Stressors And Coping Of Mexican American College Undergraduates

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Empirical literature indicates that current mental health practices with Mexican American college students are lacking. Mexican American undergraduates have unique challenges that need to be addressed by counselors within the university context and in community settings. This study addressed the dearth of empirical literature on stressors and coping strategies by exploring the experiences of Mexican American students at a predominately White institution (PWI) in the Midwest region of the United States. Through grounded theory, a theory was generated from multiple in-depth interviews using a comparative analysis process to enhance understanding of how Mexican American college undergraduates at PWIs cope with stressors. There was a total of 11 participants, 5 females and 6 males. This study sought to answer these research questions: (1) How do Mexican American college students cope with stressors? (a) What influences their coping processes? (b) What values are connected to their coping? (c) What type of stressors do they experience? (d) How do their coping processes vary? (e) What are the most common coping strategies?

The themes of this study were connected, forming a theory grounded by the data. The participants’ secure ethnic identity made it easier to seek social support within their Latinx community and adapt to their environment. Their secure ethnic identity was fluid, depending on their context and Mexican-leaning. Their Mexican American values of familismo, personalism
collectivism, and achievement may have served as protective factors against stress. Stress was described as worry, coping was described as solutions and cognitive coping, and discrimination was defined as different treatment. The most challenging stressor reported was family-related. The discrimination stressors included microaggressions to systemic racism. Discrimination elicited short-term stress and emotions. Participants coped by cognitively coping. Then, the participants had a behavioral response by self-advocating, avoiding the perpetrator, and seeking social support. The most common pre-pandemic stressor was being in a PWI due to seeking a sense of belonging on campus. Almost all participants were involved in a Latinx-based organization, so they eventually found a community at their PWI. The most common stressors were adapting to change and grief and loss during the pandemic. The participants experienced long-term stress and feelings of depression, burnout, and fear. Then, the participants increased distraction coping (short-term) and decreased their usual coping strategies. Sometime after the pandemic started, the participants could expand their coping strategies and use their usual coping strategies. Overall, the most common coping strategies were cognitive coping and seeking social support.

This research provides the counselor education field and those they serve with enhanced training to prepare effective, culturally competent counselors and counselor educators. Implications and future research recommendations are offered.
STRESSORS AND COPING OF MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the literature on stressors and coping of Mexican American college undergraduates. The demographics of the population are outlined to show the importance of this group. Since there is more research on the general Latinx population, this chapter describes the conditions of how Latinx college students operate at predominately White institutions (PWIs) and how they cope. Then, this chapter highlights the stress and coping among Mexican American college undergraduates, who are the focus of this study. This chapter provides the problem statement, discussion of significance, purpose statement, and research questions. Lastly, this chapter defines common terms used in this dissertation.

Background

Mexican Americans are the fastest-growing Latinx subgroup in the United States, accounting for 62% and 11% of the United States’ (U.S.) overall population (US Census Bureau, 2019). However, only 11% of Latinx’s attain a bachelor's degree which is the lowest percentage of any racial or ethnic group in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2010; Ed Trust, 2016). Those entering a 4-year institution, 32% of Latinx drop out, versus 23% of White students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Only 52% of Latinx students graduate within 6 years of enrollment (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Latinx students need to be supported to improve their college outcomes.

Latinx College Undergraduates

Latinx college students reported increased stress levels with academics, finances, and personal matters more than White students (Contrada et al., 2001; French & Chavez, 2010; Quintan et al., 1991). Contrada et al. (2001) found that in addition to typical college students’
stressors like social, academic, and financial issues, Latinx experience stress from belonging to a minority group in the United States. Minority stress includes discrimination, acculturation or assimilation, and perceived academic disadvantages, which grant higher psychological distress (French & Chavez, 2010), academic adversity, and low retention rates (Rodriguez et al., 2000). Latinx experience acculturative stress, discrimination, and at times hostile campus climate (Nuñez, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2003). Latinx are vulnerable to high stress, and their coping attempts should be explored. This study explores the stressors and coping of Mexican American college students at a Midwestern PWI.

**Latinx at Predominately White Institutions**

Latinx college students at PWIs experience higher levels of depressive symptoms, social isolation, and dissatisfaction than White students (Ancis et al., 2000). Additionally, Latinx college students at PWIs face greater stigma, less overall college support, and less social support than White students (Keels, 2013). Microaggressions are typical for Latinx students at PWIs (Harwood et al., 2012; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Sue et al., 2007). For example, microaggressions that insinuate that they do not belong in the United States and microaggressions related to their race or immigration status. These experiences are significant because research indicates that college students who experience racism are more likely to experience poor mental health outcomes and do poorly in their academics (Brown & Lee, 2005). Faculty play a significant role in students’ experiences. Latinx had a higher degree completion rate at institutions with a higher percentage of faculty of color (Zerquera & Gross, 2017). Faculty of color play a significant role in college success, such as mentorship. Ultimately, Latinx find various ways to cope with adversities in college, and this study uncovered specific strategies used by Mexican American college students.
Coping

Previous research has shown how engagement in political activism has served as a buffer against the distressing effects of racial and ethnic discrimination for Latinx college students (Hope et al., 2017). The implication from this study is that activism may serve as a coping strategy. However, not all students may be interested in activism. Ethnic identity formation is associated with wellbeing and activism among Latinx college students (Cronin et al., 2012; French & Chavez, 2010). Hence, an assessment of ethnic identity will help guide the recommendation of activism as coping.

Coping strategies in college also include differing types of social support. Hernandez and Villodas (2019) found that seeking social support was significantly correlated to Latinx students' academic persistence attitudes. A study with Latina college students found that family involvement and connections with peers, family, and college personnel served as educational coping (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012).

The institutional environment plays a significant role in the wellbeing of students. The level of congruity between cultural values and the institution may make the difference of psychological wellbeing. Latina college students had the strongest predictors of psychological wellbeing from cultural congruity between her and the institution and a planned, positive action (Gloria et al., 2016). However, it could be more difficult for Latinx at PWIs to find cultural congruity because of the differing of values. Cultural incongruity may lead to acculturative stress.
Stress and Mexican American College Undergraduates

Acculturative Stress

Acculturation stress is regularly experienced among Mexican American college students. Findings from recent research indicated that when acculturative stress increased, so did anxiety and depressive symptoms among Mexican American college students (Crockett et al., 2007). However, stress was not always associated with adverse outcomes (Mcginley et al., 2009). Stress may lead to enhanced sympathy and helping behaviors (Mcginley et al., 2009). These findings are consistent with theories that state that to cope, we help others to feel like we have a purpose and are worthy (e.g., Midlarsky, 1991).

Along with university settings, work environments may also play a role in acculturative stress. For example, migrant farm work students experienced more acculturative stress than non-migrants, and men report higher levels than women (Mejia & McCarthy, 2010). Migrant students reported higher levels of anxiety and depression than non-migrants, and the sample report higher levels of depression than the general population (55% versus 20%). When students are around other Mexican Americans, perceived intragroup marginalization and absence of cultural fit between the participant and their college institution influenced depressive symptomology from acculturative stress (Cano et al., 2014). In relation to ethnicity, women’s ethnic affirmation and ethnic identity achievement explained the correlation between acculturative stress and depression symptoms at lower levels of acculturative stress (Iturbide et al., 2009). Ethnic identity was a protective factor when acculturation stress levels were low (Iturbide et al., 2009). This section detailed literature college students and their experiences with acculturative stress. Along with acculturation, lived experiences of discrimination are important to understand. The following section highlights recent research on discrimination of Mexican American college students.
Discrimination

Mexican American college students experience discrimination on college campuses. The effects of discrimination have been reported among Mexican Americans undergraduates. This section reviews the effects of discrimination. One study found that as perceived racial discrimination increased, subjective well-being decreased (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). When experiencing microaggressions, there was a significant positive correlation between racial microaggressions and psychological, behavioral, and physiological stress responses (Franklin, 2019). Another study found that when siblings were involved and when there was an increase in sibling support, there was a positive correlation of discrimination and ethnic identity resolution and self-esteem (Jones et al., 2018). With lower sibling support, discrimination is negatively correlated with ethnic identity affirmation and positively correlated with self-esteem. With lower sibling support, there was a negative correlation between discrimination and ethnic identity affirmation and depressive symptoms (Jones et al., 2018). With discrimination being a part of Mexican American college students lives, attempts of coping occur. The counseling-related literature on Mexican American undergraduates are scarce. This study will luminate coping and stressors that these students experience at a Midwestern PWI. Counselors and counselors-in-training can use this study’s findings to inform counseling interventions for this population.

Coping and Mexican American College Undergraduates

Values

Mexican cultural values can act as buffers against stress. Values are also the basis of what strategies are used for coping. Villarreal et al. (2017) assessed the role of Mexican cultural values against depression. Men that scored higher in familismo (familism) and fatalismo (fate) did not show depressive symptoms. Germán et al. (2009) also found that familismo is a
protective factor among Mexican American adolescents. Mexican American traditional values such as familismo, respeto (respect), religiosidad (religiosity), and gender roles, contribute to resiliency, with familismo contributing the most (Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013). Mexican cultural values of family support and religion were significant predictors of thriving. Further, the mainstream U.S. value of competition negatively predicted thriving. In addition, the value of material success (another U.S. mainstream value) positively predicted thriving (Morgan Consoli et al., 2016). Lastly, caballerismo, which is a prosocial aspect of Latino masculinity, predicted subjective well-being (overall life satisfaction and social support satisfaction) (Estrada & Arciniega, 2015) and religiosity bolstered this effect. Values are important factors to study among this population due to their relation with coping. This section reviewed cultural values and their associations with positive life outcomes. The current study explored the values that may be linked to the process of stress and coping. The next section highlights the limited research on coping strategies used by Mexican American college students.

**Strategies**

There are several different coping strategies used by Mexican American college students. These strategies are congruent with Mexican cultural values. Some of those strategies include hope, mindfulness, and meaning of life which positively correlated with life satisfaction (Vela, et al., 2016). Grit, optimism, and gratitude are also predictors of life satisfaction (Vela et al., 2017). Enculturation was positively correlated with persistence and life satisfaction (Ojeda et al., 2014). Students that enrolled in Chicano studies class(es) stated that it helped them cope with the feeling of isolation, build meaningful relationships with their professors, and practice perspective-taking (Nuñez, 2011). In relation to academic coping, Mexican American students may benefit from becoming familiar with individualistic behaviors (e.g., goal-setting) to excel in
Lastly, engaged coping correlated with mental health resiliency (Piña-Watson et al., 2019). The studies have provided preliminary findings on coping and life satisfaction among Mexican American undergraduate college students. The current study adds to this existing literature by uncovering the process of stress and coping among this group attending a Midwestern PWI.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study explored the stressors and coping of undergraduate Mexican American male students at a PWI (Perales, 2019). This study found that stressors included finances, discrimination, family, identity, being a first-generation college student, primary language, and predominately White spaces as stress sources (Perales, 2019). Further, the stress the participants felt ignited motivation to move forward in their endeavors. That motivation was based and sustained by their family, the Latinx community, and self. This motivation creates persistence, which leads to coping (e.g., engaging in social activities and cognitive coping). To sustain persistence, consistent involvement with the Latinx community happened, which finally lead to improved mental well-being. This involvement may be receiving services, providing services, or both (e.g., mentorship, activism, advocacy, volunteer work). This pilot study's implications can indicate intervention recommendations to engage within the Latinx community as a coping strategy. This pilot study demonstrated the need to investigate further stress and coping strategies for Mexican American college undergraduate students, which will inform counseling interventions. Other studies (e.g., Kobus & Reyes, 2000; Santiago et al., 2016) were conducted in locations where there were large percentages of adolescent Mexican Americans. This study addresses the missing component of the previous research by considering the context of attending a PWI in the Midwest region of the United States.
Problem Statement

Counseling-related research on Mexican American college undergraduates is limited. This limitation risks counselors, the profession of counseling, and Mexican American undergraduate clients. This population is at risk of dropping out of college, with 32% dropping out and only 52% of Latinx students graduate within 6 years of enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; Snyder & Dillow, 2015). This population is already at risk for suicide and mental illness; Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among all Latinx, between 10-34 years of age (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017); Eighteen percent of adult Latinx have experienced mental illness. College undergraduates, as young adults, can experience several stressors that potentially affect their studies. Only 11% of Latinx’s attain a bachelor's degree which is the lowest percentage of any racial or ethnic group in the United States (Ed Trust, 2016; US Census Bureau, 2010). Their coping and stressors should be explored.

This study offers research on a specific population that benefits serval entities. The related current research focuses mainly on youth at locations where there is a high population of Latinx, use instruments not normed for Latinx, and do not explore values of Mexican Americans. This study’s location is at PWIs and the sample is of adult age, which have a different impact on participants’ experiences with stress and coping. Lastly, there are scarce qualitative studies such as mine, which adds depth to the voices of Mexican American college undergraduate students at a PWI.

Significance

The gap in the literature on stressors and coping of undergraduate Mexican American college students results in counseling professionals without knowledge needed to practice competently and ethically. Counseling interventions for Mexican American undergraduates at
PWIs are limited. Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requires one multicultural class in which all diversity topics have to be summarized and discussed in one semester. If the students are not prepared, they risk harming clients. Counselors have a duty to uphold the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence as part of their ethical guidelines (American Counseling Association, 2014). This means that a counselor must do no harm and provide best practice for the well-being of the client. Being well informed about best practices with this population will promote ethically competent practice. This study also improves cultural awareness which is necessary for multiculturally competent counselors (ACA, 2014). Counselors and counselors-in-training have a responsibility to be able to work competently with diverse clientele. This responsibility is why counselor educators and supervisors have to be culturally competent and knowlegable about multicultural issues to be able to teach to their students and supervisees. In conclusion, this study will provide benefits to Mexican American college students at PWIs by helping them understand their own coping and stress and prevent the harm of not knowing best practices with this population among counselors, counselors-in-trainning, faculty/supervisors, and student organizations.

In addition to the counseling field, this study will benefit Latinx college organizations (i.e., College Assistance Migrant Program, multicultural greek life) to assist in identifying stressors/risk factors and help with enhancing coping strategies. Programs would benefit from this research because the well-being of the student is crucial in the college success. This study may help future students of similar background. Importantly, Mexican American college students will also be able to understand their own coping mechanisms and become aware of what might work best for them. Overall, this study will benefit the counseling field, college organizations, and Mexican American college students.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to describe and interpret the process of stress and coping of college undergraduate Mexican American students at a Midwestern PWI in order to generate a theory. This study will build off existing theories while generating a new theory related to coping and stress of Mexican American college students attending PWIs.

Research Question

These research questions were refined during the early stages of the research process.

1. How do Mexican American college students cope with stressors?
   a. What influences their coping processes?
   b. How do their coping processes vary?
   c. What values are connected to their coping?
   d. What type of stressors do they experience?

Definition of Terms

Acculturation: The extent to which an individual or group has combined the customs, practices, and social norms of the majority group, and the level of to which a person feels a sense of belonging to this group (Gonzales, et al., 2009).

Acculturative stress: The stress experienced during the acculturation process (Berry, 1998).

Coping: To deal with or attempt to overcome hardships (Miriam-Webster, n.d).

Discrimination: Unjust treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, or age (among other categories) (Oxford Languages, n.d).

Enculturation: The process of original/indigenous norms being relearned or learned and maintained (Alamilla, et al., 2010).
Latinx: A gender-neutral term to describe a person of Latin American origin or descent (Oxford Languages, n.d).

Mexican American: An American with origins or descent from Mexico (Lopez et al., 2020).

Stress: Mental, physical, or emotional factors that cause mental tension (Shiel, 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the stressors and coping of Mexican American college undergraduates. The demographics of the population were outlined to show the importance of this group. Since there is more research on the general Latinx population, this chapter described the conditions of which Latinx college students operate in among PWIs and how they cope. Then, this chapter introduced literature of stress and coping among Mexican American college undergraduates. This chapter provided the problem statement, significance, purpose statement, and research questions to the current study. Lastly, this chapter defined common terms used in this dissertation.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The largest Latinx population in the United States consists of Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans with Mexicans being the largest. The US Census Bureau reports 36,986,661 identifying of Mexican origin (2018). As the focus of this study is on Mexican American college students, this chapter begins with a brief history of the Latinx people including the multiple pathways that Mexicans came to the United States (U.S.). This is followed by a discussion of stress experienced utilized Latinx in general and Mexican Americans more specifically along with the coping strategies that they employ. Empirical research related to youth and young adults is detailed along with specific theories related to stress and coping. This chapter concludes with a discussion of evidence-based counseling interventions for Latinx.

In 1492, colonization from the Spaniards began in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hispaniola, followed by Mexico. The Native people were killed by European disease, their labor demands, and genocide. Because of the millions of Natives that died, Europeans replaced the Natives with enslaved Africans (Gutierrez & Almaguer, 2016). In 1521, the Spanish learned about the wealthy Aztec Empire in Mexico. The Spanish conquered the Aztec Empire and the rest of the Native people by enslaving them. The Spanish brought enslaved Africans when there were no longer enough Native people to sustain the labor required in Mexico (Hamnett, 1999). The Spanish forced the Native people to practice Catholicism instead of their tribes’ cultural practices. The Spanish raped the enslaved African and Native women; therefore, their offspring were of mixed descent. Because of this, the Spanish created a class system based on phenotype and skin color (Hamnett, 1999). The Whiter one appeared, the more privileges they would hold. This class system reflects racism and colorism today.
In the 20th century, many Mexicans entered the United States by choice, however just as many were already living on what is now known as United States land by territorial incorporation due to America’s 19th-century imperial expansion wars (Gutierrez & Almaguer, 2016). Immigration to the United States from Mexico was motivated by violence from the Mexican Revolution and available work opportunities in the United States. The transcontinental railroad needed cheap labor, and American enterprises recruited Mexican immigrants. From the First and Second World Wars, Mexican immigrants were in need to work the labor needs of agriculture, mining, and construction of the United States. The Bracero Program was created in 1942 to improve labor demands during the Second World War (Gutierrez & Almaguer, 2016). This program legally brought five million Mexican workers. However, they also recruited just as many workers illegally so that employers could avoid tax paperwork and other administrative requirements to contract them formally. U.S. employers have continued to hire undocumented migrant workers for cheap labor to this day.

American foreign policy in Latin America is accountable for inciting civil wars and regime changes in the Caribbean and Central America. These civil wars led to Mexicans and other Latinx seeking refuge in neighboring countries, including the United States. In the 1980-1990s, the United States did not want to recognize their policies that have forced refuge in the United States (Gutierrez & Almaguer, 2016). The United States have denied Latinx to enter as political refugees, forcing Latinx to enter undocumented. Latinx continue to have a long and challenging process of becoming citizens of the United States. The United States does not want to face the ramifications of their foreign policy on the lives of Latinx.
Stress and Coping Among Latinx

This section introduces the stress and coping among the Latinx population. While there is some research on Latinx in general, there is a dearth of literature on the subgroup of Mexican Americans. Since this study seeks to understand the experiences of Mexican American college students, this section focuses on empirical studies on youth and young adults. A search was conducted for peer reviewed articles using the following search terms: Mexican American, College, Coping, Stress, and Counseling. Studies were reviewed for relevance and selected to be included based on their contributions to the literature and the counseling field. Each study is reviewed in the following sections, including their contribution to the literature and the need for future research to aide our understanding of Latinx experiences of stress and coping, particularly Mexican American college students.

Youth

This section reviews two studies that explored stress and coping of youth, which included both middle and high school aged students. The first study was mixed-method in design and investigated 58 Latinx middle school students from a midwestern city (Santiago et al., 2016). The authors sought to understand connections between cultural factors and coping and found that familism may produce adaptive reactions to stress. Familism was defined by the authors as a strong connection to family. Students that reported high levels of family ethnic socialization relied more on maladaptive coping at high levels of stress. Family ethnic socialization is the process in which the parents expose their children to their culture’s values and behaviors. The authors explained that adolescents may be associating their stress to their culture or they may be engaging in maladaptive coping due to their low-income status (Santiago et al., 2016). A strength of this study was that most of their instruments are normed with ethnic minorities, which is an
advantage in comparison to other Latinx studies. This study highlights the importance of cultural factors in coping. Several studies were done with youth, the gap in the literature remains for college students.

In the second study identified in the review of the literature, Crean (2004) sought to understand the role that relationships have in risk and protective factors. Crean (2004) found that 304 urban Southwestern Latinx middle school students’ acute stressors and social conflict positively correlated to psychological symptomology and negatively correlated to school competency. As short-term stress and conflict within peers increased so did psychological distress and they did poorer in school. Social support and adaptive coping techniques negatively correlated with psychological symptomatology. Social support positively correlated with school competency. Unfortunately, the instruments in this study were not normed within the Latinx population. In addition, Crean (2004) stated the limitation of the data not being a perfect fit for the model and the use of cross-section data which hardly gives evidence for causal relationships.

**College Students**

Whereas a handful of studies have focused on stress and coping in Latinx youth, others have investigated young adult and college populations. A study of 128 Latinx students, from a large midwestern university, found that the university environment plays a role in academic persistence among students with an Anglo orientation only (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015). Also, generation level in the United States played a role among those with a Mexican orientation and a stronger ethnic identity (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015). Aguinaga & Gloria (2015) recommended that Latinx student services should focus on meaning and aligning to values for first-generation students (born in the United States) and cultural fit for second-generation students.
A study of 129 Latinx students found that those teased for not being Latinx enough (by their family/friends) reported a decrease in confidence in their choice to attend and graduate from their college. However, those that reported better perceptions of their college environment reported an increase in confidence in their choice to continue their education. (Heredia, et al., 2018). The authors found that Latinx students that reported traditional Latinx behaviors, reported a decrease in teasing and reported an increase in confidence in their choice to attend and graduate from their college. The authors suggested that Latinx students benefit from practicing traditional Latinx behaviors in college persistence (Heredia, et al., 2018).

This section introduced the stress and coping among Latinx selected literature. In this area of research, there is more youth than college-age literature. A major drawback of these studies is that they utilize instruments that are not normed on non-Latinx populations. In addition, the researchers sampled in areas where there is a high percentage of Latinx people. Future research would benefit from examining Latinx youth and young adults in settings where they are not the majority. The current study bridges the gap in the empirical literature and uncovers the perspective of Mexican American college students in Predominately White Institutions (PWI).

**Stress and Coping Among Mexican Americans**

This section reviews the research of stress and coping among Mexican Americans, which is an area with extremely limited research. The focus of most empirical studies is on youth. Therefore, the counseling field is in need of additional research with an adult population. This study seeks to bridge that gap by exploring the process of stress and coping among Mexican American college undergraduates. This section of the literature review will detail studies
completed with Mexican American youth and college students. Furthermore, it will discuss values, acculturation, and discrimination, which has also been the focus of recent research.

**Coping Among Youth**

Much of the stress and coping research is on youth, yet little is known about college-age young adults. It is unclear what the similarities and differences are among these two developmental stages. This section examines the existing literature on youth and the results of each study is detailed.

Kobus and Reyes’ (2000) study aimed to find a description of stress and coping of young urban Mexican Americans. The study consisted of a sample of 158 youth that were interviewed and surveyed. The authors found that urban Mexican American adolescents could manage stress mostly by using action-oriented coping strategies, then family support, self-assurance, and behavioral avoidance. More specifically, when dealing with school and personal-related stressors, they tend to use action-oriented problem-solving strategies. This type of coping was most helpful when dealing with school events. It is important to note that the participants attended a predominately Latinx high school in Chicago. Few studies have examined Mexican American students, particularly college age, in prominently White settings.

Another study of 189 Southwestern Mexican origin adolescents found that support-seeking and distractions (coping) increased internalized symptoms for boys at high levels of family stress. For girls, active coping for internalized symptom was found to buffer stress (Liu et al., 2011). The students from this study were in a predominantly Latinx middle school. A drawback to this research was that none of the instruments used in this study were normed on the Latinx population.
This stress and coping study focused on 472 Mexican American adolescents from Texas (Guinn, & Vincent, 2002). Researchers found that overall, participants experienced high-stress levels, low acculturation, and self-esteem scores that averaged with no gender differences. Self-esteem was the highest predictor of effective coping strategies. Mexican Americans adolescents with high self-esteem were less likely to have their sense of self-hurt when experiencing stressors, hence allowing for effective coping (Guinn, & Vincent, 2002). Unfortunately, most of the instruments in this study are not normed within the Latinx population. The next section will include all of the coping literature that was found among Mexican American college students.

**Coping Among College Students**

This section details 10 studies that explored coping of college students, who are the target population of the current study. A study of 130 Mexican American college students, from a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in the Southern United States, found that hope, mindfulness, and meaning of life correlated positively with life satisfaction (Vela, et al., 2016). In addition, mindfulness and search for the meaning of life correlated with depressive symptoms; High levels of mindfulness decreased depressive symptoms, while high levels of search for the meaning of life correlated to increased depressive symptoms (Vela, et al., 2016). These results inform the counseling interventions for Mexican American college students and informs the current study’s interview questions.

A mixed-method study of 124 central California students found that Mexican American traditional values such as familismo (familism), respeto (respect), religiosidad (religiosity), and gender roles, contribute to resiliency, with familismo contributing the most (Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013). The qualitative themes that appeared were familismo, religiosidad, respeto,
perseverance, and ethnic identity. The authors stated that Mexican American values play a significant role in building resilience.

A qualitative study of 22 Latinx sophomore students (mostly Mexican-decent) found that those who took a Chicano studies class(es) stated that it helped them cope with the feeling of isolation, build meaningful relationships with their professors, and practice perspective-taking (Nuñez, 2011). These processes increased their ability to cope and maneuver with specific issues, such as handling racism and building a community on campus. Nuñez (2011) stated that this research could inform practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to enhance their campus experience. What is yet still unknown is if there is anything else that can replicate similar effects to enrolling in a Chicano studies course if the university does not offer these courses.

A study of 457 students from a HSI used Lent’s social cognitive model of wellbeing (Lent, 2004) to investigate academic and life satisfaction (Ojeda et al., 2011). The sample consisted of “20% first-year students, 39% sophomores, 21% juniors, and 20% seniors” (p. 63). The data fit Lent’s model;

We found positive relations from positive affect to enculturation, acculturation, college self-efficacy, academic satisfaction, and life satisfaction; from enculturation to college self-efficacy; from acculturation to college self-efficacy and college outcome expectations; from college self-efficacy to college outcome expectations, academic goal progress, academic satisfaction, and life satisfaction; from college outcome expectations to academic satisfaction; from academic goal progress to academic and life satisfaction; and from academic satisfaction to life satisfaction. (Ojeda et al., 2011, p. 61)

This study’s implications include that Mexican American students should become familiar with individualistic behaviors (e.g., goal-setting) to excel in college (Ojeda et al., 2011).
A study of 170 Southern Mexican American women from a HSI found that parent conflict influenced the relationship between marianismo and depressive symptoms (Piña-Watson et al., 2013). Marianismo is the traditional female role of a Mexican woman. The authors stated that the implications of this research may serve mental health professionals serving this population. Piña-Watson et al. (2013) suggested that counselors have the client evaluate any discrepancies in values between herself and her parents.

A study of 268 Southwestern (near United States and Mexico border) Mexican-descent and non-Latinx White undergraduate students found that an increase of bicultural stress is correlated with an increase of engaged and disengaged coping and reactions to stress (RTS) (Piña-Watson et al., 2019). Engaged coping correlated with mental health resiliency. In addition, disengaged coping and RTS influenced vulnerability. Disengaged and secondary engaged coping explained depressive symptoms and self-esteem (Piña-Watson et al., 2019). Disengaged coping and RTS affected the relationship between bicultural stress and depressive symptoms (Piña-Watson et al., 2019). Piña-Watson et al. (2019) combined the two different groups to produce the results.

A narrative qualitative study of 12 students from a Southwestern PWI found that some students have close relationships with their family, and they were an essential part of their coping processes (Rodriguez et al., 2019). Whereas others did not seek family members to help them cope. Some chose their “families” at college (i.e., peers and mentors) to help them deal with stress (Rodriguez et al., 2019). Most of the time, the students choose a variety of strategies to cope with academics and social situations (Rodriguez et al., 2019). The authors stated that further research should consider other locations that differed from theirs, learn the different roles
of each family member, how their identities contribute to their choices and learn more about why some students decide not to include their families.

Ojeda et al. (2014) explored college persistence and life satisfaction among 515 Mexican American University of Texas-Pan American college undergraduates. The authors found that enculturation was positively correlated to persistence and life satisfaction. Acculturation and White marginalization were positively correlated to persistence (Ojeda et al., 2014). Further, “Mexican American marginalization negatively predicted persistence and life satisfaction” (Ojeda et al., 2014, p. 3). Marginalization in this study signifies adopting of the culture’s behaviors, but not adopting the values or beliefs of that culture. Since this study was done at majority Hispanic institution, it would be important to explore these factors at a PWI.

A study of 126 Mexican American students from an undergraduate HSI found that grit, optimism, and gratitude are predictors of life satisfaction (Vela et al., 2017). Unfortunately, none of the instruments used were normed on the Latinx population. The instruments used may not apply to this population. The studies mentioned in this section have researched stress, coping, and life satisfaction among Mexican American undergraduate college students. Again, a limited amount of research exists within this population and topic. The current study focuses on the process of stress and coping among students at a Midwestern PWI. In addition, learning about cultural factors is essential when investigating coping. Cultural values have been linked to positive coping outcomes.

**Values and Coping**

Mexican American cultural values are an essential part of Mexican American college students' identity and play a role in coping (Germán et al., 2009). According to empirical studies, compliance with cultural values is connected to positive life events in adolescents’ academic
performance (Gonzales et al., 2008), prosocial behaviors (Knight et al., 1993), and help-seeking tendencies (Ramos-Sanchez, 2009). This section examines literature on the intersection of values and coping, which is important because many cultural values have been associated to positive life outcomes.

Many Latinx students develop a need to conform to mainstream White U.S. culture, while also keeping connections with their cultural roots. This may establish pressures to live different ethnic standards at home versus school and other environments (Padilla, 2006). For example, the students may hide their cultural identity at school to try to assimilate into their school culture.

Villarreal et al. (2017) assessed the role of Mexican cultural values against depression. Men that scored higher in familismo and fatalismo did not show depressive symptoms. While familismo refers to a strong connection to family, fatalismo is the belief in fate. Men who do not identify with Latinx values may be more vulnerable to depression and drug use. Germán and colleagues (2009) also found that familismo is a protective factor among Mexican American adolescents. The authors suggest that familismo values should be supported, especially in adolescents with behavioral or conduct problems.

Morgan Consoli et al. (2016) explored values and thriving among 124 Mexican/Mexican American college students (most were undergraduates) in the West coast. The authors found that Mexican cultural values of family support and religion were significant predictors of thriving. Further, mainstream U.S. values of competition negatively predicted thriving and the value of material success positively predicted thriving (Morgan Consoli et al., 2016). The authors suggested a qualitative study to explain the value of material success since in past research it has
been associated to negatively predict thriving. The current study will explore the meanings behind students’ values.

Caballerismo is a prosocial aspect of Latino masculinity. Caballerismo predicted subjective well-being (overall life satisfaction and social support satisfaction) among 128 Mexican American men (Estrada & Arciniega, 2015); Religiosity bolstered this effect. This section reviewed cultural values and their associations to positive life outcomes. The current study explores the values that may be linked to the process of stress and coping. One cultural factor that Mexican Americans may negatively impact life outcomes is acculturation. Acculturative stress is another factor that is essential to investigate its impact.

**Acculturative Stress**

Along with understanding how values help coping, it is important to examine acculturative stress and along with coping strategies among Mexican Americans. One example of such research is a study with 3,084 Mexican American adults that found that as acculturation increased, psychological distress increased significantly. However, psychological distress decreased as they got older (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). Kaplan and Marks (1990) suggested that alienation and discrimination may influence the psychological distress of highly acculturated young Mexican American adults. Their findings suggest that young Mexican American adults may strip away cultural and traditional resources and support them to advance economically and socially in the dominant society. However, in older adult life, they may connect back with their native culture, which improves their mental health (Kaplan & Marks, 1990). More recently, Bekteshi et al. (2015) affirmed that as acculturation increased so did psychological distress among 1,197 Mexican American women living in California.
College Students

A study with 148 Mexican American college students, Crockett et al. (2007) found that as acculturative stress increased, so did anxiety and depressive symptoms. Crockett et al. (2007) defines active coping as cognitive coping or behavioral coping and avoidant coping as ignoring the problem or repressing it. Active coping was correlated with reduced depressive symptoms, while avoidant coping was associated with increased depression and anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, parental support and active coping were protective factors against high acculturative stress on depressive and anxiety symptoms. Also, social support was a variable that affected the relationship between acculturative stress and anxiety level. Crockett et al. (2007) recruited undergraduate students in Texas and California. This research had several limitations: the instruments used in this study are not normed with the Latinx populations, the small sample is not representative to all Mexican Americans since the sample was from Texas and California, and the data was all self-report. Future research is needed to use samples in PWIs and regions that are not highly populated with Latinx.

Mcginley et al. (2009) found that stress was not always associated with adverse outcomes. They found that stress may lead to enhanced sympathy and helping behaviors. This study consisted of 148 Mexican American college students from Texas and California. The authors found that the relationship between acculturative stress and prosocial inclinations was positively correlated but differed by helping behaviors and gender. High levels of acculturative stress were associated with higher levels of emotion, immediate, compliant, and anonymous prosocial inclinations. Sympathy determined the relationship between acculturative stress and prosocial inclinations for men only. These findings are consistent with theories that state that to cope, we help others feel like we have a purpose and are worthy (e.g., Midlarsky, 1991). One
critique of this study is that the instruments used were not normed on Mexican Americans. Future research should use samples in PWIs and regions that are not highly populated with Latinx.

A study of 168 Southwestern students found that migrant farm work students experience more acculturative stress than non-migrants, and men report higher levels than women (Mejia & McCarthy, 2010). Migrant students reported higher levels of anxiety and depression than non-migrants, and the sample report higher levels of depression than the general population (55% versus 20%). The authors suggest integrating cultural factors in stress research with Mexican heritage college students to inform clinical treatment.

A study of 155 Mexican American students found that perceived intragroup marginalization and absence of cultural fit between the participant and their college institution had an influence on depressive symptomology from acculturative stress (Cano et al., 2014). The authors stated that stress stems from their host and heritage culture by attempting to balance both cultures.

A study of 148 Californian and Texan students found that the women’s ethnic affirmation or belonging and ethnic identity achievement explained the correlation between acculturative stress and depression symptoms at lower levels of acculturative stress (Iturbide et al., 2009). Men with lower levels of other group orientation (engagement with other ethnicities), levels of self-esteem were alike, notwithstanding the level of acculturative stress (Iturbide et al., 2009). Ethnic identity is a protective factor when acculturation stress levels are low (Iturbide et al., 2009). This section reviewed the literature among college students and their experience with acculturative stress. Along with acculturation, lived experiences of discrimination are important to understand.
The following section details recent research on discrimination of Mexican Americans across the lifespan.

**Discrimination**

*Adolescents*

A study of 749 Southwestern Mexican American adolescents found that perceived discrimination was negatively correlated to prosocial tendencies (compliance, emotional, and dire needs) and positively correlated to public prosocial helping behavior. These findings were mediated by their Mexican American values, including supportive and emotional familism, obligation familism, referent familism, respect, and religiosity (Brittian, O’Donnell et al., 2013).

Another study with 73 Southwestern Mexican descent adolescents, found that action-oriented and denial coping was positively correlated with discrimination stress (Edwards & Romero, 2008). At high levels of discrimination stress, with youth who used more action-oriented coping strategies, reported higher self-esteem. Edwards and Romero (2008) suggested that these findings indicate that Mexican descent youth use coping strategies that protect self-esteem damage from discrimination stress they endure. A study with 269 Mexican-origin adolescents, found that ethnic identity, social support, and anger withholding, correspondingly, significantly reduced the relationship between discrimination and adjustment problems. In contrast, visible anger expression increased this relationship (Park et al., 2018). Unfortunately, several of their instruments were not normed on Mexican descent youth.

A study with 150 Southwestern U.S. Latino youth-parent dyads who were first-generation or second-generation, found that youth had higher levels of familismo and their parents had higher levels of perceived discrimination (Ayón et al., 2010). Only the youth had internalized the perceived discrimination and reported distressful psychological symptoms. As
familismo decreased, the parents’ depressive symptoms increased. Even though familismo improve mental health, it did not serve as a protective factor against discrimination’s psychological effects. Ayón et al. (2010) suggested that the parents may have learned to accept discrimination as part of living in the United States.

A study with 189 Southwestern Mexican-origin adolescents, found that distraction-oriented coping (temporary relief) served as a buffer against perceived discrimination and distressful psychological symptoms among youth that were low acculturated to White U.S. culture (Brittian, Toomey, et al., 2013). Social support served as a buffer against perceived discrimination and externalizing behaviors among youth minimally enculturated to their Mexican culture (Brittian, Toomey, et al., 2013). Unfortunately, several of their instruments were not normed on Mexican descent youth so it is unknown if the results are reliable. This study shows the importance of assessing acculturation level for Mexican American clients. Yet, further research is needed in the young adult population.

Ríos-Salas and Larson (2015) found that as perceived societal and interpersonal discrimination increased, mental health well-being decreased among Latinx adolescents in immigrant families. A higher socioeconomic status served as a buffer against depressive symptoms inflicted by perceived interpersonal discrimination (Ríos-Salas & Larson, 2015). The sample of 2,437 is from California and Florida, and like many of studies cited previously, several of their instruments were not normed on Latinx youth. This study informs how socioeconomic status played a significant role in protective factors and how this factor needs to be assessed to provide additional support for those in a lower socioeconomic status. The current study adds to this research by asking what types of support is needed to buffer the effects of discrimination.
A grounded theory qualitative study of 40 parents and 40 youth of Mexican descent found that youth did not have a significant amount of strategies to deal with discrimination (Romero et al., 2015). The youth reported stereotypes being prevalent (e.g., media, anti-immigrant comments, and insults from peers) and worried that confrontation against discrimination might lead to physical violence. The youths’ parents reported the commonality of prejudice and ethnic slurs, especially at school. The parents reported teaching strategies to help their children avoid derogatory terms, avoid fighting, report school issues to their teachers, and to prevent criminal stereotypes, advising about clothing choice. For mixed-race families, they discussed inclusivity, ethnic or racial pride, and sharing their family history (e.g., immigration, language, racial diversity) (Romero et al., 2015). The authors suggested that parents need to help their children deal with discrimination because it is a “normative” experience for minority youth. Though this would be a helpful micro-level intervention, mental health professionals should also consider macro-level interventions (e.g., anti-racism).

**College Students**

A study of 302 Southwestern Mexican American college students found that as perceived racial discrimination increased, subjective well-being decreased (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). Out of the coping strategies examined, Villegas-Gold & Yoo (2014) found problem-solving to be the only mediator in subjective well-being. As perceptions of perceived racial discrimination increased, problem-solving increased, which positively correlated to subjective well-being. Maladaptive coping strategies (self-criticism, wishful thinking, and withdrawal) were significant mediators that increased as subjective well-being decreased. As perceptions of racial discrimination increased, self-criticism, wishful thinking, and withdrawal increased, which decreased subjective well-being (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). Unfortunately, several of their
instruments were not normed on Mexican Americans and their discrimination instrument has a limited assessment of racism.

A national study of 399 African Americans and Mexican Americans found that racial stress response differed among them (Franklin, 2019). When faced with racial microaggressions, African Americans had psychological and behavioral stress responses, but the correlation was not significant. For Latinx, there was a significant positive correlation between racial microaggressions and psychological, behavioral, and physiological stress responses. Franklin (2019) suggested that coping strategies may be effective on an individual basis. Franklin (2019) also recommended the implementation of a systemic intervention via education on racial microaggressions.

A study of 171 Mexican Americans from a HSI in Texas found that when there was an increase in sibling support, there was a positive correlation of discrimination and ethnic identity resolution and self-esteem (Jones et al., 2018). Ethnic identity resolution is an understanding of what ethnic identity means to the person. With lower sibling support, discrimination is negatively correlated with ethnic identity affirmation and positively correlated with self-esteem. Ethnic identity affirmation is the feelings associated with the person’s ethnic group. With lower sibling support, there was a negative correlation between discrimination and ethnic identity affirmation and depressive symptoms (Jones et al., 2018). The authors stated that these findings showed how discrimination correlated with the protective function of sibling support for this population.

**Adults**

A study with 215 Mexican-origin adults from California found that perceived discrimination positively correlates to depression and poorer overall health (Flores et al., 2008).
Perceived discrimination on overall health is higher for men than women, and the influence of perceived stress on depression is higher for women than men. Flores and colleagues asserted that the results provide evidence that discrimination is a basis of chronic stress significantly more so than perceived stress; both sources of stress are harmful to mental and physical health. The authors recommended that health providers, including mental health professionals, need to assess the effects of discrimination and perceived stress.

This section reviewed the research of stress and coping among Mexican Americans. This review covered the subcategories of values, acculturation, and discrimination. Most of the instruments used are normed on non-Mexican American populations, which brings into question the reliability of the results. In addition, the researchers sampled in areas where there is a high percentage of Mexican American people, and thus did not capture experiences of those who are ethnically minoritized. The current study will give a new perspective of college students attending a PWI and sought to understand the process of stress and coping. The next section explores the theoretical ideologies related to stress.

**Stress Theories**

This section reviews significant stress theories. The literature has few significant works of stress models, which are predominately based on the White population. The models discussed in this section are transactional stress model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), model of conservation of resources, Hobfoll (1989), diathesis-stress model (Zubin & Spring, 1997), and the minority stress theory (Meyer, 1995). These models may apply to Mexican Americans, but it is not certain since researchers have not studied them with Mexican Americans.
**Transactional Stress Model**

The transactional stress model explains stress as the incongruency in perceived demands and resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Resources can be coping strategies or tools, and demands must either be heavily taxing or surpass the resources needed to cope (Matheny et al., 2008). Matheny et al. (2002) found that in Turkish and U.S. college students, perceived stress and coping resources forecasted life satisfaction; coping resources differed by gender. In this study coping resources explained the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction. Matheny et al. (2008) found the same results to support the transactional stress model in a sample with U.S. and Mexican citizens attending college. Matheny et al. (2008) suggested several implications for mental health providers. First helpers can assist to expand or make use of coping resources. Second, they can also help college students avoid stressors, whenever this is possible. Studies testing the transactional stress model have not used Mexican American college students, so it is still unknown if this theory applies to this population.

**Model of Conservation of Resources**

Hobfoll (1989) stated that coping resources are the most significant factor in predicting stress. Hobfoll (1989) reported that people seek to sustain, protect, and accumulate resources; putting these resources at risk is the potential or real loss of their resources, leading to stress. When the loss of resources occurs, replacing them can occur to cope with the stress experienced due to the loss. Alarcon’s et al. (2011) study on burnout and engagement among majority-White Midwestern college students found that perceived demands partially explained the correlation between resources and coping strategies. Coping partially explained the correlation between perceived demands and burnout and engagement. Unfortunately, this model is too broad to capture the unique stress and coping process of Mexican American college students.
Diathesis Stress Model

The diathesis-stress model explains pathology with genetic factors and environmental stress (Zubin & Spring, 1997). This model states that there must be a genetic predisposition that is triggered by an environmental stressor in order to develop a mental health disorder. This model also states that genetic predisposition is replaceable with psychological or socio-cultural factors (Zubin & Spring, 1997). Solberg et al. (1994) applied the diathesis-stress model to Latinx students from California. The study found that academic and social stress and perceived availability of social support accounted for 59% variance for college adjustment level. However, the results did not support the diathesis-stress model because social support did not moderate the relationship between stress and adjustment (Solberg et al., 1994). Another diathesis-stress study of 575 majority-White Southeastern college students found that trauma history predicted depression and anxiety symptoms and also explained the relationship between hope and adjustment (Chang et al., 2016). The authors found hope and trauma to fit well with the diathesis-stress model, but a limitation is that the results may not be generalizable due to the sample being mostly White.

Minority Stress Theory

Minority stress theory explains the various ways that gay men may experience various forms of stress in their lives. Meyer (1995) researched the stress originating from minority status and the mental distress effects in gay men. Meyer stated that gay people experience chronic stress from stigmatization. Specifically, gay men's stressors include internalized homophobia, stigma, and discrimination, and violence. This study, with 741 gay male New Yorkers, found that each of the stressors mentioned had significant correlations with various mental health outcomes. The study found that men with higher levels of minority stress doubled to triple the
likelihood of experiencing high levels of distress (Meyer, 1995). Though this study focuses on one oppressed identity, the minority stress theory ignores the intersectionality of various identities and their implications. Since then, this theory has been expanded to other minority identities. For example, one study with undocumented immigrants expanded it to ethnic minority and undocumented status (Valentin-Cortes et al., 2020). The authors found that immigrants experienced an increase in anxiety due to anti-immigrant social and political environment (Valentin-Cortes et al., 2020). Another study also expanded this theory to ethnic and racial minorities and used intersectionality theory to formulate multiple minority stress theory (McConnell et al., 2018). Black sexual minority men had the highest amount racial stigma in LGBT environments (McConnell et al., 2018). While there are other studies in the empirical literature, they primarily focus on the process of coping.

This section reviewed significant stress theories. The models discussed are transactional stress model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), model of conservation of resources, Hobfoll (1989), diathesis-stress model (Zubin & Spring, 1997), and the minority stress theory (Meyer, 1995). Researchers may test these models with Mexican American college students, but researchers do not model them after Mexican Americans or other Latinx groups. Coping theories may give a foundation for Mexican American college students coping processes.

Coping Theories

This section reviews significant coping theories. The literature has a few seminal works of coping models primarily based on the White population. The models discussed are leisure coping (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000), broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004), community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2005), Bowen theory (Bowen, 1978), and helping (Midlarsky,
1991). These coping models may apply to Mexican Americans, but they have not been applied to the Mexican American population.

**Leisure Coping**

Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) proposed that pursuing leisure activities serves as a coping strategy. Iwasaki (2003) found that leisure coping influences short- and long-term outcomes (i.e., stress reduction and general health) more so than other types of coping among Canadian college students. The belief of leisure activities being beneficial and participation in the activities produced the wellness outcomes. Another study that researched leisure coping found that Korean senior high school students found ways to cope with excess academic stress through maladaptive and adaptive leisure time (Park & Kim, 2018). Similarly, Soliman (2014) found that when Saudi Arabian medical students experienced high stress, they set boundaries, set priorities, and engaged in leisure activities to cope. Another study of 202 UK undergraduate students found that leisure coping beliefs had a positive correlation with resilience, positive affect and flourishing (Denovan & Macaskill, 2016). These studies show further investigation among the Mexican American student population is needed to confirm leisure coping and what types of leisure coping is helpful.

**Broaden-and-Build Theory**

The broaden-and-build theory states that positive emotions increase thought-action, momentarily (Fredrickson, 2004). Fredrickson (2004) described positive emotions as "joy, interest, contentment and love" (p. 1367), and each of these emotions would prompt an action consisting of playing, exploring, practicing mindfulness, and practicing these actions with someone they feel secure with. Fredrickson (2004) also stated that from the increase of thought-action activity, the individual's resources increase. These resources include social and
psychological (e.g., coping strategies). This theory also states that these resources are will serve as reserves when needed to access later in life for coping. This theory does not consider that good moods will not always signify that there will be a learning opportunity. One study of 159 Mid-Atlantic majority-White undergraduate students found that teachers’ confirming behaviors had a positive effect among students (Goldman & Goodboy, 2014). The students felt supported academically and emotionally (Goldman & Goodboy, 2014). Further, exploring belief systems of coping can bring insight to what is helpful for effective coping strategies for Mexican American college students.

**Community Cultural Wealth Model**

Yosso (2005) defined community cultural wealth as "an array of knowledges, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by Communities of Color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression" (p. 154). Yosso (2005) described six different forms of capital that contribute to cultural wealth: social, familial, linguistic, resistant, navigational, and aspirational. Aspirational capital is the capability to sustain hope and future goals while facing adversity. Linguistic capital is social and intellectual skills gained through communication that includes two or more languages or styles (e.g., the arts). Familial capital is family history and cultural intuition that gets passed on. Navigational capital is the skills of navigating through social institutions, including historically, White institutions. Resistant capital is the knowledge and skills gained through oppositional behavior confronting inequality (Yosso, 2005). A grounded theory qualitative study of 20 South Texan, high school students found that neighbors, church members, and physicians served as social capital (Martinez, 2012). Social capital are resources that are available to a community. Further, the participants used resistant and aspirational capital to cope with racial and ethnic stereotypes (Martinez, 2012). Another study of
16 Latinx undergraduate college students found that students that entered into their Northeastern university with cultural community wealth resisted the institution when the institution’s values and expectations conflicted with their capital (Rincon et al., 2020). These results are important because people of color use a form a capital in their everyday lives. The current study explores coping among college students, to explore what capital they may use, when they use it, and barriers to utilizing it.

**Bowen Theory**

Bowen (1978) described differentiation of self as an individual’s ability to functionally detach from the family process and not rely on the family for emotional needs (Murdock & Gore, 2004). Murdock and Gore (2004) described differentiation of self from the family as a crucial factor in psychological wellness. Bowen (1978) argued that the effects of stress are influenced by differentiation of self. An example of this phenomenon is that people with low differentiation will be impacted more so from high levels of stress than people with high differentiation levels. Murdock and Gore’s (2004) study supported Bowen’s Theory; differentiation influenced the effects of perceived stress in projecting mental wellness. In addition, differentiation predicted wellness outcomes more so than coping styles. Lastly, Bowen’s Theory is based on individualistic values and the theory was based on White families; hence may not apply to communities of color which may adhere to more collectivistic values. A study of 61 people of color from a large Midwestern university found that high levels of differentiation of self was correlated to positive psychological adjustment, social problem-solving skills, and higher ethnic group belong (Skowron, 2004). In this study, acculturation was not assessed, which is a significant factor of conformity to differentiation of self (Skowron, 2004). Another study of 296 majority-White Midwestern university students found that independent self-construal explained

Helping

Midlarsky (1991) stated that helping people may provide a distraction from stressors, induce a feeling of meaning and purpose, and increase positive feelings, self-worth, and self-efficacy. Janoff-Bulman (1991) theorized individuals, eventually, re-frame their victimization to experience more feelings of meaning, self-worth, and benevolence, and decrease self-blame. After re-framing or reinterpretation of the event, the individual is likely to engage in helping behaviors to prevent what happened to them to others. Morris et al. (2005) found that individuals with PTSD decreased their symptoms by writing a trauma narrative intended to help others cope with their trauma. Salovey, Mayer, and Rosenhan (1991) argued that helping others may quickly improve moods or sustain regulation of mood over a long-time span. Staub (2005) stated that suffering leads to altruism because the individual feels sympathy. Zahn-Waxler et al. (1983) stated that everyday stress leads to an opportunity for empathy of others' negative experiences, which may lead to altruism.

This section reviewed significant coping theories. The models discussed were leisure coping (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2002), broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004), community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2005), Bowen theory (Bowen, 1978), and helping (Midlarsky, 1991). Like stress models, these coping models may apply to Mexican Americans, but they are not certain since researchers do not test them on Mexican Americans. Stress and coping theories are foundational to the counseling field. Along with these theories, identity theory needs to be
considered in order to address stress and coping in Mexican Americans, which is discussed in the next section.

**Identity Development Theory**

Ruiz’s (1990) seminal work in Latinx identity development is a relevant theory for this study because Ruiz focused this theory surrounding Latinx/Chicanx living in predominately White spaces. There are 5 stages to this model. Causal stage 1 is when the individual receives messages of White superiority. Cognitive stage 2 is when the individual associates their Latinx culture to discrimination and poverty, sees assimilation as the only way out of poverty and prejudice, and sees assimilation is the only way to find success. Consequence stage 3 is the ethnic identity rejection. Working through stage 4 is when the individual struggles with an ethnic identity crisis and they no longer want to identify as another ethnic identity. Successful resolution stage 5 is when the individual accepts their identity and culture. Identity stage can preface what type of counseling and coping would be effective for the Latinx client.

Furthermore, there is limited research on counseling practices with Mexican Americans. Along with this theory, counseling modalities and client factors need to be considered in order to address stress and coping in Mexican Americans, which is discussed in the next section.

**Counseling Practices with Mexican Americans**

This section reviews the research on counseling practices with Mexican Americans. A thorough search of the empirical literature resulted in few studies on counseling Mexican American college students. Current practice relies on this handful of studies and the few seminal works on counseling Mexican Americans. There are a few modalities in the literature that are known to work with the Mexican American community, as well as significant factors to consider.
Modalities

The Multidimensional Ecological Comparative Approach (MECA) (Falicov, 1995) framework emphasizes understanding clients' migration history (if any), ecological context (i.e., race, class, occupation, immigration status, role models, support), the cycle of their family life (impact of child-rearing and concepts of masculinity/femininity through generations), family organization (views of expectations, experiences of collectivism/individualism, and hierarchical/egalitarian ideologies). This framework can help deconstruct harmful ideologies and construct a narrative that benefits the client's well-being.

Adapting CBT for Latinx (Organista & Munoz, 1996) is a short-term and solution-focused modality. Small talk is used to enhance trust in the relationship, which includes self-disclosure. The simplification of ABCD model to helpful and unhelpful thoughts and refuting unhelpful thoughts with “Yes, but...” are recommended by Organista and Munoz (1996). Using religion but being careful it is not avoiding the problem and using assertiveness training is also recommended. However, being careful that assertiveness is being taught in a culturally responsive way and using activity schedules. Lastly, use distraction rather than self-care term to become more culturally responsive. Distraction is often used in the Latinx culture, so it is familiar language.

Ponterotto (1989) argued that multimodal counseling is best suited for Mexican Americans because of its flexibility and the diversity within this Latinx subgroup. Multimodal therapy, founded by Arnold Lazarus (1971, 1981). Lazarus (1981) posits that all humans display behavior, feel emotions, physically feel, visualize, think, relate to one another, and have biological needs. Lazarus labeled these modalities as Behavior, Affect, Sensations, Images, Cognitions, Interpersonal relations (including environmental conditions), and Biological
(Drugs/Diet) functioning. Each modality will use its corresponding techniques in that area. Ponterotto (1989) suggested that the acculturation level is essential in the initial assessment of Mexican American clients. Then, Ponterotto (1989) suggested that by using the multimodal modality profile and conceptualization, the counselor will more likely provide culturally relevant interventions. Lastly, Ponterotto (1989) also recommends that counselors take an active socio-environmental role in their community, in the form of activism and advocacy. Ponterotto (1989) believed that activism is an effective and culturally relevant part of counseling Mexican American clients. The modalities mentioned work well with many counseling issues. The next section discusses significant factors to consider while counseling Mexican American clients.

**Significant Factors: Language, Religion, Rapport, and Diagnosis**

Gonzalez (1995) outlined the progression of counseling for Mexican American clients. Gonzalez (1995) recommended assessing the acculturation level first. Then, explain how the counseling process works. Asking about language preference is essential because the client may be more comfortable expressing themselves in Spanish. Asking the client if they are comfortable involving their family in therapy is also important because the family may play a crucial role in the client’s decision-making process. Curanderos (folk healers) can work as ancillary support to the client if they choose to have one, and it is important not to pathologize their superstitions and beliefs. The assessment of folk healing and religious beliefs is needed to integrate those aspects into their treatment plan properly (Gonzalez, 1995). Gonzales (1995) and other researchers (e.g., Ruiz & Langrod, 1992) stated that small talk (platica) helps build rapport with Mexican American clients. Gonzales (1995) also stated that many Mexican Americans are comfortable with closer physical proximity than White Americans. Mexican Americans might not look directly into the eyes as a sign of respect or deference (Gonzalez, 1995). Most Mexican
Americans greet others with a handshake or a hug, so it would be recommended for a handshake to occur between client and counselor (Michno, 2017; Padilla et al., 1975; Jamarillo, 1973).

Gonzales et al. (1997) and Panigua (2018) pointed out several considerations in making an accurate diagnosis for Mexican American clients. After making an acculturation assessment, the clinician might use the V code, *acculturation*, in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual. Panigua (2018) reported that acculturative stress symptoms may be mistaken for major depressive disorder, adjustment disorder, or other mental disorders. Panigua (2018) reports that the DSM 5 calls for applying context and culture to diagnosing accurately. Culture-bound syndromes may be the diagnoses as well (e.g., nervios, ataque de nervios, susto). Lastly, learn how language plays a role in expression.

This section reviewed the research that covers counseling practices with Mexican Americans. Unfortunately, there is limited research on counseling Mexican American college students. However, there is research on Mexican Americans, in general, even though the research is scarce. Counseling modalities that fit Mexican Americans are slim. The more common research is when researchers lump all Latinx cultures together. The next section will review the more recent and limited literature on Mexican American counseling.

**Empirical Counseling Practices for Mexican Americans**

Shea et al. (2012) found that guided self-help CBT was flexible enough to be adapted to Mexican American women who have been diagnosed with an eating disorder. The authors explain that immigration and acculturation experiences may explain family dynamics, cultural expectations, and perceived social support. The authors suggest having clients explore these factors in counseling to give insight to their current state.
Miville and Constantine (2006) explored help-seeking attitudes and behaviors among 162 Mexican American college students in a large Southwest PWI. The authors found that cultural congruity, low perceived family support, and high perceived support from significant others predicted positive help-seeking attitudes. Significant predictors of help-seeking behaviors included high acculturation levels and low perceived support from friends and family.

Hirai et al. (2015) explored acculturation, enculturation, stigma, and treatment preferences among 267 Texan college undergraduate Mexican American students. Students that scored higher in enculturation preferred culturally relevant religious-based treatment or no treatment, respectively. Strong negative beliefs of psychological disorders explained the relationship between enculturation levels and no treatment preferences among first- and second-year students only. Acculturation had no effect on stigma or treatment preference. The authors concluded that education will help decrease stigma towards psychological disorders.

Conoley et al. (2015) examined the basic helping skills among White counselors and 4 Mexican American clients (college undergraduates from the West coast). The authors found that empathy was the most important factor judged by the clients. The clients felt most understood by the skills of paraphrasing and immediacy. The skills that had the lowest ratings were challenge, closed questions, recommendations, and information giving.

Bitar et al. (2014) studied therapist disclosure with ten male Mexican American court-mandated clients. This phenomenological study found that therapist self-disclosure is a culturally competent skill among this group. This skill strengthened the therapeutic relationship, normalized client problems, increased egalitarianism, and modeled self-disclosure.

Ramos-Sanchez (2007) studied language switching and emotional expression among 65 Mexican American college students from a West coast university. The author found that White
counselors who used Spanish and English during counseling (versus English only) elicited the most feelings expression from the Mexican American clients.

Ramos-Sanchez (2009) studied the effects of the counselor’s bilingual ability and ethnicity on perceived credibility and cultural competence among 65 Mexican American college students from a West coast university. White bilingual counselors were perceived to be more culturally competent than Mexican American bilingual counselors.

Elias‐Juarez and Knudson‐Martin (2017) researched cultural attunement among 11 Mexican-heritage couples from Southern California. The authors found that clients valued the counselor’s professionalism and knowledge and felt respected and attuned to when the counselor demonstrated humility, used self-disclosure to tell personal stories and feelings, and engaged in a collaborative counseling process.

Malott et al. (2010) researched ethnic identity development and group counseling among 23 Mexican-descent adolescents from the East coast. This phenomenological study found that participants found this group counseling experience as overall meaningful. In addition, themes that were found included the significant factor of the counseling relationship in instilling change, increased interpersonal skills, and ethnic identity growth, such as, knowledge of their culture and traits, and ethnic pride.

Conclusion

The counseling-related literature on Mexican Americans is limited and even more scarce among the college population. It is common is for researchers to lump all Latinx cultures together which fails to capture unique cultural experiences. The studies among the Mexican American population are primarily conducted in non-PWI or in locations where there is a high percentage of Mexican Americans (i.e., California and Texas). These locations make sense for
quantitative studies that rely on large sample sizes. When the whole sample is Latinx, quantitative studies rely heavily on instruments that are not normed on the Latinx population, which may discredit their findings. Quantitative studies help inform significant relationships between variables, but there is no explanation to their results, which leaves gaps in the research for qualitative research to explore lived experiences. This current study is qualitative, which can look closely at the needs of Mexican American college students attending a PWI. The findings of this study add to the limited research on counseling practices with Mexican Americans in college settings. Lastly, this study will add to the research on coping and stress theories among Mexican American college students.

This chapter began with a brief history of the Latinx people which included the multiple ways Mexican Americans came to the United States. This is followed a discussion of stress and coping experienced by Latinx in general and Mexican Americans more specifically. Empirical research related to youth and young adults is detailed along with specific theories related to stress and coping. This chapter concluded with a discussion of evidence-based counseling interventions for Latinx and specifically Mexican American clients.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the methodology of the current study. This section outlines the research questions, study design, data collection, and data analysis. The current study used grounded theory methodology to investigate coping in Mexican American undergraduate college students. The sample was obtained from a Midwestern predominantly White institutions (PWI), specifically. This chapter reviews the methodology process of this study.

Research Question

1) How do Mexican American college students cope with stressors?
   a) What influences their coping processes?
   b) How do their coping processes vary?
   c) What values are connected to their coping?
   d) What type of stressors do they experience?

Study Design

I used qualitative constructivist grounded theory research for my study. The grounded theory approach aligns with my research questions. My interview questions had participants share their stressors and coping strategies. This gave insight into their cultural values and how they intersect with their coping strategies. A grounded theory approach helped give insight to internal processes, including stressful events and coping, whether it was behavioral or cognitive. The social context is another significant factor to consider (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I reviewed the literature on this topic prior to conducting this study. The search served a purpose in informing me of what needs to be researched. The literature review confirmed there was a problem (e.g., Vela et al., 2017; Ojeda et al., 2014; Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014), confirmed that
this study has not been conducted with this population, it provided context to the problem, and provided evidence for the research need.

Grounded theory is the “discovery of theory from data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). Grounded theory was born because theories did not apply to the participants under study in the sociology field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because there are no current theories on coping with Mexican American college undergraduates at PWIs, grounded theory is appropriate. This study will build off existing theories related to Latinx college students while generating a new theory related to coping and stress of Mexican American college students attending PWIs.

The theory is grounded in the data from the participants that have experienced the process or action. There are phases to this action or process. The researcher tries to explain this process by formulating a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This theory will inform practice, further research, or add to other theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Further, constructivist grounded theory is a philosophical shift from Glaser and Strauss (Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist means that theory is developed by the researcher’s interactions with participants and by the perspective of the researcher. Therefore, the data could potentially develop more than one theory (Charmaz, 2014). Constructivism acknowledges the researcher as part of the research process. Constructivist grounded theory was chosen because it is a practical method for qualitative research because the researcher has a significant role in interpretation of the data. Constructivist grounded theory is based in relativism, so objectivity does not exist, and knowledge is contextual. The researcher is an interpreter of the data, the methods are flexible in application, and the final theory is subjective, descriptive, and dependent on the current context (Charmaz, 2014; Groen et al., 2017). Theory has causal properties, but their effects are contingent (Charmaz, 2014; Maxwell, 2004). Additionally, bracketing is a repetitive process of identifying
biases and reflexivity is used through the entire research process while acknowledging positionality (Charmaz, 2014; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing means that the researcher is aware of their biases and does not let those biases affect the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). I used bracketing throughout the entire research process by suspending certain beliefs as to not taint the research.

This grounded theory approach fits best with the research question in this study. The research question is process oriented. So, there is a start to finish to a phenomenon. The research question tries to answer “how” a phenomenon happens. A grounded theory approach will help give insight not only to external processes and actions but also to internal processes, such as thoughts and actions.

**Statement of Positionality**

This statement includes several fixed attributes that may have influenced the research. I am an able-bodied agnostic Native and White Xicana. The X in Xicana is to acknowledge the colonization of Mexico and the connection to my indigenous roots. My family is not certain what tribe(s) we are part of due to the effects of colonization. I am a second generation Mexican American from a low-socioeconomic status and a first-generation college student. I am in a privileged position of having attained several degrees, including a master’s in clinical mental health counseling and pursuing a doctoral degree in counselor education and supervision. My previous job experience was counseling youth, families, and college students. I am bilingual, with English being my dominant language. I grew up in Washington state, where it is mostly White and Mexican. I have only attended PWIs for all my education; I have always been the minority in all of my classes and most of my jobs. For me, I believe that mental well-being is achieved with connecting back to collectivistic and indigenous practices: People taking care of
each other in many ways, slowing down and breaking away from hyper-capitalism, resting, and 
unlearning harmful thinking. There are also perceptions I hold about the research process that 
may influence the research.

I view the qualitative research process as rapport-building and collaborative process 
between the participants, liaisons, and me. I view myself as someone that can build-rapport 
quickly with this population since I am also Mexican American. The research took place during 
the COVID-19 global pandemic and virtual contact has now been normalized for about a year. 
Stress is higher than usual and usual outlets/coping strategies have decreased due to the health 
and safety concerns of being around people you do not live with. Vaccinations have been 
prioritized to essential workers, the elderly, and people with immunocompromised health, so the 
majority of college students have not received their vaccination yet. During in-person public 
events, masks are required to be worn and 6 feet distance is strongly recommended. Students had 
to get accustomed to online learning abruptly. Many students went back home to live with their 
family and that could be stressful with managing school and home expectations. Dorm-living and 
online-learning felt isolating for many students. Moving majority of situations to online has been 
exhausting for many. This pandemic has influenced the entire research process. In addition, 
students have experienced social unrest from police violence during this pandemic. Which may 
also contribute to added stress.

**Conceptual Framework for Study**

Grounded theory calls for jointly collecting, coding, and analyzing data (Glaser & 
Strauss, 1967) (Figure 1). With this initial process, this happens internally as the researcher is 
interviewing their participants. During the first interview, analysis begins to create themes. 
During the second interview, analysis of the first and second interview continues, and new
themes may emerge. During the third interview, analysis of the first to the third interviews allows for more themes may emerge. This process continues until interviews conclude. Questions may arise any point in data collecting which gives opportunity to seek more answers by collecting more data from the participant or to future participants. Themes that emerge may be consistent with past participants or add to new themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In my study, I looked for themes related to stress and coping, which are related to one’s values. In counseling, values and beliefs guide the behavior. Analysis in this study involved two rounds of coding to condense categories and codes, using the constant comparative method, to formulate a theory.

**Figure 1**

*Grounded Theory Conceptual Framework*
Population, Sample, and Participants

Population

The population used for this study were junior and senior undergraduate Mexican American students attending a Midwestern PWI. Only juniors and seniors were recruited because they had a pre-pandemic college experience. Differences of pre-pandemic and pandemic experiences were investigated. To be included in the study, participants needed to identify with Mexican heritage/roots/extraction and also identify with being an American due to living in the United States. Participants were born in either the United States or Mexico.

Sampling

Data collection occurred at a Midwestern PWI and utilized purposive, convenience, and snowballing approaches. Purposeful sampling means that the researcher wants to purposely seek out participants and sites that are needed to understand the research problem and the phenomena in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Convenience sampling meant that I selected a sample based on the time I have to conduct this study, my budget, and availability of sites/locations that I have granted access to (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling means the participants suggests other participants to the researcher.

Sample

I contacted the multicultural fraternities, sororities, College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), Latino Student Alliance (LSA) and other Latinx organizations at a Midwestern PWI. These programs also comprise of several students with Mexican heritage. I contacted the organizations via email and social media. I asked if they would be willing to advertise my research and/or have me personally advertise my research through Zoom/Webex presentations, emails, and/or infographics. I also advertised my study on my social media accounts (Facebook
and Instagram). I asked for participants’ emails or phone numbers as a form of communication and to set up a Webex interview. I used my laptop and iPhone to record the interviews, which were downloaded to a secure password protected laptop.

Site

Minority students’ experiences in a PWI school differ from a Hispanic-Serving Institutions or a more diverse institution, which is a significant reason for understanding coping for Mexican American college students at PWIs (Palmer et al., 2011). The site where data collection occurred was at a Midwestern PWI, meaning the majority of the students attending the university were White.

Participants

The sample is Mexican American junior and senior undergraduate students. The sample includes all genders due to limited research among this population. Charmaz (2014) suggested that a higher number than 8 interviews are in need if the research topic is controversial or complex, interviews are the only source of data, or if the researcher is pursuing professional credibility. I recruited up to 30 participants, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018). Sampling continued until no new knowledge was constructed and saturation was reached.

Access

Rapport is defined as gaining permission and trust to conduct interviews for a certain population (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I gained rapport to access the population for my research study. Specifically, I built rapport to communicate with the directors/contact persons of the multicultural fraternities and sororities, CAMP, LSA and other relevant organizations at this Midwestern PWI. I let the contact person know about my research and the benefits of conducting this research. I answered questions or concerns about my study.
When I interviewed participants, I helped them feel comfortable by introducing myself and letting them know a little about my professional and personal background. I briefly explained my research and defined terms. I briefly explained the qualitative process. For example, I explained how the interview will go and the member-checking process. Then, I asked them a few questions to get to know them, including demographic information. Lastly, I asked them if they had any questions.

**Data Collection**

This section reviews the data collection method of this study. Audio and video recorded interviews were collected and transcribed for this study. The research questions aligned to each interview question (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Research Questions With Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) How do Mexican American college students cope with stressors?</td>
<td>1) What does it mean to be Mexican American for you, personally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What influences their coping processes?</td>
<td>2) How would you define stress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) How do their coping processes vary?</td>
<td>3) How would you define coping?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) What values are connected to their coping?</td>
<td>4) What are the stressors you have experienced during your time as an undergraduate student Pre-COVID-19 pandemic? Please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) What type of stressors do they experience?</td>
<td>5) What are the stressors you have experienced during your time as an undergraduate student during COVID-19 pandemic? Please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) In general, what is/are the most challenging stressor(s) for you?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) What makes it/them the most challenging?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7) Think about one of the most recent challenging stressors you experienced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) How were you feeling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interview Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What were you thinking?</td>
<td>b) What did you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) How did you cope with it?</td>
<td>i) What was that process like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How else do you cope with stressors?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Were there any differences in the way you coped pre-pandemic versus during the pandemic?</td>
<td>a) If so, how so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) If so, how so?</td>
<td>i) What was that process like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) What influenced you to cope this way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Have you sought out any help during stressful times?</td>
<td>a) Was there a difference of seeking help pre-pandemic versus during pandemic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) How would you define discrimination?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) If you have been discriminated against during your time as an undergraduate student, tell me about the most recent time this has happened to you.</td>
<td>a) How were you feeling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What were you thinking?</td>
<td>c) What did you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) How did you deal with it or cope with it?</td>
<td>e) What influenced you to deal or cope with it this way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Was there a difference of how you dealt with discrimination pre-pandemic versus during the pandemic?</td>
<td>i) If so, how so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) What influenced you to cope this way?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) How do you think we can improve mental health for Mexican American college undergraduates in a predominately White institution?</td>
<td>a) How can universities, like here, help support Mexican Americans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Do you know anyone that might be interested in participating in this study?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional Review Board

To prepare for the study, I completed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, including details of informed consent, risk and cost of participation, benefits and confidentiality. The IRB approval was secured prior to conducting my study. Once it was approved, I recruited participants. There are several issues that were covered in my application to the IRB. I created an informed consent document for participants to sign. Informed consent signifies that participants are aware of risks and costs of the study and agree to participating in the study. The risks and costs were clearly stated to the participant, which includes the participant’s time. This also included thinking about upsetting events. The benefits of the study were also communicated to the participant. A $10 gift card was given to the participant after the completion of the interview and another $10 gift card was given to the participant after confirming the findings with the participant. The participants’ name was not used in the study and a pseudo name was used instead. Further, I retracted identifying information to the best of my ability. Lastly, the audio, video and transcripts of the participants were stored on my password-protected laptop. Interviews were recorded via password and fingerprint-protected iPhone and sent to a transcription program. The Webex videos were recorded on my password-protected laptop. Field notes were taken right after each interview. The field notes were typed into my laptop.

Interviews

The interview questions were created to gain knowledge on the process of coping from start to finish, which means talking about stressors as well. I wanted to know how participants cope with stressors. Data was collected once from each participant. The interviews were expected to last up to an hour. All interviews were conducted over Webex to be able to observe
body language. If Webex experienced technical difficulties, the interview was audio-recorded via a phone call.

**Reflexivity and Trustworthiness in Data Collection**

Trustworthiness means that the data collection, analyses, and interpretation must be proven to be dependable, credible, transferable, and confirmatory. In qualitative research, the researcher can use multiple data sources, examine disconfirming evidence, or disclose bias to affirm trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity was used to be aware of my biases. I used it to prevent asking leading questions. I made sure not press on any questions. For example, if the participant told me he had no discrimination experiences, I would not question him whether that was actually true or false. My interview questions were all open-ended questions, except for the demographic information. I asked about what their stressors were and how they coped with it. I asked about how they coped with discrimination, if they had experienced it. Lastly, I asked how they think Mexican Americans mental health can be improved as an additional question.

During my undergraduate time, I experienced several stressors and have used several coping strategies. Some of my stressors and coping strategies I connect to my Mexican heritage. My stressors come from my own heritage, mainstream White culture, and other areas. I have been discriminated against, but not in a school setting, that I can recall. I became tearful when this first happened while I was working at a retail store as a high schooler. I felt shocked and sad and coped by talking/processing about it to my co-workers and family. Additional stressors included, finances, relationship problems, and school-related challenges. Those stressors are the obvious ones. There are also stressors like; not feeling Mexican enough with my Mexican friends.
and not feeling “American” enough with my White peers. Most of the time, I felt more comfortable with people of color. I would find ways to cope with my stressors.

Values play a significant role in coping. Growing up as a Catholic, I would pray when I felt a panic attack coming or when I was feeling depressed (religiosidad/religiosity). My number one coping strategy was to talk to my family (familismo/importance of close family and personalismo/importance of relationships). In addition, my role in my family/friends was nurturing, being humble, and maintaining harmony, which are all traits of marianismo (traditional woman role). The role of my nurturance, humbleness, and harmonious nature served as a protective factor because I kept out of danger and conflict this way. I use other strategies not related to my heritage like mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing, and yoga. Overall, my culture does not promote mental health well-being. There is a “get over it” mentality-this makes sense because many Mexicans/Mexican Americans are just trying to survive, economically. I think back to my parents and how much they had to and have to work to live here in the United States. Many families/fathers are sending money to their family/extended family in Mexico out of expectation and necessity. These were some of my experiences that relate to my research topic. These experiences influenced my desire to engage in this study and how I interpret my data.

My belief system in coping and stress are rooted in awareness and learning. I believe that social learning plays a part in coping. I learn from my parents, friends, and peers. I see stressors as subjective to each person. For example, I might experience discrimination stressful and another person might appear unaffected. To why this happens, I am not sure. This could also play a part in social learning. For example, if I learn what discrimination is, now I am aware of it, then, I see how other people react to discrimination. Hence, I might react similarly. However,
the reaction is not equivalent to how one actually feels, thinks, or the physical response. One may think they are fine or act fine, but later find themselves stressed out and the person may not be sure why. There could be many factors that attribute to the stress that one feels. In the end, I do believe that stress can come from anywhere, including one’s own culture. It is important to be aware of my own experiences regarding stress and coping to not bias the research.

**Data Analysis**

Transcription occurred after each interview (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Analytic memoing was used before coding and during analysis. This included interpreting content and attempting to connect the dots between other memos/codes/categories (Charmaz, 2014). The first round of coding, initial, process, values, and emotion coding was used. In grounded theory, initial and process coding is used. Initial coding codes for potential theories. This is a fast process due to theoretical memos. Initial coding is done either line by line or paragraph by paragraph. Process coding is used to identify actions (e.g. coping, stressing). I decided to code for values because, the research indicates that this is a potential area for exploration in coping studies with Latinx populations. Mexican values have been identified in the literature, and I am aware that these may or may not come in the data. I used emotion coding to gather information on how this population describes and perceives their experiences. I also used reflexivity, so that I did not force data into codes and categories.

Second round of coding consisted of focused, axial, and theoretical coding. Focused searches for the most frequent or significant initial codes to develop the most salient categories in the data. Axial coding reduces codes that are redundant and combines codes that are similar. Theoretical coding captures the overarching theme (the skeleton of the data). Which is the theory that explains the how and why of the phenomena. A diagram can explain the process of the
phenomena. Furthermore, it has the potential to add to existing theories (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). The constant comparison method compares codes in the same category. This is followed by integration of categories, which reduces the number of categories. During analysis, memos were created on the data’s margins, electronically. First round and second round of coding utilized an excel sheet. I went back and forth: looking at my memos and adding my codes into the excel sheet in their categories. As coding continued, I increased my categories and sub-categories. My codes and categories emerged from the data. Then, codes and categories were merged and reduced. When the data reached saturation, a theory was constructed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Saturation occurs when there are no new patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2006).

**Trustworthiness in Data Analysis**

I practiced reflexivity during data collection and data analysis to reduce bias in the data collection and analysis process. During the interviews, I refrained from asking leading questions and I paraphrased after the participants spoke to make sure my interpretations were correct. After the transcription was completed, I read each transcript for accuracy, while listening to the audio. Once I reviewed the first round of coding, I gathered the codes that were similar to each other to create themes and sub-themes. The second round of coding were placed in a new excel document with the reduced and merged themes and sub-themes. Once the tentative theory was formulated, I called or emailed each participant to schedule a member-check meeting. Member-checking means I contacted the participant after data interpretation and theory formulation to confirm the results and theory were correct (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I explained to each participant I needed to check in with them for any feedback about the theory and results. I explained that I sought out feedback regarding if the codes were accurate and if the theory made sense to them. I sent each participant their codes and themes and the theory for them to review via email. The feedback I
received was verbal or written via email. If my interpretations were wrong, I went back to include and reinterpret the data with the feedback I received, which is known as theoretical sampling in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006)

**Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the methodology of the current study. This chapter outlined the research questions, study design, data collection, and data analysis. The current study was a grounded theory study of the coping strategies of Mexican American college undergraduates attending a Midwestern PWI. Participants were recruited among 3 PWI in Michigan. The data collection involved interviews and the data analysis consisted of 2 rounds of coding. Trustworthiness strategies in data collection and data analysis were implemented.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter four reviews the description of the participants, brief description of data analysis, and the findings. The description of the participants will review the demographic information from each participant. This section will include a short description of each participant and some of their quotes to form a deeper understanding of each participant and their worldview. The data analysis section will summarize the data analysis process for this study. Lastly, the findings will include a research questions and categories, the theory, the theory description, and quotes that correspond to the theory.

Description of Participants

Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 1 hour. Most participants (n = 9) stated they were from Michigan. Most (n = 7) of the participants were second generation living in the United States (U.S.) (meaning their parents immigrated to the United States, and they were born in the United States). Two and a half generation means that one parent is second generation and the other parent is third generation. Ages ranged from 20 to 27 years old. There were four juniors and seven seniors. There were five females and six males. All participants had to self-identify as Mexican American as their ethnicity to participate in this study. Some participants did not know their race and stated “Latino” or “Hispanic,” those participants have their race as “Unknown” (Table 2). Most participants were a part of a Latinx-based organization at a Midwestern PWI. Lastly, the participants pseudonyms were chosen at random.
Table 2

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>U.S. Generation Level</th>
<th>Junior/Senior</th>
<th>Grew Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocio</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participant names are pseudonyms.

Elena

Elena was a 20-year-old woman. She described her identity as “It's sometimes hard right, because you're not fully American, I don't fit in because I'm not, White. It's like, I'm not from Mexico to understand. It's like just a weird place.” She felt the most stress from academics since it tied to her scholarship, and she feels pressure coming from her parents and herself to be successful; “I think it's coming from me [pressure]. I'm going to be completely honest I don't think my parents really put, like-they never say anything, it's just like, I feel that they want me to succeed.” An authority figure she trusted at this Midwestern PWI helped her seek help for herself. However, she would like a therapist that knows her experience as a Mexican American:

[counseling] Helped me reflect a lot in my life, I think I benefited from some things, but I think the hardest thing was like my counselor was White and so she didn't really understand a lot of, you know, what I was going through. So that's like, the only thing I didn't really like about it, but, I mean, it really did help, like reflecting...
Lastly, She believed that this this Midwestern PWI tried to be inclusive, but it was not enough for real change for Latinx students.

**Rosa**

Rosa was a 24-year-old White bicultural Mexican American woman. She was secure in her identity and she got frustrated when others did not recognize her Mexican heritage: “I feel like, because I don't necessarily have a strong phenotype, it’s like, people at work, I'll talk about my life outside of work and still just be like, oh, I forgot you're a Mexican and it's like ok...” She came to realize the upmost important relationships in her life--her family; “Since the pandemic I've gotten a lot closer with my family. It put things into perspective... it's like, if I am going to risk getting a sickness, I'd rather risk getting it from my family members than from friends.” The pandemic influenced this student to become more self-reflective in her solitude as she was scared to get her family sick before the vaccine came out. In addition, she was fully aware when she was affected by sexism whether it be within her family, from male professors, or from customers. When authority figures were sexist, it left her feeling helpless hence the power imbalance. She coped mostly from talking to family and solo activities.

**Juan**

Juan was a 20-year-old male. He believed that his identity was about having a deep understanding,

Being Mexican American means having a connection to the culture. And I don't think that just means knowing like, oh, certain genres of music or knowing like I don't know, like certain stuff about Mexico or stuff like that. I think it’s just like being able to just understand what the struggles that Mexican American people face. And understanding some of the history behind us...
This is the only participant that described intragroup marginalization as discrimination. This participant’s stressors included burnout, finding a community, and losing in-person community at this Midwestern PWI.

Luis

Luis was a 21-year-old male from Florida. He leaned towards the Mexican side, “I take a lot of pride in being Mexican. Well, I obviously know that I'm American born here in the United States, but I have a lot of pride whenever it comes to Mexican.” His stressors included being in a PWI, financially burdening his parents, and online school. This participant was the only one that could not recall a discrimination event in his undergraduate years.

Teresa

Teresa was a 21-year-old female with a fluid ethnic identity dependent on her environment. She had many solution-focused coping strategies. In addition, she used cognitive coping and social support. She used cognitive coping that she learned from her father when he would be discriminated against at work when someone yelled at her to “build the wall,”

He would just say at the end of the day sure they give me money and stuff and give me, at that point, when he lived in California, like a little place to live, but at the end of the day, I don't care what they say to me as long if it's work related, I would care but, you know, personally, shrug it off.

Miguel

Miguel was a 20-year-old male from Illinois. His ethnic identity was fluid dependent on his environment. Navigating his identity in a PWI was a conscious phenomenon for him,

I feel if I try to embrace my culture a little bit, I might get into some unfortunate situation where someone who is telling me to not speak Spanish or like you know, why are you
listening to that? … I don't want to exclude people from my culture. I also don't want to feel like I have to be full American when I'm here in a predominantly White area.

Fear of racism was one of his biggest stressors and he believed anti-racism at this Midwestern PWI would help Mexican Americans navigate a PWI. He was the only participant that brought up discrimination as a stressor before being asked about it directly.

**Antonio**

Antonio was a 22 year-old male who reported being connected to being Mexican and American equally, “If I go to Mexico, they tell me I’m American, the U.S., they tell me I’m Mexican, so it doesn't matter.” He used his Mexican background as a motivational drive in a predominately White country, “I have this pride or this background that just motivates me to do good, to do the best I can in this White world or in this American society.” This participant was independent and learned how to improve his mental health by doing research and applying what he learned to his life. He learned about meditation and set boundaries during the pandemic and that dramatically changed his stress levels.

**Francisco**

Francisco was a 27-year-old male with a fluid ethnic identity depending on his environment. He stated that he has had to always “prove” his Mexican side to other Mexicans that were first or second generation. He saw them as more “deeply rooted” than him, him being fourth generation. This participant endured many stressors. He was an essential worker, busy in campus involvement, and lost his mother to COVID-19. He knew the importance of talking through thoughts and feelings and he has become more open to therapy now that he is experiencing grief. When he arrived to this Midwestern PWI, he reported having a discriminatory experience in the dorms and thought he could not advocate for himself,
Hispanics were almost like, non-existent. So, coming from high school, where I'm surrounded by people, just like me to be brought into, a predominantly White setting and feeling, alone in that aspect, even though I had my roommate, my friend, and my brother now... It felt like well, what's going to happen? Like it's just me. I was just like, it's just us. It's just really nothing we can do.

Martha

Martha was a 20-year-old female with an ethnic identity that leaned more towards her Mexican side and defined by language. This student reported being a first-generation college student and dealing with the stress of this challenge. She found that finding a community at PWI was challenging and when she first arrived at this Midwestern PWI, she didn’t feel like she belonged: “I feel like left out or I don’t belong.” When being discriminated against at a restaurant by her waiter, she felt that she should tip him to prove to him that he had a faulty perception of Mexicans.

Daniel

Daniel was a 21-year-old male with a fluid ethnic identity dependent on his environment. This participant experienced stress in finding belonging at a PWI and he felt depressed at the start of the pandemic. He experienced being in survival mode during the pandemic. His mentors and advisors helped him feel more belonging at this Midwestern PWI. He had police called on him twice in one night, unwarranted, during this time he feared for his life of being murdered by the police: “They believed the White lady more than me. And I felt so discriminated there.” “During that summer, I worked somewhere that wasn't diverse. And this car problem that happened was in a White area, small town, and I guess many people feel unsafe, even though I had my work uniform on.”
Rocio

Rocio was a 22-year-old female with an ethnic identity that leaned towards her Mexican side. This participant reported that she was a child of an immigrant, which adds on additional roles for her as daughter, such as, translating. This participant talked about how much she changed once she got to a high school, where Mexicans were the majority. She stated she used to look down on people who smoked weed, later she changed her mind: “It's not bad. Like, I had all this negativity in me from growing up in all-White community.” She used to go by an English name and now she goes by her birth name (a Spanish name). She grew up believing that having stress and anxiety was just an excuse to be lazy because that was what she learned from her mother, but now she knows they are real.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed as planned for a grounded theory study. The interviews were transcribed verbatim via Webex and filler words were deleted (i.e., umm, like). Analytical memos were made on the margin of each transcript. Transcription, memos, and coding were completed after each interview. Therefore, analysis was ongoing, which is a unique feature of grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2014). These memos helped me code quickly for phase 1 of coding. Phase 1 of coding resulted in many categories, also known as themes. Phase two of coding reduced categories and combined categories through the constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). The most common themes created the major categories of the theory, resulting in the final form of the theory. I used Nelson’s Conceptual Depth Criteria (2017) to determine whether I needed to continue gathering participants for saturation. The criteria consisted of a vast data range, complex connections, correct interpretation, and meaningful data, backed by similar literature, and applicability among people in a similar social
context as the research participants. Since this criterion was met, I was able to move forward and finalize theory-building.

**Grounded Theory Analysis Process**

The grounded theory analysis process looks different for each researcher while still adhering to the foundational steps for the grounded theory analysis. I made interpretations during interviews and verbally confirmed interpretations with the participant. I was building connections during interviews to develop more follow-up questions. For example, after the first two interviews I started asking if there was a side the participants connected to most (Mexican and American) to gain more insight to their acculturation and ethnic identity. After the first interview, I would write down theory memos and what stood out from that interview, and I continued that process for all participants to keep track of my theory ideas. In phase two of coding, I started to merge categories. For example, identity had four categories and I merged them into two categories, making two broader categories of fluid and Mexican leaning.

I used a large whiteboard to write down all categories. I started with the categories I knew influenced the rest of the theory (identity, values, beliefs). I wrote down the processes of stress and coping categories and used arrows to connect the theory. I knew what categories were connected, but the difficult part was displaying the theory so it could make sense to the reader.

I wanted to view all the participants in one document to search for significant differences and similarities during theory building. So, I created a three-by-four table consisting of everything that stood out from each participant. This table was essentially a mini summary of each participant, using bullet points so that I could easily view each participant. This table also served to help me remember each participant and their stories to help me make more theory connections.
Lastly, I had all the stressors at the top of the model since stressors are where coping originates. In addition, writing up the model's description was also a difficult process because I had to explain my complex connections. The connections made sense to me while creating the theory, but while I was writing the explanation for the theory, I found why they made sense to me in a more detailed manner. The details were in the values and identity and explaining how they were connected to participants’ coping and how they served as protective factors.

**Member-Check**

Member-checking occurred after the theory was created to show each participant their codes and the theory. Six participants were able to give feedback, and each was paid a $10 Amazon e-gift card. Teresa addressed that she felt relieved that others also felt the same stress of finding a sense of belonging at this Midwestern PWI due to her growing up in a predominately White area. She stated that this finding also saddened her. Rocio and Antonio stated that their codes and theory were accurate and made sense. Daniel stated his codes were correct and emphasized the part of the theory of burnout and depression during the pandemic. Juan stated that his codes were accurate. Juan noted that he resonated with the Mexican values in the theory; he also emphasized that discrimination is something that Latinx college students have to face. He stated that support groups may serve a sense of a “home away from home.” Martha emphasized that she did experience more stress during the pandemic due to the global panic. Martha noticed that she would seek out social support after the pandemic for coping, whereas in pre-pandemic, she would rely on coping by herself. Martha also emphasized that she felt like an imposter in her classes because she felt like a true minority in all-White classes. Lastly, the graphic (Figure 2) was created for the visual representation of the process of stress and coping among Mexican
American undergraduates at a Midwestern PWI. Table 3 demonstrates the themes found for each research question.

**Findings**

**Table 3**

*Research Questions and Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) How do Mexican American college students cope with stressors?</td>
<td>Secure Ethnic Identity: Fluid and Mexican leaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What influences their coping processes?</td>
<td>Beliefs of stress, coping, and discrimination: worry, solution and cognitive, and different treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What values are connected to their coping?</td>
<td>American: Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican: Familismo, personalismo, collectivism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) What type of stressors do they experience?</td>
<td>Discrimination: systemic racism and microaggressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-pandemic stress: PWI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic stress: Adapting to change and grief and loss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant stressor: Family related</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-pandemic: Joining Latinx-based organization and usual coping strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic: 1. Sustained emotional response 2. Increased distraction and decrease of usual coping strategies 3. Expand/substitute and usual coping strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) What are the most common coping strategies?</td>
<td>Cognitive coping and help-seeking: social support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2

Stress and Coping Model for Mexican American Undergraduates in a Midwestern PWI

- **Secure Ethnic Identity**: Fluid (depending on context) and Mexican leaning
- **American Value**: Achievement
- **Mexican Values**: Familismo, personalismo, collectivism
- **Beliefs** of stress (worry), coping (solution and cognitive), and discrimination (different treatment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Stressor: Family related</th>
<th><strong>Discrimination</strong>: systemic racism and microaggressions</th>
<th><strong>Pre-pandemic stress</strong>: PWI</th>
<th><strong>Pandemic stress</strong>: Adapting to change and grief &amp; loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Acute Stress**
- **Acute Emotional Response**
  - Powerlessness
  - Anger
  - Fear

- **Cognitive Coping**
  - “I don’t know them”

- **Behavioral Response**
  - Self-Advocacy
  - Avoidance
  - Sought social support

**Long-term stress**
- **Sustained Emotional Response**
  - Depressed
  - Fear
  - Burnout

- **Increased Distraction and Decrease of Usual Coping Strategies**

- **Expand/Substituting & Usual Coping Strategies**
  - (Cognitive, distractions, mindfulness, movement, time management, expressive outlets, and academic & social support)

**Cognitive Coping and Help-Seeking: Social Support**

**Improved Mental Well-Being**
- **Beliefs of Mental Health Improvement in a PWI**
  - Support Groups
  - Unity among Latinx (decrease competitiveness)
  - Outreach (available resources)
Stress and Coping Model for Mexican American Undergraduates in a Midwestern PWI

This dissertation studied Mexican American undergraduates’ process of stress and coping (pre-pandemic and during the pandemic) in a Midwestern PWI. This study found that Mexican American undergraduate students’ secure ethnic identity and cultural values served as protective factors against stressors in a Midwestern PWI. This model shows the process of how secure ethnic identity and cultural values result in helpful coping (Figure 2). Focusing on the process is an important part of this phenomena because there is a potential for intervention to help support students. Lastly, three important findings to note is the predominant stressor and coping strategies. The predominant stressor is family related concerns and their coping strategies are cognitive coping and social support. This model has a base which influences the rest of the process.

Base of Model

The model starts with the students’ secure ethnic identity, cultural values, and beliefs at the base, influencing their stress and coping process. The data showed values of the U.S. The American value of achievement and Mexican values of familismo, personalismo, and collectivism. Familismo refers to a strong connection to family (Villarreal et al., 2017), personalismo refers to the importance of relationships (Cuellar et al., 1995), and collectivism refers to interdependence, adherence to family values, and acting on what is best for the group (Triandis et al., 1986). Five out of the 11 participants in this sample had a fluid Mexican American identity. Fluid, meaning they felt more connected to being Mexican or American, depending on their context. Five participants also reported a stronger connection to their Mexican heritage. The participants described stress as worry, coping as finding solutions and cognitive coping and discrimination as different treatment.
**Discrimination**

All but one participant reported being discriminated against during their undergraduate years. Almost all discrimination happened pre-pandemic. Although the participants described discrimination as distressful, only one participant brought up discrimination as a stressor before being asked about discrimination. The participants' view on discrimination is more event-based, and each participant did not have many discrimination events. Therefore, discrimination stress seemed to be acute. The discrimination reported ranged from systemic racism to microaggressions. Their emotional response was powerlessness, anger, and fear. Participants used cognitive coping in these situations. Most participants were affected by strangers, and they did not put importance on their actions since they did not know them. In this case, familismo can serve as a protective factor for their mental health. In addition, several participants had behavioral responses past cognitive coping. Some participants advocated for themselves, which can affect others in the future. In this case, the collectivistic value is seen here. Some participants avoided the perpetrator, which was driven by fear of escalation. Lastly, some participants sought social support to debrief about what happened as a way of coping.

**Pre-Pandemic**

Most participants (6) reported being in a PWI as a major stressor. Many of the participants were stressed about finding a sense of belonging. Participants came from non-White and White areas before attending this Midwestern PWI. Later, the students found their way to Latinx-based organizations at this Midwestern PWI. Students were also using their usual coping strategies. During the pandemic, their stressors and coping strategies started to shift.
Pandemic

The students described their stress during the pandemic as stressors that involved grief and loss and adapting to change. Their longer-term emotional responses were depression, fear, and burnout, which led to distraction coping (short-term relief) and a decrease in their usual coping strategies. These processes may be considered a freeze response to the traumatic events that happened during the pandemic and because of the pandemic. Later, the students were able to feel more safety which helped them regulate their nervous system and that made it easier to practice their usual coping strategies. Many of these coping strategies were learned through their parents or friends (modeling). In addition, many of the participants had to substitute or expand their coping strategies due to quarantine and the compounding stress. These students had to be resourceful and adaptable, contributing to their resiliency.

Predominant Coping and Stressor

Cognitive coping and seeking social support were used to cope after discrimination, pre-pandemic, and pandemic stress. Seeking social support is tied to personalismo and collectivistic values. In addition, students described the most challenging stressors as family related, which makes sense due to their familismo value. The students’ importance for family made it their predominant stressor. The participants had some ideas that would help them improve their mental health.

Beliefs of Mental Well-Being

The participants were aware of what could help their mental health at their university. The participants believed that Mexican American undergraduate college students at PWIs can improve their mental health by having support groups, working towards unity among Latinx students and decreasing competitiveness, and having outreach services that communicate the
available resources. Participants wanted to receive help, and they also recognized their community would benefit if they were all working together to reach common goals, which is aligned with collectivism.

**Result of Model**

Ultimately, the combination of these students' cultural values and secure ethnic identity worked as protective factors that led to resiliency. The American achievement value influenced persistence in college and use of coping tools. The Mexican values helped participants stay connected with their family and friends and cope with discrimination. Only one participant struggled with their identity in this sample. This participant did not feel connected to their Mexican American ethnic identity. Their secure ethnic identity among these students worked as a protective factor. Students with a fluid Mexican American identity may insinuate adaptability and assimilate, when necessary, through an unconscious and conscious process. These participants’ secure ethnic identity also influenced their connection to their ethnic group. Students who felt more connected to their Mexican heritage used their culture as a strength when navigating their PWI.

**Limits of Model**

This model can be used for Mexican American undergraduate students that attend Midwestern PWIs. They may have similar experiences and therefore similar stress and coping processes. One primary finding that influences the coping process is participants’ secure ethnic identity. This finding was expected due to recruitment of participants from Latinx-based organizations. Hence, this finding does not constitute as a limitation of the model. However, this model is not transferable to students who are not connected to a Latinx-based organization. Another primary finding is Mexican American cultural values. If participants do not hold those
values, then this model may not apply. The next section will provide examples of each part of the model.

**Data Corresponding to Model**

**Secure Ethnic Identity**

**Fluid**

Their connection to each part of their identity was dependent on their environment. Miguel states how he feels: “I think it depends on the environment typically. Ignoring the environment, I'm like half and half, but if I'm back at home, I am way more Mexican than American. Here, I definitely feel like I'm way more American.” Francisco states he feels connected more to his American side, but his environment influenced this:

Probably one, more than the other, probably more of the American side when it comes to a lot of things, but, like, I never really felt like that until I got to high school, when it was, like, I really realized I understood my culture and everything, but I wasn't as deeply rooted as I thought I was.

**Mexican Leaning**

Some participants always felt more connected to their Mexican side. Even though Miguel has a fluid identity he also tries to embrace his Mexican culture at the same time: “I still try to embrace the Mexican side of me as much as I can.” Luis describes himself as a proud Mexican: “I think every Mexican just has a lot of pride and I think everybody should have a lot of pride.”

**American Value**

**Achievement**

Several participants portrayed themselves as striving for success. Elena speaks about the pressure she feels to do well in school: “I think it's coming from me [pressure]. I'm going to be
completely honest--I don't think my parents really put, they never say anything, it's just like, I feel that. They want me to succeed.” Antonio talks about his drive: “I have this pride or this background that just motivates me to do good, to do the best I can in this White world, I guess, or in this American society.”

**Mexican Values**

*Familismo*

Many participants relayed how important their family is in many aspects of their lives. Rosa discusses her stressors: “Family responsibilities and especially in my family. Especially on my dad's side, I feel like I have a lot of responsibilities, like, care for and help my family.” Elena talks about the stress she feels in the family context: “I feel pressured with my parents to be successful. And the whole disappointing somebody, disappointing my parents, in not succeeding. That's what gives me the most.” Rocio discusses how translating for her mom has become the norm for her: “It's normal for me to help out my parents, I don't I think it's weird.”

*Personalismo*

The participants value for personal relationships were highlighted in their help-seeking behavior for social support. Teresa mentions why she seeks help: “They're also students as well. So they kind of understand what's going on because they're also kind of dealing with that stress as well.” Miguel states: “On occasion, vent to my friends, or I just ask them what they would do if I was or if they were in my position. Because I always like, hearing somebody else's opinion.”

*Collectivism*

The participants value for collectivism was highlighted in their desire for unity. Antonio discusses how Mexican Americans can work together for the advancement of the whole group: “If we want to be better, we can just honestly all network together and can honestly build
something that's worth having.” Juan and most of the participants believe that collective care can help improve mental health, he describes a program from the University of Michigan: “Not only do they learn about all the resources, but they got connected to other students.”

**Beliefs**

**Stress**

Stress was described as a cognitive phenomenon in this sample. Participants described stress as worry. Antonio describes stress as “Worry and doubt.” Stress can be short-term or ongoing.

**Coping**

Participants described coping as solutions and mentally moving on (cognitive coping). Juan describes coping as “dealing and living with something.” Teresa describes coping as: “you can find ways to not constantly think about it, just find ways to better yourselves mentally and also figure out like, the best possible solution to get the stress out of your hair.”

**Discrimination**

Participants described discrimination as different treatment. Elena described discrimination as “treating someone different because their race or ethnicity.” This definition influences how they see discrimination in their everyday lives.

**Past and Current Stress Experiences**

**Discrimination**

Discrimination ranged from microaggressions to systemic racism. Elena describes her observation of system racism at her university in terms of receiving funds for student organizations:
You only see the White organizations receiving the most funds. And when it comes to events with Latino orgs, we don't receive the amount of money that they do. And it's always, it's like we have to prove the reasoning behind why we're hosting events like, I feel like we have to present it--We have to work on it 3 times harder. Other student organizations it’s so much easier.

Daniel had police called on him twice in one night, unwarranted, during this time he feared for his life of being murdered by the police. Daniel was upset that the police believed a White clerk over his words that he was not on drugs and he acknowledged that even with his work uniform on he was still discriminated against.

**Acute Emotional Response**

Powerlessness was felt by Martha when she was discriminated against by her waiter: “I didn't have the power to do anything, it felt like it.” Elena became angry when she was discriminated by classmates:

I was just really upset. I just felt anger like, I'm not the type of person to argue so, I never said anything. And I'm not the also not the type of person to try to fight somebody, but I just, like, kept all that anger and frustration inside of me. The thing like, I don't say anything and it's like, I feel like I should. But then it's not even worth it because it's not going to change like their point of view, or it's not going to change them at all.

Powerlessness is another feeling Elena felt because she thought if she self-advocated for herself, there would be no change. Daniel has felt fear of police in their presence: “I'm always worried because I was like, well, probably they're gonna think I'm a criminal. I will probably get shot. I see that happens to, you know, African Americans.”
Cognitive Coping

Most participants engaged in cognitive coping after the discrimination event. Teresa is one of many that didn’t know the perpetrator. Her perpetrator yelled “build the wall” at her and she thought: “I don't know who he is, so at the end of the day, why should I mind, why should I care what he says?” Since many of the participants didn’t know the perpetrator, they had a similar reaction to Teresa. Antonio said: “He or she is not important to me anyways,” about the perpetrator. This is where familismo and personalismo can serve as protective factors against discrimination’s mental effects.

Behavioral Responses

Many of the participants carried out a behavioral response that was also part of the coping process. After cognitive coping, some of them engaged in self-advocacy and sought social support. Elena took advice from her friend when they told her to talk to the professor in the class where her classmates were saying racial microaggressions:

I told my friend, my roommate at the time. And she said it was messed up and to talk to the professor. And I did, I was like, you know, it's not like a really good environment to be in…

Additionally, some participants avoided the perpetrator. Francisco avoided his dorm resident assistant (RA): “It was just like, the entire year, like, really just avoid the RA and like if we did have to have conversations, it was, like, hi and bye things. Like, we weren’t trying to be friends or anything.” Francisco felt like he had no support at the time, being one of the only Latinx person in his dorm, which influenced his response to avoid his RA.
Pre-Pandemic Stress

PWI

Many participants experienced stress from being in a PWI. Participants sought a sense of belonging and feared discrimination. Luis talks about being in his classrooms “It's just a lot of White people and sometimes I feel like I don’t belong, but, I mean, I stay there because I know this is just temporary.” Daniel mentioned how he felt in his predominately White classrooms: “I didn't belong there or I didn't feel smart enough or equal to them.” Miguel was afraid of racism on campus:

I was always worried because this is a new environment for me, I always grew up in a place heavily populated with minorities and so I never felt like I was a minority there and I felt like I could just blend in, but when I had to go to college, predominantly White, I was always afraid to, especially because of a Trump. I mean that I would be somehow discriminated against. And that just caused to stress on me honestly a lot because I was always wondering is that person racist…You know, it was always that fear, because it was something new.

Other Pre-Pandemic Stressors

In addition, to being in a PWI, there were several other stressors mentioned. Family concerns, moving away from family, academic disadvantages, academics, finances, basic needs, navigating college, time management, support system, social life, asking for help, and work were the many stressors mentioned. Daniel states:

Grades, bills sometimes I have like I guess I like about the money. Like, if I'm going to run out of the summer money, I probably have to work but I don't want to work.
That's just been stressed out like, money management. Time management, asking for help. Grades, having a social life.

**Latinx-based Organizations**

**Of the 11 students,** 9 of the participants found their way to at least one Latinx-based organization at this Midwestern PWI. Elena says,

> Being a part of student organizations is my, I guess, that helps me too. Like, I mean, I interact with a lot of people. And I'm not thinking of my stress, so you can just. I'm just me, just relax. Just socializing.

Many found belonging somewhere in these groups. Due to their secure ethnic identity, they were able to connect with these groups. The participants that did not disclose being in a Latinx-based organization, they at least stayed connected to their families.

**Pandemic Stress: Adapting to Change and Grief & Loss**

Most participants experienced grief and loss and were trying to adapt to change. There were many things that changed due to the pandemic; online learning, communication, loss of in-person community, and death. Juan explains how it feels to lose in-person community:

> I think losing that community. Just like, I think one of the most amazing things about college is it's like. Not only just taking classes, but like, just like the social life and hanging out with your friends on campus and stuff like that. And so I guess when I'm here in my house doing work. And, like doing homework and, like, doing stuff like that, it's not like. Um, I don't know, I guess there's something about, like, being able to relate to your friends, like, oh, you know, I got this exam coming up and, like. I gotta do this, this and this and, you know, it's not the same being on to say. To your parents may not understand where you're coming from.
Francisco explains how it’s like to remember his mom passing away:

I'm just going on with my day and then I’d be having a good week and then something small reminds me of my family or her and, I just don't feel like doing anything anymore. And then that just rolls into putting off my responsibilities again. And then trying to rush to get things done.

*Sustained Emotional Response*

The ongoing pandemic had many of the participants feel burnout, depression, and fear.

Daniel explains how depression was like for him:

The peak of the depressed, it was like, schools were closing, and a lot of people were losing their jobs. And all that, about a month later, and people are like trying new things like, okay, we're going to do online school which made me kind of feel better.

Going back to routine helped him feel better. In addition, Juan mentioned feeling “exhaustion” during the pandemic.

*Increase Distraction and Decrease of Usual Coping*

The participants had an increase of distraction coping (short-term) and lost motivation to continue their normal coping strategies. Miguel started playing more video games as distraction and became less physically active: “I ended up playing a little more in video games, than I'd like to admit. So, I guess I became a little less active.” In addition, more distractions can be found at home versus a library, Teresa explains: “Pre-pandemic and pandemic, I guess I didn't stop doing what I needed to do and then, like, clean a little bit, but I felt like during COVID [-19] time, I did it more often because I was at home more.”

*Expand/Substitute & Usual Coping Strategies*

The participants were able to learn new coping, substitute coping, and use their normal

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coping strategies at some point after the pandemic started. Antonio was determined to learn how to help his mental health:

I guess one of the books for, like one of the podcast, I guess is this really ingrained in my head, it's like, hey, if you drop down or something, a lot of things, you won't be as stressed, and you will still manage to get everything completed in the way you want to. I don't stress, I don't put too much importance on a lot of things anymore.

Juan substituted in-person socialization coping with listening to music when quarantining:

The music thing wasn't something I really did until the pandemic for me. And then, like going to like, different campus events and doing stuff with my friends on campus was stuff I’d do pre-pandemic, so it's just kind of like yeah, I guess that that music was like a substitute.

Now Juan has an additional coping strategy he can use with music.

**Improved Mental-Wellbeing**

Participants believe that support groups, unity among Latinx, and receiving outreach services from this Midwestern PWI would help the mental health of Mexican American students at a PWI. These solutions are related to community care, which stem back to their values. Elena mentions support groups as beneficial:

Maybe like support groups or having a space where we can go and talk to somebody. Because I mean, maybe workshops well, sometimes people, like, they can go to workshops, but don't apply what is said. Helpful resources to do to help with stress & coping, but I think definitely like, I don't know some form of group. Or something, because like Western, like, you have trio, you have, camp, you have different scholars, like, MLK scholars and all these different programs, and I've benefited from programs. I
get to go talk to, like, maybe one other staff member share, like, you know, they assign
you like a peer mentor or a leader, you know. So, at least you to talk to them about stuff.
A lot of students don't benefit from those programs. So, like maybe having a support
group within the office of diversity inclusion to strictly just you know, be there for
Mexican American students.
Lastly, Miguel talks about how he would like students to become more aware of the anti-racism
training this Midwestern PWI offers: “If we can somehow spread more of that kind of
awareness.”

Predominant Stressor: Family Concerns

Participants described their most challenging stressors to be family related. For example,
Luis doesn’t want to burden his parents with added stress of money:

My mom, my people, like my parents have their family in Mexico. They still help out. I
don't go to them. I'm like, they’re already helping somebody out. I don't want to add more
stress to them. You know what I mean?
In his perspective he has no choice but to be financially independent because his value of
familismo and collectivism of helping the mental health of his parents. If his parents experience
less stress, the whole family will have better outcomes. Antonio worries about physical and
emotional closeness within his family: “I like my family to stay close and if they're not, it's like,
okay, it's bothersome” Elena does not receive verbal pressure from her parents to succeed in
college, but she stated that she still feels pressure from them. This could be due to Elena being
second generation living in the United States. She may feel like she owes them this—to be
successful for their sacrifices they made. Rosa stated that her family is one of her biggest
stressors, specifically her father:
My dad's really stubborn and it's hard to really tell him anything and I want to. He's like 70 years old and I want to look out for him and care for him, and it's really difficult because he doesn't listen anything I say so it makes it a lot harder.

One of Rocio’s biggest stressors included parenting and being a child of an immigrant. For Rocio even if these are challenging, she finds parenting rewarding and she states that she does not mind helping her mother with translation. Francisco’s biggest stressor was losing his mother to COVID-19. Francisco was dealing with grief while having to deal with other changes the pandemic brought.

**Conclusion**

Chapter four reviewed the description of the participants, data analysis, and the findings. The description of the participants reviewed the demographic information from each participant. This section included a short description of each participant and their quotes. The quotes help form a deeper understanding of each participant and their worldview. The data analysis section summarized the data analysis process for this study. Lastly, the findings included the research questions and categories table (Table 2), the theory (Figure 2), the theory description, and quotes that corresponded to the theory. Chapter five will review supporting literature for the findings, limitations, implications for counselors and counselor educators, and future research directions.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Chapter five will go over the discussion of the study. This chapter describes the study and its’ findings. Further, this chapter will review the literature related to the findings, limitations, implications, and future research recommendations. There are several findings in the study that have been supported by past literature. This support in the literature is one of the reasons that gives data saturation credibility. New findings also add to the existing literature on Mexican American counseling. This chapter will start by giving a brief background of the study.

There are currently minimal studies that have studied stressors and coping among Mexican American college students attending a Midwestern PWI. Mexican American undergraduates have unique challenges that need to be addressed by counselors within the university context and in community settings. This grounded theory study aimed to describe and interpret the process of stress and coping of college undergraduate Mexican American students at a Midwestern PWI to generate a theory. This study builds off existing theories while generating a new theory related to the coping and stress of Mexican American college students attending PWIs. This study sought to answer these research questions: (1) How do Mexican American college students cope with stressors? (a) What influences their coping processes? (b) What values are connected to their coping? (c) What type of stressors do they experience? (d) How do their coping processes vary? (e) What are the most common coping strategies?

Summary of Findings

The participants’ secure ethnic identity made it easier to seek social support within their Latinx community and adapt to their environment. Their ethnic identity was fluid, depending on their context and Mexican-leaning for most. Their Mexican American values of familismo,
personalismo, collectivism, and achievement may have served as protective factors against stress. Stress was described as worry, coping was described as solutions and cognitive coping, and discrimination was defined as different treatment. The most challenging stressor reported was family related. This category is broad but there were different types of stressors that were either directly related to family or collaterally influenced by their family.

The discrimination stressors included microaggressions and systemic racism. Discrimination elicited short-term stress and emotions. Participants coped by using cognitive strategies. Then, the participants had a behavioral response by self-advocating, avoiding the perpetrator, and seeking social support. The most common pre-pandemic stressor was being in a PWI due to seeking a sense of belonging on campus. Almost all participants were involved in a Latinx-based organization, so they eventually found a community at their PWI. The most common stressors were adapting to change and grief and loss during the pandemic. The participants experienced long-term stress and feelings of depression, burnout, and fear. Then, the participants increased distraction coping (short-term) and decreased their usual coping strategies. Sometime after the pandemic started, the participants could expand their coping strategies and use their usual coping strategies. Overall, the most common coping strategies were cognitive coping and seeking social support.

**Literature Related to Findings**

**Ethnic Identity as a Protective Factor**

This dissertation study adds to the studies that find ethnic identity as a protective factor. Torres and Ong (2010) found that identity commitment among Latinx provided a buffer against discrimination stress. Identity commitment in their study refers to a sense of belonging or attachment to their ethnic group. The authors discuss that identity commitment is an essential
indicator for coping with discrimination. The authors discuss that part of the formation of identity commitment may be building a social support network of other Latinx. The formation of a support system is helpful for coping. This dissertation study found that some participants did choose to use their support system to cope after a discrimination event. In addition, almost all participants were involved in a Latinx-based organization, so at least their attachment to their ethnic group was evident.

These participants' tendency to seek social support helped them cope in general. This dissertation study adds to past ethnic identity studies by learning how a secure Mexican American ethnic identity can work as a protective factor in a PWI. A secure Mexican American ethnic identity (at any acculturation level) can mean that the participants can easily choose which side to connect with (unconsciously or consciously). This process helps them navigate a PWI. Due to participants' confidence in their ethnic identity, whether fluid or Mexican-leaning, they could use specific values as a drive for their coping strategies. Values are associated with each side of their Mexican American identity and research has found correlations to well-being.

**Familismo Value as a Protective Factor**

The value of familismo in the literature has been shown to have positive associations. Familismo values were found in the coping process among the participants in the study. Villarreal et al. (2017) found that men that scored higher in familismo and fatalismo did not show depressive symptoms. Germán and colleagues (2009) also found that familismo is a protective factor among Mexican American adolescents. Morgan Consoli et al. (2016) found that Mexican cultural values of family support and religion were significant predictors of thriving.

In a study that researched discrimination and values, Ayón et al. (2010) suggested that even though familismo improved mental health, it did not serve as a protective factor against
discrimination’s psychological effects. However, in this dissertation study, the stress from discrimination was considered short-term. A mixed-method study found that Mexican American traditional values such as familismo (familism), respeto (respect), religiosidad (religiosity), and gender roles contribute to resiliency, with familismo contributing the most (Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013). The qualitative themes that appeared were familismo, religiosidad, respeto, perseverance, and ethnic identity. The authors stated that Mexican American values play a significant role in building resilience. Resilience in this study was defined as positive individual characteristics that improve adaptation, which leads to life satisfaction (Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013).

**Discrimination and Stress**

All but one participant experienced discrimination in this study. The participants experienced psychological distress from these experiences. A few participants were afraid of racial discrimination in the Midwestern PWI they attended. Villegas-Gold and Yoo (2014) found that subjective well-being decreased among Southwestern Mexican American college students as perceived racial discrimination increased. Out of the coping strategies examined, Villegas-Gold & Yoo (2014) found problem-solving the only mediator in subjective well-being. As perceptions of perceived racial discrimination increased, problem-solving increased, which positively correlated to subjective well-being. In this dissertation study, a few participants did engage in self-advocacy, which is considered problem-solving. Avoiding the discriminatory perpetrator was another theme that could also be considered problem-solving since the participant would no longer be affected by the perpetrator. Maladaptive coping strategies (self-criticism, wishful thinking, and withdrawal) were significant mediators that increased as subjective well-being
decreased (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). In this dissertation study, only one participant engaged in wishful thinking.

A national study of 399 African Americans and Mexican Americans found that among Latinx there was a significant positive correlation between racial microaggressions and psychological, behavioral, and physiological stress responses. Psychological stress response from discrimination was also experienced by the participants in this dissertation study. Franklin (2019) suggested that coping strategies may be effective on an individual basis. In this dissertation study, the participants engaged in cognitive coping, sought social support, self-advocated, and avoided the perpetrator. The participants were able to cope on an individual basis.

**Coping Theories**

Yosso (2005) defined community cultural wealth as "an array of knowledges, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by Communities of Color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression" (p. 154). Participants in this study asked for an increase in social capital to improve mental health. All participants had to learn how to navigate a PWI to reach where they are now. In part, navigating a PWI may have been connected to social capital and ethnic identity. Midlarsky (1991) stated that helping people may provide a distraction from stressors, induce a feeling of meaning and purpose, and increase positive feelings, self-worth, and self-efficacy. The participants in this study stated that support groups and working towards unity among the Latinx community would help improve their mental health. Helping may be a by-product of those two activities.

**Stress Theories**

The transactional stress model explains stress as the incongruency in perceived demands and resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The participants stated that they would like to be
aware of all their university's resources to achieve better mental health outcomes. Therefore, this stress theory supports the theory in this dissertation. Similarly, in the model of conservation of resources, Hobfoll (1989) stated that coping resources are the most significant factor in predicting stress. When loss of resources occurs, replacing them may happen. This theory, in part, encapsulates some of the participants when they replaced coping strategies when the pandemic hit. However, not all replaced coping strategies due to the high stress or trauma felt during the pandemic. Minority stress theory (McConnell et al., 2018; Meyer, 1995) indicates that minorities experience more stress related to their oppression, producing chronic stress. Most of this dissertation participants experienced discrimination as a stressor. However, the discrimination mentioned was not considered chronic stress for the participants. Discrimination has always been adversity that Mexican Americans face and the added pandemic may exacerbate mental health issues. There are recent studies that have found the effects of pandemic stress (Martinez Arriaga et al., 2021; Rivera-Rivera et al., 2021; Zimmermann et al., 2021).

**Pandemic Stress**

In this study, the pandemic stress evoked prolonged stress, depression, fear, and burnout. Martinez Arriaga et al. (2021) found that stress was positively associated with anxiety, anger, sadness, isolation, and daily screen time during the COVID-19 2020 pandemic among Mexican college students. Screen time may have been used as distraction coping. In addition, stress was negatively correlated with happiness and relaxation. These correlations may be due to a freeze state in the students’ nervous system and similar to participants in this study, they had increased distraction coping. Rivera-Rivera et al. (2021) found that high pandemic stress was correlated with depression among Mexican women and social support may serve as an effective coping
strategy against the effects of psychosocial stress. Zimmermann et al. (2021) found that Latinx and women had greater stress levels than other students during the beginning of the pandemic. Given the effects of pandemic stress on Latinx populations, stress and coping are essential to explore.

Coping Strategies

Seeking social support was one of this study's most common coping strategies. Past studies have found social support as a protective factor in college. Hernandez and Villodas (2019) found that social support was significantly correlated to Latinx students' academic persistence attitudes. Students’ involvement in social support with peers, family, and college personnel served as educational coping (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Students are more likely to remain in college with their involvement with social and academic support.

In addition to social support, mindfulness was a common coping strategy. Mindfulness has been found to be positively correlated with life satisfaction among Mexica American undergraduates (Vela et al., 2016). In relation to academic coping, Mexican American students may benefit from becoming familiar with individualistic behaviors (e.g., goal-setting) to excel in college (Ojeda et al., 2011). In this study, students did engage in time management.

Stress and Coping among Mexican-descent College Students at a Midwestern PWI

A pilot study explored the stressors and coping of undergraduate Mexican American male students at a PWI (J. Perales, 2019). This study found that stressors included discrimination and predominately White spaces as stress sources, among others (J. Perales, 2019). Coping consisted of engaging in social activities and cognitive coping. To sustain persistence, consistent involvement with the Latinx community happened, leading to improved mental well-being. This involvement may be receiving, providing, or both, such as mentorship, activism,
advocacy, and volunteer work (J. Perales, 2019). The findings mentioned supported what was found in several parts of this dissertation’s findings. A new finding was that competitiveness among Latinx organizations was mentioned in this sample. This finding could be due to awareness of the issue and increased competitiveness among the organizations. The pilot study found that the participants were motivated to cope by their family, Latinx community, and self (Perales, 2019). However, in this dissertation study, this theme was not found.

During the pandemic, a dissertation study among Mexican-descent migrant farmworker college students was conducted (A. Perales, 2021). This study primarily focused on studying intragroup marginalization, but there were many similarities among the participants' experiences. A. Perales (2021) found that the participants were able to seek support through friends, family, or counselors as part of coping. Some participants struggled to cope with stress, were unsure how to cope, paused self-care, and ignored stress. These findings support the stress and coping process during the pandemic. “Othered” is another theme that supports this study. Many participants felt like they did not belong on campus (A. Perales, 2021). This finding matched the pre-pandemic stress the participants experienced in this study.

**New Findings**

This study brought new findings to the literature. This study provided insight into what a secure ethnic identity can look like for students in a Midwestern PWI. These participants reported fluid (Between Mexican and American) and Mexican-leaning identities. A secure ethnic identity helped with adaptability in a Midwestern PWI. The participants were consciously and unconsciously adapting to their environment. Also, this study found what values served as protective factors for students in a Midwestern PWI. The American value of achievement helped with persistence in school and the use of coping tools. This study showed
how participants’ stress and coping beliefs influenced what they saw as stressors, how they experienced stress, and how they coped. For example, the participants saw coping as solution-focused and cognitive, so they engaged in that type of coping.

This study provided the stress and coping processes that occur in a Midwestern PWI for Mexican American college undergraduates. This study showed the discrimination process of coping. The value of familismo served as a protective factor in this study against discrimination’s psychological long-term effects. This study also gave insight into the process of coping during the pandemic. This study confirmed that the pandemic may have dysregulated the participants' nervous system (freeze response). The participants reported long-term stress and engaged in poor coping changes during the pandemic. Overall, the most used coping strategies were cognitive coping and seeking social support and the predominant stressor was family-related concerns.

**Limitations**

There are limitations to every study. All interviews were conducted via Webex video. Two participants choose to keep their cameras hidden. Therefore, I was not able to see their facial expressions. There is also a limitation when doing interviews over video because I cannot see whole body language. Rapport may have been better in-person. However, it was best suitable since the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. Self-report is another limitation of this study.

Like all self-report research, participants may be withholding information. Some participants may have felt more comfortable with me than others which possibly impacted their answers. Participants were asked to remember pre-pandemic events; their memory could have
been affected. If participants experienced trauma, trauma could affect memory. In addition, there are other limitations to be aware of

All participants identified as Mexican Americans and this sample was multiracial. However, several participants did not know their race and results can look differently depending on race. A Black Mexican American may have a far different experience from a White Mexican American. In addition, several identities were not shared by anyone else in the sample. For example, there were only one mother, one DACA recipient, and one LGBTQ+ member. Those participants may experience more stress than the rest of the sample. There were also no non-binary participants in this sample. In addition, most participants were connected to a Latinx-based organization on campus. So, this theory may not be transferable to students that are not connected to a Latinx-based organization on campus. Lastly, this study captured students enrolled in college, but students who dropped out or took a pause from school would have rendered different results.

Implications

Predominately White Institutions

Being in a PWI was a major stressor in this study. Most of the students struggled with feeling belonging in their Midwestern PWI. Due to this finding, it is recommended that Latinx students become connected with Latinx-based organizations before they start college or at least when they start college. A general Latinx organization may serve as a mentor program for incoming first-year students, so they at least get connected to one current student. In addition, PWIs can create a summer program for Latinx to meet the new incoming Latinx students and learn all the college support programs (University of Michigan, n.d). Building community is
crucial for this population to enhance a sense of belonging. Another crucial factor for belonging is making PWIs a safe and anti-racist environment.

Outreach was mentioned to be one of the ways to improve mental health in PWIs. One of the outreach suggestions from a participant was to offer anti-racist training to students. Some universities have anti-racist training they offer or are mandatory for students and staff. It would benefit universities to move from a diversity and inclusion institution to an anti-racist institution. Institutions have a responsibility to dismantle systems of oppression. PWIs that recruit people of color and promote diversity and inclusion must have a safe environment for people of color. Dismantling systems of oppression at an institution can be done through anti-racism work. Moving towards an anti-racist institution from an inclusive institution means institutions must provide anti-racist training to all, attempt to rid of White advantage, build strong cross-racial relationships, White people develop accountability to people of color, mass leadership commits to anti-racism work and identity, and policy changes occur to include the institution's commitment to anti-racism (Barndt, 2007). These recommendations would be the next step to enhancing a safe environment for people of color on campus. Organizational advisors are another resource to consider in supporting Mexican American college students.

Registered student organizations (RSO) have an appointed advisor. Advisors are typically staff or faculty on campus. Advisors can serve an important role in outreach and referrals. Advisors for Latinx-based RSOs should learn about beneficial student programs and counseling services on campus. Ponjuan and Hernandez (2021) found that the male Latinx students did not know their resources on campus. Therefore, campus programs and services should be more strategic in recruitment and advertising to reach this population. Building unity among the Latinx population on campus is another recommendation.
Unity among Latinx was another theme when asked what would improve their mental health. Engagement in activism on campus or in their local community may enhance that feeling of unity. Collaboration among all Latinx-based organizations could also help enhance unity. Collaboration could mean volunteering and having events together—the more collaboration between Latinx-based organizations, the more potential for unity. Advisors can encourage this form of collaboration. Lastly, implications from this study also target the counselor education field.

**Counselor Educators, Counselors, Counselors-In-Training**

This study has several implications for counselor educators, counselors, and counselors-in-training. Many of the implications can be taught by counselor educators in the multicultural course, practicum, internship, and other courses. Morgan Consoli and Llamas (2013) suggest that exploring adherence to clients’ cultural values and ethnic identity would be beneficial in counseling. In counseling, values and ethnic identity can be used to build on their strengths. Therefore, exploration of achievement, familismo, collectivism, and personalismo values and ethnic identity should be explored in session among this population. Cultural values and ethnic identity may serve as protective factors. Counselors should explore self-advocacy when Mexican American clients face discrimination. Self-advocacy may be beneficial in strengthening the client’s power in a situation and aligning with their collectivistic value of caring for others. In addition, coping strategies are an essential part of counseling.

Counselors must know how to build culturally appropriate coping strategies. Clients should be asked if they would like to try their usual coping strategies again, replace them with something else, and learn new coping strategies when building coping skills. Teaching new coping skills to Mexican American clients can range from cognitive restructuring, using
distractions, practicing mindfulness, engaging in physical movement, time-management, expressive outlets, and academic and social resources. Counselors should ask about their current coping strategies and their hobbies so they can expand their coping tools. Given the coping skills used in this sample, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) could work for Mexican American students. Organista and Munoz (1996) also believed CBT matched the Latinx population with some adaptations. Organista and Munoz (1996; Gonyea et al., 2016) recommend small talk to enhance trust in the relationship, including self-disclosure. The authors also recommend simplifying the ABCD model to helpful and unhelpful thoughts and challenging unhelpful thoughts with “Yes, but...” sentences. Lastly, use distraction rather than self-care term to become more culturally responsive. Distraction is often used in the Latinx culture, so it is a familiar language. Hinton et al. (2011) Recommends using culturally appropriate imagery and using coping rituals already in use in addition to the coping/relaxation skills taught in CBT. Education should be simple and analogies should be related to their culture. In addition, Solution-focused techniques seem to be fitting when building coping strategies for this population since their perspective on coping is solution-focused. Lastly, family stress is another topic to be explored in counseling.

Family related stress was found to be the most common stressor. It is crucial to explore how to best support these students by understanding their family dynamics. Learning about their relationship with their family will give insight into what types of support are already there and what support needs strengthening. For example, learning communication skills and boundary setting and finding resources for them. Since asking for help was one of the most common coping strategies, it would be appropriate to help strengthen Mexican American clients' support network if the client is struggling with reaching out for help. Strengthening their network could
mean encouraging the client to attend a Latinx-based organization informational or attend one of their events. Support groups could be another source for strengthening the client’s network and coping strategies.

Support groups were a theme in this study when asked what would help improve their mental health. Support groups on campus could be created for this population. Support groups have the flexibility to be however the participants want them to be and whatever their needs are. Counseling services were only used among a few participants in this study. Some of the students did not know they could request a counselor of color. Having diverse counselors on campus is vital for students of color. Then, the next point of action would be for the counselors to have outreach experiences at all-campus program events and form a relationship with Latinx-based organizations. The program director and counselors can collaborate on how to reach this population best. A. Perales (2021) recommended that this relationship be formed as it has the potential to provide counselors-in-training practicum and internship sites and help destigmatize utilizing counseling services. Counselors also have the responsibility to dismantle systems of oppression.

Counselors and counselor educators must work towards dismantling systems of oppression via anti-racist work. The American Counseling Association (2014) upholds counselors’ duty to be social justice advocates. It would be unethical for counselors to help clients cope with oppression while disregarding the oppressive systems that cause clients distress. Swan and Ceballos (2020) have suggested that counselors must implement social justice advocacy in and outside of the counseling room. Swan and Ceballos (2020) recommend first becoming aware of oppressive systems that affect people of color and then working towards dismantling those systems. Counselors, counselors-in-training, and counselor educators should
continually explore their biases and think critically about their views. Consciously or unconsciously, one can internalize racist views. Therefore, critical thinking about one’s thoughts is essential. Anti-racism is about actively going against racism, including oneself, others, and society (Aquino, 2016). Speaking up about the racism one has been affected by (Fleming et al., 2012) and speaking up against racism witnessed (Mitchell et al., 2011) are examples of anti-racist work. Anti-racism benefits clients, campus environments, and society.

Counselor educators must train counselors to address oppression. Counselor educators can have their trainees develop individual advocacy programs to develop advocacy knowledge and their confidence towards advocacy (Edwards et al., 2017). Advocacy and anti-racism examples include working at a college and going to administrators to advocate for the students that are experiencing discrimination, advocating for better resources for marginalized communities, joining a research team, joining a local advocacy organization, or community service, among others (Murray et al., 2010).

Counselor educators can create assignments that target social justice advocacy. Washington and Henfield (2019) suggest student assignments based on the Association for Multicultural Counseling Development and Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies (Ratts et al., 2015). Supporting this suggestion, counselor educators can require students to attend anti-racism workshops offered in the community. When students attend workshops like these, they can later reflect on that experience and make an action plan towards anti-racism work. Self-reflections have been recommended to raise multicultural and advocacy awareness (Burnes & Singh, 2010; Decker et al., 2015; Edwards et al., 2017). Lastly, counselor educators should continue implementing an effort to include multicultural counseling in every course. This type of education will focus on the racially and ethnically diverse populations in conjunction with other
identities that clients hold. From this study, there are indicators that lead to future research directions.

**Future Research**

Future research should continue to grow the literature on Mexican American college undergraduates to produce best practices in counseling for this population. Since context matters, it would be ideal for researching this population in other regions of the United States (i.e., the pacific northwest). By conducting research in different regions in the United States, we can see the differences and similarities among ethnic identity, values, stress, and coping. Future studies should home into the predominant stressor of family related concerns. During pre-pandemic and the pandemic experience, family concerns were at the forefront of these participants’ minds. In result, counselors can better support this population. The timing of the research also matters. Now that the pandemic is ongoing into the third year, students’ stress and coping processes might look different. Many mask mandates have been lifted, there are COVID-19 therapeutics available, more testing available, and the COVID-19 vaccine and booster are readily accessible, especially for college students living near campus. Even though most of the participants did not mention getting infected with COVID-19 as a stressor, the effects of the pandemic were major stressors.

Future research can produce longitudinal studies for students that were impacted by the pandemic. This longitudinal research can focus on the effects of the pandemic. There may be permanent or temporary changes from the pandemic. Researchers can compare data collected pre-pandemic and collect data during the pandemic at different points in time. For example, repeat studies every year to understand mental health changes. Researchers can study how the pandemic impacted mental health, such as stress, coping, thriving, and resilience. On the other
side, research should also be conducted on students that had to drop out of college or paused college due to the pandemic. One common explanation to pause college was because students wanted to attend college in person for many different reasons. However, some students decided to pause or drop out of college due to mental health issues, among other reasons. Learning about the obstacles that students faced can help prevent dropouts in college. Another helpful research area is how PWIs changed throughout the pandemic and how those changes affected Mexican American students. Learning which changes were considered barriers, neutral, or beneficial would help inform other PWIs on what they can do to help this population succeed in college.

**Conclusion**

Chapter five went over the discussion of the study. This chapter described the study and its findings. Also, this chapter reviewed the literature related to the findings, limitations, implications, and future research recommendations. There were several findings in the study that have been supported by past counseling-related literature. This study added to the education and counseling literature by learning about the specific group of Mexican American college undergraduates attending a Midwestern PWI. Mexican American undergraduate students’ secure ethnic identity and cultural values serve as protective factors against stressors in Midwestern PWIs. This research will help add to best practices for this population in the counselor education field. This research will also help PWIs better support this population.
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Appendix A

Recruitment Email Script
Hello,

My name is Jeanette Calvario Perales and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Western Michigan University. I invite you to take part in a research study titled Stressors and Coping of Mexican American College Undergraduates. If you decide to participate in this study, you will receive a $10 Amazon electronic gift card after participation in one interview and you will receive another $10 after a short check-in to confirm the findings. Additionally, my general findings (no identifiable information) will be shared to WMU administration to address the needs of Mexican American students.

In the interview, I will be asking questions about your stressors and reactions to those stressors (coping). The Webex interview will be up to 60 minutes and the check-in will be up to 20 minutes. To qualify for this study, participants must meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as Mexican American
2. Junior or senior undergraduate WMU student (i.e., working on bachelor’s degree)

If you are interested in learning more about my study, please email me at, jeanette.c.perales@wmich.edu for more information. By emailing to receive more information about the study, you may be seeking more information and are not committing to participate.

Best,

Jeanette Calvario Perales, MA, LPC, NCC
Counselor Education and Supervision Doctoral Candidate
Western Michigan University
Appendix B

Informed Consent
Western Michigan University
Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Foster, Ph.D
Student Investigator: Jeanette C Perales, M.A.
Title of Study: Stressors and Coping of Mexican American College Undergraduates

You are invited to participate in this research project titled “Stressors and Coping of Mexican American College Undergraduates”

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to:
The purpose of this grounded theory study is to describe and interpret the process of stress and coping of Mexican American students at a predominantly White institution (PWI) midwestern university in order to generate a theory. This study will serve as Jeanette Perales’ dissertation for the requirement of the counselor education and supervision doctoral degree. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to participate in an interview and a check-in. Your time in the study will take up to 80 minutes total. Possible risk and costs to you for taking part in the study may be discomfort from answering sensitive questions. Potential benefits include the contribution to the counseling field who seek to serve the Mexican American population and possibly provide support for institutional change. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

The following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this study to explore the stressors and coping strategies used among college undergraduate Mexican Americans.

Who can participate in this study?
You may participate in this study if you are a Mexican American junior or senior undergraduate student and are enrolled at Western Michigan University.
Where will this study take place?
This study will take place on Webex video conferencing. The video meeting will be locked so that others cannot enter our session. The video session and audio will be recorded and their files will be stored via a password-protected file in OneDrive.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
You will be asked to participate in an interview that could last up to 60 minutes. Then, you will be asked several months after the interview to participate in a check-in to confirm the findings that will take up to 20 minutes. The total time commitment is up to 80 minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to participate in an interview about stressors and coping.

What information is being measured during the study?
The investigator will be analyzing your responses from the interview and the check-in.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
You may experience mild to moderate psychological discomfort when answering questions about stressors. You may take a break from answering questions if you wish to continue with the study. You will be provided with a mental health resource list as resource information.

Your identity will be concealed by a random pseudonym.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are currently limited qualitative studies exploring stressors and coping of Mexican American college undergraduates at predominantly white institutions. Potential benefits by participating in this study could mean potentially assisting in informing the counselor education field when working with this population. The findings of this research may also provide support for institutional change.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
The only cost costs associated with participating in this study is the time needed for the interview.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
A $10 electronic gift card will be given to the participant after the completion of the interview and another $10 electronic gift card will be given to the participant after confirming the findings with the participant.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Only the principal investigator and student investigator will have access to all data collected (e.g., interview). Transcripts, video, and audio will be stored in a password-protected file in OneDrive.
The only two people allowed access to this file is the principal investigator and student investigator. All information collected will be held confidential and a pseudonym will be used to conceal your identity.

**What will happen to my information or biospecimens collected for this research project after the study is over?**

After information that could identify you has been removed, de-identified information collected for this research may be used by or distributed to investigators for other research without obtaining additional informed consent from you.

**What if you want to stop participating in this study?**

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Dr. Jennifer Foster at (269) 387-5115 or jennifer.foster@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

---

**Please Print Your Name**

Participant’s signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Appendix C

Interview Protocol
Introduction and consent to audio and video record
Turn on audio recorders and start recording screen
Explanation of research study
Explanation of interest in unique narrative of the participant
Length of interview: up to 60 minutes
Explain confidentiality
Expectations of interview
Questions/concerns?
Demographics

Introduction (5-10 minutes):

Good afternoon. I would like to thank you for participating in this interview. I am Jeanette Perales from Western Michigan University.

Thank you for volunteering as a participant in this study. The information you give us today will teach us about what stressors Mexican American college undergraduate students experience and the coping strategies used. I am interested in your own experiences and processes of stressors and coping during your undergraduate time. This information will help students with your background improve their mental well-being. Additionally, my general findings (with no identifiable information) will be shared to WMU administration to address the needs of Mexican American students. I really appreciate you taking the time to help with this study.

Before we get started, there are a few things you should know.

• I am very interested in your point of view. There are no wrong answers.

• I will remain objective. So, I ask that you please say what you think/feel, not what you think I want to hear.

• The conversation will be audio and video recorded. This will allow us to go back and listen, take notes, and then write a short summary about what was said. I want to reassure you that these recordings will not be shared. All of your comments will remain anonymous. This means your name will stay secret and won’t link you to what you said. You will be assigned a random pseudonym.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions:

1) What does it mean to be Mexican American for you, personally?
2) How would you define stress?
3) How would you define coping?
4) What are the stressors you have experienced during your time as an undergraduate student Pre-COVID-19 pandemic? Please describe.
5) What are the stressors you have experienced during your time as an undergraduate student during COVID-19 pandemic? Please describe.

6) In general, what is/are the most challenging stressor(s) for you?  
   a) What makes it/them the most challenging?

7) Think about one of the most recent challenging stressors you experienced.  
   a) How were you feeling?  
   b) What were you thinking?  
   c) What did you do?  
   d) How did you cope with it?  
      i) What was that process like?

8) How else do you cope with stressors?

9) Were there any differences in the way you coped pre-pandemic versus during the pandemic?  
   a) If so, how so?  
      i) What was that process like?  
      ii) What influenced you to cope this way?

10) Have you sought out any help during stressful times?  
    a) Was there a difference of seeking help pre-pandemic versus during pandemic?

11) How would you define discrimination?

12) If you have been discriminated against during your time as an undergraduate student, tell me about the most recent time this has happened to you.  
    a) How were you feeling?  
    b) What were you thinking?  
    c) What did you do?  
    d) How did you deal with it or cope with it?  
    e) What influenced you to deal or cope with it this way?  
    f) Was there a difference of how you dealt with discrimination pre-pandemic versus during the pandemic?  
       i) If so, how so?  
       ii) What influenced you to cope this way?

13) How do you think we can improve mental health for Mexican American college undergraduates in a predominately white institution?  
    a) How can universities, like here, help support Mexican Americans?

14) Do you know anyone that might be interested in participating in this study?
Appendix D

Demographic Information
- Ethnicity:
- Gender:
- Race:
- Age:
- Generation level:
- Years in college:
- Grew up (location):
Appendix E

HSIRB Approval
Date:    May 10, 2021

To:  Jennifer Foster, Principal Investigator
     Jeanette Perales, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re:    IRB Project Number 21-04-3C.

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Stressors and Coping of Mexican American College Undergraduates” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

A status report is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days) May 9, 2022 and each year thereafter until closing of the study.

When this study closes, submit the required Final Report found at https://wmich.edu/research/forms.

Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.