but shared very similar traits and characteristics. At the same time, the way each made meaning of their experiences differed. The following chapter will showcase the study's findings and display the common themes among all participants.

Chapter V

FINDINGS

The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, USA. The initial four chapters of this dissertation introduced the problem, a review of relevant literature, the study's methodology, and descriptive participant profiles. The present chapter will review the research questions, data analysis and provide the study's findings.

A qualitative basic interpretative design approach was implemented to collect data via semi-structured interviews. Ten open-ended interviews were conducted, and each lasted between 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours, 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the spring semester of 2021 via the Zoom platform. The interviews were auto transcribed with ~80% accuracy by Kaltura, a cloud-based software, and the researcher manually edited each transcript to 100% accuracy. Following Maxwell's (2013) and Saldaña's (2016) approach, the data analysis process included listening to the transcripts, taking notes, and jotting for possible initial codes, as well as creating reflection memos. Line by line, the transcripts were coded by identifying relations and interpreting meaning. Codes were created based on the content and were then placed in overarching categories. These categories helped identify similar topics clustered together to interpret the meaning

and create a codebook. The codebook was created, and code saturation was reached at the fourth interview. The codebook was then used with the remaining six interviews. Interrelationships and connections were sought with the overall interpretation of meaning. As the data was coded and placed into categories, several themes emerged along with other sub-themes. In addition, triangulation and member checking were used to strengthen validity.

The interviews resulted in rich qualitative data, and the following research questions were used to analyze the data:

RQ 1. How do Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity?

RQ 2. How do Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their college persistence and ethnic identity at Predominately White Institutions in Georgia?

Participants were recruited from all possible PWI's in Georgia that have at least one Latino Greek-lettered Organization. The researcher outreached to the office of fraternity and sorority life at five different Georgia institutions and used social media to recruit participants, which resulted in four institutions being represented in the sample. In addition, due to the study's scope, criterion sampling and networking sampling were applied to recruit participants. Furthermore, all participants came from one organization out of the four possible LGLO's that currently have active chapters in Georgia. Lambda Epsilon Nu Fraternity will be used as a pseudonym for this LGLO throughout this document to ensure privacy and anonymity. Table 1 shows brief demographic information and social identities of these ten participants using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

The interview protocol and open-ended questions (Appendix F) were guided by Seidman's (2013) backbone approach to capture context and the reconstruction and meaning of experiences to captured rich descriptive data during the interviews. Questions 1-11 asked participants to identify and describe the experiences that shaped their identities to create context. Questions 12-28 asked about their experiences and involvement in their LGLO, focusing on their ethnic identity development and collegiate persistence – reconstruction and meaning of experiences. This semi-structured and flexible interview process explored essential areas to discover answers to the research questions (Patton, 2015). Themes were organized to make meaning of reoccurring data. Out of these ten interviews, three main themes emerged: familial influences, educational environment, and fraternal interactions.

Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity through personal connections, past interactions, and their environment. Familial influences and K-12 experiences exposed them and helped them understand their initial ethnic and racial identities. Moreover, most of them solidify their ethnic identity during their collegiate careers. Likewise, fraternal interactions and their college environment enhanced or helped them solidify their ethnic identity. Ultimately, Latino fraternity members perceived their involvement in Lambda Epsilon Nu enhanced their academic persistence through various aspects of brotherhood and academic expectations. Furthermore, while this study's primary focus was to understand participants' ethnic identity, participants sometimes integrated their racial and ethnic identities; therefore, racial identity is discussed to enhance the understanding of the participant's ethnic identity development as needed. Table 4 depicts the theme and subtheme finding's matrix.

Familial Influences

Familial influences were significant factors in initially developing the participants' ethnic and racial identities. Familial influences were the concepts, ideas, experiences, or exposures from the participant's immediate family, close friends, or significant others that supported developing the participant's ethnic and racial identities. Family and close friends became their first and primary source of exposure to these social identities. For instance, during his early years, Gilbert noted that his mother did something that he perceived as unfavorable and equated that to being Mexican, noting he was not aware of his ancestry.

> Then there is [a] time where I guess I didn't realize I was Mexican. And probably someone at school told me. I don't really remember the background...My mom was doing something, and I didn't like it. And we're at home. And I was like, 'Mom,' I was like, 'don't do that, or I tell everyone at school that you're Mexican.' And she was like, 'What? She's like, 'do you not realize that you're Mexican too?' And I was like 'What?!' So, this is when I was pretty young, so that was one of my first the first ones that I was ever like recall [my ethnicity].

Notable sub-themes that emerged from familial influences were language, ancestry & social identity, a racial identity dilemma, and acculturation levels.

Language

Having the ability to speak or understand Spanish was an essential factor for all of the participants. At the same time, not all participants were bilingual or knew how to speak Spanish. Language in this context meant speaking Spanish or understanding it and how this ability connected them to their ethnic identity. For example, Anthony directly

equated speaking Spanish as part of his definition of what it is to be Latino: "I think the language for one, speaking the same language my parents had spoken. That's the only thing they speak. They don't speak English as well." Fidel, Jacobo, Anthony, Leandro, Neftali, and Rigo learned Spanish during their childhood. In contrast, Aang, Caleb, Jacobo, and Gilbert learned Spanish or aspects of this language later in life to connect with their cultural identity and ethnicity. Furthermore, Jabobo is not bilingual, which caused him to question his Latino identity:

> …I guess yeah, there is like yo as I'm not with my biological family. And I'm like I'm not getting that experience, a whole experience of coming home speak Spanish having these different Latin cuisines that are made, or the traditions is something I feel like I lacked. And I guess I even though like this is like my dad and the passing of that it makes you question am I Latino enough? Am I Latino enough, you know what I mean?... But I know sometimes it makes you feel like am I Latino enough?

Aang noted that his mother didn't speak Spanish to him and learned to speak this language of his girlfriend and her family during his high school years.

> So, when my mom, she for whatever reason, she decided to just speak English with me and my sisters at home. Obviously, she speaks Spanish fluently, but she never really forced teaching Spanish with us at home. So, I struggled learning Spanish when I was younger, and I was very embarrassed to even speak it because I couldn't; I didn't understand it. And so, and of course, all of my family spoke it. It's seen as a weird dynamic there. And even nowadays, the

> Spanish that I have, for the most part is Colombia and I've become fluent…I grew very American, I feel. And all my friends spoke English.

Having learned Spanish at later stages of their life, Gilbert stated that speaking Spanish is crucial to him and that he will make an effort to pass this ability to his children in the future as his parents didn't.

> I've told them [Gilbert's parents] before that they suck because they don't want to help me [learn Spanish]. Like learning a language. I have said to them, 'why don't you guys help me' and they're like, 'we just don't feel like, we don't feel like speaking Spanish today.' Like, 'okay,' they brush it off, and I just don't like, I want to give this to my kids, but they're just living their life. I know that when I have my grandchildren, and I will tell them I only speak Spanish around them, they're going to honor my wishes, or else they aren't going to see my babies. I guess it's just the way it is. I don't think about it too much. When my time comes to be a parent and whatnot, I'll have it [the language] under control (Gilbert).

On the other hand, some of the participants experience negative connotations or experiences because they could speak Spanish at an early age. For Neftali, it felt like he was academically held back because he was multilingual as he spoke Spanish and a native Guatemalan dialect. "So, in the third grade, I had to repeat the third grade because I didn't understand the language, and I was placed in ESL classes."

Furthermore, for Anthony, he realized that Spanish was only used by Latinos, and because of his immigration status, he felt that at times speaking Spanish meant he could get deported.

> … I don't know if it's mixed up with my immigrant status as well, but there's always been that fear of like being arrested, my parents being arrested, you know, and what could happen if they are deported and stuff like that. You realize that Spanish for the most part because it's a language that you don't use at school once other people start using it. You're like, 'oh, okay, they're like me.'

Ancestry and Social Identities

The ancestry and social identities are intertwined concepts as most participants used their family descent to depict most of their social identities. In this context, ancestry means the participant's birthplace or their parent or their family's lineage. While social identities in this situation exclusively mean racial and ethnic social identities. Table 1 indicates the self-selected race and ethnicities that each participant selected. Each participant was asked to identify their ethnicity and race in separate questions. Then each participant defined each of these labels based on their understanding and experiences. All participants described their ethnic identity based on their parent's ancestry or place of origin.

Aang's father is Guatemalan, and his mother is Peruvian but was born in the US. "I've always had that in my head that I am half Guatemalan and half Peruvian, but I guess I am also American. But, you know, I guess my ethnic identity is that I have Guatemala and Peruvian [but] overall American." At the same time, most participants recognized that their sense of ethnic identity is a fusion based on their ancestry and place of birth. For Anthony, being Mexican American means:

> It's an infusion of keeping some of those traditions that you have at home—and also learning different stuff by living in America, going to school interacting with

> Americans. Maybe doing more traditional things that we do here in America, being in a band and stuff, in high school. Now you do get mixed up a lot... I think that's definitely an infusion of both.

Notably, all but Jandro utilized a shared social identity label used by the Latinx community. For Jandro, his race and ethnicity are directly tied to the country he has the most knowledge about and where he resides:

> …I do know where my family comes from. But then again, I do know what the history of United States is mainly no more of this, [or] than I know more of this; you know what I mean. So [I think] White would takeover, Hispanic, and Latino [rather than] Hispanic and Latino takeover White. Because I come from like from, I was born here, you know, and I know more stuff from here [than from where] my parents came from. So, I feel like I classify as White [as my ethnicity].

A couple of participants shared that they were brought to the US while children and currently hold DACA immigration status. Their immigration status is part of their ancestry and was sometimes more important than their ethnic identity. At the same time, their immigration status was a catalyst for developing their ethnic identity early on. Anthony strongly felt that his ethnicity and race were directly tied to his DACA status. He felt secluded while growing up because he could not partake in what his high school friends could do – like getting his driver's license when he turned sixteen.

Furthermore, he felt that "… being on a program like DACA, you are reminded that you're not necessarily American at all or anything?" Leandro brought up his immigration status when asked about his ethnic identity: "Ethnically, well I am Hispanic male, and then I am of Latino descent, and then I identify as a Mexican immigrant

because unfortunately, I don't have legal status. And so, I consider myself a hardworking Mexican immigrant."

Lastly, several participants stated that their social identities depended on who was asking the question.

> Well, my parents are definitely from Mexico. They crossed. They came to the United States way before I was born. But I will say, given that I grew up with the American culture and celebrating their holidays and eating their food and all that nice stuff, I would definitely say that I also grew up with the Mexican culture as well. You know, celebrate the culture as well and their religion too. But I would identify as I have had a dilemma with both of these terms. I will say it's between Chicano and Mexican American… And it really just depends on the day which one I resonate more with or who is asking.

Racial Identity Dilemma

All participants were asked about their racial identity, and all of them had predicaments or questions about this identity. Participants tended to blend their ethnic and racial identities, or their definition of race was not precise. Their definition came from their family or school experiences. When asked about their race, participants had a mixture of preferences between not choosing anything at all, using the *Other* label, selecting White, or selecting two racial identities. Ultimately, as noted in Table 1, nine out of the ten would identify or partially use the White racial identity while one of them identified as indigenous or Native-American. At the same time, most of the participants equated race as a phenotypical trait.

Caleb defined race as someone's ancestry while using ethnicity to differentiate two people who may identify as White:

> Your origin like where [you] descended from… race is more general. I guess, for example, Americans are White, and some Mexicans are White as well, but their experiences growing up and their beliefs, how they see things are completely different. And you just look at race, you won't be able to know that, but once you include like ethnicity, you can get a bigger understanding of like the culture or the area they grew up, so, and I figure the effects that it has on their beliefs.

Fidel explains his racial identity dilemma when he applies for jobs or completes any paperwork. Ultimately, at least six participants feel like there is no racial option they can select without feeling secure about their choice.

> It's interesting because a lot of times on job applications. I was confused. Like why White? Why is my race White? I was just like, 'there's no slot for me. There's no slot for me to put.' There is no slot, I guess, for us to put like Mexican. race or our own entity was just put White. I remember when I first applied for my first job, I was probably 16. I asked the lady at the front counter, what do I put here? I'm not that, and I'm not that what do I put here. And I don't know. She just didn't want to tell me, or she just didn't want to go into like that about or be like that conversation. Are we supposed to put this, or is this what you are supposed to put? But she was just like, "what do you consider yourself like." And I told her Mexican American, but there is no spot there. I am not White; I don't consider myself White. That's not my race. So, I ended up leaving it blank.

For most of them, conceptualizing race was directly correlated with the physical characteristics a person possesses. Rigo denoted the racial struggle most Latinx experience in the US, which extends to familial influences.

> … If I had the chance, I would definitely say Brown. Most of the time, I've been click[ing] in the White box… I'm seeing that they're starting to introduce like Latino, Latina, Hispanic [as a first question before asking race in questioners] or I've even seen like Native American or Indigenous American…The dilemma here is [that] I don't look like White people, you know what I am saying? I'm a little on the darker side, but I definitely have some more sun on me. And that's the dilemma. I just don't think I look White... I pretty much grew up being told that I should click the White box.

Acculturation Levels

There were varying levels of acculturation between participants. In this context, acculturation means assimilation and an affinity to the American culture. Those who were born outside of their US tended to have lower acculturation levels. In comparison, those who were born in the US had higher levels of acculturation. Those surrounded by diverse groups and their family exposed them to a Latinx culture while growing up tended to have lower acculturation levels, while the opposite is true.

Leandro was brought to the US when he was young and only listened to English music, but as he met peers who looked like him, he could explore his ethnic identity through music.

> I hated Mexican music. You know, I cannot stand it when my parents used to like to play it in the car, and we're going to go get groceries or just do any type of uh

> chores, not chores but errands. Yeah, so, we're going to go do any type of errands like they would listen to their music on like *el Patron* [Mexican radio station]. Oh, that's horrible music. You know. I was more of oh yeah, let's listen to Drake and this, this, and this. So, I felt like when I was in elementary school; I was more Americanized to listen to those types of things…

Fidel described his upbringing as a "typical Mexican household" in which the family provides for their children and does not push for higher education: "the community I grew up, like especially family community, wasn't much like for higher education or whatnot, to be honest. They were just like the typical Mexican family, like parties, a party on the weekend, you know, do stuff together." This exposure allowed him to develop a stronger ethnic identity and thus lower levels of acculturation.

Caleb noted he felt more Americanized than his parents. At the same time, he has seen his parents assimilate more to the dominant culture over time.

> I mean, I guess I've seen it especially happening with my parents. I think as years passed by; they became more Americanized. Like I said, just seeing how we were treated growing up as opposed to how my younger sister is treated. Like, seems more Americanized now than before. And so, if anything, I'll just be even further Americanized as I grow up, now I'll start, maybe sticking to like the American norm.

On the same note, Gilbert is a second-generation Latinx individual who self-identifies as *Tejano* because his family grew up in Texas and was mainly raised there. *Tejano* is a social identity described as a specific type of Latinx culture mixed with American culture. Gilbert defined this identity as:

> Kind of [a] merge [between Hispanics and Caucasians]. You get a lot of Hispanics that you would call Whitewashed. And I think that's a better way of saying Whitewash that your *Tejano* or at least based regionally off, like where my family is from. Because the culture there's kind of collided and a lot of Hispanics, they're just talking English, even though they're Brown.

Notably, the environment played a significant factor in their levels of acculturation as well. Based on their experiences at varying points of their life, these levels changed over time. As previously noted, their level of acculturations supported their ethnic identity development. Growing up, most children attend school and, thus, their education environment became a significant factor in the participant's ethnic and racial identity development.

Educational Environment

The educational environment was a prominent factor in the start and overall enhancement of the participant's ethnic identity development. The K-12 environment provided the initial concepts and exposure about their ethnic and racial identities. Their racial identity was mostly solidified before college, while their ethnic identities were enhanced or solidified during their post-secondary years. Many of them were publicly ostracized or experienced racism and prejudice, which facilitated or made them questioned their Ethnic and racial identities.

Gilbert shared an experience where he felt discriminated from other Latinx students as he was not invited to culturally-based parties or *quinceañeras* and was bullied on a bus ride during his middle school years.

> …Nobody [of Latinx descent] really talked to me [in high school]. I don't know why. On the bus to like, there were these there two I don't know if they're Guatemalan or Hispanic. They were sitting next to me on the bus. And like for no reason, I would just sit there and mind my business because I was anti-social. But they would pick on me…

On the other hand, Neftali realized and embraced his racial and ethnic identities during his college career as he believes his knowledge on these topics came from post-secondary education.

> So, the entire time I was in elementary, middle, and high school. I don't think I prescribe to ethnicity because, again, I felt like it was a race thing. Not in that race and ethnicity were the same thing. But it wasn't until early on in college where I started to learn more about ethnicities and Races…

K-12 Experiences

For most, their primary, middle, and secondary experiences allowed participants to initiate and shaped their understanding of their ethnic and racial identities. During these years, participants experienced racism or prejudice while exploring their identities with others who had similar identities. Many of these experiences were social, and thus, the diversity of classmates played a role.

For instance, Fidel was playing high school baseball, and he experienced a significant amount of racism, enough to drop out of this sport. He was called a *wetback*, a derogatory and racist term used to describe a Mexican – as an individual's back is wet because they swam across the Rio Grande.

> They [the players] knew each other … and then the other team was making, I guess, jokes. And then one of the well, I guess one of the guys that played on my team, he said something like 'we came down to play, a little *wetback* playing in the team now. They can't even get players to play.' I was like, 'okay.' And the coaches heard it [and] like it, [but] depended like who said it if it was a good player, like an all-star player you can tell like they wouldn't say much. They wouldn't pay attention to it.

Leandro shared an instance in which his seventh-grade teacher asked him about his ethnicity in front of the entire class, and he didn't know what to say. "I looked at her [teacher] confused, and I honestly did not know what she was talking about. She asked me, how do you not know?" These instances allowed the participants to experience to dwell on their characteristics and identities.

Furthermore, depending on where they lived, the diversity of their K-12 school system allowed them to explore their identities. Those in predominately White school systems tended to be more assimilated or Americanized than those whose school systems were more diverse. Aang was enveloped in the American and English-speaking community rather than the Latinx community due to his environment and his people. "I feel like I got a melting pot of my own throughout my whole academic career."

On the same note, Rigo and those in school systems with predominately minoritize students allowed participants to explore their identities, as a result, had more explicit and complex definitions of their social identities. As previously noted, Anthony would only listen to American English music as he did not have a Latinx classmate until middle school.

> …once I got to sixth grade, and I started learning more about the things like the satire that I used to watch [on YouTube]and stuff like that. I became more interested [in my own culture]. I'm like, oh, like, Mexican. What does that mean? And so, I started looking more into like soccer. I started looking more into like *corridos* [regional traditional Mexican music]*;* you know those types of music, *banda* [regional traditional Mexican music]. And then I was like, you know, these things aren't as bad as I thought, you know, and I just start listening more to the lyrics and you know what they meant and started liking more Mexican food.

Post-Secondary Experiences

College as an educational environment supported the participant's ethnic identity development. For most of the participants, their identities were solidified and enhanced by the student activities they participated in or the courses they took during these years. Additionally, some participants were able to develop a complex understanding of race and ethnicity after attending college. At the same time, their predominately White institution environment allowed some of them to continue to feel discrimination or prejudice.

After taking a particular class, Rigo recognized that starting college allowed him to explore these concepts and adopted the Chicano social identity. If given the option of picking Mexican American or Chicano, he would select Chicano.

> I would definitely think the switch [to Chicano] happened when I entered college. That's when it happened. Because that's where I started learning more about ethnicity and certainly more about race. And I learned more about my culture and things of that nature.

As previously noted, Neftali realized and embraced his racial and ethnic identities during his college years rather than his K-12 experience. He believes his knowledge on these topics came from being in school.

> It wasn't until early on in college where I started to learn more about ethnicities, Races. That's when I actually embraced my ethnicity as a Latin American and as Guatemalan and as Latino… So, to me, in understanding race, ethnicity is a consequence of education. So, I know all of high school, we never touch on those topics, or we didn't even have those conversations in high school or elementary, middle school. And any time growing up, not in the household, not in the schools. So, I wasn't really educated in that aspect, so, I didn't know what to identify as.

As noted, discrimination in PWI environments occurred in almost all of the participant's experiences. Fidel shared an occasion when he was an orientation leader at his university, and a White parent was dismissing his information. "I picked up on the fact that you know how much she didn't trust my information. The same information was provided by another person [that looked like her, another White individual], and she was ok with it." In another instance, Gilbert's friend's tire was deflated, and he and several of these Latinx friends went to help her. "A police officer pulls up. He's like, 'oh, are all of you brothers and sisters?' And there were like 10-11 people. I was like, No. just because we're all brown doesn't mean we're like brothers and sisters." These experiences enhance their ethnic identity as they have to think about their identity more than the majority critically.

Ultimately, attending college allowed participants to be challenged and push through different barriers. All of them have enjoyed their collegiate experiences as they

have met various folks from different walks of life. Rigo stated, “it’s a really eye-opening experience because you meet a lot of great people. A lot of people think differently than you. People that challenge your thoughts. You meet people with great ideas. You also attend events and workshops.” Some of these workshops and events were part of the LGLO they joined.

Fraternal Interactions

All participants were part of Lambda Epsilon Nu Fraternity on their respective PWI. All participants described their fraternity experience as positive, which allowed them to explore further, enhance or solidify their ethnic identity through various fraternal interactions. Fraternal interactions in this framework are complex as they extend through various personal and organizational interactions participants had with members of Lambda Epsilon Nu. These interactions created a family-like environment, provided mentoring and overall support, and created a sense of belonging that supported or enhanced their ethnic identity development. Furthermore, the Latino fraternity members perceived their involvement in Lambda Epsilon Nu fraternity enabled them to persist academically through brotherhood, academic expectations, and role modeling, which manifested through their fraternal interactions.

All but one participant noted that their Latino fraternity helped support their overall ethnic identity development or knowledge of their ethnic identity. Jacobo joined his Latino fraternity early in his collegiate career. He noted that the fraternity had a significant influence on his life as the Latino fraternity does community service to support the Latinx population, which he feels passionate about.

> [Lambda Epsilon Nu] is like my life. Like it's been my baby since I've joined, barely when I first came to college… We just had a conversation about the 'I stand with immigrants' campaign. And I could just relate because, as I said, my dad's undocumented, and he's an immigrant himself. And it's just like, 'oh, I want to do more for the Latino community through that way.' And so, like when I joined, like the fraternity as part of it was about being part of that platform - standing up for the Latino community, the immigrant community. It really is; it's just a thing within the organization. They are really always just inviting. It's an inviting environment where we embrace each other's Latinoness.

Furthermore, Gilbert described a time when he was going through something rough and almost dropped out of college, but his Lambda Epsilon Nu brother supported him, enabling him to persist academically. "The fraternity has had the biggest impact on my persistence, like them being there for me whenever I was going through something rough. That way, I can continue my college education." Additionally, Jandro expressed that his Latino fraternity allowed him to see himself beyond the four-year degree and persist through his current undergraduate degree. "Oh yeah, my persistence increased like a lot like over the years all the way to even graduation or master's degree in engineering; they push me to go further into college [and] to continue pushing."

Brotherhood

Brotherhood in this context are interactions with fraternity members that created any positive connection with each other while creating a family-like environment. All of the participants had an affirmative and encouraging experience with their respective Lambda Epsilon Nu chapters. All participants were able to provide various instances in

which their interactions provided them with positive influences. These brotherhood and family-like interactions validated their ethnic identities and strengthened their Latinx identities. Aang described the fraternity as an opportunity to get closer to the Latino community: “The fraternity really opened a gateway for me to develop as a person, as a student, as a leader. I think I honestly attribute a lot of that to the fraternity.”

Leandro initially wanted to join a historically Black fraternity. However, he ultimately decided to join a Latino fraternity because he felt an affinity towards others who shared similar characteristics as him: “I’ve never had an older brother, and I’ve obviously never had a younger sibling either… I felt like I yearned that brotherly love by someone that looks like me, sounds like me [and] talks like me.”

Similarly, Jacobo reaffirmed that Lambda Epsilon Nu helped him strengthen his Latinx identity as he had previously questioned his identity during his K-12 years. Jacobo felt rejected and disconnected from the Latinx community during his high school years because he did not speak Spanish. Becoming a fraternity member allowed him to reconnect with his dormant Latinx identity.

> I've always carried along that [when] I was [a] young White Latino. And joining [Lambda Epsilon Nu] itself is not really like any other organization that would solidify me not having to question like ‘oh, I’m not Latino enough.’ I think [the Lambda Epsilon Nu] itself is what solidified me not having to question [my identity].

Furthermore, participants had several interactions with other fraternity members that allowed their social identities to be validated, which enabled their ethnic identity to be enhanced or solidified through these connections. Leandro and others discussed

meeting other fraternity members who had a variety of Latinx ancestries and cultures. As reflected by Leandro:

> The Latin fraternity has definitely helped out like [to] meet different individuals from different backgrounds. Even though they may be of the same Hispanic or Latino culture descent. But yeah, it has helped me meet like a different number of different individuals; to learn about them, their customs, and the way they talk. Because even though we all may speak the same language, as far as like per se, like Spanish. There are different [Spanish] dialects."

Additionally, many participants shared that their members were from various parts of the world or different Latinx heritages. The understanding of ethnicity and race became more pronounced as their fraternity brothers surrounded them. As elaborated by Aang, "Every other fraternity brother in my chapter was Mexican. And so, I was the only one that isn't Mexican. So, I kind of got even more exposure to the Mexican community, and I have more appreciation for that."

Family-like Environment

Participants had many fraternal interactions that led to a shared sense of brotherhood, creating a family-like environment. In this context, a family-like environment were experiences that showed a close bond with each other as a result of their fraternal interactions, which enhanced or validated their ethnic identity. Many participants shared that Lambda Epsilon Nu extended beyond their home chapter at their PWI. Many noted that being part of their organization allowed them to have a family-like environment and connections beyond their post-secondary institution as their organization has many chapters not just in Georgia but nationwide. Anthony, who

graduated from a Georgia PWI in 2020, moved to Florida, recounts that he is still involved with the fraternity as he has connected with the members in his new home state of Florida.

> I'm trying to get more and more involved still, you know, even though I'm a little couple hour away from my home from my chapter, but even at Tampa. I hang out with the guys [fraternity members in Tampa]. It's easy to meet more people through the fraternity and to get a little more involved. So, I think it's great. It's a family anywhere you go.

Participants recounted their most memorable fraternal experiences, and for most, their *new member show* was the most meaningful experience. Their *new member show* is also known as *coming out show, probate*, or *new member presentation* is an event in which ethnic Greek-lettered organizations showcase their new members and are welcomed to their new community, the fraternity, and sorority life community. Leandro shared that he was a *solo,* meaning he was the only member joining the fraternity the semester he joined and as he was preparing for his performance, he felt somewhat alone but:

> after my new member presentation show, I felt the love from all these people, and they all came out and to see me, all came out to support me, and all the brothers in the area came out to support me. And it just, it was just a nice experience overall.

Aang shared a similar experience about his new member presentation and shared that being part of Lambda Epsilon Nu opened the door to understanding differences within their own diversity.

> Joining [Lambda Epsilon Nu] gave me the opportunity to create bonds that really go past even ethnic boundaries. But at the same time, it strengthens that appreciation for those as ethnic roots that we have. Because we all share the same ideals, you'll kind of share a very similar culture; whether we come from the same place or not, we go through the same struggles.

Sense of Belonging

Similar to the previous subtheme, Lambda Epsilon Nu members experience various fraternal interactions that promoted brotherhood and developed a sense of belonging on their PWI. In this framework, a sense of belonging were feelings and experiences that allowed participants to feel like they were part of their PWI community and provide a home away from home sentiment due to being part of Lambda Epsilon Nu. These fraternal interactions supported and validated each other's experiences allowing them to openly express themselves on their respective campus while increasing their cultural pride, thus enhancing their identity.

After joining Lambda Epsilon Nu, Gilbert noted that he feels more comfortable telling people about his *Tejano* identity and dresses the part while on campus.

> I feel like it helps other people as well. Like when you really express yourself or like your culture, where you come from, I feel like it's a good thing because it enables everyone to be able to do the same thing. And it makes people happy. I am happy being who I am... I am able to express more and be more comfortable with who I am.

Like Gilbert, Rigo notably mentioned that his chapter's cultural and ethnic pride had increased ever since they chartered Lambda Epsilon Nu on their PWI. This

heightened sense of cultural pride contributed to their ethnic identity by creating a sense of belonging.

> The fraternal organization that we establish at the university. We're proud. I know they're proud because we voice [it] all the time what it means to be Mexican, what it means to be Chicano, what it means to be Guatemalan…It's a brotherhood that I could rely on these guys for anything. They would have my back. We would hang out a lot. Have a lot of events together, study together, have a couple of drinks here and there… And I will also say it [reason to join] was probably having a sense of belonging to a family or belonging to something on campus…

Moreover, Jandro was already deeply involved in other student activities when he decided to join Lambda Epsilon Nu in spring 2020. He and many others described how it was easy to connect with other fraternity members: "I can relate with it fit in and be part of myself, have no filters and just try to fit in pretty much. Fit in as it felt like home, a place where I belong." Furthermore, the fraternity allowed him to be proud of his ethnic identity as his brothers have embraced him as who he is.

> [The fraternity has] made me feel to be proud of me. To accept it. How can I tell you? To love it. To cherish it and to go with it. Basically, it's to let you know like 'hey, you can't change it but at least learn how to go with it and learn to love it,' and that's pretty much what it is and how it has impacted me.

Mentoring and Support

Participants noted varying fraternal interactions in which they felt mentored and received a significant amount of support from other members of Lambda Epsilon Nu. In this subtheme, mentoring means interactions in which participants received mentorship

and support that enhanced or solidified their ethnic identity while supporting their persistence. Many participants described their mentorship made a significant impact in their life. Jacobo and Neftali noted that their fraternal interactions allowed them to spark an interest in higher education and would like to earn a master's in higher education once he completes his undergraduate degree. In addition, Jacobo noted that:

> The mentorship that I've gotten from the fraternity, like the older bros. I think it's something that I needed, and they helped me mature. Like whenever I did things, you know, my big [brother] would pull me off to the side and be like, 'Look, I love you before I hate you, but you can't be doing all this and that. And this is ways that you should learn to grow up to be a better, gentlemen.'

Furthermore, Rigo decided to join Lambda Epsilon Nu because of the mentor relationship with an older member of his Latino fraternity.

> And I definitely would say it [I joined] because, of growing a really strong relationship with one of the members there… I would definitely say one of them was more of a mentor and influencer. And then the other ones [undergraduate members] was more like a family type of connection…

Additionally, many participants received support in many ways – from personal to financial support. Caleb became a member of his fraternity late in this academic career as he initially had doubts. Even though he only had less than six months of membership, he expressed that Lambda Epsilon Nu has provided a deep sense of support that he hadn't felt before. He noted that he could see how "everybody's just supportive [and] how this really is like a brotherhood." Moreover, he witnessed how "if anybody ever needs any help, they post it in the [group] chat we have… and we just see nothing

but support… It just feels like a brotherhood, really." Caleb especially remembers the time when fraternity brothers were offering a place to spend the holidays.

Lastly, Jacobo, Aang, Leandro, and others received financial assistance from members of Lambda Epsilon Nu. Aang and Leandro noted that they wouldn't have been as involved with the fraternity or enrolled in school without Lambda Epsilon Nu's brother's financial support. Furthermore, Jacobo indicated that:

> There have been times where I have financially struggled, and I've had bros helping pay for like my car insurance or [they say] I can help you pay for this month's rent or part of it. So, like on average, I've had a lot of support financially. And then when we can talk about mental [support] uff! the amount of support is great.

Academic Expectations and Role Modeling

Academic expectation and role modeling through fraternal interactions were significant factors in the participant's persistence. In this context, academic expectations were academic rules and regulations set forth by Lambda Epsilon Nu and personal academic expectations they gave themselves. While academic role modeling was experienced by seeing other fraternity members academically excelled pushed participants for academic excellence, thus supporting their academic persistence.

Participants shared their organizations had many academic expectations that they had to meet. In addition, their state board recognized the chapter with the highest GPA. For instance, Leandro stated that his fraternity kept him in college and pushed him for more: "The fraternity kept me like in college, like [to] keep me going, so I guess the fraternity has definitely been like that catalyst on me wanting to be part of a

platform that's helping the Latino community and graduate." Furthermore, Aang noted that while he wanted and knew he wanted to graduate:

> There were definitely times throughout college where I doubted myself and struggled … and having that support system of brothers that were going through the same struggles were willing to help no matter what it took, are willing to take an hour [of study] out of their day to stay with you.

Anthony, like many others, described that his Latino fraternity helped him to stay in college and eventually graduate as his fraternity members pushed each other for academic achievement: "The peer support, a fellow college student, peer support, knowing that we had to keep that grade to keep my fraternity, you're proud of the stuff the fraternity does. So, you also want to show it in your grades." Fidel shared that he has academically struggled and that his fraternity members have influenced him to persist, especially when life has gotten rough for him academically.

> I don't think I would be academically wise and as involved as much as I would if I wasn't in the Latino fraternity, to be honest. Like it gives me, like seeing the fact that I see other brothers, the involvement they have within the fraternity like see them progress with their academic excellence in academic and career. It makes me strive to be like, 'okay, maybe that will be me one day. Maybe I can be that way, or maybe I will be that way.'

Summary

The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at

PWIs in Georgia, USA. In this qualitative study, ten participants were interviewed, data was collected and analyzed. Thematic analysis was instituted, and three main themes and various subthemes emerged. Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity through personal connections, past interactions, and their environment. Family influences and K-12 experiences exposed them and helped them understand their initial ethnic and racial identities. Additionally, most of them solidify their ethnic identity during their collegiate careers. Furthermore, fraternal interactions and their college setting enhanced or helped them solidify their ethnic identity. Finally, Latino fraternity members perceived their involvement in Lambda Epsilon Nu enabled them to academically persist through various aspects of brotherhood and fraternal academic expectations.

Chapter VI

DISCUSSION

The present research study is timely. As the data were collected and analyzed, the 2020 US census results were released. According to the latest US census results, the Latinx population has grown 23% since 2010 (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). This growth marked the Latinx population as the largest minoritized group in the country. Furthermore, the Latinx population is considered the second-fastest-growing minority group in the US (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). These updated statistics continue to show an upward trend in the Latinx population. As noted by the Excelencia in Education, while the Latinx population increases, the higher education enrollment is disproportionate to other groups (2019). Therefore, studies supporting the success of the Latinx college student population should be conducted to support this growing population effectively.

Summary of Study

Limited studies exist that suggest connections between LGLOs, their ethnic identity development, and college persistence. Latino Greek-lettered affiliated students tend to have a more defined sense of ethnic self, as they learn to navigate their academic environment to be academically successful (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Garcia, 2020; Guardia & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Nuñez, 2004; Sanchez, 2011). Due to the limited research in this area, there is a need to continue to explore the effects of LGLO's and other Latinx student organizations to

explore the needs of this increasing student population in the United States (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Garcia, 2020; Sanchez, 2011). Therefore, this study attempted to expand the knowledge of this ever-increasing population by exploring Latino fraternity member'slived experiences in PWIs in the South. Moreover, using Torres's (1999) BOM model and Ferdman and Gallego's (2001) typology system and adding the Latinx as an additional identity option, the present study explored how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their collegiate persistence and ethnic identity development.

Restatement of the Problem and Research Questions

Although few research studies connect the collegiate experiences of Latinx Greek members and their ethnic identity, a gap still exists. The Latinx student population will significantly increase over time, and thus, they will populate US colleges and universities. Therefore, keeping track of Latinx students' educational achievement in the United States is vital to effectively evaluate this population's influence on economic and educational development (Brown et al., 2003). As a result, research on the college Latinx student experience that affects their persistence and overall student success in higher education should be performed for university professionals to continue to serve this rising population effectively.

To help interpret and understand the unexplored lived experiences of Latinx fraternity members in PWIs warrants a qualitative investigation. The following research questions served as a guide for this study:

RQ 1. How do Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity?

RQ 2. How do Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their college persistence and ethnic identity at Predominately White Institutions in Georgia?

Summary of Methods

A basic interpretive qualitative design was utilized for this dissertation study. The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, USA. Ten participants were recruited from all available Georgia PWIs that had LGLO chapters. Table 1 shows brief demographic information and the social identities of all participants. The sample included every possible site except for Valdosta State University, and all participants came from the same LGLO, Lambda Epsilon Nu (pseudonym). Zoom interviews were conducted in spring 2021. Each transcript was transcribed first by the Kaltura cloud-based software, edited by the researcher, and reaffirmed by each participant. Each interview lasted between 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours, 30 minutes.

The interview questions (Appendix F) were open-ended and guided by Seidman's (2013) backbone approach to capture context and the reconstruction and meaning of experiences to capture rich descriptive information. Questions 1-11 asked participants to identify and describe the experiences that shaped their identities to create context. While questions 12-28 asked about their experiences and involvement in their LGLO, focusing on their ethnic identity development and collegiate persistence, which enabled participants to reconstruct and make meaning of experiences. This semi-structured and flexible interview process explored essential areas to discover answers to the research

questions (Patton, 2015). The qualitative data were coded, and thematic analysis was implemented to observe reoccurring patterns and themes. Findings are presented to interpret the researcher's understanding of the participants' experiences and phenomena from the coded data and emergent themes.

Findings and Discussion

This study aimed to explore the experiences of Latino fraternity members' perceptions of their ethnic identity at PWIs. Therefore, Torres's (2003) Bicultural Orientation Model (BOM) model will be used as the main framework as findings are discussed while using Ferdman and Gallego's (2001) typology system to conceptualize the participant's social identities while adding the term Latinx is an additional identity option as it was not included in this typology.

Out of these ten interviews, three main themes emerged: (1) familial influences, (2) educational environment, and (3) fraternal interactions. Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity through personal connections, past interactions, and their environment. Familial influences and K-12 experiences exposed them and helped them understand their initial ethnic and racial identities. Moreover, most of them solidify their ethnic identity during their post-secondary careers. Likewise, fraternal interactions and their college environment enhanced or helped them solidify their ethnic identity. Finally, Latino fraternity members perceived their involvement in Lambda Epsilon Nu enhanced their academic persistence through various aspects of brotherhood and academic expectations.

Additionally, while this study's primary focus was to understand participants' ethnic identity, participants sometimes integrated their ethnic and racial identities;

therefore, racial identity is discussed to enhance the understanding of the participant's ethnic identity development as needed. These racial identities and perceptions become crucial as Ferdman and Gallego's identity model uses race as a lens to depict each orientation.

Familial Influences: Ethnic Identity Development

All participants noted various familial influences and factors in developing the participants' initial ethnic and racial identities. Familial influences were the concepts, ideas, experiences, or exposures from the participant's immediate family, close friends, or significant others that supported the participant's ethnic or racial identity development. Furthermore, the following sub-themes emerged: language, ancestry, social identities, racial identity dilemma, and acculturation levels.

The present findings are very similar to the original BOM model studies. According to Torres (2003), all of her ten participants credited their families for their perception of their ethnic identity. Similarly, the ten participants in the present study also credited their families for the initial creation of their social identities. Furthermore, family and immigration status were significant in Torres's (2003) study as well as the present study. Two participants' immigration status was DACA. This identity seemed to be more important than any other social identity. It guided their collegiate decisions due to the financial burden as they had to pay out-of-state tuition rates in Georgia. At the same time, having fraternity brothers with the same immigration status allowed them to feel safe while on campus and in their community. Anthony stated:

> Some of the brothers that were on the DACA and were Mexican American. One of the brothers [who] is DACA, [that] I joined because I knew him and of his

> status. He would go to church. He'd be like, 'hey, you want to go to church?' And we would go to mass…

Language.

Speaking English and Spanish or simply understanding Spanish was a fundamental factor in conceptualizing their ethnic identity for all participants. While not all participants spoke Spanish, they could all conceptualize the cultural connection of how language affects their sense of ethnic self. Many participants like Anthony depicted Spanish as a way to connect with their families. They even included this ability as part of what it meant to be Latino: "I think the language for one, speaking the same language my parents had spoken. That is the only thing they speak. They do not speak English as well." Others described how even though they may not speak Spanish at 100%, they will pass this trait to their offspring to continue their legacy. Gilbert shared:

> I know that when I have my grandchildren, and I will tell them I only speak Spanish around them, they're going to honor my wishes, or else they [his parents] aren't going to see my babies...When my time comes to be a parent and whatnot, I'll have it [the language] under control.

This subtheme falls under familial influences as the participant's family passed their language to them in one way or another. Patton et al.'s (2016) definition of ethnic identity uses language as part of his multidimensional notion that depicts what this social identity describes, and it was evident that language was critical in developing the identity of participants. Furthermore, the present study's findings are similar to Pérez's (2014) findings. One of the four themes that allowed Latino students to succeed in their respective PWIs was *affirming identity through language*. Lastly, similar to Torres's

study (2003), being able to speak Spanish was a significant factor in their upbringing environment as it allowed them to "participate in culturally relevant activities at home" (p. 538).

Ancestry and Social Identities Including Latinx.

The ancestry and social identities were entangled concepts as most participants used their parent's ancestry to depict their social identities. In this context, ancestry means the participant's birthplace or their parent or their family's heredity. While social identities in this situation exclusively meant racial and ethnic social identities. While participants had similar identity labels, they also differed depending on their individual experiences. Nonetheless, all ten participants described their ethnic identity based on their parent's ancestry or place of origin. Similar to the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Report (2013), many participants stated that their social identity changed depending on who asked. Rigo stated: "I will say it's between Chicano and Mexican American…And it really just depends on the day which one I resonate more with or who is asking."

Notably, while all ten participants heard the term Latinx as a social identity, only nine understood the concept and purpose of this term. Furthermore, one participant shunned the term, and only two of them stated they would use this term as needed when speaking for or about a large group. Jacobo stated:

> I think the term is important; I guess it is an essential term for those who identify as non-binary and on the spectrum. I don't know. Whenever I'm talking my language overall, like I don't want to use as a plural 'Latinos,' if I know I'm speaking to this particular community, then I'll use Latinx.

Furthermore, he noted another term he and his friends used in a higher education setting, *Latine*.

> I think the newer, well that's not really newer term but more accepted term is like Latine [to] have an 'e' at the end, like best fits… It's almost the same as an identifier as Latinx. But I guess when it comes down to language, like structurally, I think it just gets better [for] the Spanish language like… Latin "x" [does not] roll of the tongue that way.

At the same time, only one of them said they would use it to describe themselves, but both of these participants prefer to use Latino instead as it's tied to their gender. Neftali said: "Yeah. To me, I'm Latino. Yes. Latinx *tambien* (as well) because it applies to me. So, I identify as male; therefore, Latinx and Latino for me is okay."

Racial Identity: Ferdman & Gallegos Model.

All participants were asked about their racial identity, and all of them had predicaments or even questioned this identity. Participants tended to blend their ethnic and racial identities, or their definition of race was not precise or accurate. Their definition came from their family or school experiences, similar to Torres's (2003) study. When asked about their race, participants had a mixture of preferences but mostly centered around the White racial identity. In addition, most of the participants equated race as a phenotypical trait. Participants were asked about race and ethnicity separately, but many of them mixed their identities and constructs. These specific questions allowed the Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) orientation model to be used as this model uses race as a lens to create their Latinx social identity.

The six orientations in Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) model are *(a) Latino-integrated, (b) Latino-identified, (c) subgroup-identified, (d) Latino as other, (e) Undifferentiated/Denial,* and *(f) White identified*. Appendix A depicts each orientation with additional detail, including the racial lens each orientation uses. Participants of this study had a blend of these orientations and included two *Latino identified*, three *Latino-integrated*, two *Latino as other,* one *subgroup identified,* and two *White identified*.

Individuals in the *Latino identified* orientation make a conscious or unconscious decision for history, culture, and other ethnic markers to be part of their lives. Individuals in the *Latino-integrated orientation* have the widest lens, which allows them to understand the Latinx complexities and how their identity integrates with other social identities. Individuals who identify in the *Latino as other* orientations have an undefined identity and do not commit to a group. Individuals with this orientation are not aware of specific Latinx culture, heritage, or background. They prominently see themselves as People of Color without differentiating themselves from other subgroup minority groups. The *subgroup identified* orientation identify within their ethnic subgroup or nation of origin. Individuals in this orientation have a narrow lens as they tend to see their own group as better than any other Latinx subgroup. Lastly, *White identified* is an orientation in which individuals view themselves as White and see the White race as superior to other Races. These individuals completely assimilated to the White and mainstream US societywhile disconnecting from their Latinx heritage and community. Table 2 indicates each participant's orientation using the Ferdman and Gallegos model and the quotes to support this designation.

Participants who had a higher level of ethnic pride, knowledge, or were able to articulate the complexities of race or ethnicity and had more cultural connections tended to have the *Latino identified* and *Latino-integrated* orientations. On the other hand, those who had limited Latinx cultural family practices and identified more with the American identity or had limited Spanish capabilities tended to have the other orientations. Participants' orientations seem to be tied to the level of acculturation and acceptance to the mainstream White American culture, which is consistent with Torres's (2003) Bicultural Orientation Model (BOM) as well.

Acculturation Levels: Bicultural Orientation Model.

There were varying levels of acculturation between participants. In this context, acculturation means assimilation and an affinity to the American culture. Those who were born outside of the country tended to have lower acculturation levels. In comparison, those who were born in the US had higher levels of acculturation. Those surrounded by diverse groups and their family exposed them to a Latinx culture while growing up tended to have lower acculturation levels, while the opposite is also true. These findings are similar to Torres's studies and the BOM model. Acculturation and ethnic identity are viewed as two separate constructs in this model. The BOM model takes varying levels of acculturation and ethnic identity and splits it into four quadrants. These four quadrants are *Latino orientation, bicultural orientation, Anglo orientation, and marginal orientation.* See appendix B for a visual representation of the BOM model. Participants in the present study were asked various questions about their background, family, ethnicity, and educational experiences. The data from these questions allowed the researcher to place each participant in a BOM orientation based on his responses. The ten

participants of this study fell in two of these orientations, including seven *Bicultural Orientation,* two *Anglo Orientation,* and one *Latino Orientation.*

An individual with both high levels of acculturation and ethnic identity has a *Bicultural Orientation,* indicating a preference to function competently in both the Anglo and the Latino cultures. A person with a low level of ethnic identity with a high level of acculturation has an *Anglo Orientation,* indicating a partiality to operate within the Anglo culture. On the other hand, someone who has a high level of ethnic identity and low levels of acculturation has a *Latino Orientation,* denoting a fondness to function within the Latino culture (Torres, 1999). Essentially, as Latinx students make choices about their adjustment to the majority culture (acculturation) and the conservation of their cultural origin (ethnic identity), a distinct orientation develops incorporating both cultures (Torres, 1999). The ten participants shared many experiences throughout their lives; however, the most recent experiences depicted their BOM orientations as these orientations also intersect with their educational environment. Table 3 shows each participant's BOM orientation and the quotes to support this alignment.

As previously noted, the BOM model fit well with the study's sample as the original sample when the model was created had Latinx students from Georgia. Notably, while the BOM model allows each individual to have a preferred orientation based on their ethnic identity and acculturation levels, timing and environment are significant factors. Some of the participants, growing up, started in the Anglo orientation as they were more Americanized, only spoke English, or didn't feel Latino enough. As they interacted with their LGLO during their college years, that transitioned them into the Bicultural orientation. These results are different from Torres's (2003) findings as two of

her, not bilingual participants, were of the Anglo orientation. Still, all of the monolingual participants in this study felt attuned with the Latinx community and culture due to being part of their LGLO. Furthering the idea that being part of an LGLO enhanced participants' ethnic identity, potentially moving participants from the Anglo orientation to the Bicultural orientation. Similarly, the participants of the Anglo orientation in this study were bilingual but were more apt to identify with the American culture. Continuing to note that environment, experiences, and personal choice influence their ethnic identity development regardless of their LGLO participation.

Furthermore, Torres and Baxter Magolda (2004) found that Latinx students' ethnic identity was positively influenced when they reconstructed social knowledge. The process of reconstructing knowledge results from the dissonance between previously formed beliefs and exposure to a new environment or facts. These findings were consistent with the present study. Many participants experienced cognitive dissonance as they stepped into their PWI and then experienced fraternal interactions from different parts of the world. These experiences allowed participants to reaffirm or changed their beliefs about their ethnic identity. For example, Rigo had open discussions with his fraternity members that discussed struggles of their sometimes-fluid biculturalism: "Yeah. When I'm bringing up the idea of like the struggle between 'Am I Mexican enough to be Mexican or American enough to American.' Other fraternity brothers also agree with that idea..." Additionally, Neftali's conceptualization of race and ethnicity completely changed as he entered his post-secondary education.

> So, my own [ethnicity] would have to be like college years embracing where I come from. So, the entire time I was in [K-12]. I don't think I prescribe to an

> ethnicity because, again, I felt like it was a race thing. Not in that race and ethnicity were the same thing. But it wasn't until early on in college where I started to learn more about ethnicities and Races.

Educational Environment

The educational environment was a crucial factor in the start and overall enhancement of the participant's ethnic identity development. The K-12 environment provided the initial concepts and exposure about their racial and ethnic identities. At the same time, their racial identity was mainly solidified before starting college, while their ethnic identities were solidified or enhanced during their post-secondary years through their interactions. College as an educational environment supported the participant's ethnic identity development. For most, their identities were solidified and enhanced by their LGLO or the courses they took. At the same time, their predominately White institution environment allowed some of them to continue to feel discrimination or prejudice.

These findings are consistent with Phinney's ethnic identity development model (1993), as most participants depicted their upbringing and childhood as stage two or *ethnic identity search or moratorium*. In this stage, individuals become exposed to cultural issues that allow them to question and face their ethnic background. Many participants experienced oppressive and racist experiences that allowed them to move toward this stage. Fidel, Gilbert, and Jandro described sports-related discriminatory experiences that led them to reflect on what it means to be Latinx. For example, Gilbert told a time during his childhood where he was the only Latinx playing soccer but never actually played the game:

They were considering putting me in [the game] but like, 'why am I not playing like everyone else?' I know my parents told me that the coach was like a piece of [profanity]. But like I think it had to do more with like, he was racist in some way. Like, I don't know why he did [what he did]; there wasn't any good reasoning.

Furthermore, these findings are also following Delgado-Romero & Hernandez's (2002) study. They found that many Latinx students experience social, cultural, and academic difficulties when they arrive on Predominately White campuses. In addition, in Gloria and Rodriguez's (2000) study, sentiments of discomfort, isolation, and alienation come from experiences in which Latinx students attempt to balance their academic and cultural values with the mainstream culture of a PWI. In the present study, some participants felt similar, but their LGLO provided a home-away-from-home and a place to be themselves in the midst of this environment. Rigo stated:

> I feel like it helps other people as well. Like when you really express yourself or like your culture, where you come from, I feel like it's a good thing because it enables everyone to be able to do the same thing. And it makes people happy. I am happy being who I am... I am able to express more and be more comfortable with who I am after joining Lambda Epsilon Nu.

Fraternal Interactions: Ethnic Identity Enhancement and Persistence

All participants were part of Lambda Epsilon Nu Fraternity on their respective PWI. All participants described their fraternity experience as positive, which allowed them to explore further, enhance or solidify their ethnic identity through various fraternal interactions. At the same time, these fraternal connections allowed for participants to feel supported enough to persist academically. Fraternal interactions in this context are

multifaceted as they extend through various personal and organizational exchanges between members. These interactions created a family-like environment, provided mentoring and overall support, and created a sense of belonging that supported or enhanced their ethnic identity development. Furthermore, all participants but one perceived that their involvement and association with their LGLO enabled them to persist academically through brotherhood, academic expectations, and role modeling. These findings are consistent with other studies that researched LGLOs (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Garcia, 2020; Guardia, & Evans 2008; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Nuñez, 2004; Sanchez, 2011).

Brotherhood, Family-like Environment and Sense of Belonging.

The findings of this dissertation study are consistent with many researched factors that showcase Latinx student persistence. Some of these factors include but are not limited by: positive campus climate, ethnic and cultural identity, familiar and social support, and student involvement (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Castillo et al., 2004; Castillo et al., 2006; Gloria et al., 2005; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996; Jones et al., 2002; Kiyama et al., 2015; Oseguera et al., 2009; Peltier et al., 1999; Pérez, 2014).

Brotherhood, a family-like environment, and a sense of belonging were concepts that were shared among all ten participants. Brotherhood in this context were interactions with fraternity members that created a positive connection while creating a close-knit group and environment. A family-like environment was experienced that showed a close bond with each other due to their fraternal interactions. A sense of belonging were feelings and experiences that allowed participants to feel like they were part of their PWI

community and provide a home away from home sentiment due to being part of Lambda Epsilon Nu.

The participants had positive experiences with their respective chapters, state, regional, and nationwide fraternal interactions. Furthermore, all participants were able to provide instances in which brotherly interactions provided them with positive outcomes. Consistent with a study conducted by Moreno & Banuelos (2013), participants in this study felt that being part of Lambda Epsilon Nu Fraternity provided additional benefits beyond the social components that other general student organizations offer. For example, Rigo stated: "[Our] brotherhood [is one in which] I could rely on these guys for anything. They would have my back. We would hang out a lot. Have a lot of events together, study together, have a couple of drinks here and there. More than the regular student org."

Their brotherhood and family-like interactions validated their ethnic identities and strengthened their Latinx identities. Similar to other studies, participants in this study found refuge and safe spaces, especially for those students who moved out for college (Guardia & Evans 2008). Aang described the Lambda Epsilon Nu Fraternity as an opportunity to get closer to the Latino community: "The fraternity really opened a gateway for me to develop as a person, as a student, and as a leader, especially as I moved out. I think I honestly attribute a lot of that to the fraternity."

Latinx students experience academic, cultural, and social difficulties arriving at their respective PWIs (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002). Some participants in this study had similar initial sentiments, but Lambda Epsilon Nu allowed them to form rapid connections. Aang stated the brothers were highly welcoming and that he "just really hit

it off well with the brothers that were in the fraternity at the time…and that's something that I couldn't really find very often during my freshman year." Additionally, participants had daily fraternal interactions that led to a shared sense of brotherhood, creating a family-like environment. These sentiments and findings are consistent with other LGLO research. Garcia's (2020) study conceptualized how Latino fraternities and Latina sororities students make meaning of their sense of belonging at a PWI. The study showed that being part of a campus subculture was more important than feeling part of the institutional identity. Jandro stated, "I can relate with it fit in and be part of myself, have no filters and just try to fit in pretty much. Fit in it felt like home, a place where I belong."

Additionally, many participants shared that Lambda Epsilon Nu extended beyond their institutional chapter. The alumni mentioned that being part of their organization allowed them to have a family-like environment and connections beyond even after graduation, as their organization has chapters throughout the nation. For example, Anthony graduated in 2020 and moved to Florida. He shared that even though he became a brother in Georgia, the Florida brothers have welcomed him in open arms.

Luedke (2018) and Villalpando (2003) found that Latinx student organizations create a family-like environment and support each other as they maneuver through their collegiate experiences. This close-knit atmosphere enables Latino students to learn from each other mutually and reaffirm their cultural values while enhancing their cultural connections. These findings were similar to the experiences of the ten Lambda Epsilon Nu members. For example, Caleb had a couple of months of active membership, yet he

noted a significant amount of support, brotherhood, and a family-life environment right after he joined.

> I joined like right before Thanksgiving, and that weekend before... like for Thanksgiving and Christmas, they were messaging like if nobody needed a place to go, [that] their house was open. I don't know to me that just showed me that the brotherhood was really there... to invite people that you don't know into your house like they're family. It just made me feel like if I ever need any help, I know I can have people who are willing to help me.

Mentoring, Support, Academic Expectations, and Role Modeling.

Similar to previous studies, persistence in this sample was best supported through various avenues but was heavily supported through their fraternal interactions that led to mentoring, support, provided academic expectations, and role modeling. Peer support groups through student organizations and involvement are vital to the persistence of Latino college students (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002). Participants described many instances in which they felt mentored and supported by their fraternity brothers. In this subtheme, mentoring means interactions in which participants received mentorship and support that enhanced or solidified their ethnic identity while supporting their persistence. Many participants described their mentorship made a significant impact in their life (Suriel, et al., 2018). Jacobo explained that his passion for higher education was started because of his deep fraternal involvement.

Guardia and Evans (2008) found that Latino Greek members at an HSI had a near-instant connection with each other due to their shared identities. Furthermore, these researchers noted that the social support that came with being part of an LGLO became

an integral part of the members' academic success (2008). As is the case in this study, participants connected their fraternal interactions to their academic success. The academic expectation and role modeling through brotherly interactions were significant factors in the participant's persistence. Academic expectations were fraternity regulations participants needed to follow. In contrast, role modeling experiences pushed participants for academic excellence by observing other fraternity brothers' successes.

Pérez and his colleagues completed a couple of studies depicting Latino student success factors in PWIs (Pérez, 2014; Pérez & Taylor, 2016). Some of the themes of these studies were also observed in the participant's experiences of the present study. For example, Pérez (2014) found that affirming identity through language created a positive environment to support student success and thus persistence. As previously noted, speaking Spanish was a vital factor in enhancing their ethnic identity development while creating an environment that contributed to their persistence through their fraternal interactions. For example, Caleb denoted a time where he and his fraternity brothers discussed how Latinos expresses different words that mean the same thing:

> …I ask them like, 'hey, *pasame un popote*, which means pass me a straw, and he was like 'what is that?' I responded, 'that thing right there in your hand?' He was like, 'Oh, we don't call it like that. We call it a *paja*.' And I was like, 'Oh dang, that is completely different things.' We started learning a little bit about each other through that…we all learn from each other.

Furthermore, Pérez & Taylor (2016) found that sustaining students' social group and cultural identity through their collegiate years supported Latino student success in prestigious PWIs. Additionally, they discovered that familial and social capital promoted

students' success. Familial support allowed their participants to partake in enriching academic activities, which promoted their academic success and collegiate persistence. They also found that if participants sustain their social support and cultural identity through their collegiate years contributed to their success. Lastly, they found that students' social capital is developed through on-campus social support groups, including Latino Fraternities. These factors allowed participants to learn from older students and persist through their collegiate experiences (Pérez & Taylor, 2016). While the present study was only a snapshot of time in the participants' lives, there are several commonalities in Pérez et al., conclusions to the findings of this study as these seem to relate to the main themes and sub-themes this dissertation study. Therefore, continuing to understand the similarities across institutional types and the Latinx college students' population among the US.

Implication for Practice and Higher Education Professionals

The findings of this study suggest that Latino fraternity members' ethnic identity is fully solidified on a college campus and by participating in an LGLO. Furthermore, persistence is enhanced by being affiliated with Latino Greek-lettered organizations. The findings of this study carry several implications for student affairs and higher education administrators. As post-secondary institutions continue to focus on student success with an ultimate goal to increase graduations rates, the present study findings provide ways to enhance Latinx student persistence.

Higher education institutions should note that LGLO members and those interested in joining these organizations seek a family-like atmosphere and embrace Latinx culture. While these could potentially be found on campus through their

Multicultural Student Affairs office, LGLOs provide a deeper and richer experience that enhances their member's ethnic identity and college persistence. Higher education professionals should support the expansion of LGLO's and other ethnic Greek-lettered organizations if students request them. Moreover, student affairs professionals working closely with LGLOs, and other ethnic Greek-lettered organizations should have high cultural competence and understanding of these organizations to serve these student populations adequately. When a Multicultural Greek Council or a NALFO is being formed at an institution or considered, student affairs professionals should undergo training to effectively serve these new organizations or councils, particularly if the staff members do not have experience working with these types of organizations.

Additionally, higher education institutions should intentionally hire Spanish-speaking personnel to increase Latinx student persistence. As noted by these findings, Language is a significant factor in their overall ethnic identity and creating a home-like environment that would promote persistence. Moreover, by intentionally establishing LGLO's and other ethnic Greek-lettered organizations, higher education professionals are creating more inclusive and culturally aware institutions, where all students could learn to be world citizens while promoting general student success and diversifying the institution.

Lastly, practitioners should acknowledge that LGLO's support student persistence while also supporting minoritized student recruitment efforts. At least two participants shared that they learned about their LGLO through their institution's open house initiatives. Furthermore, additional research and attention should be given to the largest

minoritize group in the US as they will continue to population US colleges and universities.

Implications for Future Research

As previously noted, while several research studies connect the collegiate experiences of Latinx Greek members to their ethnic identity development, a gap still exists. Most studies are location and institutional-type bound studies (Castellanos & Gloria 2007; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Guardia & Evans 2008; Garcia, 2020; Moreno & Banuelos, 2013; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Nuñez 2004; Sanchez, 2011). No studies had been done with the LGLO population at PWIs in Georgia, and the present study partially fills this gap. While the current qualitative study has rich data, it only captured the experiences of ten participants from the same organization. Further research should be conducted across different LGLOs to compare data between and within LGLOs and institutions.

Additionally, this study only recruited participants at Georgia PWIs. There are at least four chapters in Georgia Minority services institutions - how do they differ from the PWI experience, if any? What about the Georgia Latina sorority perspective? The present study only recruited individuals in Latino fraternities. What about the Latinx student experience of those who join historically Black and White fraternities in Georgia? Do non-Greek culturally based student organizations also enhance ethnic identity and persistence? If so, how? How would a quantitative approach to this study look like? What about LGLO members from the various other higher education institution types outside of Georgia? These questions merit further investigation.

As the Latinx population increases, educational achievement is an essential benchmark for assessing economic and civil health contributions (Brown et al., 2003). Thus, research on the college Latinx student experience that positively affects their college success and persistence should be performed for higher education institutions to adequately serve this growing student population (Kiyama et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The present study had two primary purposes (1) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their ethnic identity and (2) to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity and persistence at PWIs in Georgia, USA. In this qualitative study, ten participants were interviewed, data was collected and analyzed. Thematic analysis was instituted, and three main themes along with various sub-themes emerged: (1) familial influences – (a) language, (b) ancestry and social identities, (c) racial identity dilemma, and (d) acculturation levels; (2) educational environment – (a) k-12, and b) post-secondary; and 3) fraternal interactions – (a) brotherhood, (b) family-like environment, (c) sense of belonging, (d) mentoring and support, and (e) academic expectations and role modeling.

Ultimately, Latino fraternity members experience their ethnic identity through personal connections, past interactions, and environment. Family influences and K-12 experiences exposed them and helped them understand their initial ethnic and racial identities. Additionally, most of them solidify their ethnic identity during their collegiate careers through fraternal interactions, and their college setting enhanced or helped them solidify their ethnic identity. Finally, Latino fraternity members perceived their

involvement in Lambda Epsilon Nu enabled them to academically persist through various aspects of brotherhood and fraternal academic expectations.

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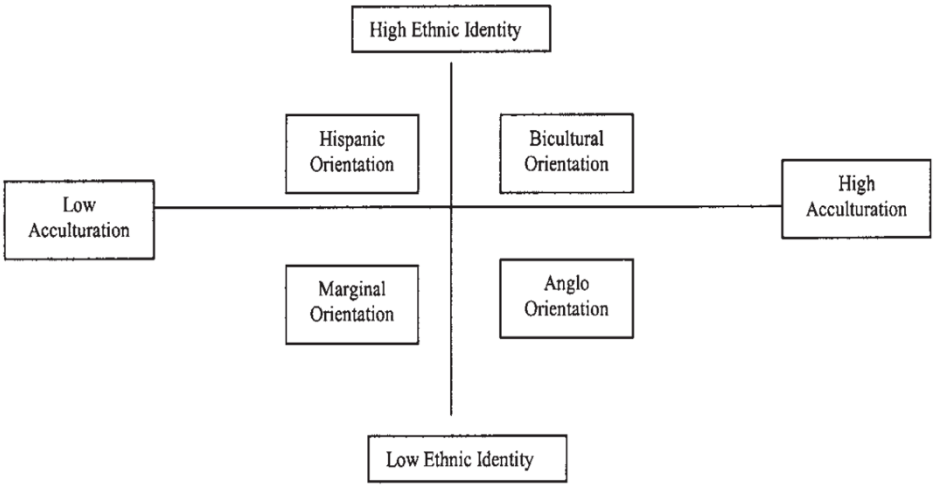
Appendix A - LATINO/A RACIAL IDENTITY ORIENTATIONS

Orientation	Lens	Identify as/prefer	Latinos are seen	Whites are seen	Framing of Race
Latino-integrated	Wide	Individuals in a group context	Positively	Complex	Dynamic, contextual, socially constructed
Latino-identified (Racial/Raza)	Broad	Latinos	Very Positively	Distinct; could be barriers or allies	Latino/not Latino
Subgroup-identified	Narrow	Own subgroup	My group is ok, others maybe	Not central (could be barriers or blockers)	Not clear or central; secondary to nationality, ethnicity, and culture.
Latinos as Other	External	Not White	Generically fuzzily	Negatively	White/not White
Undifferentiated /Denial	Closed	People	"who are Latino?"	Supposed color-blind (accept dominant norms)	Denial, irrelevant invisible
White-identified	Tinted	Whites	Negatively	Very positively	White/Black, either/or, one drop or "mejorar la Raza" (i.e., improve the Race)

Latino/a Racial Identity Orientations (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001, p. 49)

Appendix B - BICULTURAL ORIENTATION MODEL



Bicultural Orientation Model (Torres, 1999, p. 287)

Appendix C - INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

For the Protection of Human Research Participants

Protocol Number: 04129-2021

Responsible Researcher(s): Christian Bello Escobar

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Jamie L. Workman

Project Title: *The Persistence and Ethnic Identity Development of Latino Fraternity Men at Predominately White Institutions in the South: A Qualitative Approach.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2**. Your research study may begin immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** recording audio/video interviews provided the recording is used for the sole purpose of creating an accurate transcript.*
- *Exempt protocol guidelines **prohibit** the collection and/or sharing of audio/video recordings. Each recording must be destroyed immediately upon creation of the transcript.*
- *Upon completion of this research study all collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years.*
- *Participant email addresses and collected correspondence must be maintained separately from interview transcripts.*
- *Interviews conducted virtually must take place out of the view and hearing range of others.*
- *The Participant Payment Log is auditable and must be current at all times.*
- *Each person who receives a $15.00 gift card must sign for their gift card. It is recommended that you email each participant a log sheet for them to digitally sign (docusign) and then email back to you.*

☒ ***If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *02.10.2021*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator
229-253-2947.

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix D - INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled *"The Persistence and Ethnic Identity Development of Latino Fraternity Men at Predominately White Institutions in the South: A Qualitative Approach,"* which is being conducted by **Christian A. Bello Escobar**, a doctoral ***student*** at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity development and understand how their membership affects their college persistence at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in the South.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the experiences of Latino fraternity members in PWIs in the south. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately **90 minutes.** The interviews will be audio and/or video recorded in order to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview will serve as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to cabelloescobar@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix E - RESEARCH PROJECT ADVERTISEMENT

Hello,

My name is Christian Bello E., and I am a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. I am completing my dissertation titled "*The Persistence and Ethnic Identity Development of Latino Fraternity Men at Predominately White Institutions in the South: A Qualitative Approach.*"

I am looking for candidates to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity development and understand how their membership affects their college persistence at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in the South.

For those who are eligible and partake in a 90-minute interview, they will receive a $15.00 gift card. Your participation is voluntary.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to cabelloescobar@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

If you are interested in participating, please complete this short interest form.

If the hyperlink is not working, please copy/paste the following on your internet search bar: https://ung.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_em1MZMeT79kdT0x

Thank you,

Christian Bello Escobar
Doctoral Candidate, Leadership
Valdosta State University
cabelloescobar@valdosta.edu
404-625-4137

Appendix F – INTERVIEW GUIDE AND PROTOCOL

Verbal Consent
You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "*The Persistence and Ethnic Identity Development of Latino Fraternity Men at Predominately White Institutions in the South: A Qualitative Approach.*" The research project is being conducted by Christian Bello Escobar, a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how Latino fraternity members perceive their affiliation affects their ethnic identity development and understand how their membership affects their college persistence at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in the South. These interviews will be recorded in order to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. You'll be asked to verify the transcript for accuracy and receive at $15.00 card. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Can you please verbally consent to the following: **"**The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am agreeing to be part of the interview process, therefore, agreeing to participate in this study and I am certifying that I am 18 years of age or older. I have electronically signed the consent to partake in this study and I will receive a copy of this consent form."

Interview
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The interview will last about 90 minutes. I will be taken notes during and after the interview to capture your main ideas. You are more than welcome to review the notes I take for clarity and precision after the interview is over. I will not use your real name; you've created a pseudonym and that's how you will be identified throughout the study. You real name will ONLY appear on the consent form. To confirm, you've selected the following pseudonym: _____. Your fraternity's name will also have a pseudonym.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Interview Questions (Adapted from Guardia, 2006)
Context

1. Tell me about your home background and family. How large is your family? Where were you raised and by whom? Where are you from? What type of community where you raised in? What do your parents do for a living?
2. What was your high school like (i.e., ethnic make-up, public or private, small or large)?
3. What clubs were you involved in and what was your experience like? If not, what stopped you from getting involved? How did you become involved in those organizations?
4. How would you describe your gender? What does it mean to be a (self-identifier) man?

5. How do you define ethnicity? How would you identify yourself in relation to ethnicity (e.g. Latino/Hispanic/Bi or Multiracial/ethnic)? How do you identify ethnically (e.g. Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc.)? Is this self-identifier one a member of your family would use to describe him or herself?
6. Please talk about when you realized your own ethnicity. How old were you? Who or what event introduced you to thinking about it?
7. Please describe your family and friends in the community in which you were raised and discuss any issues related to ethnicity?
8. Who had the most influence on you before attending college? Why did you choose to attend your University?
9. What is/was it like to be a college student at your University? What is/was it like to be a Latino at your University?
10. What types of activities are you involved in on campus or in the community? Do you/did you participate in any other campus organizations?

Reconstruction and Meaning of Experiences

11. Why did you choose to become a member of the Latino fraternity? How long have you been a member of your organization?
12. What were some of the reasons that made you decide to join your organization? How much time do you spend per week involved in activities associated with your organization? Do you/did you feel more or less involved in college as a member of a Latino fraternity?
13. What is your most memorable experience with being a member of your organization?
14. Describe your major network of friends and acquaintances on campus.
15. Has this community of people influenced how you identify yourself in relation to ethnicity? If so, how?
16. What does being Latino (or other self-identifier) mean to you?
17. Tell me about an event at college that caused you to think about your ethnicity.
18. Has the perception of your ethnicity changed since attending college? If so, how has this new perception impacted you? Your family? Your high school friends? Your college friends? Your career goals?
19. Describe specific cultural values or beliefs that are significant to your ethnicity. How has it been for you to maintain your cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors on campus?
20. Being Latino (or other self-identifier), what struggles, and challenges have you encountered on campus?
21. How has being a Latino with your organization and institution contributed to your ethnic identity development? How has your Latino fraternity influence your goal to graduate?
22. Describe any specific aspects of the fraternity that have confirmed or developed your understanding of your ethnicity.
23. How have other members of the fraternity influenced your understanding of your ethnicity?
24. What similarities in ethnicity do the members of the Latino fraternity possess? What differences?

25. Of the activities you are involved in within the fraternity, what has had the greatest impact on your ethnicity? What about your college persistence?
26. Was/Is there a feeling of connectedness and involvement in the general campus life important to your ethnic experience?
27. How did your participation in a Latino fraternity affect your collegiate persistence?
28. What are the major advantages and disadvantages of being a member of your organization?
29. Is there something you wish I would have asked you but didn't - pertaining to your persistence and ethnic identity development as a member of a Latino fraternity?

Table 1

Participant Profile Demographic Table

Pseudonym	Institution	University Enrollment Status	Active Years in LGLO	Self-selected race	Self-selected Ethnicity
Aang	YellowStone University	Alumni	4	Other – if available, if not White	Latino – half Peruvian and half Guatemalan
Anthony	St. Elizabeth University	Alumni	4	Indigenous or Native-American	Latino or Mexican American; depends
Caleb	St. Elizabeth University	Currently Enrolled	0.5	White	Hispanic
Fidel	Maximus University	Currently Enrolled	3	Other	Latino or Mexican American; depends
Gilbert	Reiki University	Currently Enrolled	2	White	Tejano
Jacobo	St. Elizabeth University	Currently Enrolled	3	White	Latino
Jandro	Reiki University	Currently Enrolled	2	White and Black	White-American
Leandro	YellowStone University	Currently Enrolled	2	None – if required, then White	Hispanic
Neftali	Maximus University	Alumni	3	None – if required, then White	Latino – Guatemalan
Rigo	YellowStone University	Currently Enrolled	3	White	Chicano or Mexican American; depends

Note. University names are pseudonyms. Active years in Lambda Epsilon Nu are rounded based on when they shared, they joined their organization. Participant race and ethnicities are self-selected and described.

Table 2

Participant Ferdman and Gallegos Identity Orientation Model Matrix

Pseudonym	Self-selected race	Ferdman & Gallegos Orientation	Quote
Aang	Other – if available, if not White	Latino as other	"I'm still unclear whether Latino means an ethnicity or not…I belong to a community of people that come from a kind of the same general region as myself or my family, and I grew up here in America. I speak English, and in many ways, I'm American, but in a sense, my roots are in the Latino community."
Anthony	Indigenous or Native-American	Latino-integrated	"I looked into like Latin American studies, and in Latin American countries, the whole thing is about mestizos… I'd say, of indigenous and of European descent... One because I don't know, my mother's side is like very of European complex a very White color versus my dad side, which is more darker skin like me now."
Caleb	White	White-identified	"I had some other Hispanic friends who said they were Black, but I told them 'No, we are White. Why would you want to be anything else?' But they didn't want to believe me, but this is something you could look up and tell."
Fidel	Other	Latino-integrated	"My opinion would be that Races are their own entity identified as a group. And ethnicity is your cultural background or what you represent, what you like to represent in which you believe you are."
Gilbert	White	Subgroup identified	"Tejano is a subcategory [of Hispanic] because you have Hispanics who go to different places, and I guess they could come up with their own ways sayings like *Tejas* [Texas in Spanish], we just include the word *Tejas* in[to] the word *Mexicano*."

Jacobo	White	Latino as other	"I am not going to say I am Mexican. I'll probably be like; I'm of Mexican descent because I'm not from Mexico. And my dad is, I am half Mexican because of my dad. So I'll just say, Latino."
Jandro	White	White-identified	"I was working with [someone] who had the same ethnicity [as me] as American White… it made me realize that we are the same and that I was set with my ethnicity like this should be it, I am White."
Leandro	None – if required, then White	Latino-identified	"Ethnically, I am Hispanic male, and then I am of Latino descent, and then I identify as a Mexican immigrant… I feel like I don't even have a race because yeah, I can say I'm Mexican, but that's where I'm from, not my race."
Neftali	None – if required, then White	Subgroup identified	"Nationality/ethnicity is, to me, synonymous. Again, I can totally be wrong, but not per se where you were born, but where is your family predominantly from? So, like for me, ethnicity would be Guatemala. [My] ancestors and my family are from there. So, my ethnicity it is that my nationality… I don't think I'm White, but I also don't think I'm Native American or Black. So, most of the time, it's just White racially. But honestly, I don't think there's that race label that applies to [me]."
Rigo	White	Latino-identified	"I would define ethnicity as your background as if like as where your parents are coming from, your roots… they're [Chicano and Mexican American] interchangeably exchanged, I think people use these two terms in the same way, but one has more history than the other…"

Table 3

Participant Bicultural Orientation Model Matrix

Pseudonym	Self-selected Ethnicity	BOM Orientation	Quote
Aang	Latino - half Peruvian and half Guatemalan	Bicultural	"Half Guatemalan and half Peruvian, but I guess I am also American."
Anthony	Latino - Mexican American - depends	Bicultural	"[Mexican American is] an infusion of that of keeping some of those traditions that you have at home. And also learning different stuff by living in America, going to school, interacting with Americans; Traditional things that we do here in America, being in a band and stuff, in high school. You do get mixed up a lot…I think that's definitely an infusion at both [cultures]."
Caleb	Hispanic	Anglo	"I think maybe I might lose some [Latino] cultural norms that I grew up with, but I think that's mainly it… my parents seem more Americanized now than before. And so, if anything, I'll just be even further Americanized like as I grow up, now I'll start, maybe sticking to like the American norms only."
Fidel	Latino - Mexican American - depends	Bicultural	"I grew up in a pretty typical Mexican household… I have Mexican parents. I am Mexican, but I was fortunate enough to be born here, so I am also American."
Gilbert	Tejano	Bicultural	"I identify as Tejano; I think it would be the right word. Basically, there's a large Caucasian population there, and also the largely Hispanic, and they merge…I think that's a better way of saying whitewash that your Tejano or at least based regionally off like where my family is from. Because the culture there's kind of collided, and a lot of us look brown do brown things but only talk English."
Jacobo	Latino	Bicultural	"I kind of missed a big part of that life. Ethnicity-wise and I tried to surround

			myself [in college]. More of my friends who are Latino, trying to speak Spanish whenever I could; eating the foods or learn about the [Latino] holidays. But just different things. Just trying to surround myself around [what] my adopted family couldn't bring me. My friends are in a fraternity. That's what close that gap for me."
Jandro	White	Anglo	"…I was working with one who had the same ethnicity as [me] American White. And so we're just working, and it just made me realize that you know I was like hey we are the same, and he was just really cool... So that's pretty much it when I realized that I was set with this ethnicity like this is me; White."
Leandro	Hispanic	Bicultural	"I was always a big fan of like pizza, you know, burgers, you know, things like that... so, you know, I started liking things like tacos and more Hispanic stuff. But growing up, I was never big on or tortillas. My mom used to tell me that I was not like tortillas at all and that somehow I just started liking them. But after that, everything led on to something else like it was like a little chain reaction, and I started to like both Mexican and American things."
Neftali	Latino	Latino	"Nationality/ethnicity is, to me, synonymous. Again, I can totally be wrong, but not per se where you were born, but where is your family predominantly from? So, like for me, ethnicity would be Guatemala. I am from Guatemala. [My] ancestors and my family are from there. But I guess yeah, So, my ethnicity is that my nationality. So, that's why they're synonymous."
Rigo	Chicano or Mexican	Bicultural	"I grew up with the American culture and celebrating their holidays and eating their

American - depends	food and all that nice stuff, I would definitely say that I also grew up with the Mexican culture as well… I've kind of started to adapt into or started to grasp on the idea of individualism. But also trying to hang on to the collectivist side too. So, it's kind of like the butt heads with each other."

Table 4

Theme and Subtheme Finding's Matrix

Themes/ Subthemes	Meaning	Quote
1) Familia Influences	Concepts, ideas, experiences, or exposures from the participant's immediate family, close friends, or significant others that supported developing the participant's ethnic and racial identities.	"My mom was doing something, and I didn't like it. And we're at home. And I was like, 'Mom,' I was like, 'don't do that, or I tell everyone at school that you're Mexican.' And she was like, 'What? She's like, 'do you not realize that you're Mexican too?' And I was like 'What?!'"- Gilbert
1a) Language	Speaking Spanish or understanding it and how this ability connected them to their ethnic identity.	"I struggled learning Spanish when I was younger, and I was very embarrassed to even speak it because I couldn't; I didn't understand it. And so, and of course, all of my family spoke it. It's seen as a weird dynamic there. And even nowadays, the Spanish that I have, for the most part is Colombia and I've become fluent" – Aang
1b) Ancestry & Social Identities	Intertwined concepts as most participants used their family descent to depict most of their social identities. Ancestry means the participant's birthplace or their parent or their family's lineage. Social identities exclusively mean racial and ethnic social identities.	"It's an infusion of keeping some of those traditions that you have at home—and also learning different stuff by living in America, going to school interacting with Americans. Maybe doing more traditional things that we do here in America, being in a band and stuff, in high school. Now you do get mixed up a lot... I think that's definitely an infusion of both." - Anthony.
1c) Racial Dilemma	Participant's uncertainty in selecting or identifying to a specific racial identity.	"… If I had the chance, I would definitely say Brown. Most of the time, I've been click[ing] in the White box… I'm seeing that they're starting to introduce like Latino, Latina, Hispanic [as a first question before asking race in questioners] or I've even seen like Native American or Indigenous American…The dilemma here is [that] I don't look like White people, you know what I am saying? I'm a little on the darker side, but

		I definitely have some more sun on me. And that's the dilemma. I just don't think I look White... I pretty much grew up being told that I should click the White box." – Rigo
1d) Acculturation Levels	Acculturation means assimilation and an affinity to the American culture.	"*Tejano* is a kind of [a] merge [between Hispanics and Caucasians]. You get a lot of Hispanics that you would call Whitewashed. And I think that's a better way of saying Whitewash that your Tejano or at least based regionally off, like where my family is from. Because the culture there's kind of collided and a lot of Hispanics, they're just talking English, even though they're Brown." – Gilbert
2) Educational Environments	The educational environment was a prominent factor in the start and overall enhancement of the participant's ethnic identity development	"So, the entire time I was in elementary, middle, and high school. I don't think I prescribe to ethnicity because, again, I felt like it was a race thing. Not in that race and ethnicity were the same thing. But it wasn't until early on in college where I started to learn more about ethnicities and Races…" - Neftali
2a) K-12	Primary, middle, and secondary school experiences that allowed participants to initiate and shaped their understanding of their ethnic and racial identities.	"My seventh-grade teacher asked me about my ethnicity in front of the entire class, and I didn't know what to say. I looked at her confused, and I honestly did not know what she was talking about. She asked me, 'how do you not know?'" - Leandro
2b) Post-secondary	College experiences that allowed participants to enhance or support or help shaped their understanding of their ethnic and racial identities.	"I would definitely think the switch [to Chicano] happened when I entered college. That's when it happened. Because that's where I started learning more about ethnicity and certainly more about race. And I learned more about my culture and things of that nature." Rigo
3) Fraternal Interactions	Complex as they extend through various personal and	"[Lambda Epsilon Nu] is like my life. Like it's been my baby since I've joined, barely when I first came to college… We

	organizational interactions participants had with members of Lambda Epsilon Nu.	just had a conversation about the 'I stand with immigrants' campaign. And I could just relate because, as I said, my dad's undocumented, and he's an immigrant himself. And it's just like, 'oh, I want to do more for the Latino community through that way.' And so, like when I joined, like the fraternity as part of it was about being part of that platform - standing up for the Latino community, the immigrant community. It really is; it's just a thing within the organization. They are really always just inviting. It's an inviting environment where we embrace each other's Latinoness." – Jacobo
3a) Brotherhood	Interactions with fraternity members that created any positive connection with each other while creating a family-like environment, a sense of belonging, provided mentoring and support	"I've never had an older brother, and I've obviously never had a younger sibling either… I felt like I yearned that brotherly love by someone that looks like me, sounds like me [and] talks like me." - Leandro
3a1) Family-like Environment	Experiences that showed a close bond with each other as a result of their fraternal interactions, which enhanced or validated their ethnic identity.	"Joining [Lambda Epsilon Nu] gave me the opportunity to create bonds that really go past even ethnic boundaries. But at the same time, it strengthens that appreciation for those as ethnic roots that we have. Because we all share the same ideals, you'll kind of share a very similar culture; whether we come from the same place or not, we go through the same struggles." - Aang
3b2) Sense of Belonging	Experience various fraternal interactions that promoted brotherhood and developed a sense of belonging on their PWI.	"[The fraternity has] made me feel to be proud of me. To accept it. How can I tell you? To love it. To cherish it and to go with it. Basically, it's to let you know like 'hey, you can't change it but at least learn how to go with it and learn to love it,' and that's pretty much what it is and how it has impacted me." – Jandro

3b3) Mentoring and Support	Mentoring means interactions in which participants received mentorship and support that enhanced or solidified their ethnic identity while supporting their persistence.	"And I definitely would say it [I joined] because, of growing a really strong relationship with one of the members there… I would definitely say one of them was more of a mentor and influencer. And then the other ones [undergraduate members] was more like a family type of connection…" – Rigo "There have been times where I have financially struggled, and I've had bros helping pay for like my car insurance or [they say] I can help you pay for this month's rent or part of it. So, like on average, I've had a lot of support financially. And then when we can talk about mental [support] uff! the amount of support is great." – Jacobo
3b) Academic Expectation and Role Modeling	Academic expectations were academic rules and regulations set forth by the LGLO and personal academic expectations they gave themselves. While academic role modeling was experienced by seeing other fraternity members academically excelled pushed participants for academic excellence, thus supporting their academic persistence.	"The fraternity kept me like in college, like [to] keep me going, so I guess the fraternity has definitely been like that catalyst on me wanting to be part of a platform that's helping the Latino community and graduate." – Aang "I don't think I would be academically wise and as involved as much as I would if I wasn't in the Latino fraternity, to be honest. Like it gives me, like seeing the fact that I see other brothers, the involvement they have within the fraternity like see them progress with their academic excellence in academic and career. It makes me strive to be like, 'okay, maybe that will be me one day. Maybe I can be that way, or maybe I will be that way.'" – Fidel