“It’s Really Hard to Have Your Own Place”: The At-Home Experiences of Latina/o/x Undergraduates During COVID-19

Eligio Martinez, Jr.1, Ever Barraza1, and Audrey D. Paredes2

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to understand the at-home lived experiences of Latina/o/x college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Critical Race Theory as the guiding framework, the authors used storytelling to capture the at-home experiences of 19 Latina/o/x college students during the pandemic. Findings revealed how the pandemic shifted meaning of the home space, increased roles and responsibilities, and increased stress and mental health demands for students.

Resumen
El propósito de este estudio fue el entender las experiencias vividas en casa por los estudiantes universitarios latina/o/x durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Usando la teoría de Raza Critica como marco de referencia los autores usaron el cuento para capturar las experiencias en casa de 19 estudiantes universitarios latina/o/x durante la pandémica. Los resultados revelaron cómo la pandémica cambió el significado del espacio de casa, incrementando papeles y responsabilidades, e incrementando la tensión y las demandas de salud mental para los estudiantes.

Keywords
COVID-19 pandemic, Latina/o/x student experiences, storytelling

1California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, USA
2University of California, Los Angeles, USA

Corresponding Author:
Eligio Martinez, Jr., College of Education and Integrative Studies, California State Polytechnic University, 801 W Temple Ave, Pomona CA 91768-2557, USA.
Email: eligiom@cpp.edu
Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected the lives of millions across the world. Within the United States, Latinas/os/x were disproportionately affected compared to the rest of the general population considering they suffered one of the highest infection rates and death tolls throughout the country (Hayes-Bautista & Hsu, 2020). A major cause for high cases amongst Latinas/os/x was their social condition, that is they were at a higher risk of exposure due to their “essential worker” employment and lived in close proximity to others, making social distancing difficult (McClure et al., 2020; Ong et al., 2020). The impact of the pandemic was further perpetuated by the lack of access to health care and the quality of care available to Latinas/os/x (Garcia et al., 2021; Martínez et al., 2021).

Beyond high infection and death rates, Latinas/os/x also experienced increased economic hardships as a result of increased employment loss (Hayes-Bautista et al., 2021; Vargas & Sanchez, 2020). For instance, a report by the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute found that the number of Latinas in the workforce dropped by 2.74% nationally from March 2020 to March 2021 (Hernández et al., 2021). This was partially as a result of the employment sectors of Latinas who are often employed in low-wage employment, such as leisure and hospitality. The impact of the pandemic was also compounded for undocumented Latina/o/x families who were often deemed essential workers but were not eligible for federal and/or state financial relief (Hinojosa-Ojeda et al., 2020; Protecting Immigrant Families, 2021).

One of the areas that the pandemic has created long-term implications for Latinas/os/x is within the field of education. Emerging research has captured the challenges that Latina/o/x students and parents encountered as a result of the pandemic. However, what is missing is research that gives a voice to the home experiences of Latina/o/x college students. While research has documented the transitions into higher education (Martínez et al., 2022; Puente, 2022), experiences during the pandemic (Errisuriz et al., 2022), and impact on post-graduation plans (Garcia, 2022), the at-home experiences and the toll that the pandemic had on the home life of students is missing from the developing literature. As such, the purpose of this study is to understand the at-home experiences of Latina/o/x college students during the pandemic. Our study is guided by the following questions: (1) What were students’ at-home lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic? and (2) How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact students’ lives?

Review of the Literature

Latina/o/x College Students and the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has widened educational disparities for Latina/o/x students and families. Emerging research on Latinas/os/x during the pandemic has revealed the challenges that students had to navigate and the impact on their academic experiences. One of the more common challenges that Latina/o/x students and parents encountered in both the K-12 and higher education landscape was the lack of reliable internet and
technology along with necessary resources (Cioè-Peña, 2022; García-Louis et al., 2022). This was also exacerbated by the fact that Latina/o/x parents often had less available financial resources, which limited their ability to provide reliable internet and other services to their children (Atske & Perrin, 2021; Chen et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted enrollment rates for Latina/o/x college students at both the 4-year and community college level (Bulman & Fairlie, 2022; Puente, 2022). For some Latina/o/x students, economic hardships brought on by the pandemic, which affected family income, forced students to cancel or delay their enrollment plans into higher education (Ahn & Dominguez-Villegas, 2022).

Class inequalities were also exacerbated during the pandemic as low-income Latina/o/x students had less educational resources, that hurt their academic performance (Errisuriz et al., 2022). Students enrolled in college at the onset of the pandemic experienced increased challenges in mental health, housing and food insecurity, and increased financial need (García-Louis et al., 2022; Martinez, et al., 2022; Zottarelli et al., 2021). But perhaps the most significant challenge for Latina/o/x college students who returned home during the pandemic was the lack of adequate study space and reliable internet services, which made learning at home difficult (Means et al., 2020; Mshigeni et al., 2022). While the COVID-19 pandemic is transitioning to an endemic, its impact on Latina/o/x educational outcomes will be felt for years to come.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, which provides a lens that recognizes the intersectionality of race, gender, and socio-economic situation of students by providing a space for them to be acknowledged in the research. Using Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) tenet of storytelling, we use CRT to expand on the minoritized-majoritarian stories where Latinas/os/x have not been centered in education discourse because of the history of racism within the education system, which has positioned the educational needs of those in power as the main narrative. Scholars have used CRT in an effort to ground the experiences and voices of communities who have been marginalized concerning critical dimensions of ethnicity, culture, identity, sexuality, and language (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Storytelling as a practice in education and legal scholarship has a rich history of using stories or chronicles as a source of knowledge by scholars of color to document the experiences of communities of color (Bell, 1976, 1980; Chapman et al., 2018; Delgado, 2006; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Storytelling can also provide an opportunity to challenge dominant discourse on race, gender, and class as it relates to the educational experiences of students of color by examining the educational processes and policies that subordinate minoritized students (Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT emphasizes students’ experiential knowledge as an asset and strength, challenges the dominant ideologies, centers intersectionality, race, and racism as multiple layers and forms of subordination and oppression, and CRT has a commitment to the pursuit of social justice by advocating for social change for
minoritized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In this paper, we utilize CRT to examine and analyze the at-home experiences of Latina/o/x undergraduate students during their first year of college. Given the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Communities of Color, CRT allows us to call attention to how race, gender, class, and other social positioning exacerbated and/or influenced at-home living and learning conditions. Furthermore, CRT allows us to share these student experiences in the form of storytelling as a way to challenge the race-neutral manners in which the impacts of COVID-19 are discussed in broader discourse and in higher education.

**Methods**

Our study employed a narrative qualitative research approach to capture the voices of Latina/o/x students and document the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the at-home lives of students. It is important to note that this study focused on the students’ home, or lack of stable home, situations to allow us to understand their familial, economic, academic, mental health, and other responsibilities underreported in the literature from the standpoint of individual narratives rather than an aggregate of findings. By employing a qualitative research design, with CRT as the guiding framework, we were not just trying to “tell a story” but provide a social analysis about inequity and social justice to collect rich data, seeking to examine issues related to the oppression of individuals through semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants were recruited to the study by email communication invitations. Specifically, we purposefully selected and targeted participants that identified as Latina/o/x and either a first-time freshman or a newly enrolled transfer Latina/o/x student during the 2020 to 2021 academic year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online with 19 self-identified Latina/o/x students, which provided flexibility to explore and gain a more in-depth picture of participants’ lived experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews ranged from 30 to 75 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Of the students who participated, ten were transfer students, and nine were first-year freshmen—eleven of the participants identified as women, seven identified as men, and one as non-binary. Transcripts underwent multiple rounds of coding guided by our theoretical framework of CRT. We utilized an inductive and deductive in vivo coding approach, allowing for the narrative themes to emerge directly from the words of participants (Saldaña, 2013). After coding, the team of researchers met to discuss themes, categories, findings, and associations to explore the intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions related to our research question (Saldaña, 2013).

**Results/Findings**

As emerging research has shown, Latina/o/x students were more likely to be affected by COVID-19 both in their personal and academic lives (Errisuriz et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2022). In an effort to take a holistic approach in understanding the lived experiences of Latina/o/x students during this critical time, we also sought to
gain insight into our participants’ at-home experiences. From our data and subsequent analysis, we arrived at the following themes in response to the question of what were the at-home lived experiences of Latina/o/x students during the COVID-19 pandemic: (1) The physical space of the home was impacted for students; (2) familial role and responsibilities shifted as a result of the pandemic; and (3) the overwhelming presence of stress and mental health concerns that affected Latina/o/x students.

The Home Space

Although the idea of “working from home” has been normalized as a result of the pandemic, there is still a lack of scholarship that examines how this shift in the physical home space actually manifested in the lives of Latina/o/x students. From our interviews, we were able to gather that one of the overwhelming themes in the lived experiences of our participants was how the existence and usage of the home space for students shifted and was redefined. While many institutions of higher education sought to support students in their at-home learning and collegial experiences, there were many students who did not have what is normatively considered to be a home. For example, Jessica, a transfer student, shared that she lived in a friend’s vehicle for a significant portion of her first-year experience.

I was living in my car. Well, it wasn’t my car, it was my friend’s car, so that car didn’t move. The wheels were flattened and it didn’t move. I don’t know what was wrong with it, but it didn’t move, so that’s where I was mainly staying. . .but it felt better because before that I was just [staying] in random places in the outdoors, so that was not very safe, it didn’t feel very safe. But in the car, it felt better because I could lock the doors and you have your own space. I don’t really have to worry too much about people coming into your space. In the open space, anyone could come to you, so I felt better about that, yeah. . .in terms of electricity and stuff, there was no electricity, so I had to find a way to charge my devices and things like that, so that was a big challenge.

At the time of the interview, she had recently moved into stable housing through a university program, which allowed her to accomplish basic tasks such as cooking, showering, and feeling secure, which were things that she had not been able to do before.

Experiences such as Jessica’s are evidence that not all students experienced at-home schooling and learning in the traditional home space. Similarly, we also found that some students had to leave home at some point during the pandemic because they found themselves in situations that were detrimental to their emotional, mental, and physical well-being. An example of this was Mixtli, a first-year student who, although facing financial difficulties, left her family home to dorm on campus. As Mixtli recalled,

Personally, there is a lot of things happening at home. I felt like my grades my fall semester were horrible. I didn’t focus. I thought that probably moving away from the environment I was in could help me tremendously, but it just. . . I mean, it was better than fall semester, but it was still hard mentally. . .[There were] a lot of personal issues that I
was dealing with here. There’s just a lot of risks I was going to take if I were to stay here at [redacted city name]. So I decided that the best thing to do was to email housing about my situation, and they gave me a dorm after that. But it was just due to the risk that I had here at home that the best decision for me was to dorm on campus.

Similar to Jessica, Mixtli’s experiences provides insight into how some students’ spaces and places that were considered to be home have been redefined as a result of the pandemic.

Another example of this is Mike who, like Mixtli, moved to on-campus housing because of the stress of living at home with family. Mike shared with us,

I was having, not like an abusive situation at home, just a very stressful. . .like most families we have a little bit of dysfunction, you know, in terms of communication and stuff. And it’s for those last few months of spring and the summer when the quarantine. . .you know, stay-at home order was starting, it was really hectic and I’m a very introverted person. And it was like really wearing me down and I got the opportunity, because of my history of OCD and anxiety, to stay in the dorms that first school year. . .So I looked at it as a huge opportunity for myself, but I didn’t quite factor in just how isolating it would be.

Mike shared that they moved to on-campus housing for the sake of their mental health but also did not expect living on campus to be isolating and affect their mental health in other ways. Isolation, for those who lived on campus, with family, or otherwise, was also a significant theme across participants.

In addition to sharing how challenging the quarantine aspect was, participants also shared that because other family members were also working or schooling from home, their home space was not conducive to being the best learning environment. Through Ignacio, a first-year student, we learn how socio-economic status affected the home environment and the number of people who were schooling or working from home. He shared,

My sisters, they had the living room to themselves whenever they had class. My older sister would get our room, and I would go to my parents room. We would just work there. There was a lot of interference whenever we would talk, between people talking, or having to talk ourselves. So that’s really just the biggest adjustment we had to make. I don’t even remember if it was pre-pandemic or during the pandemic, but we actually had to move one apartment over, just because of that. We needed more space. We were living in a one-bedroom apartment, six people. It’s really hard to have your own place. There was times where I would go into class or have a meeting or something, and I would have to go into the bathroom for it to be quiet.

As shared by participants, the ideas and definitions that society has ascribed to “home” and schooling from home, vary for Latina/o/x students. The quotes shared here highlight how the home space was also influenced by socio-economic conditions, shaped by their class status, limited the resources and spaces Latina/o/x could access. The home environment also affected students as they had concerns about safety and mental
and emotional well-being. These stories problematize the standard idea that exists about the home environment that students navigated during the pandemic.

**Familial Roles and Responsibilities**

Just as the home space was rearticulated and redefined for participants in our study, so were their roles and responsibilities at home. As is evidenced in the literature, Latina/o/x students, especially those who are the first in their families to go to college, already have a significant role within their family units in helping parents financially and/or their siblings with navigating the education system (Covarrubias et al., 2019). From our interviews with Latina/o/x undergraduates, many of whom were first-generation students, we learned that the pandemic exacerbated these roles and responsibilities. These stories suggest how racialized students, especially those of low socioeconomic backgrounds, had to navigate the pandemic differently than their more affluent and white peers. A significant theme across all participants was how responsibilities simply increased. For example, Carlos, a transfer student shared,

> Since I’m more home, I need to do more. Because the pre-pandemic times, I was out at 8AM. And then, I usually return home around 9, 10PM because of work, classes, and all different things going [on] outside. So, yeah, I think my work responsibility did increase[. . .]my involvement in helping out, did increase.

Mixtli, who was living in her family home at the start of the pandemic and her first semester in college but later moved out to on-campus housing, expressed a similar sentiment.

> Obviously it was harder [during the] first semester because once I was done with classes in the morning, I had to go cook and then clean.

In addition to home-related responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning, several participants shared that they had to financially support themselves and their families as a result family members losing their jobs and income during the pandemic. For example, Sara, a first-time freshman, shared her family’s situation, she said,

> When COVID hit, it was really hard for us because both my parents, they work at the swap meet so, the swap meets were closed down and they’re both not from America, they were not given unemployment. So we had to make ends meet by going to churches that donate free food or going to some organizations that would [do] open donation.

In response to her parents losing their sources of income, Sara had to support her family financially and relied on institutional support to increase her income. She shared,

> I feel the pandemic has affected my goals just because the money situation. So I had to give most of my financial money to my parents just so we can still be able to live in this home. It was really hard on us, but luckily I was able to find new scholarships. When I
kept getting emails from the school like, “You can apply for this,” I would do them and I would... I thank God for this, that I would get accepted on getting money.

What made matters worse for Sara and her family was that they also had to support family in Mexico who contracted COVID and were also dealing with the high cost of healthcare.

Similarly, Andrew, a transfer student, shared that he was required to support his family financially when his dad’s hours were cut due to the pandemic. He reflects,

My dad’s hours were cut as well. He was the main, I guess, breadwinner of the house. So his hours were cut. I had to help out a bit with groceries and stuff like that. That was really it, just staying afloat with what was going on was a big issue for me. Bringing food home, and that was already an issue with everyone, right? You go to the market, and I just remember going to the market, and all [the] aisles were empty. It was surreal. I’ve never seen that before.

Given that Andrew came from a single-parent household, his family had to rely on his income to help cover some family expenses. These financial responsibilities that participants took on also extended beyond their immediate family.

In addition to having an active role in supporting their family’s finances, several participants in this study were faced with an increased role in their siblings’ educational experiences and well-being. In other words, several participants had to provide support to supplement their sibling’s online learning and schooling. For example, Andrew also shared his experience supporting his sister through online learning. He said,

But my sister, if she had any questions with any classes, I would be right here. We’d be at the dinner table, I’ll be working on my homework on the computer, she’d be working on her homework. So it was easy for her to kind of ask. She wasn’t at school, she was there at home with me. So yeah. I helped her out a bit with classes.

What we learned from the participants in this study is that assisting parents with the care of their siblings was a common experience. In addition to supporting siblings’ schooling and learning, some were also tasked with the general care of their siblings. Sara shared,

I was very much responsible for my youngest sister. Since my parents weren’t around, I had to be in charge of her. Since she didn’t have to go to school. She was also online. I had to make sure that she was doing her homework, she was on task, she wasn’t using her iPad or her phone. I was in charge of the house cleaning, our dogs, making sure they have food and making sure me and my sister have food. So I was responsible for us and just focused more on school and just applying to scholarships and trying to get the basic needs. I tried to plan that a couple times and I got it, which I’m thankful for.

Given that their parents were at work, participants assumed the educator role for their younger siblings, ensuring that they stayed on track with their school.
Other participants shared that caregiving roles and responsibilities also went beyond siblings in a few instances. For example, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some participants in our study were responsible for caretaking in regard to their parents’ health. Mixtli’s experience with her mother’s illness, caused her to shift her priorities,

I think towards the end, well, when my mom got sick, I did have to obviously take care a lot more. I wouldn’t attend a lot of classes, but I mean, I still managed to get my work in steady.

The caregiving role that she provided affected her ability to engage in learning and her schoolwork. The lack of resources available to Mixtli’s family caused her to prioritize taking care of her mother over attending class. As is evidenced in the narratives of our participants, their realities, roles, and responsibilities as members of a family unit were deeply impacted by COVID-19 and the ways in which the pandemic affected their families.

Stress and Mental Health

Across the stories shared by participants in this study, we learned that students experienced a heightened sense of stress because of the impacts that COVID-19 had on their schooling, families, communities, financial stability, and in many other contexts in their lives. In regard to feeling a heightened sense of fear because of the shift to an online learning environment, Mateo, a first year student, shared,

I would say very nerve-wracking and scary, because it was just very weird to have schooling online and especially going to a new school with new rules and so much more stuff that you need to know about. It just made it very hard, and I didn’t very much like it at all.

Similarly, other participants discussed how their motivation and ability to engage in schoolwork were affected because of quarantines and the online nature of experiencing their first year at their new institution. Carlos, a transfer student, stated,

I think one of the biggest challenges was motivation. Because then, trying to keep consistent with those feelings of feeling overwhelmed just to be in the same spot or location for a very long time.

As previously discussed, this sense of stress and overwhelm was not only related to school and online learning. For example, a significant contributor to students’ stress levels was the fear of contracting COVID-19 and the implications if that were to happen. Luna, a transfer student, shared that she lost family members because of the pandemic and was fearful that something similar would happen to her. She shared,

So I did feel kind of stressed. I wanted to do more, but my mom, she’s very protective over me. I do feel scared with being at high risk with COVID and due to everything, a lot
of my family members got COVID and we did lose some family members. I did get scared and my mom told me to stay home and to not work for right now because that would make me be more at high risk. I was the one that was really stressed. I was very scared of getting sick because before COVID, every year I would end up at the hospital because I would get pneumonia or lung infections. So I was really paranoid of going to the hospital and not being able to have my parents by my side. It really scared me.

The concern and fear of contracting COVID-19 was not only limited to the particular moment in time when participants were interviewed for this study. Participants also expressed their worries about the future and the lack of social responsibility that others were demonstrating, making them fearful for the future and the inevitable return to in-person learning. Mike expressed,

I think my biggest thing is I just don’t want people to get hurt more. You know, I hear stuff about fake vax cards and shit... Yeah, I’m vaxed and I feel safe going to campus and stuff. I feel bad for people who are maybe put in positions where they’re not able to get a vaccination yet... I think my biggest worry is that we open too soon. We have to close it all down again and it’s another year down the drain.

While Mike believed he did his part of protect others, he worried about others not doing the same and putting his peers at risk.

Other causes of heightened stress levels were the precarious financial situations that students and their families were experiencing. For example, Sara shared her and her family’s experiences,

We actually had to go all the way to [redacted city], just for my parents to sell mattresses. [it] was their way of income. It was hard just because, for food, we couldn’t find money for food, we couldn’t find money for our bills to pay or our house, especially. I think that was the biggest challenge.

As is evidenced by our participant’s voices, socio-emotional trauma is being compounded on the basis of financial precarity, housing and food insecurities, job loss, lack of mental health resources, increase in familial roles and responsibilities, and much more.

Throughout our conversations with students, we learned how COVID-19 and everything that came with it increased mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression. For example, Mixtli shared,

Obviously that is a problem within myself I need to focus on. My suite-mate did notice. I think there was a point in time where she would always ask if I was okay, texting if I ate yet or if I needed to eat. She was always one to be in the living room, but again, a lot of the time I couldn’t even get out of bed, so I would just lay there until like the night, or after classes, I would take naps, that’s why I was awake at 3:00 in the morning, which wasn’t the best. But she was still awake and she would always invite me out, take me out to eat, something like that. But again, I felt like I didn’t have a lot of energy to do so, and I would push her off a little bit.
In this quote, it is evident that Mixtli was dealing with severe depression while living in on-campus housing. After seeking mental health services, Mixtli was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, General Anxiety Disorder, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Some participants expressed that they also sought out mental health services during this time to support their mental, emotional, and physical wellness. Juan, a transfer student, expressed,

I was trying my best, but I was also struggling a lot. So I was going to a counselor psychologist. I was taking antidepressants because I was going through quite a bit and I was struggling because of it.

As evidenced by the participant’s stories, the mental health of college students was severely impacted by COVID-19 and its implication in several aspects of their lives. As institutions continue to resume in-person learning, it is imperative that students’ mental health needs and concerns are met to ensure their academic and personal well-being.

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of our study was not to generalize the experience of Latina/o/x college students, but rather, provide a glimpse into what the at-home experiences of students were during the pandemic. Through our usage of Critical Race Theory and Storytelling, we were intentional about validating the at-home experiences of Latina/o/x college students and giving students a voice to share their experiences. Given the historical marginalization of Latina/o/x students, we aimed to centralize their stories about their at-home experiences to the discourse of higher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). What emerged were vivid details of the at-home realities that Latina/o/x students experienced as a result of the pandemic that were shaped by race, class, and other social factors. More importantly, our study begins to paint a portrait of the pandemic’s toll on Latina/o/x college students, as many had to deal with shifting roles as caretakers, providers, and supporting younger siblings.

Drawing from our guiding theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, we know that the lives of People of Color are uniquely impacted by way of race, class, and other social positionings (Solórzano, 1998). Based on this understanding, we argue that experiences with living conditions, shifting familial responsibilities, and stress and mental health concerns are also racialized, classed, and gendered experiences for the Latina/o/x participants in our study. This is relevant in the study of higher education because it highlights the unique ways institutions of higher education can and should be tailoring support services for Latina/o/x students and other students from systemically marginalized backgrounds. It is also essential to consider the implications of these high levels of trauma that were present in students’ lives.

As institutions of higher education reconcile with the short and long-term impacts of COVID-19, it is vital to understand that students’ experiences in the home went beyond a simple shift from in-person learning to online learning. In other words,
returning to in-person learning across college campuses does not automatically eradicate existing housing, financial, and mental health issues and concerns, many of which existed prior to the pandemic. Therefore, it is critical to interrogate how institutions can be responsive to the high levels of trauma in their students’ lives and how that will manifest in the years to come.

As is evidenced in the emerging scholarship on the impacts of COVID-19, mental health was severely affected for many and exacerbated for those with pre-existing mental health conditions (Zimmermann et al., 2021). As colleges and universities aim to destigmatize mental health services and provide transitional support for students who are returning to in-person learning, it is important to understand what these mental health concerns were and the extent to which students experienced and continue to experience them, and how race and gender exacerbate them for marginalized students.

Institutional leaders need to think outside the box and ensure that faculty and student affairs staff are aware of how the pandemic transformed the at-home experiences of Latinas/os/x. We cannot resume business as usual, knowing that Latina/o/x students have not had a normal experience during the pandemic. Through the narratives of our participants and other students, we hope that institutions of higher education will create a space for students to discuss and find the support they need for the challenges that they are still experiencing as a result of the pandemic. More importantly, higher education institutions must acknowledge the pandemic’s toll and validate their students’ experiences.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD
Eligio Martinez, Jr https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3773-1371

References
Ahn, T., & Domínguez-Villegas, R. (2022) A change of plans: How the pandemic affected students of color and their plans for higher education. UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative. https://latino.ucla.edu/research/fact-sheet-education-covid/
Atske, S., & Perrin, A. (2021). Home broadband adoption, computer ownership vary by race, ethnicity in the U.S. Pew Research Center.
Bell, D. A. (1976). Serving two masters: Integration ideals and client interests in school desegregation litigation. The Yale Law Journal, 85(4), 470–516. https://doi.org/10.2307/795339
Bell, D. A. (1980). Shades of brown: New perspectives on school desegregation. Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
Bulman, G., & Fairlie, R. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 on community college enrollment and student success: Evidence from California administrative data. *Education Finance and Policy, 17*(4), 745–764.

Chapman, T. K., Contreras, F., & Martinez, E. (2018). African American parents and their high-achieving students: Issues of race, class, and community in the college choice process. *Journal of African American Studies, 22*(1), 31–48.

Chen, C. Y. C., Byrne, E., & Vélez, T. (2022). Impact of the 2020 pandemic of COVID-19 on Families with school-aged children in the United States: Roles of income level and race. *Journal of Family Issues, 43*(3), 719–740.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2022). Computers secured, connection still needed: Understanding how COVID-19-related remote schooling impacted Spanish-speaking mothers of emergent bilinguals with dis/abilities. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 21*(3), 224–238.

Covarrubias, R., Valle, I., Laiduc, G., & Azmitia, M. (2019). “You never become fully independent”: Family roles and independence in first-generation college students. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 34*(4), 381–410.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Delgado, R. (2006). Rodrigo’s roundelay: Hernandez v. Texas and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harv. CR-CLL Rev.*, 41, 23.

Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 22.

Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, J. (2012). Chicana/Latina testimonios: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical, and political. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(3), 363–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698149

Errisuriz, V. L., Villatoro, A. P., & McDaniel, M. D. (2022). Contextualizing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational experiences and outcomes of Latinx college students in Texas. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 21*(3), 319–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2022.2052294

Garcia, K. A. (2022). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the future generation of Latinx physicians. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 21*(3), 335–345. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2022.2051709

Garcia, M. A., Homan, P. A., García, C., & Brown, T. H. (2021). The color of COVID-19: Structural racism and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on older Black and Latinx adults. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B, 76*(3), e75–e80. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa114

Garcia-Louis, C., Hernandez, M., & Aldana-Ramirez, M. (2022). Latinx community college students and the (In) opportunities brought by COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 21*(3), 277–288.

Hayes-Bautista, D., Hernandez, G. D., & Hsu, P. (2021). *The first year of Latino COVID-19 deaths: Why should anyone care?* Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture.

Hayes-Bautista, D., & Hsu, P. (2020). *For whom the bell tolls: COVID-19 death patterns in California.* Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture.

Hernández, K., García, D., Nazario, P., Rios, M., & Domínguez-Villegas, R. (2021). *Latinas exiting the workforce: How the pandemic revealed historic disadvantages and heightened economic hardship.* UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative. https://latino.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Latinas-Exiting-the-Workforce.pdf
Hinojosa-Ojeda, R., Robinson, S., Domínguez-Villegas, R., Telles, E., Valenzuela, A., Jr., & Aguilar, J. (2020). Undocumented during COVID-19: Essential for the economy but excluded from relief. UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative. https://latino.ucla.edu/research/undocumented-during-covid-19-essential-for-the-economy-but-excluded-from-relief/

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. Teachers College Record, 97(1), 47–68.

Martínez, E., Barraza, E., & Paredes, A. D. (2022). Transitioning during a pandemic: Examining the institutional response to the COVID-19 pandemic for Latina/o/x first year and new transfer students. Journal of Latinos and Education, 21(3), 289–303. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2022.2052295

Martínez, M. E., Nodora, J. N., & Carvajal-Carmona, L. G. (2021). The dual pandemic of COVID-19 and systemic inequities in US Latino communities. Cancer, 127(10), 1548–1550. https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.33401

McClure, E. S., Vasudevan, P., Bailey, Z., Patel, S., & Robinson, W.R. (2020). Racial capitalism within public health—How occupational settings drive COVID-19 disparities. American Journal of Epidemiology, 189(11), 1244–1253. https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwaa126

Means, B., & Neisler, J., & with Langer Research Associates. (2020). Suddenly online: A national survey of undergraduates during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Digital Promise.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

Mshigeni, S., Arroyo-Romano, J., & Becerra, M. (2022). “We don’t all have the privilege of having our own quiet place”: College Students in a Hispanic Serving Institution during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Journal of Latinos and Education, 21, 251–265.

Ong, P., Gonzalez, S., Pech, C., Diaz, S., Ong, J., Ong, E., & Aguilar, J. (2020) Struggling to stay home: How COVID-19 shelter in place policies affect Los Angeles County’s Black and Latino Neighborhood. UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative. https://latino.ucla.edu/research/struggling-to-stay-home-how-covid-19-shelter-in-place-policies-affect-los-angeles-countys-black-and-latino-neighborhoods/

Protecting Immigrant Families. (2021). Immigrant eligibility for public programs during COVID-19. Retrieved May 1, 2022, from https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/immigrant-eligibility-for-public-programs-during-covid-19/

Puente, M. (2022). A critical race spatial analysis of rural Latinx students’ college (In)opportunities and conscious choices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Latinos and Education, 21(3), 304–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2022.2051040

Saldaña, J. (2013). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (2nd ed). SAGE.

Solórzano, D. G. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11(1), 121–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236926

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. Qualitative Inquiry, 8(1), 23–44.

Vargas, E. D., & Sanchez, G. R. (2020). COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on the economic well-being of Latino families. Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy, 3(4), 262–269.

Zimmermann, M., Bledsoe, C., & Papa, A. (2021). Initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college student mental health: A longitudinal examination of risk and protective factors. Psychiatry Research, 305, 114254.
Zottarelli, L. K., Moreno, A., Miranda, A., Xu, X., & Sunil, T. S. (2021). Basic needs initiatives at Texas community college Hispanic-serving institutions: changes in service offerings during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 46*(1–2), 138–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2021.1973611

**Author Biographies**

**Eligio Martinez,** Jr., Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Educational Leadership Department at Cal Poly Pomona. His research examines the experiences of boys and men of color throughout the educational pipeline. In particular, his research explores the transitions into higher education and experiences within the community college context.

**Ever Barraza** serves as the Associate Director for the Office of Undergraduate Research at Cal Poly Pomona. Dr. Barraza oversees HSI initiatives focused on increasing the educational attainment of minoritized and low-income students utilizing research and peer mentoring as interventions. His research focuses on critical and equity-minded leadership for Hispanic-serving Institution grant implementation.

**Audrey D. Paredes,** Ph.D. is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her work examines the heterogeneity Latinx/a/o students in higher education, specifically those enrolled in federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Additionally, she specializes in the use of Critical Race Theory and anti-colonial qualitative methodologies in educational research.