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Navigating College: The Educational Experiences of Hispanic Immigrant-English Language Learners

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NAVIGATING COLLEGE: THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF HISPANIC
IMMIGRANT-ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

BY

PAMELA MURILLO

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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OF

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2015

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-English Language Learners (ELLs) who are graduates of the International High Schools. The study focuses on the International High School experiences that seem to foster college readiness. In addition, the study focuses on challenges and supports experienced by these individuals as well as the implications of their second language abilities during college. Twelve International High School graduates participated in the study. Qualitative methods were utilized and data obtained through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using both manifest and latent content analysis.

During the interviews, International High School graduates shared their experiences at the International High Schools; the types of supports that helped them complete their undergraduate education; the way(s) their second language abilities helped them or hindered them during their college years; the negative challenges/barriers, or unpleasant reactions they experienced during their undergraduate education, and the type of advice they would give International High School graduates or immigrant students whose native language is not English to help them succeed in college. Participants shed light on the college readiness and higher education experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs who attended International High Schools, provided insight into the supports and challenges experienced by these students while in college, and provided valuable suggestions for Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs to help them succeed in college.

The results revealed that participants had a positive experience at the International High Schools because the schools created an engaging and supporting environment for them. International High Schools helped them develop specific academic skills that prepared them for college such as learning English, problem solving, and writing. However, half of the participants felt that they were not academically challenged at the International High Schools and voiced the need to have had more advanced math, English, and science classes. Participants also communicated that while in college, they received support and encouragement from their professors and academic advisors, peers, and parents, while a few reported that support was available but they decided not to seek out support. Additionally, the majority of International High School graduates communicated that their second language abilities helped them academically and helped them take advantage of different opportunities in college, as well as to expand their social networks. The commonly identified challenges experienced by participants were academic challenges (including time management) and negative interactions with professors/advisors. In providing advice for International High school graduates and immigrant students whose native language is not English to help them get through their undergraduate education, almost all of the participants provided encouragement and general academic advice.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my wonderful father, Gustavo Murillo, who has always inspired me to work hard, achieve my dreams, and never give up. Papito, thank you for your unconditional love, support, and most importantly, for being my biggest fan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On average, over one million immigrants enter the United States (U.S.) annually, accounting for 12.45% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). According to Winqvist Nord and Griffin (1999), one out of five school-aged children was born outside of the U.S. or has a parent who was born outside of the U.S. As these students graduate from high school, many will move on to postsecondary education opportunities. Thus, it is very important to examine the experiences of immigrant students on college campuses to provide educators with valuable information in meeting their needs.

Across the U.S. a group of public high schools (Internationals) have had success in educating immigrant-English Language Learners (ELLs). The International High Schools are committed to preparing their students for college and are known to be aware of the many challenges that these students experience after they graduate high school and begin their postsecondary education. Data collected by Jaffe-Walter and Lee (2011) reveal the structural and cultural factors that support college-going for recent immigrant students. Results showed that academic preparation, social capital, and financial resources are important factors affecting students' entry to higher education. The results also showed that the institutional culture of the International High Schools is clearly focused on college access.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs who are graduates of the International High Schools. The study focuses on the International High School experiences that seem to

foster college readiness, the challenges and supports experienced by these individuals, and the implications of their second language abilities during college. Overall, the intent of this study was to extend the limited research on immigrant students and ELLs by providing valuable information regarding their college readiness and higher education experiences.

I have a very personal connection and commitment to improving the educational experiences of immigrant-ELLs. Growing up as an ELL student myself in a low-socio-economic area gives me a specific lens to be able to understand and provide assistance to students from similar backgrounds. Being a Latina who has gone through the process in which many children struggle and the education system fails, has led to the quest of improving the educational experiences of immigrant-ELLs at the secondary and postsecondary level. My goal is to bring attention to the realities of educational opportunities available to immigrant-ELLs in order to help create high school and college environments that focus on the specific needs of these students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographic Shift

Immigrants are the fastest growing segment of U.S. society. At the end of the 20th century, the minority population was reported to be increasing approximately 11 times faster than the White, non-Hispanic population (Hobbs & Stoop, 2002). This data has spurred concern about the educational opportunities available to these students, including those opportunities available at the higher education level. Many immigrants view higher education as the primary means for improving their socioeconomic status and assimilating into the U.S. culture (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Previous research has shown that immigrant students tend to have high expectations for higher education compared to native-born students (Goyette & Xie, 1999; Hao & Bronstead-Bruns, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Wells, 2010). However, these expectations are not consistent with actual educational outcomes, with immigrant students representing only about 12% of all undergraduate college students in American colleges and universities (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

Noteworthy is the growth of our nation's Latino population, which has increased dramatically over the last 15-20 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). While Latinos represented 12.5% of the total population in the year 2000, they represented 16.3% of the total population in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This demographic shift, however, is associated with a widening gap in high school completion between Latino and White students. In 2003, more than 2.75 million Latino adolescents were

enrolled in high schools throughout the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), but this representation does not translate into degrees attained. According to a 2007 U.S. Census Bureau report, almost half of Latinos (47% female and 41% male) over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma. In addition, only about 13% of Latinos in comparison to 37% Whites had a bachelor's degree by age 29 in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

A large immigrant population resides in New York City and is reflected in the New York City public school student body. Approximately 40% of New York City students are categorized as English Language Learners (ELLs), with Spanish being the top language spoken (New York City Department of Education, 2013). Fine, Stoudt, and Futch (2005) and Fine, Jaffe, Pedraza, Stoudt, and Futch (2007) reported that the four-year high school graduation rate for ELLs in New York City is an abysmal 30.3%. In comparison, the graduation rate for non-ELLs in New York City is 64.7% (New York City Department of Education, 2013). Dropping out of high school is a serious problem, not only for the individual, but also for the school system, the community, and society (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). Individuals who drop out of high school have fewer options for employment and fewer possibilities for advancement (Christle et al., 2007). According to a report on high school graduates in 2000, 56% of high school dropouts were unemployed (Stanard, 2003). Additionally, dropping out of high school has been associated with several negative outcomes, including forgone income, increased crime and antisocial behavior, poorer levels of health, and increased demand for social services (Hayes, Nelson, Tabin, Pearson, & Worthy, 2002). Therefore, dropping out of high school is regarded as a national

problem and is of great importance for students and for society.

International High Schools

In contrast to the majority of New York City high schools, within New York exists a small group of public high schools that have achieved success in educating immigrant ELLs. The International High Schools serve a population of recently arrived immigrants who come from over 70 different countries and speak over 60 different languages (New York City Department of Education, 2009). The requirements to enter an International High School are to have lived in the U.S. for four years or less at the time of admission, and to have scored in the bottom quartile on English language tests (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013). Approximately, 30% of International High School students are undocumented and many are students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013).

The International High Schools comprise a network of 17 public high schools throughout New York City, but also span to California's Bay Area, and to Alexandria, Virginia (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013). At full enrollment covering grades 9-12, about 300 and 475 students attend each school (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013). The Internationals are part of a small school movement that are orienting toward serving the intellectual and emotional needs of immigrant-ELL students (Fine et al., 2005). The Internationals have also challenged the accelerating patterns of educational exclusion by continuing to work against policies that are hostile to immigrant-ELLs while sustaining school communities dedicated to the needs of these students (New York City Department of Education,

2009; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

The schools in the Internationals network are designed to help students make a successful transition into the U.S. educational system. All schools that comprise the network have committed to five educational design elements. The first element, “heterogeneity and collaboration,” refers to students being grouped heterogeneously with respect to English proficiency level, academic background, native language, and literacy level. Teachers are organized in teams/clusters and have time on a weekly basis to collaboratively create the curriculum and address the academic and social needs of the same group of students. The second element, “language and content integration,” refers to every teacher teaching content (e.g., there are no stand-alone ESL classes) and every teacher teaching language skills. The third element, “localized autonomy and responsibility,” refers to all students taking responsibility for their own learning as well as the learning of their classmates. It also refers to teachers working together in teams to take collective responsibility for their students’ learning and outcomes.

The fourth element, “one learning model for all,” refers to faculty and students experiencing the same learning model, capitalizing on everyone’s diverse strengths and maximizing their ability to help one another. The model of adult learning parallels the model for student learning, which means that all members of the International High Schools work in diverse and collaborative groups on hands-on-projects. The fifth element “experiential learning,” refers to students being motivated to enhance their capacity to successfully participate in modern society. Students participate in internships and community service activities, collaborate with community

organizations, and create portfolios that comprise authentic tasks developed over a period of time to demonstrate understanding (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013).

Preliminary data indicates that the International High Schools have achieved significant success in educating immigrant-ELLs (Fine et al., 2005). Although no studies have yet compared the Internationals to typical high schools, Fine and colleagues (2005) compared the graduation rate of the three oldest International High Schools in New York City to the graduation rate for ELLs citywide. The three oldest International High Schools (for students who enrolled in the International High Schools in 1998) had a final graduation rate of 88.7% (Fine et al., 2005). In comparison, the graduation rate for ELLs citywide was only 49.6%. In addition, over 90% of International graduates were accepted to colleges after their high school graduation (Fine et al., 2005).

Unfortunately, little research is available regarding the educational experiences of immigrant students who are ELLs, and there is currently no research regarding the college experiences of students who graduated from the International High Schools. What happens within the Internationals that prepares students for college and seems to contribute to their readiness for college? Once students graduate from the International High Schools many will enter institutions of higher education that are not focused on the specific needs of newly immigrant-ELLs. Most colleges, in fact, think of these students as “typical” Americans who are native English speakers (Nathan, 2005). One purpose of the present study was to explore the educational experiences of International High School graduates during their four years in college. The goal was to

explore the specific challenges and supports experienced by these individuals as well as the implication of their second language abilities during college.

College Transition

The rising U.S. immigrant population has transformed the demographics of the nation in the last couple of decades, and educating immigrant-origin students has become increasingly important (Capps, 2005; Lee & Suarez, 2009). Immigrant access to higher education is affected by several factors, including proficiency of the English language, literacy levels, country of origin, socioeconomic status, and length of residence in the U.S. (Patten, 2012). For instance, immigrants from Latin America (especially those from Mexico and Central America) tend to matriculate in college at a much lower rate than immigrants from other countries and native-born individuals (Patten, 2012). Immigrants who come to the U.S. between the ages of 13 and 19 years have the lowest levels of college success (Erisman & Looney, 2007). In addition, students who come to the U.S. at younger ages may still need to develop the necessary skills to succeed academically (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Given the high demand for advanced skills and training in today's society, access to higher education has become extremely important.

The transition to college is a critical period marked by several challenges in academic, cultural, psychological, and social adjustments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). When minority immigrant students transition to a college or university, their academic adjustment becomes an important contributing factor to their persistence. Some of these academic adjustments include how well they handle educational demands, meet academic expectations, motivate themselves to continue college, and

how satisfied they feel with their academic work and environment (Baker & Siryk, 1984, 1989; Clark, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000). Furthermore, a large number of foreign-born minority immigrant students lack the English competency of native speakers, which leads to several difficulties academically and socially (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Additionally, the process of adapting to the college community might be particularly stressful for minority students who are not from the majority White middle-or upper class background and do not have the same knowledge about the college experience (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tierney, 1992).

The International High Schools are committed to preparing their students for college and have a tradition of being in tune with the many challenges that these students experience upon matriculation to higher education. The International High Schools prepare all students for four-year colleges with recognition that some may choose a different route upon their high school graduation (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011). Data collected by Jaffe-Walter and Lee (2011) reveal the structural and cultural factors that support college-going for newcomer immigrant students. Results showed that academic preparation, social capital, and financial resources are important factors affecting students' entry to higher education. In addition, results revealed that the institutional culture and structure of the International High Schools is clearly focused on college access. The International High Schools use instructional teams to provide students with access to relationships with multiple adults in the schools, and with a rigorous and culturally sensitive curriculum. It is important to recognize, however, that students like the ones at the International High Schools face ongoing challenges that

may affect college attainment. The International High Schools aim to create safe environments that buffer against broader and economic inequities, but when students graduate, many must contend with the ongoing challenges presented by their immigration status such as not having knowledge of the college system, not having the financial resources, and their English skills not being up to par with their native-born peers (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011). Considering the many challenges International High School graduates may encounter upon their high school graduation, exploring and understanding these challenges as well as supports might help improve the educational experiences of many immigrant-ELLs when they attend colleges and universities in the U.S.

Supports in College for Immigrant-ELLs

Students use of academic counseling and advising is critical given the research that identifies academic advising and academic advisers as key links between students, colleges, and student success (Orozco, Alvarez, & Gutkin, 2010). Orozco et al. (2010) conducted in-depth interviews with 363 students across nine campuses to capture the experiences of Latino, African American, Asian, Native American, White, and Immigrant students in the California community college system. Results showed that students considered it important to find academic counselors who understood their cultural background and could relate to their life experiences. In addition, results showed that recent immigrant students, in the transition between two cultures, are forced to learn how to navigate a new educational system with limited English-language skills. Cultural differences often become the center of their interaction with academic counselors, and students may be reluctant to go to them because they feel

that their English is not well developed for college. Orozco et al. (2010) found that only a few students in the sample expressed having a long-term or more established relationship with their counselors. Several students expressed distrust of their counselors and stated that they were not able to relate to their academic counselors in any way (Orozco et al., 2010).

Researchers also highlight the importance of immigrant-ELL students feeling included and welcomed in higher educational institutions as a prerequisite for student success (Contreras, 2009; Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002). Ethnically and racially diverse students, faculty, and staff are key individuals in the creation of supportive college environments for these students. Additionally, academic advising, mentors, high quality online courses, internships, and applied learning can contribute to the academic persistence of immigrant-ELLs attending community colleges as well as four-year institutions (DiMaria, 2005). Indeed, the need to create supportive and welcoming college environments is particularly crucial in light of the high numbers of immigrant-ELL students who do not complete their undergraduate education. Hence, connecting to faculty and staff as well as with other college students is vital to student retention in that it helps students become integrated and feel part of the college community. Consequently, a primary goal of the current study is to explore the perceived supports (e.g., community supports, educational supports, connectedness to faculty/professors) of International High School graduates (who are immigrant-ELLs) that helped them complete their undergraduate education.

Challenges in College for Immigrant-ELLs

First generation students often face multiple unique barriers in their efforts to achieve post-secondary success. For example, Stebleton and Soria (2012) examined the perceived academic obstacles of first-generation students in comparison to non-first-generation students while transitioning to college. The results suggest that first-generation students more frequently encounter obstacles that compromise their academic success as compared to non-first-generation students. For first-generation students, the obstacles included competing job responsibilities, competing family responsibilities, weak English skills, weak math skills, inadequate study skills, and feeling depressed or stressed. These factors may be more likely to negatively impact first-generation students' academic achievement in higher education. Several of these factors interact with one another to create even greater hardships. For example, first-generation students may have both job and family responsibilities in addition to weak study skills – factors that when combined, may cause greater challenges for students to reach their goals (Stebleton & Soria, 2012). Little is known about these challenges for International High School graduates. Consequently, another purpose of the present study is to explore the perceived challenges experienced by these individuals while in college.

High quality student-faculty interactions hold the potential to positively impact college student development. Stebleton, Soria, Aleixo, and Huesman (2012) examined student-faculty interactions and peer interactions among immigrant college students attending four-year research universities in the U.S. The results suggested that there were significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant college students

with respect to their sense of belonging, faculty interactions, and peer interactions in large public universities. Non-immigrant students reported a greater sense of belonging, more frequent communication with faculty, and more interaction with other classmates outside of class compared to immigrant students. The study also suggests a positive relationship between interactions with faculty and peers and sense of belonging among immigrant students. However, the overall findings suggests that, when controlling for demographic variables, working with peers and having a class in which a professor knew their names were among the greatest contributors to immigrant students' overall sense of belonging.

Purpose of Study

The present study examined the high school and college educational experiences of International High School graduates who identify themselves as Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs through semi-structured interviews conducted with 12 former International High School students. The study employed a descriptive, exploratory, qualitative design. Since the purpose of qualitative description research is to provide a straightforward and comprehensive illustration of phenomena, this methodology is particularly appropriate for acquiring direct answers to largely unexplored questions (Sandelowski, 2000). The current approach was deemed appropriate as more information is needed about efforts to improve the educational experiences of immigrant students who are ELLs.

The study focused on the International High School experiences that seem to foster college readiness, the challenges and supports experienced by these individuals, and the implications of their second language abilities during college. The intent was

to extend the limited research on immigrant students and ELLs by providing valuable information regarding their college readiness and higher education experiences.

Research Questions

The present study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1) What were the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their time at the International High Schools that contribute to college readiness?

2) What were the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their four years in college?

a) What were the perceived challenges experienced by Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their four years in college?

b) What were the perceived supports experienced by Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their four years in college?

c) What implications do second language abilities have for Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during college?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Twelve International High School graduates participated in semi-structured, audiotaped telephone interviews. The sample included females ($n = 7$, 58.3%) and males ($n = 5$, 41.6%). Participants ranged in age from 22 to 30 (mean = 26, SD = 2.7) and they all identified as Hispanic/Latino/a ($n = 12$, 100%). They reported to be originally from Dominican Republic ($n = 4$, 33.3%), Colombia ($n = 3$, 25%), Ecuador ($n = 2$, 16.6%), Argentina ($n = 1$, 8.3%), Honduras ($n = 1$, 8.3%), and Mexico ($n = 1$, 8.3%). In addition, all of the participants ($n = 12$, 100%) reported Spanish as their native language.

Table 1 reports the number of years the participants have lived in the U.S., as well as their age of arrival to the U.S. Length of time in the U.S. ranged from 9 to 22 years (mean = 13.9, SD = 3.7) and all of the participants arrived between ages 9 and 17 (mean = 12.5, SD = 2.3).

Table 1

Background Information of International High School Graduates

Length of Residence in the U.S.	<i>n</i>	%
Number of Years		
9	1	8.3%
10	2	16.6%
11	1	8.3%

13	2	16.6%
14	1	8.3%
15	1	8.3%
16	1	8.3%
17	2	16.6%
22	1	8.3%

Age of Arrival to the U.S

9	1	8.3%
10	1	8.3%
11	2	16.6%
12	3	25%
13	2	16.6%
14	1	8.3%
16	1	8.3%
17	1	8.3%

Note: N = 12.

Measures

Participants responded to two sets of questions including demographic and personal background questions, and interview questions. Below is a description of each measure used.

Demographic and personal background form. A demographic and personal background form was created to provide information about pertinent sample characteristics of the International High School graduates (see Appendix A).

Specifically, participants reported their gender, age, race/ethnicity, native language, reason for immigrating to the U.S., period of time lived in the U.S., International High School attended, year of graduation from high school, high school location, college attended, and year of graduation from college. They also indicated their current occupation, formal education in home country, interruptions in education, parents' education level, parents' income level, and whether or not they are first-generation college students and have pursued a graduate degree.

Interview guide. A semi-structured interview guide containing 25 questions was created to address the study goals (see Appendix B). The semi-structured interview format was selected because the interviewer is able to ask follow-up questions even though pre-determined questions are prepared (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews aim to gain information about participants' experiences, as well as information about the meaning that participants ascribe to those experiences (Seidman, 2006). Questions in the interview guide addressed participants' educational experiences during their time at the International High Schools that contributed to their college readiness. In addition, they asked about participants' educational experiences during their four years of college. Specifically, participants were asked about the supports and challenges experienced while in college as well as the implications of their second language abilities. In addition, participants were asked to provide advice to other immigrant-ELLs to help them succeed in college. Participants were also asked at the end of the interview whether they had additional information to share that would allow for a more complete understanding of their experiences.

Procedure

Prior to study implementation, the University of Rhode Island Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the methods and procedures of the study. Upon receiving study approval, potential participants were contacted and sent a cover letter (see Appendix C) as well as a consent form (see Appendix D) that detailed the study goals, and risks and benefits associated with participation. The consent form also included information about the use of telephone interviews and audiotapes, including how participant confidentiality would be preserved. To participate in the study, participants needed to have completed all four years and graduated from one of the International High Schools between the years 2001-2009, completed four years of college and graduated with a bachelor's degree, and identified as Hispanic/Latino ELL.

Participants were recruited using a combination of snowball methods and targeted sampling. Facebook groups, emails, and the Internationals Network organization were used to recruit participants. In addition, a recruitment letter was sent to the principals and teachers of the International High Schools asking them to make an announcement to their alumni network for their possible participation in the study (see Appendix C). Participants were asked in the cover letter whether they are a former International High School student who completed all four years at an International High School and graduated between the years 2001-2009, completed a bachelor's degree in the U.S., and identified as Hispanic/Latino. A total of 17 participants responded, but five did not meet the requirements for participation.

Participants who met the requirements were asked to sign and return the consent form. Of note is that the interviewer personally knew two of the participants in the study.

Emails, Facebook messages, text messages, and phone calls were used to schedule interviews. The interviews were scheduled at times that were mutually agreeable for the interviewer and interviewee. Follow-up emails, Facebook messages, and text messages were then made in an attempt to increase participation. Audiotaped interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes to an hour were then scheduled. At the end of the interview, the interviewer asked to share themes that emerged from the interview in a second conversation after the interview had been transcribed (member checking). All participants agreed to a second conversation. The interviewer then followed up with all 12 participants with a 10 to 15 minute phone call after transcriptions were completed. Upon completion of the interviews, participants who agreed were entered into a drawing to win a \$25 gift card as compensation for their participation.

Once all interviews were completed, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by two research assistants who were trained by the primary researcher. Each audiotape and transcript was carefully reviewed multiple times by the primary researcher to ensure accuracy. This process allowed the researcher to develop a deeper familiarity and understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All identifying information was removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and maintain confidentiality during coding. The primary researcher then trained one of the research assistants to serve as a secondary data coder.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analyses were performed to analyze the demographic data, while the interview data was content analyzed. Qualitative content analysis is a research method that “focuses on the subject and context, and emphasizes differences between and similarities within codes and categories” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 111). It involves a process designed to condense raw data into themes or categories based on valid inference and interpretation. This process uses inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher’s careful examination and constant comparison (Patton, 2002).

Both manifest and latent content were analyzed using content analysis. Manifest, also known as surface-level content, is represented by categories, while latent content is usually represented by themes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). To begin the analysis of the manifest content, each interview was listened to and read several times to obtain a general impression. Then, text that represented the initial research questions were identified. Two researchers independently broke down this data into smaller units or codes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). The researchers then compared, discussed, and revised the codes until 100% agreement was reached. This process continued until the data in all of the interviews had been coded. The researchers also made notes of the similarities and differences across interviews, and codes were included under developing categories. For analysis of latent content, each interview was listened to again and read several times. The primary researcher then identified themes that emerged from the data in all of the interviews. Analysis of the

interviews ceased upon reaching data saturation or a point where the acquired information became redundant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the present write up the findings are presented using narratives, and quotations are used to support the conclusions and inferences made by the researcher (White & Marsh, 2006).

Trustworthiness

When conducting qualitative research, it is important to establish trustworthiness of one's findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for evaluating interpretative research findings; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. More specifically, "credibility" refers to the truth-value of the findings, "transferability" refers to the applicability of the findings, "dependability" to the consistency of the findings, and "confirmability" to the neutrality of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These terms are often used in naturalistic examinations and are often compared to validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher engaged in several activities to establish trustworthiness. First, the researcher engaged in informal member checking by seeking to clarify information obtained during the interview to ensure appropriate understanding of the participants' message. Second, the researcher engaged in formal member checking by sharing with the participants the themes that emerged from the interview in a second conversation after the interview had been transcribed. This process helped to establish credibility of the findings and interpretations during the interviews. Moreover, investigator triangulation, where two researchers analyze and interpret the data, was also used to reduce the possibility of bias. This process is also known as peer debriefing by which

the researcher engages in discussions about data analysis and interpretation with other colleagues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher also addressed the dependability and confirmability by using an “audio trail.” This allowed for the process and product of the investigation to be documented and examined by an auditor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, to increase the trustworthiness of the findings, direct quotations from the interviews were generated. Lastly, trustworthiness was established by maintaining communication with a consultant who is an expert in qualitative research. The consultant provided important guidance throughout the research process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a critical aspect of the interview process. To maintain good ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to conducting all interviews. Additionally, all interview data was confidential and participants’ responses were not linked to identifying information. Finally, all data have been kept locked in a secure location at all times.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Demographic and Contextual Data

Participants provided personal background information concerning several features of their background. These included the (a) number of years of formal education in home country, (b) whether or not they faced interruption in their education, (c) reason(s) for immigrating to the U.S., (d) International High School attended, (e) location of the International High School, (f) year of graduation from high school, (g) parents' highest education level while in high school, (h) parents' income level while in high school, (i) whether or not they are first generation college students, (j) college(s) attended, (k) year of graduation from college, (l) whether or not they have pursued a graduate degree or an advanced degree, and (m) current occupation.

As shown in Table 2, there was high variability in the number of years of formal education participants received in their home countries. However, less variability was seen in their responses to whether or not they faced interruption in their formal education. Of note is that two participants reported that the interruption in their formal education occurred while they were transitioning to the U.S., while another one reported that it occurred the year prior to immigrating to the U.S.

Table 2

Participants' Formal Education in Home Country and Interruption in Education

Years of Formal Education	<i>n</i>	%
6	2	16.6%

7	5	41.6%
8	2	16.6%
9	1	8.3%
10	1	8.3%
11	1	8.3%

Interruption in Formal Education

No interruption	9	75.0%
1 year of interruption	2	16.6%
6 months of interruption	1	8.3%

Note: N = 12

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the reason(s) participants immigrated to the U.S, the International High School attended, location of the International High School, and the year they graduated from the International High School. As shown, participants provided numerous reasons for immigrating to the U.S., and some variability was seen in the year they graduated from the International High School. The majority of participants attended Brooklyn International High School located in Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY.

Table 3

Personal Background Information of International High School Graduates

Reason(s) for Immigrating to the U.S.	<i>n</i>	%
Better education	4	33.3%
Economic reasons	3	25.0%
Father lived in the U.S.	3	25.0%

A family member sponsored the family	2	16.6%
Mother moved to the U.S.	1	8.3%
Mother was offered a job in the U.S.	1	8.3%
To look for better opportunities/parents thought it was better for the family	1	8.3%

International High School Attended

Brooklyn International High School	7	58.3%
International High School at Lafayette	2	16.6%
International High School at La Guardia	2	16.6%
Flushing International High School	1	8.3%

Location of International High School

Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY	7	58.3%
Canarsie, Brooklyn, NY	2	16.6%
Long Island City, Queens, NY	2	16.6%
Flushing, Queens, NY	1	8.3%

Year of High School Graduation

2003	3	25.0%
2004	3	25.0%
2005	1	8.3%
2006	1	8.3%
2007	1	8.3%
2009	3	25.0%

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) for the reason(s) for immigrating to the U.S. category because some respondents reported more than one response.

Participants reported their parents' highest education level as well as their parents' income level while they were in high school, and high variability was seen in their responses (see Table 4). An examination of the education levels show that half of the parents had either no education or some education through high school, while the remaining had some level of college. When participants were asked about their parents' income level, some responded as their parents having "low income" or being "middle class," while others provided exact amounts for each parent, provided a combined amount, reported that their parents were business owners, or simply stated that they did not know their parents' income level.

Table 4

Parents' Highest Education Level and Income Level

High school (both)	2	16.6%
Mother (high school), Father (primary school)	1	8.3%
Mother (some high school), Father (never went to school)	1	8.3%
Primary school (both parents)	1	8.3%
Mother (up to 5th grade), Father (up to 8th grade)	1	8.3%
Mother (finished 5th grade in Dominican Republic), Father (some college)	1	8.3%
Mother (some college in Dominican Republic), Father (high school)	1	8.3%
Mother (some college in Colombia), Father (High school)	1	8.3%
Mother (some college), Father (primary school)	1	8.3%

Mother (B.A.), Father (was in college)	1	8.3%
Mother (M.A.), Father (B.A.) in Argentina	1	8.3%

Income Level		
Don't know	2	16.6%
Middle class	2	16.6%
Mother and father owned a business	1	8.3%
\$70,000/year (combined income)	1	8.3%
\$45,000/year (combined income)	1	8.3%
\$40,000/year (mother)	1	8.3%
\$35,000/year (combined income)	1	8.3%
\$30,000/year (mother)	1	8.3%
\$10,000/year (mother)	1	8.3%
Low income	1	8.3%

Note: N = 12

The majority of participants ($n = 11$, 91.6%) identified as first generation college graduates. In looking at college(s) attended, participants attended and graduated from a number of different colleges. Of note is that three participants (25%) attended a community college prior to going to a four-year college. Table 5 illustrates a breakdown of the colleges attended and the year participants graduated with a bachelor's degree.

Table 5

Colleges Attended and Year Participants Graduated from College

College(s) Attended	<i>n</i>	%
Kingsborough Community College	2	16.6%
Hunter College	2	16.6%
Adelphi University	1	8.3%
Brooklyn College	1	8.3%
Eugene Lang College at the New School	1	8.3%
Hampshire College	1	8.3%
John Jay College	1	8.3%
Lehman College	1	8.3%
New York City College of Technology	1	8.3%
Purchase College	1	8.3%
St. John's University	1	8.3%
Sullivan County Community College	1	8.3%
SUNY- New Paltz	1	8.3%
Year of College Graduation		
2007	2	16.6%
2008	2	16.6%
2009	1	8.3%
2010	1	8.3%
2012	2	16.6%
2013	2	16.6%

2014

2

16.6%

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) for college(s) attended because some respondents reported more than one college.

Participants also reported whether or not they have pursued a graduate degree or advanced degree. Most participants ($n = 8$, 66.6%) reported that they have not pursued a graduate degree or advanced degree. Two participants (16.6%) pursued a Master's degree in Secondary Education, one (8.3%) obtained a specialized nursing degree, and one (8.3%) was working towards a Master's degree in Public Health.

Participants also reported information about their current occupation. A close examination of this information shows that half of the participants hold professional occupations, while the other half hold other types of occupations. Table 6 provides a complete list of participants' current occupations.

Table 6

Participants' Current Occupation

Occupation	<i>n</i>	%
High school teacher	2	16.6%
Registered nurse	1	8.3%
IT at a public high school	1	8.3%
Film maker	1	8.3%
Teacher at daycare center/Kayak and stand up paddleboard instructor	1	8.3%
Navigator for Obama Care	1	8.3%
Youth worker	1	8.3%

Customer service professional	1	8.3%
Administrative assistant	1	8.3%
Valley driver/IT worker	1	8.3%
Work part time for an attorney	1	8.3%

Note: N = 12.

Research Questions

The results of the interviews are organized around the five research questions. For each research question, descriptive tables are provided to summarize the categories or explicit messages provided by participants. Implicit messages that were conveyed throughout the interview are also provided. The findings are presented through a narrative and quotations are used to support the conclusions and interpretations made by the researcher (White & Marsh, 2006).

Research question 1: What are the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their time at the International High Schools that contribute to college readiness?

The first research question examined the ways the International High Schools prepared participants for college. Participants answered three main questions and three follow up questions. The first question asked participants to describe in detail their life at the International High School. Participants were eager to tell their stories and shared rich narratives about their experiences at the International High Schools. Five categories of responses emerged and the following section provides a description of each category (see Table 7).

Table 7

Personal Experiences at the International High Schools

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Generally positive experience	9 (75.0%)
Created an engaging and comfortable environment	9 (75.0%)
Socially supportive environment	8 (75.0%)
Miscellaneous (e.g., an escape from personal/family difficulties, able to work in groups, had to act as an interpreter, didn't speak English at the beginning)	7 (58.3%)
Not challenging enough	3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Generally positive experience. Many International High School graduates indicated that being at an International High School was a good experience for them. One reported that “it was great times,” while another communicated that it was “an amazing experience” and “really enjoyed being at the high school.” Another participant spoke directly about the difficulties of learning English and the help received by the International High School:

Wasn't easy learning English, but hey, the International High School helped me a lot.

Created an engaging and comfortable environment. A commonly expressed feeling about the International High Schools were that they created a welcoming

environment where the teachers were very supportive, everyone knew each other, and there was a strong sense of community. One participant explained:

The teachers were really helpful and patient, and I think that's what helped me a lot on learning the language.

Another participant talked about the sense of community she felt at the International High School:

To me it was like a family. So all the teachers, all the students were finally the family that I needed most, especially at that time in my growing process.

One participant talked about the International High School being a very welcoming environment in which he felt comfortable practicing and speaking English:

A very welcoming environment, due to the fact that nobody spoke English well. If I make a mistake it would be okay because either they would help me or they won't laugh at me because they don't speak it perfectly either.

Socially supportive environment. A number of participants spoke about the different ways the International High Schools provided them with a socially supportive environment. Some spoke about the ways they connected with other culturally and linguistically diverse peers over acquiring English and acculturating to the U.S, while others spoke about the number of friendships they developed and the relationships with their teachers. For example, one participant reported: "I was able to like relate with the other students because we were all there to learn English." And another stated, "We bonded over our experience learning English and acculturating to the U.S." In addition, one participant spoke about the teachers' dedication to helping students:

The teachers in all the classrooms were relatively small, knew everybody and were very devoted to their teaching. I could see it by them just staying after school to help, extra help for children who needed more help learning the language or understanding what the subjects were.

Two other participants discussed the close relationships among the students and between students and teachers.

It was a very tight relationship among students and also between students and teachers.

I made a lot of friends and my relationship with my teachers was very good too.

She continues, explaining the support of her classmates:

Having help from our classmates was you know, something that really supported me and gave me confidence.

Miscellaneous. Participants also shared a variety of other experiences when they were asked about their life at the International High School. For example, one participant talked about the International High School as being an escape from personal and family problems:

It was a sort of a challenging transition for me to what used to be my teenage years into becoming an adulthood, so throughout my whole all four years of high school, I was challenged into what I wanted to become. And I know the, at the time I was going through a very difficult time with my family in terms of divorce. I didn't know where I was gonna go to college because of my immigration status. So overall, Brooklyn International for me was sort of like an escape from all of the problems I was going through.

Others mentioned that they did not speak English well when they started high school. One participant stated that he "wasn't that strong in English" while another reported that she "did not know any word{s} of English." Another participant reported that he made good use of his native language by acting as an interpreter for other students who had weaker English skills:

And so the teachers would ask me to act as an interpreter and a lot of times explain them, teach the topics in Spanish for those students who also had to learn the language.

Not challenging enough. Some participants reported that they did not feel academically challenged during their time at the International High School. For example, one participant reported:

Sometimes I did not feel challenged academically and I think that there were many other students who felt the same way... Work that we were reviewing was almost repetitive or wasn't challenging academically. Or at least I personally felt like it wasn't challenging me.

Another stated:

The first two years at International High School were relatively easy since I knew everything that the curriculum involved because I had already learned it in Argentina. So I, to me my first two years in high school in the United States were really easy.

The second question posed to participants' asked for their thoughts about the ways the International High schools prepared them for college. Table 8 represents the five categories that emerged from participants' responses. Of note is that half of the participants did not feel prepared for college after they graduated from the International High School.

Table 8

College Preparation by International High Schools

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Specific academic skills	8 (66.6%)
Did not feel prepared	6 (50.0%)
Good communication skills	5 (41.6%)
Empowerment	4 (33.3%)

Teamwork skills

3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Specific academic skills. Most International High School graduates communicated that the International High Schools helped them develop specific academic skills that prepared them for college. These skills included learning English, problem solving, and writing. One participant reported that he “learned a lot of techniques about how to read texts, how to annotate texts.” He further explained that the International High School gave him useful academic skills that he was able to apply while in college:

Then when I got to college and I didn't have anyone telling me to do that, I realized that after a while I was using those things to actually get through my readings and do some of my own college work. That gave me all these strategies, all these skills that I was able to apply in no matter what class I went to in college.

Another participant explained that students who had stronger English skills helped those students with weaker English Skills:

{Students} that knew more English were helping the other students, and that was kind of the setup that the teachers created in their classroom. And if some students were advancing at higher levels then they would be given more challenging work.

Participants also had the opportunity to develop their academic skills by participating in internships, college preparation classes, and service learning. For example, one participant reported that “some of the college classes” she took while in high school prepared her for college. Another participant reported that he had two internships while in high school that helped him be more prepared for college:

I did two internships while in high school. Was part of the community service group for three years. And I also worked, I did two afterschool programs. Service learning, we would go around the city doing community work.

Did not feel prepared. Several International High School graduates felt that they were not challenged enough in their classes and thus, did not feel prepared for college. One participant described his frustration:

I used to be one of those students who sometimes would complain that the classes were sometimes easy and they were not challenging enough.

In speaking about classes not being challenging enough, another participant discussed how he was at a much lower level in English and Math compared to his college counterparts:

It was not really the same level of English that everybody in the college was using. And I felt like even with math for example, I was way lower than most of the students that were in the class, and then I was struggling.

Another participant related a similar experience:

I wish I had more advanced classes in math, and especially in the sciences because I feel those subjects were sort of a bit of a struggle for me when I was in college.

Good communication skills. A number of participants expressed that the International High Schools provided them with the opportunity to do presentations and public speaking. One stated:

They did a good job in preparing us to speak in public. Presenting in front of other people or in front of larger groups of people.

Another participant felt that the International High School made him feel more comfortable with speaking English and saying what was on his mind. He noted:

One of the things that high school helped me with was to be more comfortable with that, being okay with saying what was on my mind even though I knew there was going to be some mistakes here and there.

He also added that in college he felt more comfortable with public speaking because of all the presentations he did in high school:

I opened up more in terms of public speaking and being in front of a crowd because we were always doing presentations.

And so when I got to college it just kind of made it easier to stand out more in those big classes and there was just, it kind of just helped me stand out from a large group.

Empowerment. Teachers and counselors at the International High Schools helped participants gain confidence in themselves and build a sense of empowerment. For example, one participant noted that at the International High School students become more comfortable with public speaking and/or interacting with others. She noted: “You’re not afraid of interacting with people.” Another participant shared that the International High School helped her see that she is able to overcome any obstacle in her life:

They pushed me to be better and have that confidence in myself that I could overcome anything. And one of those things is learning new things, and being exposed to things, you know, and be a sort of a, go for it person, and don’t be afraid to speak up and present my ideas and so forth.

Teamwork skills. International High School graduates reported that during their time at the International High School they had the opportunity to work with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and this helped them develop good team working skills. One participant recalls working in groups while at the International High School. She stated: “I remember having to work in group projects for almost all of my classes.” She also indicated that working in groups helped students see different points of views and perspectives:

Consider you know, outside visions and other perspectives and just kind of work together with others that perhaps you weren't familiar with.

Another participant explained that the International High School has a collaborative system in place to help students learn from each other:

They have a collaborative system happening between students in which we all kind of did skill sharing.

Every participant was probed to talk about the educational activities they engaged in that prepared them for college. Three main categories emerged from participants' responses: after school activities, outside of school/weekend programs, and academic achievement activities (see Table 9).

Table 9

Educational Activities at the International High Schools

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
After school activities	5 (41.6%)
Outside of school/weekend programs	4 (33.3%)
Academic activities	3 (25.0%)

Note: N = 12.

After school activities. International High School graduates participated in a variety of after school programs and activities that prepared them for college. For example, one participant stated that “joining the student government in high school” prepared her for college; while another stated that being part of the technology squad gave him the preparation he needed since he majored in information technology in college:

I did tech squad. So tech squad is uh, well formally tech squad, is a group of IT guys - students, that helped the technology guy in the school so they you know help a lot of the problems, computer breaks down, printer breaks down and you fix it.

Outside of school/weekend programs. A number of participants engaged in outside of school activities and weekend programs while at the International High Schools. Specifically, participants reported that they took college classes and engaged in volunteer work, community service, and internship programs. One participant described the International High School's internship process:

One of the things that they have in your junior year is an internship program. So we'd go out into the field of different organizations, we get to pick an area that we are interested in, and there's several organizations that we get to do an internship for a semester. I did one at City Hall, where I was able to do a research paper on undocumented students, which you know, is a very fascinating topic of mine.

Another participant spoke about her experience doing volunteer work with different organizations:

We would go to different places and just kind of you know give back to the community. You know whether it was going to a shelter, or feeding the poor, or going to an elementary school and helping kids with homework during an after school program.

Here a participant described that she was able to take college classes while attending the International High School:

The school also did a partnership with Queens College so we were able to take classes there that could be a little bit more challenging.

Academic activities. Graduates of the International High Schools also participated in a number of academic activities such as tutoring, one on-one-mentoring, and writing classes. One participant explained that she had the opportunity to work with other students and help one another during their writing-tutoring program:

We had a tutoring, a writing tutoring program. So I was able to work with students that had been there that were like a year above me and we, we would help each other in our writing.

Another participant spoke about having a specific college preparation class in which he also received help with writing:

Wednesdays we had a specific lecture pretty much for preparing us to go to college, or when it comes to writing. There were some teachers from school that had, that basically had a class just for that, for helping us do different things. Helping us get better in you know, writing skills.

In order to obtain more information about participants' college preparation, I probed them to talk about the messages they received at the International High Schools about going into higher education. Table 10 illustrates how participants' responses fell into five different categories.

Table 10

Messages Received at the International High Schools about College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Generally positive/encouraging messages from teachers and staff	7 (58.3%)
It was expected/ what students should do	3 (25.0%)
Miscellaneous (e.g., diversity, apply to different colleges)	3 (25.0%)
Guidance in preparing for college	2 (16.6%)
Didn't get much information about college	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents reported more than one response category.

Generally positive/encouraging messages from teachers and staff.

Participants whose responses fell into this category reported that they received positive and encouraging messages from teachers and staff at the International High Schools about going to college. In discussing the messages received, a number of participants noted:

If you want to go to college you can go to college and we will figure out how. So it was a very positive message in terms of going to college. Like everyone, we were all told that if we wanted to go to college we could and they would get us ready and prepare us for that if that's what we want to do, if that's where we wanted to go after high school.

Another participant mentioned that teachers and staff at the International High Schools encouraged students to keep working hard and never give up:

Never give up hope, keep fighting for what you want, and always keep pushing. Keep pushing that there's always gonna be a light at the end of the road.

She continued, and said:

They had more faith in me than I had in myself at that time. So in terms of encouragement, I think they, yeah they exceed more than 100%. There's nothing like it. More than my family actually. They really did.

It was expected/what students should do. Participants reported that going to college was something that was expected of them from everyone at the International High School, and they felt that it was something they needed to do. One participant recalls thinking that he did not need to choose between not going and going to college, because going to college was what was expected of him:

I realized okay, maybe I don't need to choose, this is what I'm expected to do. And then that's what we did.

Other participants recall teachers telling them about the numerous advantages of going to college:

They were able to like let us see that getting a higher education is going to help us in the future with like better income, better you know, opportunities in this country.

He would tell me things like the more famous the college is, the better job that you get in the future because of the connections that you get out of it, and so on and so forth. Advice just from the English teachers would be that if I went to college, which they thought that I should do, never to stop.

Miscellaneous. Other participants shared a variety of messages received at the International High School about going to college, such as colleges' desires to promote diversity and the importance of applying to different colleges. One participant reported that teachers and staff at the International High School used to "emphasize how American universities try to promote diversity in their student bodies." He further explained that teachers used to remind students that they had an advantage speaking two languages:

The advantage we all had with speaking a second language because a lot of times they would point out that Americans don't really know more than just English. That was an advantage that we would all take in any field that we would choose. Especially for me because I spoke, I speak Spanish, and they just emphasized how many Spanish people live in the United States.

Guidance in preparing for college. Graduates of the International High Schools received messages about how to personally prepare for college. This entailed how to concentrate, follow the rules, look for scholarships, and how to seek help. A participant discusses this point:

They really tried to help me out as much as they could in terms of scholarships that were available for people in my situation.

Did not get much information about college. Two International High School graduates reported that they did not receive much information about college during

their high school years. One participant communicated that her guidance counselor did not consider her career interests prior to submitting her college application:

I remember when I applied for college, I don't even remember like picking them or anything. I think that the counselor who was there at the time actually like filled out all the paperwork and you know, he did most of the work for us. It would have been nice for them to sit down with us and tell us maybe a little bit about the colleges, and you know, prepared us to say if my interests was, I don't know, like psychology or something, they could have sat with us and like told us to, I mean maybe I missed it, maybe there was like a seminar or something, but they didn't give us much information.

Participants were asked whether or not the International High School provided them with the necessary skills to complete their undergraduate education. Given the nature of the responses provided, the category of 'Provide with the necessary set of skills' was further divided into "academic skills," "confidence," "good interpersonal and communication skills," and "miscellaneous" (see Table 11).

Table 11

Skills Acquired that Contributed to College Completion

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Provided with the necessary set of skills	9 (75.0%)
Specific academic skills	5 (41.6%)
Confidence	3 (25.0%)
Good interpersonal and communication skills	2 (16.6%)
Miscellaneous (e.g., proactive, professional, responsible, and leadership skills)	1 (8.3%)
Did not provide with the necessary set of skills	3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Provided with the necessary set of skills. Many International High School graduates felt that the International High School prepared them for college and provided them with the necessary skills to complete their undergraduate education, as illustrated by the following comment:

Yes. I believe so. I mean I believe that they did everything that English language learners really need.

This category was further subdivided into four different subcategories: “academic skills,” “confidence,” “good interpersonal and communication skills,” and “miscellaneous.” For example, many indicated that the International High School provided them with specific academic skills including learning English, writing, critical thinking, and mastery of multiple-choice exams. As the following illustration indicates, one International High School graduate felt that the International High School helped her improve her English skills:

So I feel like the International definitely did everything that I needed to do in order to improve my English.

Another International High School graduate reported that two of the skills he learned at the International High School were “how to answer multiple-choice exams and how to write essays.” One participant felt prepared “in terms of writing, critical thinking, reading.”

A number of International High School graduates felt that the International High School helped them gain confidence in themselves, and as a result, feel more comfortable asking questions and seeking help. Here is one account:

I really gained the confidence I needed in terms of going for it, and doing the best that I could...and speaking out, and not being afraid to ask for help.

Other participants spoke about the opportunities they were presented with at the International High School that helped them acquire good interpersonal and communication skills. Here is one account of an International High School graduate's experience working with a diverse group of students:

We would sit on a side of the tables with the other six students who did not necessarily speak our language so we were forced to, not forced to, but empowered, or invited to create conversation in English. So we were very comfortable in doing group work.

Another International High School graduate described a variety of skills the International High School provided that helped him complete his undergraduate education. Here are some of his experiences:

Helping us grow into independent adults who will be, you know, proactive instead of waiting for things to happen.

Deciding who takes leadership and who takes follower roles, and those skills are very necessary in any job in the world right now. So those skills of knowing who's a leader and who's a follower and how to behave in those different situations are definitely essential.

Did not provide with the necessary set of skills. Some participants felt that the International High Schools did not provide them with the necessary skills to help them complete their undergraduate education. One participant described that she felt very far behind academically compared to her college counterparts: "I remember my first semester as a freshman and feeling completely lost...I think academically speaking I was very very far behind from my peers." She continues:

While I was in high school, I had brought up this concern that I had of not feeling challenged enough, of not feeling that I was, feeling that I was, yeah academically challenged, and then so I realized it when I went to college, and I was like 'oh well I was right.' I wasn't, I was not being challenged, therefore, I am facing these different consequences.

Another participant communicated:

There were moments that I felt that I should have received a little bit more preparation in terms of writing. Yeah, mostly, mostly in writing and reading.

As seen in Table 12, participants received various types of advice about college from teachers, counselors, and former students while at the International High School. Five categories emerged from participants' responses and they are described below.

Table 12

Advice Received at International High School About College

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Teachers/counselors provided advice	7 (58.3%)
Advice and feedback about what colleges to go to	5 (41.6%)
Advice about what to expect in college	4 (33.3%)
Advice on how to be successful in college	3 (25.0%)
Advice from International High School graduates about college experiences	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Teachers/counselors provided advice. Most International High School graduates stressed that teachers and counselors at the International High School were always there to provide advice about college. Here is what two participants had to say:

Yes, yes. Of course, of course. All teachers did. I can't think of one teacher that did not give me advice for college, they all did.

Yeah but you know the counselors, and the teachers themselves, like there's a lot of teachers that {were} giving advice all the time.

Advice and feedback about what colleges to go to. Several participants shared that they were given advice about which college to go to and how to apply to different colleges. One participant spoke directly about the advice she received from her guidance counselor:

And the advice that he gave me was basically what schools were good for me. Or what school I would favor to get in, or what school, basically what school was going to be the right fit for me.

Another participant had a similar experience:

My guidance counselor was the one helping me with all the applications and he really wanted me to go to a very good school and we would apply for different schools.

Advice about what to expect in college. Other participants reported that they received advice about what to expect in college, including how college life was going to be. One participant recalled the advice she received from her teachers:

I had a few teachers that told me a little bit about college and what I was supposed to experience.

Advice on how to be successful in college. Some participants received advice on how to be successful in college, and this included advice on time management and study routines. Here an International High School graduate provides an example of the type of advice she received:

Don't wait until the last minute to complete an exam, to complete a paper, to always ask questions, you know, taking notes in class and so forth.

Advice from International High School graduates about college experiences. Participants indicated that they received advice about college from former International High School students. For example:

The previous graduates would come in and talk about their current experiences in college.

Past research (e.g., Fine et al., 2005) shows that about 90% of International High School graduates were accepted to colleges upon their high school graduation, and participants shared their thoughts on why the International High Schools had this rate. When needed, the following probe was used: What is it about your experience that might account for this high college acceptance rate? Participants discussed a number of reasons why the International High Schools had such a high college acceptance rate and their responses fell into six different categories (see Table 13).

Table 13

Reasons Why the International High Schools had High College Acceptance Rate

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Teacher support/good instruction/good preparation	8 (66.6%)
Specific college preparation classes/extracurricular activities/after school activities/having a strong previous academic preparation	6 (50.0%)
Going to college was what was expected from teachers and staff/the message at the International High School was that everyone can go to college/a lot of time was devoted on college applications	6 (50.0%)
Personal immigration experience	4 (33.3%)
Strong academic standing/academic success came easy at the International High School	3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Teacher support/good instruction/good preparation. Graduates of the International High Schools felt that they had such high college acceptance rates because students received good academic preparation and instruction from very supportive teachers, which as a result make students competitive for college. One participant described:

I believe that the reason why this is happening is because the Internationals have clear periods preparing all of the students with the necessary tools that they need.

Another participant spoke directly about the support and encouragement students receive at the International High Schools:

I think, they really push us to be better, you know? And, even, like I said, even when they see that students are struggling, when they see that there is something wrong and we could really do better, the teachers are always there for you.

Specific college preparation classes/extracurricular activities/after school activities, having a strong previous academic preparation. Participants reported that students at the International High Schools take college preparation classes, and engage in a variety of afterschool and extracurricular activities that help them get ready for college. They also reported that there are a number of International High School students who have a strong academic preparation from their home countries. One participant described that she attended the International High School already having a strong academic background:

I do believe that before high school my educational experience in Colombia, the quality was a little bit better in terms of the content of the classes and, but I'm talking mostly about math and sciences.

Going to college was what was expected from teachers and staff. A large number of participants communicated that the International High Schools believe that everyone is capable of going to college, and thus, have that expectation for all of their students. Participants also stated that because the International High Schools have this expectation, they spend ample time on college applications. One of the participants stated that International High School students internalize the message of having to go to college, and this leads them to apply and get accepted:

The underlying message across the school is that everyone is capable if they want to go to college. So I feel like as you go through the years you kind of internalize that and realize, well I have to go to college cause that's what I've been prepared for and that's what they're expecting me to do. So a lot of kids end up applying and get accepted to college.

Personal immigration experience. There were a number of participants who indicated that students' personal experiences of migration to the U.S may be one of the reasons contributing to their college acceptances. For example, this participant believes that the immigration experience gives students the motivation to do well academically:

A lot of the personal experiences of migration, of coming here give them the extra push I guess to excel, especially when having the perception that if they, if we come with our parents that they sacrifice a lot.

She continues by reflecting on her own experience coming to the U.S:

Then there was that motivation that I left my home and my family and that this trip should be worthwhile.

Another participant spoke about the importance of not disappointing her family and taking advantage of the opportunity she was given by coming to the U.S:

I didn't want to disappoint them or anybody else, and my parents, and just knowing that you know, the reasons why we came here. So I was like why am I wasting everything that is here.

Another International High School graduate believed that international students have the motivation to work hard and attend college:

You want to keep going and you want to try hard, and go far, and you want to get things. And I think that motivates kids and pushes kids to at least get to college. Especially, it's not just international schools I think it's all kids that are international students. I think they really have this eager, or this like fight, or heart that they want to be somebody and they want to get better, and be better, better themselves. And you know, what they want to be, they shoot for high.

Strong academic standing/academic success came easy at the International High School. A commonly expressed reason why the International High Schools have high college acceptance rates is because students perform well academically, and according to participants, it was not difficult to get good grades. One participant explains:

Well I remember very few of us having low GPAs or low grades in general. Like there were just very few, very, very rare occasions. But then again, it could be because you know, the work was relatively easy.

Colleges want more diversity. International High School graduates spoke of colleges striving to create diverse campus environments; hence, they accept a large number of international students. One participant expressed this idea:

I know a lot of the colleges are looking for people that are, you know, from different races I guess, because they want to make it a little bit different, you know, a little bit international.

She continued by explaining that International High School students come from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds:

My main thing is because it's people from different cultures and different languages, different backgrounds, and they want to have something like that in their schools, people from different cultures, diversity.

Research question 2: What are the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their four years in college?

To answer this research question, participants described the ways their high school life differed from their college life with regards to their educational experiences. Six categories of responses emerged. The majority of participants reported that they had to be more independent in college, while the rest reported encountering more challenging classes, a less welcoming college environment, and spoke about the opportunity to pick a major in college. Table 14 provides a breakdown of this information.

Table 14

Ways High School was Different from College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Had to be more independent	7 (58.3%)
Able to pick own area of study/classes of interest	3 (25.0%)
Academic classes were more challenging	3 (25.0%)
High school was a more welcoming/comfortable environment	3 (25.0%)
Had to improve academic skills	3 (25.0%)
Miscellaneous (e.g., lack of diversity, more lectures and textbooks)	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Had to be more independent. Participants stressed that they had to learn how to study independently and did not have anyone telling them what to do in college.

One participant stated:

In high school I was a little more, I don't know, I was more taken care of than me taking care of myself. And I think I had, like you know, like I had my parents and my teachers doing, or telling me what I needed to do. And in college I had you know, basically had to do it all by my own, and like I don't know, be more independent.

Able to pick own area of study/classes of interest. International High School graduates reported that college was different from high school because they were able to take classes they were interested in, and were also able to focus on one path of study. One participant noted:

College to me it felt like it was easier, because I was able to pick my own classes of study, whatever I wanted to study. If I was interested in it, I would take the class.

Another participant spoke about taking mostly technology related classes and being able to concentrate on his field of study.

But when you go to college you focus on one career only, in a way. So I felt like everything was like concentrated, and it really changed everything because I would go home and the only thing I'd do was technology stuff. The English and the math was kind of like you know on the side. But I felt like my entire life literally was just technology because that's the field that I went into.

Academic classes were more challenging. Several participants reported that they encountered more challenging classes when they attended college. For example, one participant described this as:

Academically speaking it was just very, very challenging. I was exposed to Philosophy for the first time in my life, which was something that we hadn't really discussed at all at you know, at International High School. And the school that I went to, everything had Philosophy and everything was based on theories. So it was very challenging at first and yea I mean, academically speaking it was very, very, very overwhelming.

Likewise, another participant compared college to high school by saying:

Definitely college classes are a lot more of a workload, I feel because semesters are so much shorter, as you know. So it's a lot of material within a couple months rather than a whole year in high school. So that's, that was a lot more pressure.

High school was a more welcoming/comfortable environment. International High School graduates also communicated that in comparison to college, the International High Schools provided a more welcoming and comfortable environment. Here is one account of a participant who felt college did not provide with the same sense of community as the International High School:

I mean in high school like I mentioned, I felt very welcoming. It was like a sense of community where I belonged and I knew where I fit in. College was very difficult to, even though I was in the same school for five years, like it was difficult for me to find a place where I felt like I belonged. Like it's always, it was just, it just never felt like a sense, I never got the same sense of community that I got from International.

Another participant explained that she felt more comfortable in high school because there were people who she shared similar experiences with:

In high school it was kind of, it was comforting to see people that had gone through a similar experience, and to have that shared experience in leaving their countries.

Had to improve academic skills. A number of participants indicated that they had to acquire better study habits in order to improve their academic skills. One of the participants stated, "I really had to strengthen my writing skills in college." Another participant reported that she had to become more strategic when reading college textbooks:

Having textbooks that I had to you know, read and know what information to get out of that. Not to read everything, but skim through, you know.

Miscellaneous (e.g., lack of diversity, more lectures, and textbooks.)

Participants also reported several other reasons college was different from high school. For example, one participant stated: “So you had a lot more reading in college than you did in high school.” She continues by describing that another major difference was the lack of diversity in her college:

The school was predominantly White, so it was different to see, to not see people from different countries there being the majority, which at times felt like a challenge.

In addition, participants were probed to talk about their English skills in high school and how they compared to what they were when they were in college. Six categories developed from participants’ responses (see Table 15). A close examination of their responses show that a majority of participants reported that their English skills continued to improve all throughout high school and into college, while the remaining talked about their limited vocabulary, academic challenges, and level of confidence upon entering college.

Table 15

English Skills in High School and College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
English skills kept progressing throughout high school and into college	8 (66.6%)
Felt comfortable in high school with regard to English skills	4 (33.3%)
Vocabulary was limited upon arrival to college/vocabulary improved in college	3 (25.0%)

Types of reading and peer interaction had an impact on the progression of English skills	3 (25.0%)
Writing English was more challenging in college than in high school/improved writing skills in college	2 (16.6%)
Felt more confident in college with regards to English skills	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents reported more than one response category.

English skills kept progressing throughout high school and into college.

The majority of participants reported that they entered the International High School with basic English skills, but that their English skills continued to improve through their years of high school and college. One participant explained step-by-step the way his English skills improved throughout the years:

So when I got to ninth grade my English was really really bad because my junior high school didn't really help me. So I got there, my English was kind of like horrible. The teachers were really helping me you know, get it. Tenth grade I felt like I was literally making up words. Eleventh grade I do remember that you know, that's the college year so everybody was like using these big terms in terms of English, like fancy words, and it kind of made a whole competitive environment in a way. And then by the end of twelfth grade I know for me was like a little delayed. So by the end of twelfth grade I felt like I didn't have to think in Spanish, which is something that I usually did like literally every day of my high school life.

He continues:

So it was a really huge difference because even my thinking process was different, I was thinking more in terms of like using English. I felt like English wasn't a barrier then. My English was still, you know in progress, but it wasn't the same as, you know, when I started. Cause when I started I could tell you that I couldn't have a 1-minute conversation with you in English because I would have to switch to Spanish. So when I got to college, you know,

everything had to be in English and that's just the way it was. It was kind of like forced into you.

Felt comfortable in high school with regard to English skills. A number of participants mentioned that they felt comfortable with their English skills when they were in high school. For example, this participant communicated:

I was always pictured as, you know, having stronger English skills. And I guess, I don't know, based on my English skills I was always kind of pin pointed as a leader, and I guess better in the classroom, or in group work, or whatever it was.

Vocabulary was limited upon arrival to college/vocabulary improved in college. International High School graduates felt that when they entered college their academic vocabulary was very limited, but that it improved throughout their college years. One participant described her surprise at encountering all the words she did not know:

When I entered college it was a total {ly} different story. It was like, 'oh, what are all these words?' So yea, my vocabulary was very limited, or I felt that it was very limited upon my arrival in college.

Types of reading and peer interaction had an impact on the progression of English skills. International High School graduates also communicated that reading different books and interacting with peers who did not speak their native language helped them improve their English skills in high school and college. Here is one account:

Starting from tenth grade I started hanging out with students who lived around my neighborhood and they were predominantly Russian or from the Soviet Union area of Western Europe, Eastern Europe. And so I was forced to speak English because they all speak either Russian or English so that helped me to be more efficient with how I processed my thoughts and how I spoke. So I feel like that helped me a lot to learn the language because I had to, I had to really get my point across. They would correct me a lot of the times and teach {me} how to properly talk.

Another participant described that her vocabulary improved in college because she was reading novels and interacting with native English speakers:

All the material that I was reading in college was college level material. We did not spend a lot of time reviewing textbooks at the New School, so it was mainly theories and novels that we were reviewing and studying so I think that expanded my vocabulary much more. You know, as well as the interaction with you know, natives from the U.S. or fluent speakers in English.

Writing English was more challenging in college than in high school/improved writing skills in college. Two participants reported that writing in English was much more difficult in college than in high school, and that had an impact in their academic performance. This participant described her struggle with the first English course she took in college:

At the beginning, I remember the first year was very challenging for me. Even with just taking basic English classes, like I said. Even my first professor that I had in my first semester, he was like that, he did not like to see a lot of words in a sentence, he was very straightforward. That was hard for me to do, that's actually hard to do, to put your ideas in a very concise way, very abstract, for people to understand, and right to the point. Sometimes I tend to, at least in my experience, I tend to write a lot of the stuff on one thing and then don't make sense, so that's what he disliked.

Felt more confident in college with regards to English skills. One participant communicated:

When it comes to college, it was, I was really, I understood everything pretty much. I understood what the professors was teaching me in college classes, and I was able to express myself way better.

Participants were also probed to speak about the size of the college they attended and how it compared to the size of the International High School they attended. Table 16 provides a summary of the categories that emerged from participants' responses.

Table 16

Size of College Attended Compared to International High School Attended

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
College was bigger than high school	11 (91.6%)
Lecture classes in college with large number of students compared to high school	3 (25.0%)
College was similar in class size to high school	3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

College was bigger than high school. Most International High School graduates reported that the college they attended was bigger than the International High School they attended. One participant specifically talked about the number of students that were attending his high school and college when he was still at both schools:

Brooklyn International housed about 400 students. The college that I went to, they housed around 4,000 students.

Lecture classes in college with large number of students compared to high school. Participants communicated that when they attended college they had to take lecture classes in big auditoriums filled with students. This participant communicated that classes at the International High School were much smaller than the classes at her college.

International high school, it was small, {on} average you could say like about 15 to 20, 15 to 20 students or maybe less. I'm probably exaggerating. And in college were like lectures of like, I don't know, 30, 40, you know.

College was similar in class size to high school. Three participants reported that they attended colleges that offered small class sizes; similar to the class sizes they had in high school. One participant explains:

Both schools were small, or at least the classes that I attended were very small. There was, I don't know, 18, 15 to 18 students in one class, and one class being like five students.... The classes were seminar based, all your classes, all our classes were very very small.

Every participant (that the question applied to) was probed to talk about what it was like to go from a small high school to a bigger college/university campus, as well as if they found the experience to be intimidating. As shown in Table 17, there was high variability in participants' responses. Almost half of the participants reported that they felt intimidated when they first started college. The other half reported that it was not an intimidating experience, or they had positive feelings about going to a bigger college, or they found it difficult to make connections, or they encountered a lack of diversity.

Table 17

Participants' Experience of Going from a Small High School to a Bigger College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
It was an intimidating experience when first started college	5 (41.6%)
Positive feelings about going to a bigger college/going to a similar in class size college compared to high school.	5 (41.6%)
Not an intimidating experience	3 (25.0%)
Difficult to make connections in bigger college	2 (16.6%)

Lack of diversity in college

1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

It was an intimidating experience when first started college. Almost half of the International High School graduates reported that they felt intimidated going from such a small high school to a bigger college/university campus. When this participant was asked if it was intimidating for her, she responded: “Yes. Very. I remember I was sitting in one like when I walked to one class and I didn’t want to go in, and I’m like no way.”

Positive feelings about going to a bigger college/bigger college with similar in class size compared to high school. A number of participants shared that they had positive feelings about going to a bigger college/university, and having small classes similar to the ones they had in high school. This participant described her feelings about going to a small college:

It felt refreshing to have that similar environment where I also was able to have closer relationships with the professors who could know me by name, and knew my interests, and were able to relate to me opportunities or help me develop my educational interests. And also, in terms of the students, it didn’t feel like an overwhelming population group of students. It was really nice to, to say hello to most of the people there and know most of the people there.

Not an intimidating experience. A number of participants described that going to a bigger college was not an intimidating experience for them. For example, one participant explained:

I didn't. I didn't. I mean I thought it was big, but once I found out that other schools were much bigger-I really, to me the main-the classes were not really as big. Like the math classes were pretty much the same size as the classes when I was in high school. So it wasn't really overwhelming.

Difficult to make connections in bigger college. International High School graduates also reported that they found it difficult to connect to professors and other students when they attended college. One participant reported, “I felt like I couldn’t really connect much to anyone or my professors at all.”

Lack of diversity in college. One International High School graduate communicated that when she entered college she encountered a lack of diversity in her school. She shared that her college was predominantly White and it was difficult for her to experience being one of the few minority students there:

When I began my, the first semester, it wasn't really diverse, as International High School had been, or as my experience prior to college had been. It was mainly White. Mainly white students from out of state, and there was very, very few people of color. When I did go to college, it was such a culture shock. That was very, it was just very difficult at first... Yeah, I was literally a minority. We were, there were in a classroom perhaps I was the only person of color. And it wasn't until my junior year and then my senior year that I started to see more people of color in general. And I'm not just saying Latinos, I mean people of color, you know.

Participants were also asked to report their biggest concerns in making the transition from high school to college. More specifically, they were asked about their expectations with regard to the workload, faculty-student relations, and/or peer relations. As shown in Table 18, a large number reported that they had academic concerns, but many also reported that they did not know what to expect when they first started college. Additionally, some participants indicated that they had social concerns such as not being accepted by their peers, and some others indicated that they expected a closer relationship with their college professors.

Table 18

Biggest Concerns in Making the Transition from High School to College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Academic concerns	8 (66.6%)
Did not know what to expect	7 (58.3%)
Social concerns	6 (50.0%)
Expected a closer relationships with professors	3 (25.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Academic concerns. Many International High School graduates reported that they had academic concerns such as not knowing what to major in, not knowing if they were going to graduate, and about the workload itself. For example, when this participant was asked about his biggest concern in making the transition from high school to college he responded:

If I was going to graduate or if I even had what was necessary to graduate. So even though I was really confident that I could, the ending part was like unsure. And you know like, you have like this thought in the back of your head. Am I like worthy enough? And, am I really going to make it. Because I wasn't sure if I was actually going to get my Bachelor's degree at the end of the year. And since you know, I failed some classes when I was in high school, I felt that I would be doing the same thing when I was in college.

Another participant spoke directly about his concern regarding the workload:

Well I was concerned, I mean the workload I knew was going to be more. I knew it was going to be more work, but I just had to, I mean I just had to learn to manage it and get it done.

Did not know what to expect. Several International High School graduates reported that they did not know what to expect when they first started college. For example:

Okay well college for me was, it was an uncertainty. You know, I hadn't- I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know what it was going to be like... I didn't really have any expectations, like oh my God, you know we're gonna do a lot of work, or not a lot of work. I didn't know.

Social concerns. A number of participants reported that they had social concerns when they were making the transition from high school to college. They expressed their worries about not being accepted by their peers because they were from foreign countries or because they spoke with an accent. Here is one account:

Well before I left {high school} I was really, really concerned about my accent, and if people were gonna really understand me, or if people were going to judge me... So that was my biggest concern, how, how I was going to be judged.

Another participant expressed her worries about attending a predominantly White college, especially because she had previously encountered racism and prejudice:

Being in a predominantly white school because I didn't have those interactions {in high school} with people that were from here, or were natives. And I had already preconceptions of possible experiences with xenophobia or racism, so I was kind of wary of those.

Here is another example:

I'm an immigrant, you know who doesn't speak English well competing against all these people who speak perfect English and they literally have everything they need. So that was something that was always like in the back of my head.

Expected a closer relationship with professors. Other participants communicated that they expected a closer relationship with their college professors, similar to the relationship they had with their International High School teachers. One participant explained that he was “so close to some of the teachers in the International

High School,” that he was not sure whether “this was going to be the same or not in college.”

For those participants who reported concerns regarding their transition from high school to college, the following probe was used to acquire additional relevant information about what happened to those concerns once they were in college. Several participants reported that their concerns went away once they started college, but others discussed a number of activities they engaged in that helped lessen those worries. Two categories of responses emerged and the following section provides a description of each (see Table 19).

Table 19

Concerns Once Started College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Concerns faded away	5 (41.6%)
Engaged in academic/social activities (e.g., surrounded with students of color/joined the cultural center, went to class and understood more, built relationships with other staff and professors)	3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because this question did not apply to all respondents.

Concerns faded away. Several International High School graduates reported that their initial concerns went away or decreased once they started college. For example, this participant reported: “I wasn’t as concerned as I was in the beginning. I learned to be a little bit more independent and make my own decisions.” Similarly,

this other participant stated that he “got to know professors and other students” once he started college, therefore, he “didn’t have those concerns anymore.”

Engaged in academic/social activities. Participants also shared a variety of activities they engaged in to help lessen their worries about attending college. For example, one participant sought out other students of color: “I joined the cultural center, and it was great that the school had one. So I kind of surrounded myself mostly with students of color and international students.” This other participant explained that his academic concerns decreased after he started going to class, taking notes, and reading his books:

But then I went to class, {when} the teachers {were} talking I understood, I took notes. {When} I went home, I read my books. I mean it wasn't really a big deal. I mean it was more like the fear, fear of the unknown. But once I saw it, it wasn't really that big of a deal.

Research question 3: What are the perceived supports experienced by Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their four years in college?

The third research question examined the different supports participants experienced while in college. Participants answered one main question and seven follow up questions. The first question asked participants if they encountered supports that helped them complete their undergraduate education. Five categories developed from participants’ responses (see Table 20). A close examination of their responses shows that a majority of participants received support and encouragement from their professors and academic advisors. Others received support from their academic programs, peers, and parents, while a few reported that support was available but they never looked for it.

Table 20

Supports Experienced by Participants While They Were in College

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Support/encouragement from professors and academic advisors	8 (66.6%)
Support from peers	4 (33.3%)
Support from academic programs	4 (33.3%)
Did not seek support	2 (16.6%)
Support from parents	1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Support/encouragement from professors and academic advisors. Support and encouragement from professors and academic advisors was frequently identified as critical for participants' college completion. Generally, participants identified that professors and academic advisors provided words of encouragement, homework assistance, and several other educational opportunities to help them succeed. Here one described the research opportunities she received from an organization in her science program and from some of her professors:

I had as I told you this organization, this organization and the director of this program, she was a huge support, huge support, huge support for me. And she was also my physics professor there. Actually she was the director of the program. I was able to do summer research with them and some of the professors in the sciences. You know they do a lot of that type of work. Like anything, like anything that you need help with they help you.

Another explained the one-to-one help he received from his professor, and how that motivated him to do well in college:

I had this specific professor, Mr. Brule he was my web design professor. So if I didn't understand something, he would be the one I would be chatting with through the study portal. I would be chatting with him at like 10 o'clock at night, and I would be like listen, I don't understand how to complete this, and then he would be like okay here's a couple of websites that you can use to help you with this... He was like the professor for me, and he really helped me achieve what I needed, and even offered me a position in his company if I pass the class. So that was like a big incentive for me then.

Support from peers. A number of participants reported that they received support from peers and classmates, which contributed to the attainment of their undergraduate degree. More specifically, participants communicated that they found support through study groups and working together in class. Here is one example:

For me making friends is really easy so talking to classmates about meeting up to like study, or review, or prepare for an exam and such, that made it less difficult.

Support from academic programs. International High School graduates also reported that they received support from academic programs such as the writing center and outside-of-class tutoring. For example, this participant explained:

I would say maybe the first two years because I felt my writing needed improvement. I spent a lot of time in the writing center. My school had a writing center...so every paper, every assignment I needed to turn in, I would stop by the writing center and work with one of the tutors there to just make sure that I worked out many of the big issues or any of the main problems that existed in my writing at that point.

Did not seek support. Two participants reported that even though their college offered academic support to help them complete their undergraduate degree, they decided not to seek for it. Here one participant illustrates this point:

I mean there was some support there but that I actually went to reach out, no...there was support there, I can't say that there wasn't, I just didn't go for

the support. I knew what my problems were and I knew what I needed to do to get where I wanted to be, and I did it.

Support from parents. One International High School graduate reported that her parents were of valuable support during college. As seen here, she felt as though they were a great source of encouragement and were there for her every step of the way:

Well my parent's were like a big support. Like I did have to work full time and go to school full time. But my parent's were there for me too, economically not as much as I would like to. But they were always there. If I needed to do something, if I needed to get someone, they were always like okay we're gonna help you, we will, you have to finish. So my parent's were a big help.

In order to obtain more information about the supports participants encountered while in college, I asked them to name the top two or three things or people that helped keep them in college. Table 21 presents the six different categories that emerged.

Table 21

Top Things or People that Helped Keep Participants in College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Faculty/staff/advisors in college	7 (58.3%)
Family members	6 (50.0%)
Personal motivation to succeed	6 (50.0%)
Friends	4 (33.3%)
Academic programs	2 (16.6%)
Community/outside organizations	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Faculty/staff/advisors in college. The majority of participants identified college faculty, staff, and academic advisors as valuable support for them to stay and graduate from college.

Family members. Half of the participants communicated that family members provided significant encouragement and support for them to stay in college. For example, this participant noted: “One of my older sisters was one of my biggest motivations as well.” Another participant stated: “One person that kept me in college was my Mom.”

Personal motivation to succeed. Half of the participants also stressed that their own personal motivation and drive to succeed was what helped them graduate from college. This was illustrated by the following examples: “My own motivation I think. I think there was, I think if I wouldn’t have had that, I wouldn’t have finished or gone anywhere.” Another participant discussed how she did not want to end up working for a job in which she was going to get paid minimum wage, and that was her motivation to stay and graduate from college:

I didn't want to end up working for a minimum wage job, and I decided from when I was a little kid that the only way that I was not going to end up working in a minimum wage job was if I go to school... That was one of the reasons that kept me in college, was that I did not want to earn \$7 an hour, you know for like, killing myself for such little money.

Friends. International High School graduates also reported that their friends were critical to their success in college. For example, this one participant spoke about the friendships she created in college: “I made very strong friendships there, and you know, they were people who kind of had the same idea of succeeding.”

Academic programs. Two participants also communicated that academic programs such as the writing center and their field of study helped them stay in college. One explained: “I took some really interesting classes that just kind of strengthened my desire to stay in Hampshire and to continue.”

Community/outside organizations. A couple of participants indicated that their communities and organizations, such as church and the International High Schools, motivated them to continue their college education. Here is one account:

Church, my faith, that's another major thing that helped me.

I would still say Brooklyn International. Even after I left, of course I kept in contact with them, with the teachers and the principal.

Every participant was probed to talk about the ways in which their family members, friends, faculty/staff/advisors, academic programs, community/outside programs, and their own motivation to succeed helped keep them in college. Four main categories were developed from participants’ responses: provided financial/emotional/educational support, provided motivation/inspiration, helped them achieve personal goals, and provided advice. Table 22 provides a breakdown of this information.

Table 22

Type of Help Participants Received in College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Provided financial/emotional, educational support	9 (75.0%)
Provided motivation/inspiration	8 (66.6%)
Helped achieve personal goals	7 (58.3%)

Provided general advice 3 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Every participant was probed to state whether or not they were part of any community support groups that encouraged or helped them complete their undergraduate education. Three main categories were developed from participants' responses. The majority of participants reported that they were not part of any community support groups, while the remaining reported that they received support from programs that were offered either through their college or outside their college (see Table 23).

Table 23

Utilization of Community Support Groups

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Not part of a community support group	7 (58.3%)
Received support from programs through college	5 (41.6%)
Received support from programs outside of college	1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Additionally, the five participants who received support from programs offered through their college or outside their college were further probed with: how did those programs help you, and how important were they to you. Three main categories developed from participants' responses: provided support and motivation, helped build

relationships/friendships, and provided a place to feel comfortable. In addition, all of the participants reported that these programs were very important and helpful to them (see Table 24).

Table 24

Ways in which Community Support Groups were Helpful to Participants

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Provided support and motivation	4 (80.0%)
Helped build relationships/friendships	2 (40.0%)
Provided a place to feel comfortable	1 (20.0%)
<hr/>	
Importance of Community Support Group	
Very important/helpful	5 (100.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because this category did not apply for some of the respondents.

Participants were also probed to report whether or not they were part of any educational support groups or received any additional educational supports while in college. Of note is that many participants reported that they received tutoring for specific academic subjects, while others reported that they received extra support for their writing. A small number reported that they were not part of any educational support groups. Table 25 provides a breakdown of this information.

Table 25

Educational Support Groups

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Tutoring for specific academic subjects	7 (58.3%)
Extra support for writing	5 (41.6%)
Not part of any educational support groups	4 (33.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents reported more than one response category.

Participants who were part of educational support groups or who received additional educational supports were further probed to describe how those educational support groups (or that additional support) helped them complete college, as well as how important the supports were to them. Three main categories developed from participants' responses: helped them do better academically, helped improve their writing skills, and provided with additional resources. In addition, all of the participants reported that those programs or that additional support were very important and helpful to them (see Table 26).

Table 26

Ways in Which Educational Support Groups/Additional Educational Supports Were Helpful to Participants

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Helped them do better academically	6 (75.0%)
Helped improve their writing skills	3 (37.5%)

Provided with resources 1 (12.5%)

Importance of Educational Support Groups/Additional

Educational Supports

Very important/helpful 8 (100.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because this category did not apply for some of the respondents.

Every International High School graduate was probed to talk about whether they had anyone helping them navigate the college system. As shown in Table 27, there was high variability in participants’ responses. Many reported that they did not receive help from anyone and that they learned the process on their own, while others reported that they received help from family members, institutional agents, peers/teammates, educational support groups, and International High School teachers and counselors.

Table 27

Help Received for Navigating the College System

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Did not receive help from anyone/Learned the process “on my own”	5 (41.6%)
Received help from family members	4 (33.3%)
Received help from institutional agents (e.g., professors and staff)	4 (33.3%)
Received help from peers/teammates	2 (16.6%)
Received help from educational support groups	1 (8.33%)

Received help/advice from International High School teachers/counselors 1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

A follow-up probe involved querying participants to talk about how their family members, academic professionals, peers/teammates, educational support groups, and International High School teachers/counselors helped them navigate the college system. Table 28 illustrates participants’ responses.

Table 28

Ways Participants were Helped to Navigate College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Provided logistical advice (e.g., how to register for classes, declare majors, financial aid)	4 (57.1%)
Provided advice about how to improve academic skills	3 (42.8%)
Provided advice about general resources that existed in college	2 (28.5%)
Provided advice about the social dynamics of college	1 (14.2%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because this category did not apply for some of the respondents.

International High School graduates were further queried to talk about the extent to which they were mentored by a faculty member while they were completing their undergraduate degree. The majority of participants reported that they received mentorship from academic professionals such as professors, academic advisors,

program directors and/or department counselors. However, one third reported that they did not receive any type of mentorship in college (see Table 29).

Table 29

Mentorship Received in College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Received mentorship from academic professionals (e.g., faculty, staff, academic advisors)	8 (66.6%)
Did not receive mentorship	4 (33.3%)

Note: N = 12.

Additionally, International High School graduates who responded that they received mentorship in college were asked to provide an example of the type of mentorship they received. As seen in Table 30, participants received academic mentoring, personal/career advice, and advice about time management.

Table 30

Examples of Type of Mentorship Received

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Provided academic mentoring	8 (100.0%)
Provided personal/career advice	6 (75.0%)
Provided advice about time management	2 (25.0%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents reported more than one response category and this category did not apply to all.

In order to obtain more information about the supports participants encountered while in college, I probed them to talk about how connected they felt with

professors. Four categories developed from participants' responses (See Table 31).

The majority reported that they felt connected to some professors, while the rest reported that they felt connected to one specific professor/advisor, only felt connected towards the last two years of college, or overall felt connected to all professors.

Table 31

Participants' Connections with professors

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Felt connected to some professors	7 (58.3%)
Felt connected to one professor/advisor	2 (16.6%)
Felt very connected towards the last two years of college	2 (16.6%)
Overall felt connected to all professors	1 (8.33%)

Note: N = 12.

As a follow up probe, participants were asked to share an instance in which they felt connected to their professors. Five categories emerged from participants' responses (See Table 32). A close examination of their responses shows that there was high variability in the ways they connected with professors. In general, participants felt connected when professors worked with them during an internship or research opportunity, when they asked them about their goals/experiences, when they provided academic advice, when they shared personal experiences, and when they had conversations with them about topics of interest.

Table 32

Examples of how Participants Connected with Professors

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Miscellaneous (e.g., when professors provided their contact information, invited them to their house, worked with them during an internship/research opportunity)	5 (41.6%)
Felt connected through topics/subjects of interest	3 (25.0%)
Felt connected when they asked about personal goals/opinions/experiences	3 (25.0%)
Felt connected when they shared personal experiences	2 (16.6%)
Felt connected when they provided academic advice/help	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Finally, participants were probed to communicate whether there were any other supports that helped keep them in college. Five categories developed from participants' responses (see Table 33). As shown, participants provided similar responses by stating that they received support from college organizations/foundations/clubs, family, professors, academic programs, and friends. A few communicated that they did not have any additional supports.

Table 33

Additional Supports That Helped Keep Participants in College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Support from college organizations/foundations/clubs/jobs	5 (41.6%)
No additional supports	3 (25.0%)
Support from family	2 (16.6%)
Support from friends	1 (8.33%)
Support from professors	1 (8.33%)

Note: N = 12.

International High School graduates who reported having additional supports in college were also asked to report how those supports helped keep them in college. As seen in Table 34, more than half of the participants reported that those supports provided motivation to succeed and emotional support. The remainder reported that they provided academic support, financial support, helped them balance their academic work and social life, increased their social interactions, and helped increase their interest in specific subjects.

Table 34

Ways in Which Supports Helped Participants Stay in College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Provided motivation to succeed/emotional support	7 (58.3%)
Provided academic support	1 (8.33%)
Provided financial support	1 (8.33%)

Helped balance academic work and social life	1 (8.33%)
Helped increase social interactions in college	1 (8.33%)
Helped increase interest in specific subjects	1 (8.33%)

Note: N = 12.

In speaking about supports participants received while in college, a few spontaneously spoke about their struggle to take advantage of the supports that were available. This was expressed either explicitly or was conveyed implicitly. One International High School graduate explained that he did not get to have any mentors in college because he was just going in and out of class:

Now that I'm thinking back, not really, I did not have any mentors. Like I said, it was more like I went to school, I went to class, I did what I had to do, and that was that.

This International High School graduate explained that there were times she needed help but chose to figure it out on her own:

I mean there was help there, but one, I didn't really have the time to go, and two, I really didn't want to go. So I can't, you know, I didn't really, they had the help, I didn't go for the help. With me it was more like if I knew that I was like you know, I needed help with something, I knew how to do it myself, or how to find it myself. I rely a lot on the internet to teach me how to do things that I can't do. So I never went like out of my, my computer basically. But it wasn't that help wasn't there... There was a lot of help there, but I didn't go, you know I didn't use it, not because I didn't need it, not because I didn't need it, there were many times that I really needed the help, I just don't like when I need help, I'm very independent, you know. Like I have to be really struggling for me to go and ask somebody, 'hello come help me' or something like that. I guess it's just the way I am.

Research Question 4: What implications do second language abilities have for Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during college?

In response to this question, participants’ responses fell into five categories, as seen in Table 35. Of note is that many communicated that their second language abilities helped them academically. Others discussed that it helped them take advantage of different opportunities in college and expand their social interactions. Interestingly, a few communicated that they experienced social concerns about speaking with an accent, and one communicated that second language abilities did not seem to have an impact.

Table 35

Ways in Which Second Language Abilities Helped/Hindered Participants During College

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Helped academically	7 (58.3%)
Helped take advantage of different opportunities in college	5 (41.6%)
Helped expand social interactions	3 (25.0%)
Social concerns about speaking with an accent	2 (16.6%)
Second language abilities were not perceived to have an impact	1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Helped academically. Participants whose responses fell into this category conveyed that their second language abilities helped them academically because they

were able to test out of their language class, understand the material better from Spanish classes, and understand vocabulary with Spanish/Latin roots. This participant explained that she was able to understand certain words in English because of her ability to speak Spanish:

In a lot of textbooks there's a lot of Latin {words}, especially in nursing. Because I knew Spanish, you know, like I knew what the roots were and it just helped me understand stuff a lot better, and a lot faster.

Helped take advantage of different opportunities in college. Due to their bilingualism participants were able to take advantage of different opportunities in college, such as being able to attend events in their native language, design websites in both English and Spanish, and take internships in which they needed to use their native language. Here is one example:

A website that I created for this company, while I was in college I was able to do it in Spanish and English. Which is something that you know, back then it was kind of like oh wow you don't really have to use Google translate for it. You can translate it yourself word for word.' So it was really, it was really big. I can say I made money out of it.

Here is another example of how the ability to speak Spanish was beneficial for this participant during college:

Well it helped me take advantage of many things, like you know, attending different events that were happening. Sometimes there were a lot of films showing at the New School, very diverse, including you know, films from Latin America, Spain, and just going and interacting with film directors, and you know other folks that you know, that didn't speak English and whose main native language was Spanish. And that was always a plus.

Helped expand social interactions. A few participants indicated that their second language abilities helped them expand their social interactions in college because other Spanish-speaking students as well as English-only students looked

forward to working with them. One participant explained that his ability to speak Spanish helped him interact with other students during group work:

So being able to speak Spanish was actually a benefit many times because it just made me, many people thought of that as an asset. And many times, especially in my education classes we had to, many times work in groups. So many people wanted to or felt like they should work with me because I spoke Spanish, and many times there was no one else who spoke another language. So that actually helped me sometimes in terms of working in groups.

Another International High School graduate explained:

My second language definitely helped me to help other students who were either exchange students, or international students who were still struggling... because it's just different vocabulary, it's new vocabulary, and I used my Spanish to teach them that.

Social concerns about speaking with an accent. Two participants reported that they were concerned about speaking English because they had an accent and they were afraid of how they were going to be judged. This participant illustrates this point:

I was nervous to speak. I wouldn't say much because I would be afraid of how I was going to be judged... they {professors} thought everybody was ready, and I don't think everybody understood how long it actually takes for someone to learn English and be able to use it, and use academic language, or just being able to communicate with someone.

Second language abilities were not perceived to have an impact. One International High School graduate reported that she felt her second language abilities did not help or hinder her in any way while she was in college. She explained:

My Spanish was kind of forgotten because I didn't speak it or study it, or wrote it, or like, you know, anything. I would only speak it at home because I didn't, not that I didn't choose to, it's just that courses were all in English.

International High School graduates were further probed to talk about whether their language abilities had any implications on their academic performance, and if

they did, they were asked to provide examples. Table 36 provides a summary of participants' responses.

Table 36

Implications Language Abilities had on Academic Performance

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Experienced academic difficulties	5 (41.6%)
Knowing Spanish helped improve English skills	3 (25.0%)
Was able to understand Spanish speaking professors/read in Spanish	2 (16.6%)
It was a challenge because first thought in Spanish then needed to translate to English	2 (16.6%)
Did not perceive an impact	1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

Experienced academic difficulties. For several International High School graduates their language abilities negatively impacted how well they did academically. Some participants expressed that their language abilities put them at a “disadvantage” because they “had to many times put more work into the same assignments to be able to get the same results” as native English speakers. This participant explained:

I did so much better in my major classes then in the general education classes because a lot of the general education classes I had to take had constant reading and writing, and I think that you know, I didn't enjoy them much because they were much more difficult for me just because of my language proficiency...I had to read something much, like at a much lower pace than you know, than a native speaker would. It takes me longer to read things, you know, to write things, and get my ideas together. Lot's of like, you know revising.

Knowing Spanish helped improve English skills. Some International High School graduates reported that because both Spanish and English have words that derive from Latin, they were able to figure out the meanings of English words and learn vocabulary at a faster rate. This participant summarizes this point:

Spanish has a lot of Latin words and my God that helps tremendously when you know, when you're looking up big words in English. So I think it was like, when you know two languages you just know more words.

Was able to understand Spanish-speaking professors/read in Spanish.

Participants reported that they felt they had an advantage in college because of their bilingual skills. They communicated that they were able to speak with and understand Spanish-speaking professors when they took Spanish classes in college. They also communicated that they had the ability to read in Spanish not only for pleasure, but also when it was required of them. Here is an example:

In terms of practical terms, there were some classes that I took that were like hybrid, like Spanish and English. There were some that were in Spanish and that was mostly because we had guest professors coming from Latin American countries... So I guess in that instance I was put into an advantage by having that skill of knowing Spanish and being able to understand the professor and the readings.

First thought in Spanish then needed to translate to English. Two

International High School graduates reported that their language abilities had negative implications on their academic performance. They reported that it was difficult for them to speak and write in English mainly because they first thought in Spanish and then needed to translate to English. As one participant stated, she had to “switch” her brain “from Spanish to English when it came to writing.” In addition, this other participant explained that she experienced challenges for the same reason:

I would say it was challenging, because a lot of the times I would find myself thinking in Spanish, but then {thinking of} how to put it in English, and then {thinking of} the right way so that it could be understood.

Did not perceive an impact. One International High School graduate reported that her language abilities did not have any implications on her academic performance.

Research Question 5: What are the perceived challenges experienced by Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs during their four years in college?

The final research question examined the negative challenges, barriers, and/or unpleasant reactions International High School graduates experienced while in college. Participants answered one main question and one follow-up question. The first question asked participants if they had encountered negative challenges, barriers, or unpleasant reactions during their undergraduate education. Five categories of responses emerged from participants' responses and the following section provides a description of each category (see Table 37).

Table 37

Perceived Challenges Experienced by Participants during College

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Academic challenges/time management	6 (50.0%)
Negative interactions with professors/advisors	6 (50.0%)
Language abilities were a challenge when started college	3 (8.3%)
Difficulties integrating into the college community	2 (16.6%)
Discrimination	1 (8.33%)

Personal/family tragedy

1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses

Academic challenges/time management. Half of the participants indicated that they experienced academic challenges during college. More specifically, they experienced difficulties figuring out good study strategies, deciding what to major in, and managing their academic work and personal life. This participant spoke directly about the difficulties he experienced figuring out what to major in:

I wasn't sure what I wanted to study. I was very doubtful of what I wanted to pursue and I got really bad grades one semester. And that kind of took me down. And I didn't really pay enough attention or thought of how bad that would impact the rest of my college career.

This other participant spoke about the challenges she experienced trying to understand academic vocabulary and concepts:

At first it was mainly like, terminology and ideology, and stuff like that. But to apply those terms into critical thinking and research papers, that's another challenge within itself. In a sense, even to explore one idea, one concept, it's hard to do. So that's one of, that was one of the main challenges. So academically, that's where my challenges were.

Negative interactions with professors/advisors. Half of the participants also communicated that they experienced negative interactions with professors and advisors during college. They stated that they received "demoralizing" comments about their accent, as well as negative comments about their "poor English skills."

Here is one example:

I had this professor for my speech class. She would always try to make me feel like you know, I needed to go back and learn or something. Because I'm Ecuadorian, I will have an accent, that's just part of who we are. But she would always be making me feel like, 'your accent is no good,' or something like that. That was one of the worst experiences I had in my speech class.

Here is another example:

There was a professor that I had in my English {class}... And the professor told me that I wrote like a 7 year old, that I basically shouldn't have been in college.

Language abilities were a challenge when started college. A few

International High School graduates communicated that their language abilities were a challenge for them during the first year of college. They stated that reading and writing was difficult for them since English was their second language. This participant summarizes this point:

Yeah, reading, reading, and writing. That was like the thing, cause you know when you have to write an essay, if you're not a native language speaker you usually make a lot more mistakes, and it would be harder for you to catch them especially if you don't have somebody to proofread your paper. So yeah, language was a big barrier at the beginning of my career.

Difficulties integrating into the college community. Two International High

School graduates reported that adjusting to the college community was challenging for them. For example, this participant explained that when she first started college she did not feel welcomed and considered dropping out:

It was very, very difficult for me to integrate into the community of the college {I attended}. And during my first year I remember going through this anxiety, or period of wanting to get out of school. I didn't feel comfortable, I didn't feel welcomed.

Discrimination. One International High School graduate shared that she

encountered discrimination in college based on her nationality and accent. She explained one incident in detail:

At first when it came to meeting people there was that immediate stereotype of me having access to drugs and other things. They asked me like, 'oh so do you have cocaine with you or something like that'...I mean it was hard to tell if they were joking... I was still struggling with the perception of, in terms of I

guess, my English skills and that sense of being discriminated against. But it was kind of internalized.

Personal/familial tragedy. Another International High School graduate explained that having multiple deaths in her family made it very difficult for her to concentrate and do well in college. She shared her sad story:

I experienced three deaths in my family. They all occurred almost around the same time. So that semester itself was just terrible. I couldn't concentrate or anything, and I kind of wanted to speak to the professors about it, but I choose not to, and again, it was my decision. So I ended up the semester with nothing but failing. It was very very bad so I had to like, drop off, not drop off the classes, but I had to retake the classes again, which is the reason why I graduated in 2009. So yeah, that was a challenge for me when that part of my life happened. I just, I couldn't concentrate on anything.

In order to obtain more information about participants' negative challenges, barriers, and/or unpleasant reactions during college, I probed them to talk about what most hindered them. As seen in Table 38, the majority of participants had difficulty isolating one element that most hindered them during college, and their responses fell into six different categories.

Table 38

Things that Most Hindered Participants during College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Academic work	5 (41.6%)
Language abilities	5 (41.6%)
Time management	5 (41.6%)
Immigration status	1 (8.33%)
Negative interaction with advisor	1 (8.33%)

Not socializing/networking

1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses

Academic work. Many participants found that academic work was the most difficult part of college. They reported that what made it difficult for them was taking challenging classes, writing papers, and keeping up with the amount of work. Below an International High School graduate explains that the amount of reading and writing increase from high school to college, and that was challenging for her:

In college you have to read, it's a lot of reading. And in high school, I don't remember reading as much. In college you really have to read and write a lot of papers, and the workload was very challenging.

Language abilities. Issues regarding dual language proficiency were one of the most difficult things for several participants during college. More specifically, they discussed that reading and writing as well as speaking in public was much more difficult for them because English was their second language. This International High School graduate explained:

I mean like I had good ideas or whatever the case may be, but because of the grammar and you know, because of that, I knew I would get like a whole bunch of points taken off.

Time management. Several International High School graduates found that balancing their academic work, jobs, and social life was what most hindered them during college. One participant stated that “it was very challenging having to go to school full time and work full time.” Another participant had a similar experience:

It was just like, I would always say, I had no life. I was walking home at 11 o'clock at night and waking up at 5 in the morning just to be on time to class.

Immigration status. One participant felt that her immigration status was what most hindered her during college. She explained that being illegal in the U.S. impeded her from engaging in several college opportunities such as studying abroad and getting certain internships. She explains:

I would say, especially my senior year, I was very aware, I became more aware of my immigration status. The reason being is because throughout, throughout college there's so many different opportunities, so many internships, especially that lead into work related, that I couldn't take because of my status.

Negative interaction with advisor. An International High School graduate reported that a negative interaction with her academic advisor was the most difficult thing she experienced during college. She communicated:

When my advisor said that she wouldn't approve me to graduate unless I improved my English. That was really demoralizing and broke my heart, and it kind of, it was almost like stepping on myself-esteem.

Not socializing/networking. One of the participants reported that what most hindered him during college was not socializing or networking with professors and peers. He explained that he felt he lost the opportunity of meeting people that would help him in the future:

I would say that kind of keeping to myself in college, kind of like hindered me a little bit. I was really just focused on myself... Because I just really wanted to pass everything, but then again, that hindered me in terms of you know, not getting {to know} people who would, you know hook me up for a job later on.

Recommendations

At the end of the interview every participant was asked to reflect on his or her college experiences and to provide advice to International High school graduates and immigrant students whose native language is not English to help them get through

their undergraduate education. Table 39 provides a summary of participants' responses.

Table 39

Recommendations Provided by Participants to Help Students Succeed in College

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
General encouragement	10 (83.3%)
General academic advice	8 (66.6%)
Miscellaneous (e.g., study something of interest, be proud of accent, make use of college resources, be open-minded)	7 (58.3%)
Practice English skills	2 (16.6%)
Socialize/network	2 (16.6%)
Balance time	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses.

General encouragement. Almost all of the participants indicated that they would encourage other International High school graduates and immigrant students whose native language is not English to help them succeed in college. One indicated that he would tell them to “just keep pushing” and “never give up.” Another one indicated that he would tell them the following:

If I made it and my IQ isn't as high as most of those people out there, and I don't speak English perfectly, if I made it, so can you. Everybody has the same potential, it's just how you use it that makes a difference. Because we were all born the same way, and if you don't speak English you can learn. Because if I did, so can anybody.

Another participant spoke directly about the ability of taking advantage of being an immigrant in the U.S. and seeking out available opportunities:

Not because you're an immigrant you know from whatever country, not to feel that because of your history and because of your past and because of what has happened to you, from whether you know, from the time you migrated to now is that you do not have options, or that you are less than others, or that you cannot complete something or achieve something because of your history. Instead you know, turn that around and use that as a tool to get you somewhere further. And that there are options...And ask questions because if we don't, others are going to take their share and we will continue being you know, left behind when really there are options for us to continue growing and continue succeeding.

General academic advice. The majority of participants indicated that they would provide academic advice to other International High School graduates and ELLs to help them obtain their Bachelor's degree. For example, one participant indicated that she would recommend for them to "read a lot," while another one indicated that she would tell them to "go to office hours." Another participant highlighted the importance of forming study groups:

Go to study groups, go to groups, find groups of people that you can meet and study with and like practicing and talking about what you are learning.

Miscellaneous. Participants also shared several other types of advice. For example, one participant talked about the importance of studying something of interest and doing what feels right:

Do what's right for you, do what's right for you. Do what you want. Don't go there for anybody else, go there for you. And do what you want to do, and make sure that whatever you want to do is worth your time and money.

Another participant spoke about the importance of building good relationships with professors:

Talk to professors, get close to professors, cause the professors are the ones who are grading you, professors are the ones who are gonna give you a grade

at the end of the semester. You want to be able to have a good communication with them, a good relationship.

Practice English skills. A few International High School graduates brought up the importance of practicing the English language through reading, writing, and speaking. One participant stated that he would recommend for ELLs and other International High School graduates to “take risks” and practice the language. He explains:

You have to take risks. And if you don't feel like you speak English well and you just don't speak it because you're afraid to make a mistake, then you're never going to learn.

This other participant would recommend reading a lot to improve vocabulary and writing:

Read a lot because English is not your first language and you want to be able to learn everything as much as you can, especially when it comes to writing.

Socialize/network. Some participants reported that it would be important for ELLs and other International High School graduates to make connections with other students in college. One said that she would recommend for them to “have fun and meet people.” She continued by saying:

College is not just about your classes. There is a big social component, which I think was what completed it for me and made it so special and amazing.

Balance time. Participants also reported that one important piece of advice they would give other immigrant students and International High School graduates to help them complete their undergraduate education is to balance their time well. This participant summarizes this point:

Don't just focus on schoolwork. Everybody needs their little fun, and you have to make sure that you balance it. You can have, but it cannot be all fun, it cannot be all party, it cannot be all enjoyment, but it cannot also be all work

and study because then you're going to be depressed and bored and then you're going to hate it, and then you're going to drop out. My biggest, something that I could tell them is that you have to balance everything.

Additional Findings

Additional findings that emerged in the interviews surrounded positive feelings about the International High Schools, more advice for other International High School graduates/ELLs, and other supports and challenges experienced by participants during college. Table 40 provides a breakdown of this information.

Table 40

Additional Findings

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Positive feelings about International High Schools	5 (41.6%)
Advice for International High School graduates/ELLs	3 (25.0%)
Nothing to add	3 (25.0%)
Supports during college	2 (16.6%)
Challenges during college	1 (8.33%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some respondents provided multiple responses

Positive feelings about International High Schools. Several participants decided to reiterate that going to an International High School had a positive and significant impact in their lives. Here is one example:

I think the International High School taught me how to be very community oriented because it was such a small school where we shared many, many different experiences with a very small number of people. And another thing that we learned was being very mindful of our actions and how those would

affect others around us. My experience at International High School and that community oriented vision has made me the person who I am right now, and this is why I continue working with youth and why I want to, especially when you are working with recently arrived youth, we feel lost in the gaps. Because I think that's what the International High School at least provided to me and many of my friends.

Another participant shared a similar sentiment:

All I could say is that Brooklyn International helped. Like just the school, the staff, the environment, it was an eye opener. There were so many cultures, I learned a lot from them. It basically opened my eyes to the world. I could say that before then, you know, I didn't know much. It really made me you know, I guess accept all the cultures and all the people and understand them and understand how they are.

Advice for International High School graduates/ELLs. Participants decided to give additional advice to other immigrant-English Language Learners and International High School graduates about how to succeed in college. For example, one participant spoke directly about the importance of seeking internships and volunteer work during college:

Try to get internships, get involved in the community or do some volunteer work because once they {jobs} see that, they'll like it...But try to take like internships or volunteer jobs, because when you get to college you're probably gonna want to seek a job, you're probably gonna want to work, and if you don't, try like an internship or volunteer job because not only is good for your resume, but when an employer sees it they like that stuff. Even if you weren't getting paid, you know, volunteering, internship, not only gives you experience, but it will help you find a job.

Nothing to add. Some participants felt there was no additional information they needed to add to their interview that would allow for a more complete understanding of their experiences.

Supports during college. Two participants decided to add other supports that helped them complete their undergraduate education, some of which include college

advisors, parents, and International High School teachers and counselors. One

International High School graduate explained:

I knew that there was always someone back in high school that I could kind of talk to or contact just to chat for a few minutes that would kind of like give me a pep talk. And I would finish with them and say like okay, 'I can do this.'

He added:

My student government advisor and my college counselor, like I knew they were people who I could, if I really needed something to like pick me up from a very bad assignment or something like that, like I knew they were there and I could give them a call or something like that. And like I feel that they were going to know what to say to get me to keep going and keep pushing.

Challenges during college. One participant decided to add another challenge he experienced while in college. He added that his language skills also presented a challenge for him:

I mean the only other thing is that as I went to college, like many times there was times where I, especially the first, maybe I'd say maybe the first year, there were times I felt very kind of frustrated with myself in terms of like my language skills.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current study used semi-structured interviews to explore the educational experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs who are graduates of the International High Schools. The study focused on the International High School experiences that seem to foster college readiness. In addition, this study aimed to explore the challenges and supports experienced by these individuals as well as the implications of their second language abilities during college. The interviews yielded very rich descriptions regarding the college readiness and higher education experiences of Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs, provided insight into the supports and challenges experienced by these students while in college, and provided valuable suggestions for Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs to help them get through their undergraduate education.

Educational experiences at the International High Schools

Participants described in detail their life at the International High Schools and the ways in which the International High Schools prepared them for college. The majority of participants stated that they had a positive experience at the International High Schools and that the International High Schools created an engaging and comfortable environment for them. Many found that the International High Schools provided them with a socially supportive environment. As seen in previous studies, the International High Schools create a community of cultural and linguistic differences among adult and youth (Fine et al., 2005). These findings from the current study are of great importance because research has shown that secondary institutions, in contrast to

the International High Schools, often times do not understand the complexity of immigrant students' lives and their ongoing negotiation of culture and identity (Orozco et al., 2010). International High School graduates were very thoughtful about the intellectual advantages they experienced while working within a heterogeneous, collaborative environment. Many participants communicated that the International High Schools helped them develop specific academic skills that prepared them for college, such as learning English, problem solving, and writing. In addition, many mentioned that the International High Schools helped them develop good communication and team working skills by providing them with the opportunity to present themselves in public speaking settings, and work with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

A very important finding, however, is that half of the participants also felt that they were not challenged enough in their classes and thus, did not feel prepared for college. A few voiced the need to have had more advanced math, English, and science classes in order to have been better prepared for college. These findings are particularly interesting because previous research has found that the International High schools offer an academically challenging curriculum that encourages critical thinking, language development, and draws on students experiences (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011). The present study shows that not all participants felt that they had a good academic preparation at the International High Schools, and consequently, felt at a much lower academic level compared to their college counterparts.

Another important finding regarding participants' college preparation was the positivity of the messages they received at the International High Schools about going

into higher education. The majority of participants reported that they received positive and encouraging messages from teachers and staff about going to college. These findings are consistent with the Jaffe-Walter and Lee (2011) study in which they found the college-going culture to be evident at the two International High Schools they observed. According to the authors, teachers and other adults at the International High Schools spoke almost constantly to students about college. As seen in the current study, these messages clearly impacted students in a very positive way and provided them with the motivation to want to enroll in and attend college.

Participants also communicated whether or not the International High School provided them with the necessary skills to complete their undergraduate education, and discussed in detail the skills acquired that contributed to their college completion. The majority of International High School graduates felt that the International High Schools prepared them for college. More specifically, they reported that the International High Schools provided them with specific academic skills (e.g., learning English, writing, critical thinking, and mastery of multiple-choice exams). These findings are very important because research has shown that secondary schools do not appear to know what needs to be done to respond to the college preparation needs of immigrant-ELLs (Callahan, 2005; Olsen, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). Often times immigrant-ELLs are excluded from rigorous academic classes (Callahan, 2005), preventing them from learning specific academic skills such as the ones participants' learned at the International High Schools.

Fine et al. (2005) compared the graduation rate of the three oldest International High Schools in New York City to the graduation rate for ELLs citywide. The three

oldest International High Schools had a final graduation rate of 88.7%, while the graduation rate for ELLs citywide was only 49.6%. It was also found that more than 90% of International graduates were accepted to colleges upon their high school graduation (Fine et al., 2005). In the present study, participants shared their thoughts on why the International High Schools had this high college acceptance rate. The majority of them thought that it was because students receive good academic preparation and instruction from very supportive teachers, which would make students competitive for college. Considering the increasing importance of higher education in the labor market, some researchers have argued that schools need to actively create cultures where all students are given access to high-level academic preparation and the opportunity to create good relationships with teachers and staff who can provide adequate instructional and social support (Conchas 2006; Gandara 1999; McDonough 1997). According to Koyama (2007), students who have access to settings that provide good academic preparation and place an emphasis on the value of social networks do better in high school and have a greater chance of going to college. As seen from the present study, participants believed that good academic preparation was the main reason the International High Schools have had such high college acceptance rates.

Educational experiences during college

International High School graduates described the ways their high school life differed from their college life with regards to their educational experiences. Most commonly, participants reported that they had to be more independent in college because they had to learn how to study by themselves and did not have anyone telling them what to do. Other participants reported encountering more challenging classes

and a less welcoming college environment. Research suggests that the transition to college is a critical period for all individuals, especially for immigrant-ELL students. This period is marked by several complex challenges in psychological, academic, social, and cultural adjustment (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In particular, during the high school-college transition, academic adjustment becomes an important contributing factor to student persistence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Hence, this study calls for higher education institutions to create more welcoming college environments for immigrant-ELL students in order to facilitate their academic progress and achievement.

International High School graduates also reported their biggest concerns in making the transition from high school to college. A large number of participants reported that they had academic concerns. These results do not come as a surprise since research suggests that first-generation students (like the ones at the International High Schools) are less confident in their academic ability and readiness for college-level work (Jenkins, Miyazaki, & Janosik 2009). Collier and Morgan (2008) concluded that first-generation students tended to be more confused over faculty's expectations for assignments and specific academic expectations, in addition to challenges understanding and fulfilling the 'college student role.'

Perceived supports experienced during college. The present findings reveal very important information about who supported and encouraged participants throughout their college education. One of the most salient themes within the current study was that almost all of the participants received support and encouragement from professors and academic advisors, and all of them felt connected to at least one or

more professors. Participants communicated that professors and academic advisors provided words of encouragement, homework assistance, and several other educational opportunities to help them succeed. These findings are very important because previous research has demonstrated that minority students succeed in college with the help of core social networks (Nagasawa & Wong, 1999). For example, student-faculty interactions inside and outside the classroom hold the potential to positively impact college student development, student persistence, and achievement measures (Astin, 1993; Chang, 2005; Lamport, 1993). In addition, these findings are connected to the resilience literature, which has repeatedly shown that when students connect with at least one faculty member in college they experience a higher sense of belonging (e.g., Pichon, 2015).

Additionally, research conducted on Hispanic/Latino college students confirms the importance of strong student-faculty interactions. Anaya and Cole (2001), examined Hispanic/Latino student populations in terms of student-faculty relationships and the relationship to student grades. Academic interactions and the perceived quality of those interactions tended to be positively related to overall academic performance. It is clear from the present study that students felt that having the support and encouragement from professors and academic advisors was key to their college success.

Implications of second language abilities during college. Research suggests that the majority of immigrant students lack the English proficiency of native speakers, which causes academic and social difficulties when adapting into college environments (Erisman & Looney, 2007). However, a majority of International High

School graduates communicated that their second language abilities helped them academically. They stated that they were able to test out of their language classes, understand the material better from Spanish classes, and understand vocabulary with Spanish/Latin roots. These are very surprising findings because the lack of English proficiency has shown to be one of the biggest obstacles for immigrant-ELLs in college (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Hence, these findings demonstrate the importance of embracing students' native languages and promoting the use of their native language to help improve their English skills.

Perceived challenges experienced during college. International High School graduates also experienced several challenges, barriers, and unpleasant reactions while completing their undergraduate education. The most commonly identified challenges were academic challenges (including time management). Participants reported difficulties figuring out good study strategies, deciding what to major in, and managing their academic work and personal life. Participants also felt that their academic work, language abilities, and time management were things that most hindered them during their college years. Prior studies have shown that immigrant-ELLs tend to be at a disadvantage with respect to academic preparation compared to their native-born peers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As indicated by the work of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), first-generation immigrant students (like the International High School graduates) experience college differently than non-first generation students, and they often face additional barriers to success. The present findings highlight the importance of creating academic programs targeted to immigrant-ELL students in order to increase their confidence in areas that may be

perceived as a barrier to success.

Recommendations to other International High School graduates/immigrant

ELLs

Participants were asked to provide advice to International High school graduates and immigrant students whose native language is not English to help them get through their undergraduate education. Almost all of the participants provided encouragement and general academic advice for other International High School graduates and immigrant students. This conveys an important message – that immigrant-ELLs are an academically vulnerable population and we must provide adequate academic, social, and moral support to help them succeed in college. In addition, these findings highlight the importance of becoming better acquainted with the realities of educational opportunities available to immigrant-ELLs in the U.S. by providing insight into participants' perspectives on the challenges and supports experienced at the postsecondary level.

Limitations and Methodological Considerations

Several limitations need to be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of the current study. First, the sample size may be considered a limitation. A larger sample may have uncovered additional information about the educational experiences of International High Schools graduates. In addition, a larger sample would have allowed for a more diverse group of International High School graduates and therefore, provided further-reaching implications for Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs completing their undergraduate degree. It is important to note, however, that qualitative research typically involves a small number of participants (Patton, 2002).

Another limitation is the lack of diversity in terms of high schools attended. This study only explores the experiences of Hispanic/immigrant ELLs who attended International High Schools and who were successful at obtaining a bachelor's degree. Additionally, all participants in the study attended International High Schools located in New York City. Future research should explore the experiences of individuals who attended International High Schools in other states.

It is important to acknowledge reflexivity, or the "awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process." (Willig, 2001, p. 10). Some researchers argue that reflexivity may be problematic in research. For example, Willig (2001) argue that positivists believe that the "goal of research is to produce knowledge; that is, understanding that is impartial and unbiased, based on a view from the 'outside,' without personal involvement or vested interests on the part of the researcher" (p.3). On the other hand, other researchers argue that reflexivity can be a beneficial part of any research process because those with the 'inside' knowledge are able to provide insights into formal and informal practices (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2004). I have considered and discussed ways in which my own values, background, ethnicity, experiences, and beliefs may have contributed to the construction of meaning throughout the research process, both personally and professionally. I believe that my ethnicity, educational background, and passion for the college education of immigrant-ELLs provided an advantage. I was able to build immediate rapport with participants and perhaps they shared more sensitive experiences with me than they would have with someone from a different ethnic or educational background. I identified with the nature of their

experiences and understood what they entailed. However, this could have led to confirmation bias and I could have provided cues (e.g., tone of voice, enthusiasm) that may have influenced the way participants communicated their stories.

Directions for Future Research

Future research may seek to explore the high school and college experiences of Hispanic immigrant-ELLs that graduated and attended “typical” U.S. high schools. It would be very interesting to investigate how the educational experiences of Hispanic immigrant-ELLs who attended “typical” schools mirror and differ from the educational experiences of International High School graduates. Speaking with Hispanic immigrant-ELLs who attended “typical” U.S. high schools may help uncover unique insight into the particular high school and college experiences of these students, which could ultimately help improve their overall educational experience.

Future research may also seek to combine quantitative research with qualitative research to gain further insight into the educational experiences of Hispanic immigrant-ELLs. Information obtained from the present study may be useful to future mixed-method studies.

In addition, given that community colleges are an important portal for providing access to postsecondary education for many immigrants, more studies are needed to focus on their educational experiences at community colleges. Future research efforts could seek to further explore results from the current study and compare the educational experiences of students who attended community colleges with the educational experiences of students who attended four-year institutions.

Appendix A

Demographic and Personal Background Questions

1. What is your gender? _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. What is your country of origin? _____
4. What is your race/ethnicity? _____
5. What is your native language(s)?

6. How long have you lived in the United States? _____
7. How old were you when you came to the United States? _____
8. What was the reason for immigrating to the United States? _____
9. What International High School did you attend?

10. What year did you graduate from the International High School? _____
11. Where was your high school located? _____
12. What college(s) did you attend? _____
13. What year did you graduate from college with a bachelor's degree?

14. Are you a first generation college student? _____
15. Have you pursued a graduate degree or advanced degree? _____
16. What is your current occupation? _____
17. How many years of formal education did you receive in your home country?

18. Have you faced interruption in your formal education? If so, when and for how long? ____

19. What was your parents' highest education level while you were in high school?

20. What was your parents' income level while you were in high school? _____

Appendix B

Interview Guide

[Hello, may I speak to _____ please.] This is Pamela Murillo; I am a graduate student from the Psychology Department at the University of Rhode Island. Today I would like to talk with you briefly about your educational experiences. Thank you again for agreeing to participate. As noted in the consent form, participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question and/or discontinue the interview at any time. Let's begin.

(Ensure that equipment is working properly, if technical difficulties arise, re-schedule the interview with the participant.)

- 1) Tell me about your life at the International High School? What was it like being there?
- 2) How did the International High School prepared you for college? What educational activities did you engage in that prepared you for college?

Probes include:

- A. What messages did you receive at the International High School about going into higher education?
 - B. Do you think the International High School provided you with the necessary skills to complete your undergraduate education, and why?
 - C. Did anyone at the International High School give you any advice about college? If so, what advice did you receive?
- 3) Past research shows that about 90% of International High School graduates were accepted to colleges upon their high school graduation. Why do you think the International High Schools had this rate? What is it about your experience that might account for this high college acceptance rate?

4) How did your high school life differ from your college life with regards to your educational experiences?

Probes include:

- A. Can you talk about your English skills in high school and how they compared to what they were when you were in college?
- B. What was the size of the college you attended and how did it compare to the size of the International High School you attended?
- C. What was it like going from a small (or big) school to a bigger (or smaller) college/university campus? Did you find it intimidating? If so, why?
- D. What were your biggest concerns in making the transition from high school to college? Did you have any expectations with regards to the workload, faculty-student relations, and/or peer relations? What happened to those concerns once you were in college?

5) Did you encounter supports that helped you complete your undergraduate education?

Probes include:

- A. What are the top two or three things or people that helped keep you in college? How did they help you?
- B. Were you part of any community support groups that encouraged or helped you to complete your undergraduate degree? If so, what groups were they and how did they help you? How important were they to you?

- C. Were you part of any educational support groups or did you receive any additional educational supports? If so, what were they? How did they help? How important were they to you?
 - D. Did anyone help you learn how to navigate the college system? And how did that person(s) help you? Was that person (s) part of the college system? A family member? Can you give me an example of how they helped you?
 - E. In your undergraduate program, to what extent were you mentored by a faculty member? Can you give me an example of the type of mentorship you received?
 - F. How connected did you feel with professors? Can you share an instance in which you felt connected?
 - G. Were there any other supports that helped keep you in college? How did they help you?
- 6) How did your second language abilities help you or hinder you during your college years? What implications did your language abilities have on your academic performance? Can you provide with examples?
- 7) Did you encounter negative challenges, barriers, or unpleasant reactions during your undergraduate education?
- Probes include:
- A. What most hindered you? Can you give me an example?
- 8) Reflecting on your college experiences, what advice would you give International High School graduates to successfully get through their undergraduate education?

What advice would you give immigrant students whose native language is not English to help them succeed in college?

- 9) Is there any additional information that you would like to share that would allow for a more complete understanding of your experience going to college as a graduate of an International High School?
- 10) Do you have an interest in participating in my future dissertation research study?

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. Your input has been very helpful and I appreciate your willingness to participate. Please let me know if you would like a copy of my study results. Yes ___ No ___ Where can I send them to you? _____

I would like to make sure we understood the main points of your comments and observations. May I contact you after we transcribe the interview? Yes ___ No ___ Would you like to be included in the drawing for the gift card? Yes ___ No ___

If you are the winner, where can I send it? _____

And, might you know any other International High School graduates who also graduated with a bachelor's degree who may be interested in participating in my study? If so, please let me know his/her contact information.

Again, my sincerest thanks for your time and participation.

Appendix C

Cover Letter

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Chafee Hall, 142 Flagg Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p: 401.874.2193 f: 401.874.2157 uri.edu/artsci/psy



The University of Rhode Island
Department of Psychology
Kingston, RI 02881

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral student in the School Psychology program at the University of Rhode Island. As part of my thesis research project, under the direction of my major professor, Dr. Margaret Rogers, I am conducting a study on **the educational experiences of former International High School students who completed a Bachelor's degree**. I am writing to ask for your time and participation in this research project. If you choose to participate, you will take part in audiotaped phone interviews relating to your high school and college experiences. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential and your name will not appear in any reports resulting from this study.

The interview will address questions about your high school and college experiences. More specifically, questions about being a graduate of an International High School as well as questions about the educational experiences you had, including supports and challenges you experienced, during your four years in college. In addition, the interview will address questions about the implications of your second language abilities during college.

The interview is expected to last about 30-45 minutes. A follow up phone interview will check the accuracy of the transcription of our interview and will take 15-30 minutes. I am interested in your unique experiences and I encourage you to freely share them during the interview. If you choose to participate, you will have the possibility to win a \$25 gift card as compensation for your participation.

If you are a former International High School student who completed all four years at an International High School, graduated from an International High School between the years 2001-2009, completed a bachelor's degree in the U.S., identify as Hispanic/Latino, and are interested in participating in this study, please review, sign,

and return one of the attached consent forms in the stamped envelope provided and keep the other copy for yourself. I will be setting up interviews shortly. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Pamela Murillo, Co-Investigator, at (347) 495-0546. You may also contact Dr. Margaret Rogers, Principal Investigator, at mrogers@uri.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Sincerely,

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Full Professor
School Psychology Program
University of Rhode Island

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Chafee Hall, 142 Flagg Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p: 401.874.2193 f: 401.874.2157 uri.edu/artsci/psy



The University of Rhode Island
Department of Psychology
Kingston, RI 02881

You have been invited to participate in a research project described below. You are free to ask any questions you may have. If you have further questions or concerns, you may contact Pamela Murillo, Co-Investigator, at (347) 495-0546. You may also contact Dr. Margaret Rogers, Principal Investigator, at (401) 874-7999.

Description of the project:

This thesis research study involves responding to a series of questions regarding your educational experiences. More specifically, questions about being a graduate of an International High School as well as questions about your educational experiences during your four years in college.

What will be done:

If you decide to participate in this study, you will take part in an audiotaped phone interview lasting about 30-45 minutes. In addition, you will take part in a follow up interview lasting about 15-30 minutes. You will also have the possibility to win a \$25 gift card as compensation for your participation.

Risks or discomfort:

There are no major risks for you in participating in this study.

Benefits of this study:

Although there will be no direct benefits to you, it is hoped that your experiences will help increase the knowledge base about supporting immigrant students while in college.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. This means that none of the information will identify you by name and only pseudonyms will be used. All data will be maintained in a locked facility and will be kept for three years following completion of the study.

Decision to quit at any time:

If you decide to take part in the study, you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time. There are no consequences for not participating in the study, and you are free to refuse to answer any questions.

Rights and complaints:

If you have any questions, or if you are not happy about the way in which this study is conducted, you may discuss your complaints with Pamela Murillo at (347) 495-0546 or Dr. Margaret Rogers at (401) 874-7999, anonymously, if you choose. In addition, if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

You have read this Consent Form and your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to participate in this study.

(Signature of interviewee)

(Printed name of interviewee)

(Date)

Audio Recording:

I hereby give my consent for audio recording:

(Signature of interviewee)

(Printed name of interviewee)

(Date)

Enclosed are two copies of this consent form. Please keep a copy of this form and return a signed copy to Pamela Murillo in the stamped envelope provided.

Thank you for your time and help in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Appendix E

Recruitment Letter

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF
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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Chafee Hall, 142 Flagg Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p: 401.874.2193 f: 401.874.2157 uri.edu/artsci/psy



The University of Rhode Island
Department of Psychology
Kingston, RI 02881

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral student in the School Psychology program at the University of Rhode Island. As part of my thesis research project, under the direction of my major professor, Dr. Margaret Rogers, I am conducting a study on **the educational experiences of former International High School students who completed a Bachelor's degree**. I am writing to ask you to consider referring your former students for possible participation.

Participants will take part in audiotaped phone interviews relating to their high school and college experiences. Any information they provide will be strictly confidential and their name will not appear in any reports resulting from the study. The interview will address questions about participants' educational experiences. More specifically, questions about being a graduate of an International High School as well as questions about their educational experiences during their four years in college. The interview is expected to last about 30-45 minutes and will be followed by a second contact to ensure their responses to the first interview are accurate. Participants will also be entered into a drawing to win a \$25 gift card as compensation for their participation.

Individuals that meet the following criteria are eligible to participate:

- Former International High School students who **completed all four years at an International High School**.
- Graduated from an International High School between the years **2001-2009**.
- Completed a **Bachelor's degree** in the United States.
- Identify as **Hispanic/Latino**.

Please forward my contact information to your alumni network and to all individuals that may be interested in participating in this study. I will follow up with an e-mail and phone call to make sure this letter was received. Please feel free to contact me with

any questions you may have. I can be reached at (347) 495-05-46 or at pmurillo@my.uri.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your help!

Sincerely,

Pamela Murillo, B.A.
(347) 495-0546
pmurillo@my.uri.edu
Doctoral Student
School Psychology Program
University of Rhode Island

Margaret Rogers, Ph.D.
(401) 874-7999
mrogers@mail.uri.edu
Full Professor
School Psychology Program
University of Rhode Island

Appendix F

Statement on Diversity in Research

The present study sought to recruit participants from various racial backgrounds and both sexes to ensure that the findings are equally beneficial to the target population, which includes Hispanic/Latino immigrant-ELLs who attended an International High School and completed a bachelor's degree.

The International High Schools originated to provide a new model for educating English Language Learners in the U.S. (Fine et al., 2005). The International High Schools are highly diverse, attracting adolescents from over 70 different countries who speak over 60 different languages (New York City Department of Education, 2009). The requirements to enter an International High School are to have lived in the U.S. for four years or less at the time of admission, and to have scored in the bottom quartile on English language tests (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013). Approximately, 30% of International High School students are undocumented and many are students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) (Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2013).

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