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**YO IMPORTO: THE LATINA/O STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AT ROWAN
UNIVERSITY**

by

Alma Diaz

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of

Master of Arts in Higher Education

at

Rowan University

June 8, 2017

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

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Dedications

This work is dedicated to my parents, Juana Diaz and Freddy Diaz, for your unconditional support and encouragement. All of my successes are reflections of your hard work and sacrifice. Mamí y Papi, gracias por todo su apoyo. Soy quien soy por todo su trabajo y sacrificio. Les dedico todos mis éxitos.

To my little sisters, Brianna Diaz and Leticia Diaz, who are my inspiration and motivation in life. Thank you for always making me smile during the difficult time. You make it easy being a big sister.

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Abstract

Alma Diaz
YO IMPORTO: THE LATINA/O STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AT ROWAN
UNIVERSITY
2016-2017
Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.
Master of Arts Higher Education

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Latino/a students at Rowan University felt as though they mattered. The subjects in this study consisted of undergraduate, full-time and part-time students at Rowan University enrolled during the 2014 Spring semester. Data were collected using the *College Mattering Inventory*, which consisted of 29 Likert scale items. The findings of this study revealed that Latina/o students at Rowan University generally have positive attitudes toward mattering in the subscales. Latina/o students at Rowan University reported the lowest levels of mattering in the general college mattering sub-scale and the Mattering to Students sub-scale. Overall there were only marginal differences in the mean scores of the study of Rowan university business transfer students by Johnston (2014), Rowan University residential students by McGuire (2012) and those of Rowan University Latina/o students.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As of 2012, there are 51 million Latina/os in the United States, and only 14.5% of Latina/os ages 25 and older have earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 51% of Asians, 34.5% of Whites, and 21.2% of Blacks (Pew Research Center, 2013b). "A record seven-in-ten Hispanic high school graduate in the class of 2012 enrolled in college" (Pew Research Center, 2013, p. 1). Although the number of Latina/os entering colleges and universities has increased over the years, their graduate rates are still below all college enrollments (Fry & Lopez, 2012). "Young Hispanic college students are less likely than their White counterparts to enroll in four-year college (56% versus 72%), they are less likely to attend a selective college, less likely to be enrolled in a college full time, and less likely to complete a bachelor's degree" (Pew Research Center, 2013a, p. 1).

Latinas/os students have many factors that may interfere with their ability to graduate at higher rates (Nunez, 2009a). The Latina/o student is faced with barriers such as a lack of academic preparation, knowledge of the college experience, limited interaction with faculty members that are knowledgeable of their cultural background, and financial instability (Nunez, 2009a). Despite all of the factors affecting the graduation rates of Latina/o students, there are a few Latina/os that do graduate. The question then becomes, what made the difference for the 14.5% of Latina/os that did obtain a bachelor degree? Was it an established ethnic or racial identity, their integrations to college life, or their sense of mattering?

Statement of the Problem

Mattering has been studied as a sense of belonging and the affect it has on retention rates and success in higher education. The feeling of mattering to a college or university involves a feeling of importance, belonging, and being a part of something greater. The topic of mattering started being researched in higher education among adult students and is now being examined with other groups but has not been extended to focus specifically on Latina/o students. With the recent increase in college enrollment of Latina/o students, research on the sense of mattering of this particular group can give insight into the low graduation rates of Latina/o students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Latina/os at Rowan University feel as though they matter. This study aimed to gain insight into the attitudes of Latina/os at Rowan University as well as to better understand the Latina/o undergraduate experience. The study particularly looked at the attitudes of Latina/o students in the areas of general college mattering, mattering versus marginality to counselors or advisors, mattering to instructors, and mattering to students. This study also aimed to examine whether there is a connection between Latina/o student's racial and ethnic identity, social and academic integration, and their sense of mattering. Feedback from the students could also help explain the factors that prevent many Latina/o students from graduating at the same rates as their counterparts.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may provide faculty and administrators insight on how Latina/os feel at Rowan University. The findings may also help faculty and administrators understand the graduation gap between White and Latina/o students at Rowan University, and if mattering has anything to do with the gap. The feedback provided by this study may also be helpful to student affairs professionals at Rowan University in strengthening their support services and campus programming to foster a sense of belonging in Latino/a students.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the subjects who completed the survey were honest and trustful in their responses, without any animosity. The subjects were Latina/o students that attended Rowan University for the spring 2014 semester only. Conducting the study only during the spring semester was a limitation. The student experience is different from the fall to spring semesters, factors such as weather, the types of campus activities programming (Homecoming, Spring fest, cultural celebration months), and overall campus feel is different. Another limitation was the dates that the data collection occurred as Latina/o were contacted via email by the Office of Institutional Research during the last few weeks of the semester. This was a time of the semester when students were overextended in preparations for finals.

The format of the survey instrument was also a limitation, as subjects were asked to select all of the ethnic identities that applied to them in the paper form, however, when the survey was converted into a digital form, each ethnic identity was presented as a

question, making the survey longer than expected. Several subjects failed to complete the majority of the survey. The survey responses with less than 60% of the survey completed were removed from the data pool, resulting in a smaller sample size.

Several students were also conveniently selected and surveyed in the campus student center, library, and outside of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) and Maximizing Academic Potential (MAP) office between the hours of 4pm-9pm, during a time when many commuter students were in class or gone for the day. Therefore, the data is not a representation of the whole Latina/o community at Rowan University. There is a potential for researcher bias, as I am a Latina student who lived on campus working as a graduate coordinator for the Office of Educational Opportunity Fund and Maximizing Academic Potential, where I developed my own opinions based on my experiences at Rowan University.

Operational Definitions

1. Attitudes: How Latina/o students view their advising relationships, administrative and faculty interactions, classroom climate, peer interactions, and overall sense of mattering at Rowan University in the spring semester of 2014.
2. Ethnic Identity: “ethnic component of social identity” (Phinney, 1990, p. 500).
3. First Generation College Students: Students that are first in their families to attend an institution of higher learning.
4. Latina/o Students: Female and male students at Rowan University that are of Hispanic or Latino descent regardless of race. The term is used interchangeably throughout this study.

5. Marginality: Feeling insignificant to others or feeling like you do not belong.
6. Mattering: Mattering in general, is emotionally and cognitively related to a sense of belonging to and with others (Tovar, Simon, & Lee, 2009). The terms mattering and sense of belonging are used interchangeably throughout this study.
7. Racial Identity: Explains how Latinas/os view themselves within the socially constructed system of classifying people by physical appearance.
8. Retention: The act of keeping students enrolled in an institution of higher education.
9. Transitions: Schlossberg (1989) defines transitions as events resulting in a change of relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the attitudes of Latina/o students at Rowan University in the areas of general college mattering, mattering versus marginality, mattering to counselors or advisors, mattering to instructors, and mattering to students?
2. How do the mean scores of attitudes toward mattering in the six subscales in this study compare to those of Rowan University residential undergraduate students, Rowan University Rohrer College of Business transfer students, and elsewhere?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic variables of gender, enrollment status, class level, family background, language skills, access to social capital, residence, ethnic/racial identity, and sense of mattering?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II provides a review of the scholarly literature that is important to the study. This section includes a brief overview of Latina/os in higher education, mattering, marginality, transition, separation, integration, social capital, and racial and ethnic identity.

Chapter III describes the study of methodology and procedures of the study. The following details are included in this description: the context of the study, population and sample selection, the data collection instrument, the data collection process, and how the data were analyzed.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study. The data gathered were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to assist in examining the research questions presented in Chapter I.

Chapter V presents the summary, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Issues in Higher Education

Over the past four decades, the number of Hispanics graduating with either an associate or a bachelor's degree has increased seven-fold, with the growth outpacing that of other groups. As a result, not only has the number of Hispanic degree recipients grown, so too has their share of all college degree recipients. Even so, the number of Hispanics awarded college lags behind that of other groups, and their share of college graduates remains below that of all college student enrollments. (Fry & Lopez, 2012, p. 1)

Latinas/os in the United States

The Pew Research Center (2011) reported that there are 51.9 million Hispanics living in the United States as of the year 2011. The Latina/o populations have increased 48% from the year 2000 to 2011 (Pew Research Center, 2013). The total number of Latinas/os is projected to triple by 2050, which would then make them 29% of the nation's population (Pino, Martinez-Ramos, & Smith, 2012). Overall Latinas/os tend to live in major cities along the South, West, and northeastern coast of the United States. One-third of the Latina/o population in the United States resides in California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois (Pew Research Center, 2011). The state of New Jersey has the 7th highest Latina/o population in the nation, with 57% of Latinas/os being native

U.S. born with a median age of 19 years of age (Pew Research Center, 2011). By the year 2025, there will be 255 million Latinas/os in the workforce, an increase from the 186 million in 2005 (Pew Research Center, 2011).

Latinas/os are a heterogeneous group of people that come from different countries with different cultures and traditions. The Latina/o population in the United States is made up of individuals that originated from Latin American and Spain, but most of the Latinas/os that reside in America originated from Mexico 65%, Puerto Rico 9%, El Salvador 4%, Cuba 4%, Dominican Republic 3%, and all others 16% (Pew Research Center, 2011). There is not one Latina/o culture; what connects these groups of people is the language that they speak (James, 2005).

“Beyond their designation as the largest racial/ ethnic group, Latinas/os are also recognized as the youngest and fastest-growing population in the United States” (Perez, 2012, p. 14). According to the Pew Research Center (2011), Latinas/os make up the largest population under the age of 18 and the smallest percent of the United States population over the age of 65. With most of the Latina/o population in the early stages of the educational system, colleges and universities need to prepare for the future influx of Latina/os that will aspire to continue their education (Perez, 2012).

Latinas/os at Rowan University

As of Fall 2013, Rowan University enrolled a total of 13,349 students across three campuses in New Jersey. Out of the 13,349 students, 10,951 are undergraduate, 1,650 graduates, and 748 professional (Rowan.edu, 2013a). Out of the 13,349 current students at Rowan University, 9,339 identify as White, 1,150 identify as Latina/os, 1,217 identify

as African Americans, 159 identify as American Indian/ Alaskan Natives, 790 identify as Asians, 19 identify as Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander, and 163 identify as foreign-born, and 512 identify as unknown (Rowan University, 2013b). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, of the students that started attending Rowan University in Fall 2006, 12% graduated in 4-years, 71% in 6-years, and 72% in 8-years (Rowan.edu, 2013a). The 6-year graduation rates of Latina/o students that began their studies at Rowan University in 2006 is 53% compared to 76% of White students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

The Latina/o Identity

The Latina/o identity can be very complicated to understand. Latinas/os are a heterogeneous group of people that come from different countries with different cultures and traditions that are often grouped as one in the United States. Cultural, sociological, political, and historical factors also add diversity to this group. Even the terms used to describe these individuals can be confusing; Latinos are also referred to as Hispanics, Chicanos, or Hispanic Americans. Latinas/os carry with them different aspects of their identity that are often grouped into one. “Glossing over identifications based on national origin can be problematic, both because Latina/o experiences and social processes differ systematically across subgroups and because Latinas/os themselves have not adopted the Latina/o label as a primary identity without also making reference to their specific national origin or subgroup” (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001, p. 35). The national origin subgroups are diverse and are made up of different geographic distributions, political affiliations, socioeconomic statuses, language use, and cultural traditions (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). There are factors within these subgroups that affect relations with

members of these subgroups and non-Latina/os, including variations in gender, immigration status, social class, education, sexual orientation, generational differences, and acculturation status (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001).

Racial identity. Latinas/os do not easily fit the traditional racial construct in the United States; therefore Latina/o identity development could not be easily explained with the mainstream models that explain racial identity. One of the main reasons is that for Latinas/os, race is secondary since Latinas/os have a mixed heritage and represent a wide range of skin colors (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Fredman and Gallegos's (2001) six orientation aims to explain how Latinas/os view themselves, which include Latino-integrated, Latino-identified, subgroup-identified, Latino as other, undifferentiated /denial, and White-identified. Fredman and Gallegos use the term "lens" to explain the different ways that Latinas/os see themselves, how they prefer to be identified, how they are seen by others, how Whites are seen, and how their perception of race can affect their "lens" (2001). Someone with a wide lens is considered a person with a Latino-integrated orientation, where Latinas/os are seen positively, Whites as complex, and race contextual (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). People that have a Latino-integrated orientation also identify as individuals in a group context (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). A person with a Latino-identified orientation identifies with being Latinas/os, views Whites as distinct, and frames race as Latina/o or not Latina/o (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). A person with a narrow lens has a subgroup orientation, this person identifies as his or her own national-origin subgroup, does not really identify with other Latinas/os and sees themselves distinct from Whites (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). A Latina/o with a "Latino as an Other" orientation identifies as being "not White" views Whites negatively, and

frames race as “ White or Not White” (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). A Latina/o with a Indifferentiated/ Denial orientation identifies themselves as “just people” and views themselves as distinct from their racial or ethnic identity (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). White-identified Latinas/os view themselves as racially White, see Latinas/os and other people of color negatively, and view Whiteness as an essential and primary element of their identity (Fredman & Gallegos, 2001). According to Fredman and Gallegos (2001), the transition between orientation can occur as a person’s social circumstance or environment changes, events such as going to college or moving from one neighborhood to another can make people modify their racial identity.

Ethnic identity. While racial identity explains how Latinas/os view themselves within the socially constructed system of classifying people by physical appearance, ethnic identity is the “ethnic component of social identity” (Phinney, 1990, p. 500). According to Evans et al. (2010), ethnic identity focuses on what people learn about culture from family and community, and how those beliefs shape daily decisions. Ethnic identity development is an important part of adolescence, which helps young people understand their membership in an ethnic group (Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006). For many students, the transition from high school to college challenges their established ethnic identity. The majority of a student’s high school classmates may have been members of the same ethnic group, therefore changing their environment leads them to reevaluate their ethnic identity in a new setting. The process that many experience during adolescence, is now an additional factor in their college transition. Developing a sense of ethnic identity provides students with a strong sense of self, “that serves to guide important life decisions” (Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006, p. 963).

The Educational Status of the Latina/o Student

Although there are many differences within Latinas/os subgroups, the profile of the Latina/o student in the American educational systems appears to stay the same. Educational status is an important determinant of academic success and many Latinas/os are already starting off with a limited social capital, which is membership in groups that provide it's members with status and support. A person's social capital is measured by the size of the network of connection individuals can mobilize and by the networks of whom they are connected (Bourdieu, 1986). Not only are Latinas/os students failing to graduate from high school at the same rate as other groups, they are also least likely to attend college (Pino, Martinez-Ramos, & Smith, 2011). These Latinas/os are also first generation college students and are more likely than their white counterparts to experience racial and ethnic educational disparities (Pino, Martinez- Ramos, & Smith, 2011). Latina/o students that come from families with a low educational level tend to be first generation college students and are less likely to attend college. Indicators such as language become a determining factor for these Latina/o families when considering college access. Latina/o families where English proficiency is low may be less familiar with information on how to help their college bound student gains access to an institution of higher learning (Pino, Martinez-Ramos, & Smith, 2011).

The low level of education in many of the Latina/o households is a contributing factor to the high poverty rates in America. It results in many Latina/o families living in neighborhoods where the educational system is lacking resources and students are underprepared for standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which is highly regarded by colleges and universities as the predictor of academic success.

Standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT serve as gatekeepers, that determine where students can apply and gain admission.

Retention

As the number of Latina/os in colleges and universities increases, so does the concern for their persistence rates to graduation. The retention of college students has been a central topic of research in higher education for many years. A major topic addressed within the area of retention has been the freshmen experience, and the considerable transition from high school to college. Colleges and universities have created departments and programs, in an effort to help students persist to graduation. Offices such as first year experience and orientation programs were created in an effort to help retention and transition. Orientation programs provide new students with the information, support, and resources necessary to begin their academic journey.

Even though all students experience challenges with the transition from high school to college, that experience is not the same for everyone. Only recently has the topic of retention been studied with a specific focus on minority groups such as Latinas/os. There are many barriers that the Latina/o student can face. Latina/os, in general, tend to come from families that lack information on higher education, have family responsibilities, poor quality of primary and secondary education, live in poverty, and lack of persons who serve as educated role models.

Latina/os have among the lowest college completion rates in higher education (Pew Research Center, 2011). Research illustrates that students are more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree if they first attend a four-year institution (Nunez, 2009a). Latina/os

are overrepresented in community colleges, decreasing their chances of obtaining a bachelor's degree (Nunez, 2009a). Most of the Latinas/os that attend four-year colleges and universities have been high-achieving students that still face many academic, cultural, and financial challenges (Nunez, 2009a). "In addition to these challenges, Latina/o students can encounter campus climates that are not very welcoming. Overt and subtle forms of exclusion in college can hinder their development of sense of belonging to university communities" (Nunez, 2009a, p. 46).

Mattering

Much research has been conducted to evaluate the perception of mattering in adolescents, adult students, and minority groups, but has not been extended to focus specifically on Latina/o students. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) conducted one of the first studies of mattering by researching interpersonal relationships in adolescents. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) defined mattering as "a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego extension" (p. 165). In other words, the feelings that others have for you, and feeling that you are important to them, controls your behavior. Data have supported the idea that mattering is important to both the individual and society (Rosenberg & McCullough). Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) examined this theory and suggested that there are specific groups that have a high and a low level of mattering. The groups with the highest level of mattering are children and adults, because the child, in most cases, has adults who dote, care, and provide comfort to them. The adult, in turn, has a child or others who depend on them for resources. The groups with the lowest level of mattering are adolescents and the elderly. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) believe that, "Adolescents...[are] something of a

sociological superfluity, an irrelevance” (p. 180). The feeling of not being needed or useful to the family could be the cause of the low level of mattering amongst this group. With their study, Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) found that there are four aspects of mattering; attention, importance, ego-extension, and dependence.

Schlossberg later expanded on Rosenberg and McCullough’s concept of mattering. Schlossberg (1989) aimed to determine if mattering could truly predict behavior. Although her work was conducted with nontraditional students, her concepts have been generalized to all students. Schlossberg (1989) added the construct of appreciation as another aspect of mattering to Rosenberg and McCullough’s (1981) four aspects (attention, importance, ego-extension, and dependence) to the already established aspects of mattering. Schlossberg (1989) continued researching on mattering and marginality but later researched how student’s involvement can play a role in a student’s sense of mattering. Schlossberg (1989) engrossed on the notion that students can feel a sense of mattering in one area and feel marginalized in another, therefore determining where a student is feeling marginal is crucial to higher education administrators.

Marginality and Transition

Marginality, in contrast to mattering, is a feeling of not belonging. According to Schlossberg (1989), people in transition often feel marginalized, as if they do not matter to others. Marginalizing experiences such as isolation, exposure to negative stereotypes, and stressors associated with their minority status, can hinder the transition process of Latina/o students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Schlossberg’s theory of transition aims to examine the process of transition and the factors that influence the transition process. It

is a process that is different for every individual and could be affected by the 4 Ss: situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 1989). During Situation, a person exams their triggers, timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience with a similar transition, concurrent stress and assessment (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). During Self, factors such as personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources are important (2006). The third S, Support, is composed of the types of relations, their functions and the measurement of support (2006). The fourth S, Strategies, is comprised of three categories, modality situation, control meaning, managing and stress in aftermath, as well as the four coping modes, information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action and intrapsychic behaviors (2006).

Schlossberg defines transition as events resulting in a change of relationships, routines, assumptions and roles (Schlossberg, 1989). Therefore, marginality could be experienced through different situations and at different times throughout one's life.

Every time an individual changes roles or experiences a transition, the potential for feeling marginal arise. The larger the difference between the former role and the new role the more marginal the person may feel, especially if there are no norms for the new roles. (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 7)

College students as a whole may experience marginality during their transition from high school to college, which comes with a change of environment. College-bound students leave their families and friends and adventure into the unknown. There are students who are less likely to have a guide to explain the norms of their new roles, and first generation college students are one of these susceptible groups. Schlossberg (1989)

also explains marginality as a permanent condition, which affects bicultural individuals who are trapped between two cultures. The feeling of marginality could be temporary or a way of life.

Several studies have been conducted at Rowan University that focused on mattering and marginality among different types of students. Durham (2008) conducted a study where African American students were surveyed to determine their perception of mattering and marginality by focusing on advising relationships, administrative interactions, classroom climate, peer interactions, faculty interaction, and diversity of campus services. Durham (2008) found that overall, African American students at Rowan University felt that they mattered; however, students felt a greater degree of marginality in classroom climate and administrative interactions. Students felt that the administration should provide greater support for diversity on campus, which could increase mattering in the classroom (Durham, 2008).

D'Angelo (2010) focused his study on graduate students and aimed to evaluate the feeling of mattering among the nontraditional students. The study focused on five specific areas including campus life, administration, advising, peers, multiple roles, and faculty (D'Angelo, 2010). Overall, graduate students felt that they mattered to the university, but reported lower levels of mattering in the area of administration. Students felt that the activity fees were not used in a meaningful way towards supporting graduate education and that the rules on campus were not created with them in mind (D'Angelo, 2010).

McGuire (2012) looked at the sense of mattering of residential students at the Rowan University campus. McGuire (2012) utilized the *College Mattering Inventory* (Tovar, Simon, & Lee, 2009) to evaluate the sense of mattering of Rowan University undergraduate students. McGuire (2012) concluded that Rowan University students reported positive attitudes towards mattering in five of the six subscales that are evaluated by the *College Mattering Inventory*. The area that students demonstrated a lower level of mattering was in the subscale involving counselors and advisors. The subscales with the highest mean score was the mattering to instructor subscale (McGuire, 2012). Students felt that they mattered to instructors, and this was attributed to Rowan's small classes (2012). Statistically significant correlations were found between demographic factors and perception of mattering but three of the correlations were all weak (2012). Overall, McGuire (2012) concluded that employment status had the greatest impact on student's response to the items in the survey.

Johnston (2014) focused on the sense of mattering of full-time Rohrer College of Business undergraduate transfer students. Johnston (2014) also utilized the *College Mattering Inventory* (Tovar, Simon, & Lee, 2009) and concluded that Rohrer College of Business undergraduate transfer students reported positive attitudes towards mattering in four of the six subscales that are evaluated by the *College Mattering Inventory*. The areas where students reported the lowest levels of mattering, was in the general college mattering subscale and in the subscale involving counselors/advisors.

Separation and Integration

According to Hurtado and Carter (1997), a better understanding of mattering is key to discovering how particular forms of social and academic experiences affect students such as Latinas/os. Separation and integration have been the focus of research, when evaluating student transition into college life and retention. The problem is that the theories are not generic and are not easily applicable to minority groups. Integration can mean something completely different to student groups that have been marginalized historically, such as Latinas/os (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). It has also been noted that the nature of separation differs depending on the ethnic group (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Hurtado and Carter (1997) also stated that although there is no evidence that separation from prior communities harms the academic success of students, there is evidence that Latina/o students who attend full time and maintain supportive family relationships are more likely to adjust positively to their environment and consequently a higher tendency to persist to graduation.

Social and academic integration. Tinto's (1993) theory of integration aims to explain why students do not successfully transition into college. According to the theory, retention is predicted by student engagement in the institution, intent to graduate, student demographics, enrollment status, academic preparation, and involvement (Nunez, 2009a). According to Tinto (1993), there are two forms of integration: academic and social. Both forms are affected by the degree to which a student's value and behavior match those of the institution. Academic integration includes things such as faculty-student interactions and time allotted to schoolwork, while social interactions include being a member of student groups, experience in residence halls, and friendships within the campus (Tinto,

1993). A student's interactions can determine his or her decision to continue their studies (Nunez, 1993a).

Social integration, specifically peer interactions, plays a critical role in a student's adjustment to college and can be a predictor of social adjustment and institutional attachment (Perez, 2012). According to Hurtado and Carter (1997), Latina/o's interactions with their peers, specifically other Latina/os helps students to acquire the skills needed to persist and get a sense of their environment. Multiple studies have confirmed that the retention of students of color often depends on being able to feel a part of a community of individuals with whom they see themselves (Perez, 2012). The role of the family is very important to Latina/o students; family interdependence and parental support are essential to a student's academic adjustment (Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006). Family interdependence and obligation have been associated with academic motivation in immigrant students, who have a strong desire to repay parents for sacrifices made by moving to the United States (Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006). Many scholars critique Tinto's theory of integration because it implies that students of color must conform to institutional norms in order to succeed. Others criticize Tinto for overlooking the influence of social capital and the role of the family and community outside of the college community (Nunez, 2009b).

Sense of Belonging and Social Capital

“Relationships with institutional agents, and the networks that weave these relationships into units, can be understood as social capital” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 8). Social capital in the context of higher education could facilitate educational success since

it helps foster a sense of belonging in students (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The Sense of belonging is considered a form of social capital since it involves emotional and moral support (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nunez, 2009b). Social capital can enhance the sense of belonging of Latina/o students (Nunez, 2009b). According to Attinasi (1989), “Research suggests that Latina/o students’ ability to cognitively make sense of and navigate the college environment is positively associated with sense of belonging and retention” (as cited in Nunez, 2009b). Stanton-Salazar (1997) believes that there are five overlapping institutional problems that prevent low-status students from accumulating social capital. They include:

1. The differential value accorded children and youth in contemporary society, depending upon their social class, ethnicity, and gender;
2. The barriers and entrapment that make participation in mainstream settings a terribly uncomfortable experience for minority children and youths;
3. Evaluation and recruitment processes by which school-based agents evaluate and select minority student for sponsorship; such selection processes largely entail perceptions of the student’s ability and willingness to adopt the cultural capital and standards of the dominant group;
4. The institutionalization of distrust and detachment, or institutional engineering of conditions and prescribed roles that are antithetical to the development of social capital;

5. Ideological mechanisms that hinder help-seeking and help-giving behaviors within the school. (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 7)

These problems as identified by Stanton-Salazar (1997), hinder the social development of working-class minority student and “engineer their failure in school” since they are “mechanism intrinsic to the inner working of mainstream institutions” (Stanton- Salazar, 1997, p. 8).

Summary of the Literature Review

There is an increasing number of Latina/os pursuing higher education in the United States, and with the increase in numbers comes an increased concern for their success and retention. This group of students is very diverse in their needs and personal academic success depends on the understanding and support of faculty and administration. The Latina/o student is faced with barriers such as poor quality of elementary and secondary education, lack of role models, knowledge of the college experience, limited interaction with faculty members, and financial instability (Nunez, 2009a). Like many students that are transitioning from high school to college, Latina/os are also dealing with their racial and ethnic identity development in a new environment. According to Schlossberg (1989) “anyone could feel marginal from time to time” but “a bicultural person feels permanently locked out between two worlds” (p. 7). For many Latina/os, this is the case.

So what is the attitude of Latina/o students in regards to mattering and marginality? There are studies that look at the sense of mattering of student, in general and other minority groups such as African Americans, but there are very few studies that

focus on that Latina/o experience. Knowledge of the feeling of mattering and marginality of Latina/o students can help colleges and universities create inclusive learning environments that help foster a student's identity, facilitate a smooth college transition, boost student's social capital, and increase sense of belonging; all factors that will enhance the experience of Latina/o students and increase graduation rates.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University, located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University has three campuses in New Jersey, located in Camden, Glassboro, and Stratford. Rowan University is a selective four-year, medium- sized, public comprehensive research institution, accredited by The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (Rowan University, 2013a). Rowan University has gone through many transformational changes since its establishment in 1923 as Glassboro Normal School. The school expanded by becoming a teacher's college in 1937, a state college in 1958, achieved university status in 1997, and became a research university in 2013 (Rowan University, 2013c).

As of fall 2013, Rowan University enrolled 13,349 students (10,951 undergraduate, 1,650 graduate, and 48 professional) from 31 states and 19 foreign countries (Rowan University, 2013a). Rowan University has 24% minority enrollment. The University offers 85 bachelor programs, 32 graduate certificates, 65 Master's degrees, two professional degrees, 10 post-Master's degrees, and two doctoral degrees (Rowan University, 2013a). Rowan University is comprised of eight academic colleges and two schools which are Rohrer College of Business, College of Communication & Creative Arts, College of Education, College of Engineering, College of Humanities & Social Sciences, College of Performing Arts, College of Science & Mathematics, College of Graduate & Continuing Education (CGCE), School of Biomedical Sciences, and

Cooper Medical School of Rowan University and Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (Rowan, 2013a). Students are involved in any of the 141 clubs and organizations on campus, 18 division III athletics programs, 45 intermural sports, and 30 club sport programs. A total of 3,663 students live on campus in 8 resident halls, 5 apartment complexes and Rowan's international house (Rowan, 2013a).

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was 896 undergraduate Latina/o students enrolled at Rowan University during the 2014 spring semester. A survey (Appendix A) was administered by email to 488 students who identified as Latinas/os. Of the 896 undergraduate Latina/o students, there were 188 freshman students, 236 sophomore students, 249 junior students, and 223 senior students (Rowan, 2013b). A sample of 488 Latina/o undergraduate students was used in this study. The survey was distributed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness Research & Planning via e-mail with a website link directing students that self-identified as Latina/o students.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in this study to measure the attitudes of mattering of Latino/a students at Rowan University was the *College Mattering Inventory* (CMI), designed by Tovar, Simon, and Lee (2009). The inventory is based on the definition of mattering and themes such as, "being the object of attention of others (faculty, counselors/advisors, students), perception of support in various student endeavors by others (faculty, counselors/advisors, students), supportive learning environment, sense of fit within the college and perceived marginality owing to personal characteristics" (Tovar

et al., 2009, p. 159). The original *College Mattering Inventory* had 17 items that were negatively stated and were reversed-scored before data analysis. Tovar et al. (2009) noted in their findings that reversed-worded items were found to decrease the reliability and internal consistency of the scale; therefore, those items were removed from the modified version. The survey (Appendix A) was reduced from 62 to 29 items and negatively stated items were removed. The reliability of the survey after modifications was examined by looking at the Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficient, which was .925. The validity of the instrument was also considered. The research conducted by Tovar et al. (2009), concluded that the correlation patterns they found in their study lends support of the convergent evidence for the validity of the *College Mattering Inventory*. Making the CMI a valid instrument to test the sense of mattering among college students is essential to this study. The response format was based on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very Much). The demographical questions in the survey aimed to get a better understanding of the overall student. The questions asked for gender, ethnicity information, academic status, financial information, language skills, and access to social capital. Questions such as “How do you identify yourself?” and “How important is this identity to you?” gave a better understanding of a student’s ethnic identity. The question “Number of student organization in which you are a current member?” and “Who do you talk to about jobs or careers that you might be interested in after finishing school?” gave information on a student’s involvement and social capital. The rest of the survey items focused on students’ sense of mattering in the area of general college mattering, mattering versus marginality, mattering to counselors or advisors, mattering to instructors, and mattering to students. Following the approval from the Institutional

Review Board of Rowan University (Appendix B), a pilot test of the survey was conducted with two students who found the instrument readable and understandable.

Data Analysis

All of the data collected were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. Research question one (What are the attitudes of Latina/o students at Rowan University in the areas of general college mattering, mattering versus marginality, mattering to counselors or advisors, mattering to instructors, and mattering to students?) and question two (How do the mean scores of attitudes toward mattering in the six subscales in this study compare to those of Rowan University residential undergraduate students, Rowan University Rohrer College of Business transfer students and elsewhere?) were answered by analyzing descriptive statistics including: frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Next, correlations (Pearson product-moment calculations) between demographics such as gender, enrollment status, class level, residence, and items in the survey, were examined for any significant relationships to answer research question three.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Sample

The subject in this study were undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled during the Spring 2014 semester. The survey instrument was sent out via the office of institutional research by email to a randomly selected sample of the population once a week starting May 4, 2014 to May 22, 2014. Four hundred and eighty eight (488) students received the online survey and 177 surveys were returned giving a 36% response rate. To boost the response rate paper copies of the survey were then administered to student passerby in the Campbell Library, Robinson Hall, and Chamberlain Student Center on May 13, 2014- May 16, 2014. After administering paper copies of the survey, 63 additional responses were obtained. The total number of completed surveys was 240. After reviewing the responses, a total of 224 surveys were able to be used. The final response rate of the survey for the study was 46%.

The demographic of the subjects who participated in the study are shown in Table 4.1. Of the 224 subjects surveyed, 87 (38.8%) were male, 131 (58.5%) were female, and 1 (0.4%) were other. The majority of the subjects identified as Hispanic 130 (58%), followed by Latina/o 92 (41.1%), followed by Puerto Rican 73 (32.6%), Dominican 46 (20.5%) and multiracial 16 (7.1%). Only 1 (0.4%) identified as middle eastern. The subjects were 17% freshmen, 37% sophomore, 29.9% juniors, 31.1% seniors, and 2.2% post-baccalaureate. A majority of the students who participated in the survey were first-generation college students at 55.4%. Subjects also reported that they lived on campus at

46%, and the majority of the subject were not employed (35.3%), followed by 29% working more than 20 hours per week off campus.

Table 4.1

Subject Demographics (N=224)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Female	87	38.8
Male	131	58.5
Other	1	.4
Missing	5	2.2
Total	224	100
Racial/Ethnic Background		
Asian	3	1.3
African American	6	2.7
Black	13	5.8
Chicano	4	1.8
Colombian	12	5.4
Cuban	17	7.6
Dominican	46	20.5
Ecuadorian	11	4.9
Guatemalan	8	3.6
Hispanic	130	58
Honduran	6	2.7
Latina/o	92	41.1
Mexican	15	6.7
Middle Eastern	1	.4
Multiracial	16	7.1
Native American	5	2.2
Peruvian	8	3.6
Puerto Rican	73	32.6
Salvadoran	7	3.1

Table 4.1 (continued)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Class Level		
Freshmen	38	17
Sophomore	37	16.5
Junior	67	29.9
Senior	70	31.3
Post- Baccalaureate	5	2.2
Missing	7	3.1
Total	224	100
Enrollment Status		
Full-Time Student	203	90.6
Part-Time Student	13	5.8
Missing	11	4.9
Total	224	100
Where do you live?		
On Campus	103	46
Off Campus	49	21.9
Off Campus with Family	65	29
Missing	7	3.1
Total	224	100
Employment Status		
Not employed	79	35.3
< 20 hours/week off campus	36	16.1
> 20 hours/week off campus	65	29
< 20 hours/week on campus	18	8
> 20 hours/week on campus	17	7.6
Missing	7	4
Total	224	100

Analysis of the Data

Research question 1. What are the attitudes of Latina/o students at Rowan University in the areas of general college mattering, mattering versus marginality, mattering to counselors or advisors, mattering to instructors, and mattering to students?

The General College Mattering subscale measures students' attitudes of mattering to the university as a whole. The students' attitudes of mattering in the General College Mattering subscale are presented in Table 4.2, arranged from most to least positive using mean scores. A majority of subjects, identified "Moderately" or "Very Much" with the statement, "Other students are happy for me when I do well in exams or projects" (52.7%); "There are people at the university who are concerned about my future" (44.2%); "There are people at the university who are genuinely interested in me as a person" (42.8%); and "People on campus seem happy about my accomplishments" (37.1%). The statements that with the lowest mean score were those that dealt with pressure and disappointment. The mean score for "There are people on campus who are sad for me when I fail in something I set out to do" was 2.87 with 61% of the subjects agreeing "Slightly" or "Not at All." The mean score for the item, "I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people at the university would be disappointed if I did not" was 2.64 with 79% of subjects agreeing "Slightly" or "Not at All."

Table 4.2

*General College Mattering**(1= Not at All, 2= Slightly, 3= Somewhat, 4= Moderately, and 5= Very Much)*

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
There are people at the university who are genuinely interested in me as a person. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =4.07, <i>SD</i> =.785, Missing=28	19	8.5	21	9.4	47	21.0	39	17.4	57	25.4
Other students are happy for me when I do well in exams or projects. <i>n</i> =202, <i>M</i> =3.46, <i>SD</i> =1.520, Missing=22	21	9.4	10	4.5	41	18.3	57	25.0	62	27.7
There are people at the university who are concerned about my future. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> = 3.29, <i>SD</i> =1.489, Missing=29	20	8.9	24	10.7	42	18.8	48	21.4	51	22.8
People on campus seem happy about my accomplishments. <i>n</i> =198, <i>M</i> =3.13, <i>SD</i> =1.439, Missing=26	24	10.7	25	11.2	57	25.4	41	18.3	42	18.8

Table 4.2 (continued)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Some people on campus are disappointed in me when I do not accomplish all I should. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.93, <i>SD</i> =1.452, Missing=28	30	13.4	38	17.0	39	17.4	49	21.9	31	13.8
People on campus are generally supportive of my individual needs. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> =1.390, Missing=28	26	11.6	29	12.9	62	27.7	43	19.2	24	10.7
There are people on campus who are sad for me when I fail in something I set out to do. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> =1.457, Missing=28	31	13.8	30	13.4	56	25.0	36	16.1	32	14.3
I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people at the university would be disappointed if I did not. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =2.64, <i>SD</i> =1.531, Missing=29	51	22.8	28	12.5	40	17.9	37	16.5	28	12.5

The Mattering Versus Marginality subscale measures if the subjects felt a greater sense of belonging or not belonging at the university. Subject's attitudes of mattering and marginality are described in Table 4.2, with items arranged from most to least positive using mean scores. Items in this subsection are reverse scored. Overall subjects expressed attitudes of mattering and low attitudes of marginality in this subsection. A majority of subjects (41.1%) felt that they did not feel isolated at all when involved in student activities.

Table 4.3

Mattering versus Marginality

(1=Not at All, 2=Slightly, 3=Somewhat, 4=Moderately, and 5=Very Much)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at the university.* <i>n</i> =202, <i>M</i> =2.38, <i>SD</i> =1.462, Missing=22	64	28.6	37	16.5	38	17.0	31	13.8	21	9.4
Sometimes I feel alone at the university.* <i>n</i> =202, <i>M</i> =2.20, <i>SD</i> =1.393, Missing=22	77	34.4	44	19.6	31	13.8	24	10.7	18	8.0

Table 4.3 (continued)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I often feel socially inadequate at school.* <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =2.13, <i>SD</i> =1.309, Missing=29	69	30.8	49	21.9	37	16.5	17	7.6	14	6.3
Sometimes I feel that no one at the university notices me.* <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =2.11, <i>SD</i> =1.275, Missing=21	82	36.6	39	17.4	48	21.4	15	6.7	13	5.8
Sometimes I feel that I am not interesting to anyone at this university.* <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =2.08, <i>SD</i> =1.273, Missing=21	81	36.2	42	18.8	39	17.4	24	10.7	9	4.0
I often feel isolated when involved in student activities (e.g., clubs, events).* <i>n</i> =202, <i>M</i> =1.94, <i>SD</i> =1.278, Missing=22	92	41.1	41	18.3	28	12.5	22	9.8	9	4.0

*Items are reverse scored

The Mattering to Counselors and Advisors subscale measures subjects' attitudes of mattering to counselors (academic or psychological) and advisors (officially designated or informally assigned) at the university. The words counselor and advisors have different meaning to students. There are students on campus that have more advisors and counselors than others depending on their academic majors or involvement in different learning communities. The results of this subscale can be found in Table 4.4. The attitudes of subjects in this subscale were mixed. The majority (42.9%) did not believe their counselors/advisors would miss them if they stopped attending school. However, 49.6% indicated "Very Much" or "Moderately" with the statement, "My counselor/advisor is generally receptive to what I have to say." Subjects had mixed feelings with the statement, "If I stopped attending university, my counselor(s)/advisor(s) would be disappointed," 18.8% selected "Not at All" and 22.8% selected "Very Much."

Table 4.4

Mattering to Counselors or Advisors

(1=Not at All, 2=Slightly, 3=Somewhat, 4=Moderately, and 5=Very Much)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
My counselor/advisor is generally receptive to what I have to say. <i>n</i> =199, <i>M</i> =3.41, <i>SD</i> =1.4, Missing=2	18	8.0	19	8.5	43	19.2	62	27.7	49	21.9

Table 4.4 (continued)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
If I had a personal problem, I believe that counselors/advisors would be willing to discuss it with me. <i>n</i> =197, <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.558, Missing=27	28	12.5	27	12.1	26	11.6	53	23.7	54	24.1
Counselors/advisors at the university generally show their concern for students' well being. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.501, Missing=29	16	7.1	20	8.9	49	21.9	48	21.4	48	21.4
If I stopped attending the university, my counselor(s)/ advisor(s) would be disappointed. <i>n</i> =199, <i>M</i> =3.08, <i>SD</i> =1.600, Missing=25	42	18.8	27	12.1	26	11.6	46	20.5	51	22.8
I believe that my counselor(s)/advisor(s) would miss me if I suddenly stopped attending the university. <i>n</i> =199, <i>M</i> =2.53, <i>SD</i> =1.540, Missing=25	71	31.7	25	11.2	36	16.1	31	13.8	30	13.4

The Mattering to Instructors subscale measures how the subjects felt about mattering to the instructors that taught them. Items in this subscale are reverse scored. A majority of subjects reported that they felt as though their instructors listened to them. However, 47.8 % agreed “Moderately” or “Very Much” to the statement “I often feel my instructors care more about other things than me as a student.”

Table 4.5

Mattering to Instructors

(1=Not at All, 2=Slightly, 3=Somewhat, 4=Moderately, and 5=Very Much)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
My instructors sometimes ignore my comments or questions.* <i>n</i> =200, <i>M</i> =1.58, <i>SD</i> =.984 Missing=24	116	51.8	38	17.0	27	12.1	8	3.6	2	27
Sometimes my instructors simply do not listen to what I have to say.* <i>n</i> =202, <i>M</i> =1.84, <i>SD</i> =1.221 Missing=22	98	43.8	45	20.1	28	12.5	11	4.9	11	4.9

Table 4.5 (continued)

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I often feel my instructor(s) care more about other things than me as a student.* <i>n</i> =201, <i>M</i> =2.10, <i>SD</i> =1.216 Missing=21	28	12.5	27	12.1	26	11.6	53	23.7	54	24.1

Note. * Item reversed scored

The Mattering to Students subscale measures subjects' attitudes toward mattering to their peers at the university. The results of this subscale are listed in Table 4.6. A total of 40.5% of the subjects agreed "Moderately" or "Very Much" with the statement, "When in groups, other students tend to rely on my contributions." A 37% of the subjects agree "Not at All" or "Slightly" with the statement "Some students are dependent on my guidance or assistance to help them succeed".

Table 4.6

*Mattering to Students**(1=Not at All, 2= Slightly, 3=Somewhat, 4=Moderately, and 5=Very Much)*

Statement	Not at All		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
When in groups, other students tend to rely on my contributions. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =3.20, <i>SD</i> =1.406, Missing=28	14	6.3	26	11.6	52	23.2	55	24.6	37	16.5
Other students rely on me for support. <i>n</i> =201, <i>M</i> =2.79, <i>SD</i> =1.389, Missing=23	29	12.9	43	19.2	50	22.3	45	20.1	23	10.3
Some students are dependent on my guidance or assistance to help them succeed. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.54, <i>SD</i> =1.352, Missing=28	44	19.6	39	17.4	49	21.9	41	18.3	13	5.8

The Perception of Value subscale measures subjects' feelings of worth to the university. The results for the items in the Perception of Value subscale are displayed in Table 4.7. The scores indicate a positive attitude of value by subjects. Over 60% agreed "Very Much" or Moderately" with all of the statements in the subscale.

Table 4.7

Perception of Value

(1=Not at All, 2=Slightly, 3=Somewhat, 4=Moderately, and 5=Very Much)

Statement	Not at all		Slightly		Somewhat		Moderately		Very Much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
It is comforting to know that my contributions are valued by my instructors. <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =4.00, <i>SD</i> =1.163, Missing=21	6	2.7	6	2.7	33	14.7	71	31.7	82	36.6
Knowing that other people at the college care for me motivates me to do better. <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =3.81, <i>SD</i> =1.396, Missing= 21	1	3.3	0	0	4	13.3	12	40.0	12	40.0
There are people at the college that sincerely appreciate my involvement as a student. <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =3.64, <i>SD</i> =1.329, Missing=21	1	3.3	0	0	7	23.3	13	43.3	6	20.0

Research question 2. How do the mean scores of attitudes toward mattering in the six subscales in this study compare to those of Rowan University residential undergraduate students, Rowan University Rohrer College of Business transfer students, and elsewhere?

Table 4.8 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the research samples, Rowan University Latina/o students, Rowan University Rohrer College of Business transfer students, Rowan University Residential Undergraduate students, and the normative sample based on Tovar, Simon, and Lee (2009). The data from this study indicate a higher reported attitude towards mattering in two of the six subscales for Latina/o students at Rowan University. On average, Latina/o students at Rowan University indicated more positive attitudes toward the Perception of Value subscale ($M=3.81$) and in the Mattering to Counselors/Advisors subscale ($M=3.1$). However, Latina/o students at Rowan University indicated less positive attitudes in the Mattering to Student subscale ($M= 2.83$) compared to the business transfer sample, residential sample, and the normative study sample.

Table 4.8

Descriptive Statistics for 6 Subscales for Research and Normative Sample

Subscale	Rowan University Latino/a Students (N=224)		Rowan University Business Transfer Sample (N= 121)		Rowan University Residential Sample (N=386)		Normative Study Sample (N=1,755)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
General College Mattering	3.06	1.10	2.77	.934	3.32	1.16	2.98	1.15
Mattering v. Marginality*	2.14	1.03	2.15	.959	2.15	1.21	2.30	1.25
Mattering to Counselors/Advisors	3.1	1.23	2.82	1.02	2.90	1.28	2.96	1.28
Mattering to Instructors*	1.84	.929	1.67	.733	2.03	1.08	1.87	1.00
Mattering to Students	2.83	1.63	3.02	.912	3.33	1.07	2.97	1.13
Perception of Value	3.81	1.06	3.50	.897	3.79	1.11	3.70	1.14

Note. *Items reversed scored

Research question 3. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic variables of gender, enrollment status, class level, family background, language skills, and access to social capital, residence, ethnic/racial identity, and sense of mattering?

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationships of demographics including gender, racial/ethnic background, enrollment status, and other demographic information with the six mattering subscales. Weak negative correlations were found regarding class level and items in four of the subscales, General College Mattering, Mattering to Counselors/Advisors, Perception of Value, and Mattering to Students. Weak negative correlations were found regarding enrollment status and items in three of the subscales, General College Mattering, Mattering to Counselors/Advisors, and Perception of Value. Weak negative correlations were found regarding where students reside and items in the General College Mattering subscale.

Analysis of the data showed correlations were found statistically significant at the .01 and .05 level, (2- tailed), and all the coefficients were weak.

Table 4.9

Significant Correlations with Class Level

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
General College Mattering	There are people at the university who are genuinely interested in me as a person. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =4.07, <i>SD</i> =.785 Missing=28	-.175*	.014
	People on campus seem happy about my accomplishments. <i>n</i> =198, <i>M</i> =3.13, <i>SD</i> =1.439 Missing=26	-.179*	.012

Table 4.9 (continued)

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
	There are people on campus who are sad for me when I fail in something I set out to do. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> =1.457 Missing=28	-.207**	.004
	There are people at the university who are concerned about my future. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =3.29, <i>SD</i> =1.489 Missing=29	-.246**	.001
	Some people are disappointed in me when I do not accomplish all I should. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.93, <i>SD</i> =1.452 Missing=28	-.272**	.000
	I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people at the university would be disappointed if I did not. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =2.64, <i>SD</i> =1.531 Missing=29	-.306**	.000
Mattering to Counselors/Advisors	I believe that my counselor(s)/advisor(s) would miss me if I suddenly stopped attending university. <i>n</i> =199, <i>M</i> =2.53, <i>SD</i> =1.540 Missing=25	-.154*	.031

Table 4.9 (continued)

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
	If I had a personal problem, I believe that counselors/advisors would be willing to discuss it with me. <i>n</i> =197, <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.558, Missing=27	-.200**	.005
	Counselors/advisors at the university generally show their concern for students' well being. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.501, Missing=29	-.214**	.003
	If I stopped attending university, my counselors/ advisors would be disappointed. <i>n</i> =199, <i>M</i> = 3.08, <i>SD</i> = 1.600, Missing=25	-.244**	.001
Perception of Value	There are people at the university that sincerely appreciate my involvement as a student. <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =3.64, <i>SD</i> =1.329, Missing=21	-.179*	.012
Mattering to Students	Other students rely on my support. <i>n</i> =201, <i>M</i> =2.79, <i>SD</i> =1.389, Missing=23	-.195**	.006

Table 4.10

Significant Correlations with Enrollment Status

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
General College Mattering	There are people on campus who are sad for me when I fail in something I set out to do. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> =1.457, Missing=28	-.143*	.046
	There are people at the university who are concerned about my future. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =3.29, <i>SD</i> =1.489, Missing=29	-.167*	.020
	There are people at the university who are genuinely interested in me as a person. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =4.07, <i>SD</i> =.785, Missing=28	-.172*	.016
	People on campus seem happy about my accomplishments. <i>n</i> =198, <i>M</i> =3.13, <i>SD</i> =1.439, Missing=26	-.191*	.007
	There are people on campus who are sad for me when I fail in something I set out to do. <i>n</i> =196, <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> =1.457, Missing=28	-.217**	.002
Mattering to Counselors/Advisors	Counselors/advisors at the university generally show their concern for students' well being. <i>n</i> =195, <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.501, Missing=29	-.161*	.025
Perception of Value	There are people at the university that sincerely appreciate my involvement as a student. <i>n</i> =203, <i>M</i> =3.64, <i>SD</i> =1.329, Missing=21	-.187**	.009

Table 4.11

Significant Correlations with Where you Live

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
General College Mattering	There are people at the university who are genuinely interested in me as a person. n=196, <i>M</i> =4.07, <i>SD</i> =.785, Missing=28	-.264**	.000
	I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people at the university would be disappointed if I did not. n=195, <i>M</i> =2.64, <i>SD</i> =1.531, Missing=29	-.270**	.000

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study is based on the theoretical framework of Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) and later established by Nancy Schlossberg (1989) with her study on adult learners. Schlossberg (1989) claimed that during times of transition, feelings of marginalizing and mattering could occur in different areas of a person's life. In this study, a mattering scale designed by Tovar, Simon, and Lee (2009) was utilized to measure college students' attitudes toward mattering in six sub-scales. The survey was distributed to Latina/o students at Rowan University and analyzed to determine students' attitudes toward mattering. The study took a longer look at the attitudes of Latina/o students at Rowan University in the areas of General College Mattering, Mattering versus Marginality, Mattering to Counselors or Advisors, Mattering to Instructors, and Mattering to Students. This study was compared to Johnston's (2014) study conducted on Rowan University's Rohrer College of Business junior and senior transfer students, McGuire's (2012) residential undergraduate students at Rowan University and the normative data from Tovar, Simon, and Lee's 2009 study. Relationships between the demographic variables of gender, enrollment status, class level, family background, language skills, access to social capital, residence, ethnic/racial identity and sense of mattering were also analyzed. In general, Latina/o students at Rowan University expressed positive attitudes of mattering across the subscales as compared to the normative study of Tovar, Simon, and Lee (2009).

Discussion of Findings

Latina/o students reported higher attitudes of Perception of Value and Mattering to Counselors/Advisors compared to Rohrer College of Business transfer students, Rowan University residential students, and those in the normative data. In comparison to Rohrer College of Business transfer students, Latina/o students reported lower levels of mattering in the Mattering to Student sub-scale. In the sub-scale of Mattering vs. Marginality, Rohrer College of Business transfer students and Rowan University residential students reported similar attitudes levels; Latina/o students reported lower than both the business transfer students and residential students.

Based on the findings, Latina/o students indicated positive perception of value. Over 60% of subjects agreed very much or moderately with all of the statements in the subscales. The perception of value subscale had the highest mean score at 3.81 compared to the business transfer sample, residential sample, and the normative sample. The Latina/o sample also had the highest mean scores in the Mattering to Counselors/Advisors subscale. Although students had a high perception of self-value, they had less positive attitudes in the Mattering to Instructors and Mattering to Students subscales.

Eighty percent of Latina/o students either agreed moderately or very much with the statement “Knowing that other people at the university care for me motivates me to do better,” and 68% percent of Latina/o subjects either agreed moderately or very much with the statement, “It is comforting to know that my contributions are valued by my instructor.” Sixty-three percent of participants either agreed moderately or very much

with the statement, “There are people at the college that sincerely appreciate my involvement as a student.”

Conversely, in the mattering to student subscale, only 24% of subjects either agreed moderately or very much with the statement, “Some students are dependent on my guidance or assistance to help them succeed.” Thirty percent of subjects also either agreed moderately or very much with the statement “Other students rely on my support.”

In the Mattering verse Marginality sub-scale, the Latina/o subjects expressed positive attitudes of mattering and low attitudes of marginality. A majority of subjects felt that they did not feel isolated at all when involved in student activities, 59% agreed slightly or not at all to the statement, “I often feel isolated when involved in student activities.” Fifty-five percent agreed slightly or not at all to the statement, “Sometimes I feel that I am not interesting to anyone at this university.” Fifty-four percent of the subjects agreed slightly or not at all to the statements, “Sometimes I feel that no one at the university notices me” and “Sometimes I feel alone at the university.” Overall, subjects felt included in student activities, noticed by others, and socially adequate.

When comparing the means of the 6 subscales of Rowan University, the Latina/o student sample, business transfer student sample, the residential sample and that of the normative study sample, the means are similar in range. There are a few differences and similarities in the demographics of the studies conducted at Rowan University. The Latina/o student samples just focus on students that self-identified as Latina/o, the business transfer sample had a total of 3.8% of Latinas/os subjects and the residential sample had a total of 6.8% Latinas/os subjects. A total of 36% of the Latina/o sample

lived on campus, meanwhile, 100% of the students of the resident sample lived on campus and the business transfer student sample did not report their living arrangements. In regard to class levels, the business transfer student sample focused on junior and senior students, while the Latina/o sample had only 30% juniors and 31.3% seniors, and the residential sample had 25% juniors and 10.5% seniors.

The Mattering versus Marginality subscales were close in range for all three of the sample data, ranging from 2.14 to 2.30. The normative sample had a mean of 2.30 in the Mattering versus Marginality subscale, while the Rowan University Latina/o sample had a mean of 2.14 and the Rowan University business transfer and the Rowan University residential sample both had a mean of 2.15. The closeness in range could be attributed to similarity in experiences while at the Rowan University campus. All three of the studies conducted at Rowan University collected data on the employment status of the students; overall, the resident sample students had the highest unemployment percent (58%), the business transfer students had the highest off-campus employment (50.4%), and the Latina/ o sample had the lowest percentage of on-campus employment (8%) considering 46% of the Latina/o sample lived on-campus. The low percentage of on-campus employment of Latina/o students could be attributed to students' limited social capital, lack of role models, and limited integration with faculty and staff members.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship demographics including gender, racial/ethnic background, enrollment status, and other demographic information with the six mattering subscales. There were a few negative correlations that were found statistically significant at the .01 and .05 level.

Despite the correlations being weak, there seem to be something there that needs to be

examined further. Student's enrollment status and class level seem to impact the student's attitudes of mattering. According to the data, as a student increases in class level, their attitudes of mattering seem to decrease causing a negative correlation.

Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that Latina/o students at Rowan University generally have positive attitudes toward mattering in most of the subscales. The data from the study indicated that Latina/o students reported positive attitudes of mattering in five of the six subscales. On average, Latina/o students at Rowan University indicated more positive attitudes toward the Perception of Value subscale ($M=3.81$) and in the Mattering to Counselors/Advisors subscale ($M=3.10$). Latina/o students at Rowan University reported the lowest levels of mattering in the Mattering to Students subscale.

Overall, there were only slight differences in the mean scores of the study of Rowan University business transfer students by Johnston (2014), Rowan University residential students by McGuire (2012), and those of Rowan University Latina/o students. In the General College Mattering subscale, Latina/o students reported higher levels of mattering than those of the Rowan University business transfer students and less levels of mattering than those of the Rowan University residential sample. The biggest difference could be found in the mattering to student subscale, where the mean score of 2.83 was 10% lower than the study of residential students at Rowan University and 4% lower than that of Rowan University business transfer students.

Although the mean scores of the items in the mattering to students subscale seem close in range, there is a story to tell when the items are examined closer. The mean score

of the mattering to students subscale for the Latina/o sample was 2.83, 3.02 for the business transfer sample, 3.33 for the resident sample, and 2.97 for the normative sample. Overall the mean scores look similar, however, only 6.3% of Latina/o students chose “Not at all” when the statement “When in groups other students tend to rely on my contributions.” Six point three percent is very low when compared to 19% of business transfer students and 17.7% of resident students that chose “Not at all” to the statement of “When in groups other students tend to rely on my contributions.” The reason behind why Latina/o students felt that their contributions to groups do not matter at Rowan University should be the subject of further study.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for practice are presented:

1. Rowan University should continue to offer support services and extracurricular programming to engage students outside of the classroom.
2. Rowan University should establish departmental programs that encourage faculty and student interactions outside of the classroom.
3. Rowan University should expand the support services they offer to sophomore and junior students. An office or department should be created that addresses the sophomore and junior experience.
4. Rowan University should revise its student evaluation and recruitment practices to diversify the student body.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Further studies should be conducted with larger populations to confirm the findings of this study.
2. Conduct a mixed method study of surveys and one-on-one interviews focusing on Latina/o students.
3. Conduct longitudinal research using the *CMI* to measure the change in attitudes toward mattering over time.
4. Exam student's participation in summer bridge programs (TRIO Programs) such as the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Program as a factor that could affect a student's sense of mattering. Students that participate in the EOF program receive additional support services such as advisement and mentorship, two main factors that can affect a student's sense of mattering.
5. Conduct a similar study with a larger and smaller institution to see if the size of the institution impacts the attitudes of mattering and marginalization of Latina/o students.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



April 30, 2014

Alma Diaz
6900 Broadway, Apt. 3f
Guttenberg, NJ 07093

Dear Alma Diaz:

In accordance with the University's IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project, category 7, through its expedited review process.

IRB application number: 2014-194

Project Title: Yo Importo: Attitudes of Mattering and Marginality of Latina/o Students at Rowan University

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for **one calendar year** from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to Dr. Harriet Hartman (hartman@rowan.edu or call 856-256-4500, ext. 3787) or contact Dr. Shreekanth Mandayam, Associate Provost for Research (shreek@rowan.edu or call 856-256-5150).

If you have any administrative questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-5150).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harriet Hartman".

Harriet Hartman, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Burton Sisco, Educational Services, Administration, Higher Education, James Hall

Office of Research
James Hall
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

856-256-5150
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Appendix B

Survey Instrument

College Mattering Inventory © 2009, Esau Torra & Merrill A. Sisco

Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you are not required to answer any of the questions, however your cooperation is greatly appreciated and important to the success of this study. All participants must be 18 years old or older and all responses will be kept anonymous and no personal information is required. Your participation in this study will not exceed 10 minutes. This study is conducted by Alma Diaz in partial fulfillment of her M.A. degree in Higher Education. The purpose of this study is to examine the sense of mattering and marginality of Latina/o students at Rowan University. There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, feel free to contact Alma Diaz at Diazal@Rowan.edu or Dr. Burton Sisco by phone at 856-256-4500 X 3717 or email Sisco@rowan.edu

Background Information

Please check all that apply.

Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Transgender
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Ethnicity Information

How do you identify yourself? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Asian/ Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Latina/o
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American	<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial
<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Chicano	<input type="checkbox"/> Mexican	<input type="checkbox"/> Ecuadorian
<input type="checkbox"/> Peruvian	<input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvadoran
<input type="checkbox"/> Dominican	<input type="checkbox"/> Guatemalan	<input type="checkbox"/> Colombian	<input type="checkbox"/> Honduran

How important is this identity to you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Not important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important
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Academic Status

Class Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> Freshman	<input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> Post- Baccalaureate
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Enrollment Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-Time Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Part-Time Student
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Expected to graduate date : _____	Current Grade Point Average: _____
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Are you a first generation college student?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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Living Arrangements

Where do you live?	<input type="checkbox"/> On Campus	<input type="checkbox"/> Off Campus	<input type="checkbox"/> Off Campus with Family
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Financial Information

I am Currently:	<input type="checkbox"/> Not employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Working less than 20 hours per week off campus
<input type="checkbox"/> Working more than 20 hours per week off campus	<input type="checkbox"/> Working more than 20 hours per week on campus	<input type="checkbox"/> Working less than 20 hours per week on campus

Check all that apply:

I currently receive...	<input type="checkbox"/> Subsidized loans	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not qualify for financial aid
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal or state grants	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsubsidized loans	<input type="checkbox"/> Scholarships
<input type="checkbox"/> Private loan	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Plus Loans	

Language Skills

Do you speak Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
What language is most often spoken at home?	<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish
What language do you prefer to use most of the time?	<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish

Access to Social Capital

Who do you talk to about jobs or careers that you might be interested in after finishing school?

(Check all that apply)

An advisor at school (<input type="checkbox"/>)	A peer (<input type="checkbox"/>)	Parent/ Guardian (<input type="checkbox"/>)
A Professor of school (<input type="checkbox"/>)	Sibling (<input type="checkbox"/>)	Other adult relatives or older adult friend (<input type="checkbox"/>)

Number of student organizations in which you are a current member.	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5+
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College Mattering Inventory Tovar, Simon & Lee (2009)

CMI Survey Instrument was removed at the request of Dr. Merrill Simon, please contact the author (merril.simon@csun.edu) for more information or to reference or receive a copy of the instrument.

Appendix C

Letter of Permission from Dr. Tovar

