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Brokering Social Capital: A Qualitative Case Study On How A Hispanic Serving Institution Fosters Social Capital For First-Generation, Latinx, On-Campus Student Employees

Christian Corrales
University of Texas at El Paso

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BROKERING SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ON HOW A HISPANIC
SERVING INSTITUTION FOSTERS SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR FIRST-GENERATION,
LATINX, ON-CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYEES

CHRISTIAN CORRALES, M.Ed., B.S

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Administration

APPROVED:

Jesus Cisneros, Ph.D., Chair

Penelope Espinoza, Ph.D.

Angus Mungal, Ph.D.

Julia Duncheon, Ph.D.

Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.

Dean of the Graduate School

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by

Christian Corrales

2020

DEDICATION

To my children, Azeneth, Anasofia, Christian

and

To my lovely wife, Vanessa Serrano

BROKERING SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ON HOW A HISPANIC
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by

CHRISTIAN CORRALES, M.Ed., B.S

DISSERTATION

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The University of Texas at El Paso
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of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

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ABSTRACT

Around 80 percent of undergraduates enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions are employed (Carnevale et al., 2015; Kena, Musu-Gillette, Robinson, Wang, Rathbun, Zhang, & Velez, 2015). Research shows that student employment is one of the most critical activities that affects students' post-secondary experiences and decisions while enrolled (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna 2010; Riggert et al., 2006; Tinto, 1993). The present study aimed at understanding how employing organizations and workplace environments of first-generation Latinx on-campus student employees influenced their ability to build social capital and navigate through higher education.

A social capital lens was used to help understand student participants' work experience by drawing attention to their social relationships and networks in their workplace (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999). The theoretical framework was Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten first-generation Latinx undergraduate student employees and six full-time student employee supervisors. A deductive method to organize how student participants formed social capital was employed before the data were categorized into themes.

Data analysis from this study demonstrated how students' work environment helped form social capital and navigate higher education. This analysis led to identifying three major themes: (a) supportive environments; (b) on- and off-campus networks; and (c) enriching experiences through embedded networks. Findings suggest that students' supportive environments, interactions and networks, and enriching experiences brokered at their campus, contributed an intricate role to participants' social capital formation. This study offers implications for educational research and practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study	6
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
Key Findings on Student Employment.....	9
The role of the number of hours worked.	10
The role of employment location (off-campus vs. on-campus).....	13
The role of gaining work experience.	15
Summary on Student Employment	16
First-Generation Students	17
Latinx Students	18
Latinx Students and Hispanic Serving Institutions.....	18
Summary of the Literature	20
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	21
Social Capital Theory	22
Bourdieu (1986).....	22
Coleman (1988, 1990)	25
Differences Between Bourdieu and Coleman.....	26
Organizational Brokerage Theory.....	27
Brokerage.....	28
Organizational brokerage.....	29
Social and organizational tie formation.	29
Summary of Small’s (2009) Organizational Brokerage Theory.....	35
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	38
Qualitative Approach	38

Case Study	40
Context of Region.....	41
Context of Setting.....	42
Sample.....	44
Recruitment of Participants.....	44
Data Collection	45
Interviews.....	45
Freelist exercise.	47
Documents.	48
Data Analysis.....	48
Trustworthiness.....	49
Member Checking.....	49
Notes and Memos	50
Researcher Positionality.....	50
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	52
Context of On-Campus Employment at Border University.....	52
Students, Supervisors, and their Places of Work	53
Advising.....	54
Federal Grant Program.....	55
Academic Affairs	56
Student Affairs	58
Student Media	61
INTERVIEW RESULTS	64
The Workplace Fosters Supportive Environments	65
Transitioning to higher education.....	65
Sharing culutral bonds through work.....	69
Developing a sense of belonging through work.	70
Positive social interactions in the workplace	73
The Workplace Fosters On- and Off-campus Networking.....	78

Influential networks	81
Enriching Experiences Through Embedded Networks.....	89
Internships.....	89
Professional skills training.....	93
Early career experience.....	96
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISSCUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS	99
DISCUSSION.....	101
Supportive Environments and Trusting Relationships	102
On- and Off-Campus Networks.....	104
Enriching Experiences Through Embedded Networks.....	106
IMPLICATIONS	109
Implications for Research	109
Implications for Practice.....	114
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.....	117
REFERENCES	118
APPENDIX A: STUDENT RECRUITMENT SAMPLE E-MAIL SCRIPT.....	130
APPENDIX B: SUPERVISOR RECRUITMENT SAMPLE E-MAIL SCRIPT.....	132
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM	134
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	139
APPENDIX E: STUDENT EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW SAMPLE PROTOCOL.....	144
APPENDIX F: SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW SAMPLE PROTOCOL.....	147
VITA.....	149

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Historically, investing in a post-secondary education has proven a strong return on one's investment in terms of long-term financial stability (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Obtaining a higher education degree has never been more important (Carnevale, Rose & Cheah, 2011). Postsecondary education in America can increase both social mobility and earning potential over the years (Carnavale, Rose & Cheah, 2011; Long, 2010). According to the 2017 Bureau of Labor report, on average, higher education graduates with a bachelor's degree earned up to 65% more than those with only a high school diploma and 30% more than students with an associate's degree.

Aside from the monetary gain associated with earning a degree, higher education graduates tend to have a higher probability of being employed. Around 46% of the jobs in America require a bachelor's degree (Bureau of Labor, 2017), and unemployment rates are much lower for those with a higher education degree. The Georgetown Public Policy Institute on job growth reported that, by 2020, 65% of all jobs in the United States will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013).

Additionally, there are benefits to higher education beyond earning more money and employment. For example, research shows that participation in higher education brings a range of non-economic benefits for individuals and society (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011; King, 2006; Perna 2010). According to Carnavale et al. (2011), individuals who graduated from higher education were more likely among other things to have better health and have a longer life expectancy than those who had not graduated from higher education. The main reason for this was because graduates were more likely to be employed and could afford health care. Also,

individuals who attended higher education were more likely to have increased involvement in society (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016).

Ma et al.'s (2016) study stated that society benefited from participation in higher education in the form of greater social cohesion, trust and tolerance, less crime, political stability, greater social mobility, and greater social capital. Social capital is defined as the resources that existed within social networks and how people accessed them and put them to use (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001). According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is conceptualized as the interactions and relationships that exist between people. Coleman (1988) argued that social capital was a resource dependent on context and activities used by people to achieve desired ends.

Earning a post-secondary degree offers numerous benefits; however, recent trends shows that the cost of attending higher education in the United States continue to increase (Carnavale, et al., 2011; Huelsman, 2018; Ma, Baum, Pender, & Bell, 2017). Three significant issues contribute to this problem: higher tuition costs, increases in student loan debt, and decreases in state and government funding for higher education. Meanwhile, higher education institutions have experienced an increase in enrollment of nontraditional students, such as first-generation¹, Latinx students², who research shows struggle to afford a post-secondary education (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Santiago, 2013).

¹ First-generation generation students are defined as students whose parents never attended higher education (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998) or completed a post-secondary degree (Thayer, 2000).

² The term Latinx is used as a gender-neutral identifier of individuals of Latin American descent (Salinas & Lozano, 2017).

First, national trends show that tuition had risen at public two-year and four-year institutions (Huelsman, 2018). Between 2007-2008 and 2017-2018, average tuition fees increased by 30% at public four-year institutions (Ma et al., 2017). In fact, since the 1980s, tuition and fees grew more rapidly than consumer prices (Kulm & Cramer, 2006). Consequently, the cost of attending higher education has risen three times as fast as the median family household income (Huelsman, 2018). Therefore, more families shouldered a more significant percentage of the financial costs of higher education than before (Eagan, Lozano, Hurtado, & Case, 2013).

Second, the increase in higher education costs are directly reflected in the percentage of increased student loan debt. In order to pay for the increased tuition, many students take out student loans. Research shows that students have borrowed more than ever before to finance their post-secondary education (Abel & Deitz, 2014; Avery & Turner, 2012); and student loan debts are at an all-time high (Abel & Deitz, 2014; Huelsman, 2018). Borrowing to finance tuition has been increasing over the years—more than quadrupling since the early 1990s (Avery & Turner, 2012). Student loan debt is 85 percent higher among recent graduates who took on debt while attending public four-year institutions, than among graduates from a decade ago (Huelsman, 2018). At \$1.4 trillion in loans outstanding, student debt is now the second-largest source of household debt, after housing (Abel & Deitz, 2014; Scott-Clayton, 2018).

Third, while tuition has been rapidly increasing, and students have been acquiring more debt, state appropriations to fund public higher education institutions have been declining. State funding for higher education has not kept pace with the rising costs of educating students or the ability of states to fund higher education (Weerts, 2014). The decline in state funding has forced public higher education institutions to increase tuition for students. Such decreases in state

funding are especially concerning, considering that more students are expected to enroll in colleges and universities (Carnavale, et al., 2013; Huelsman, 2018; Ma et al., 2016). More students are expected to enroll in higher education because of the aforementioned benefits, but most importantly because current and future career opportunities would require a post-secondary degree. (Carnavale, et al., 2011; Long, 2010).

Higher education has become harder to afford at a time when more students from underrepresented backgrounds, such as first-generation Latinx students, are trying to enroll. Research shows that a third of all undergraduates in the United States are first-generation students (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018). Many first-generation Latinx students view higher education as a way to get a better job and create opportunities that were not available or pursued by their parents (Santiago, 2013; Santiago, Calderón Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). Moreover, many first-generation Latinx students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and often need additional financial support to help pay for higher education and to support their families (Cataldi et al., 2018; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

Therefore, the rise in higher education costs makes it harder for first-generation Latinx students to pay tuition. Collectively, these trends help explain why students are seeking alternative methods, like student employment, to afford a post-secondary education and have led to more students having to work while enrolled (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015; Fede, Gorman, & Cimini, 2018; Mamiseishvili, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna, 2010; Yeh, 2010).

Student employment has become a fundamental part of the higher education experience for many undergraduate students (Perna, 2010). As stated by Riggert et al. (2006), “Student employment... is an educational fact of life” (p. 64). Around 80 percent of undergraduates

enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions are employed (Carnevale et al., 2015; Kena, Musu-Gillette, Robinson, Wang, Rathbun, Zhang, & Velez, 2015). According to a 2011 U.S. Census survey, 14,184,000 undergraduate students worked while enrolled in higher education (Aud & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2013).

In light of rising tuition and other expenses associated with attending higher education, many students must work while enrolled to help defray the costs of attaining a degree (Elling & Elling, 2000; King, 2006; Perna 2010). According to Kuh (2009), nearly half of the undergraduates who worked while attending higher education described themselves as working to meet their expenses. In most cases, employment provided the financial resources that many students required to enroll and stay enrolled. Not only was the average higher education student employed, but they also worked a substantial number of hours, and more students were working full-time (Perna, 2010; Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2008).

Some students elected to work long hours, combined with part-time enrollment, to reduce or avoid debt. Subsequently, those students depended on the money earned from their student employment to meet their basic living and study expenses (Callendar, 2008; King, 2006; Perna, 2010). Consequently, according to King (2006), student employment could decrease the student's likelihood of degree completion by reducing the time available for academic work and the amount of time needed to complete degree requirements. Given these potential negative impacts of work, this trend of students needing to work while enrolled is alarming.

Statement of the Problem

Although working could have benefits (Nunez & Sansone, 2016), first-generation Latinx students who worked were, on average, at higher risk for failure and attrition (Callender, 2008; Cataldi et al., 2018, Mamiseishvili, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna, 2010, Yeh,

2010). Thus, student employment was one of the most critical activities that affected students' post-secondary experiences and decisions while enrolled (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna 2010; Riggert et al., 2006; Tinto, 1993). Although some attention has been focused on the implications of student employment for traditional higher education students, the role of work for first-generation Latinx student employees is less clear (Cataldi et al., 2018; Mamiseishvili, 2010; Nunez & Sansone, 2016; Yeh, 2010; Ziskin, Torres, Hossler, & Gross, 2010). In the words of Salisbury et al. (2012), "If higher education institutions intend to enroll, educate, and graduate all students equally successfully, it is critical to develop a clear and thoroughly nuanced understanding of the effects of work on full-time undergraduates across the broad landscape of postsecondary education" (p. 3).

More specifically, Perna (2010) suggested that non-financial outcomes of student employment should be explored. She stated that, given the blend of personal and economic pressures that drive students to work, future research should "consider ways to transform employment into an experience that can enhance students' intellectual and personal development" (p. 33). Student employment, Perna (2010) said, needs to be conceptualized as an experience that benefits students' educational and career outcomes. Therefore, studies are needed that focus on improving the quality of students' employment experiences and support services to enable working students to navigate and graduate from higher education (Perna, Cooper, & Li, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of social capital formation among first-generation Latinx student employees, and identify how employing practices at a four-year, public Hispanic Serving Institution located on the U.S.-Mexico border supported

student workers. Specifically, this study aimed to understand how students' work environment and their relationships with student employee supervisors influenced how first-generation Latinx student employees formed social capital and navigated through higher education. Access to social capital is highly correlated with first-generation Latinx students having more meaningful experiences in higher education (Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). Having social capital is particularly important to first-generation Latinx students because it gives them access to information that guides them through higher education. Yet, student employment is traditionally excluded from research exploring social capital formation in higher education among first-generation Latinx students (Nunez & Sansone, 2016). For this reason, the primary research question that guided this study is as follows: How do employing organizations at Border University influence first-generation Latinx on-campus student employees' ability to form social capital and navigate through higher education?

Using a social capital perspective is helpful for understanding on-campus student employees' work environments. Social capital theory focuses on people, their interactions, network development, and the resources embedded in social relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999). Mario Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory argues that what people gain from their networks depends on the organization in which these relationships are embedded. Small's perspective, in this sense, will be utilized to examine social capital formation among first-generation, Latinx, on-campus student employees. Organizational brokerage offers an organizational context perspective on how student employees' workplaces offered social capital opportunities for students. As Kuh (2009) argued, "Working on campus could become a developmentally powerful experience for more students if...professionals who

supervise a student in their place of employment intentionally created conditions that characterize optimal learning opportunities” (p. 698).

The organization of this dissertation is as follows: In chapter two, I provided an accumulation of the literature about student employment, Latinx first-generation students, and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). I also introduce the theoretical framework of this study, which is grounded in social capital theory and Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory. In chapter three, I propose the methodology on how this study's data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four describes the findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 offers a discussion and implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review was divided into several sections. First, I provide a brief outline of key findings on student employment in higher education. Then, I offer a synthesis of the current research surrounding student employment that highlights the following: 1) the number of hours worked matter regarding student outcomes; 2) employment location (on-campus vs. off-campus) influences student outcomes, and 3) additional benefits of student employment. Next, I briefly review the current research on Latinx first-generation students, which focuses on literature that connect Latinx first-generation students to student employment. Finally, given that my study looks at Latinx first-generation student employees who attend and work in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), I examine HSI's literature focused on research that shows how HSIs impact Latinx first-generation students.

Key Findings on Student Employment

An extensive body of literature has considered the effects of employment on students' overall post-secondary experiences. The majority of the research studies have used quantitative methods to examine the relationship of working to student outcomes, most frequently examining the number of hours worked per week, financial need, and work location (on or off-campus). A few qualitative studies have addressed how students describe the effects of work on their higher education experiences. Given the mounting pressures from higher education institutions to demonstrate successful student outcomes, higher education professionals and faculty members have recognized the influence of work on students' academic outcomes such as performance (GPA) and completion of a bachelors' degree (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Cheng & Alcantar, 2007; Fjortorft, 1995).

Researchers have learned that the relationship between student employment and student outcomes such as academic performance or campus engagement is neither simple nor consistent (Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2008; Riggert et al., 2006). The literature shows a mixed picture of the relationship between work and academic outcomes, but fails to find the consistency between the two (Perna, 2010; Pike et al., 2008). In some studies, student employment demonstrated an adverse effect on academic progress and showed that working students had lower grade point averages (GPA) than those students who did not work (Elling & Elling, 2000; Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2003). Other studies showed the complete opposite (Light, 2004; Kuh, 2009). Riggert et al. (2006) summarized the debate surrounding the impact of student employment: “Overall, the empirical literature on student employment is marked by diversity and contradiction...these studies have done little to create a systematic understanding of work and higher education relationships” (p. 69).

Despite inconclusive evidence, researchers who explored the relationship between work and student outcomes found that employment did impact students’ post-secondary experiences and academic trajectories (Astin, 1993; Beeson & Wessel, 2000; Elling & Elling, 2000; Kuh, 2009; Lundberg, 2004; Mamiseishvili, 2010; Perna, 2010; Pike et al., 2008). Generally, these studies found that the number of hours worked, and where students work (on-campus or off-campus), could have an impact on students’ academic performance, persistence, and engagement with their campus. In what follows, I discuss the role of hours worked and work location. Throughout, I highlight the implications for students’ outcomes. I then highlight a third potential effect of employment, as identified in the literature, which pertain to gaining work experience.

The role of the number of hours worked. In previous literature, the average student was working a substantial number of hours (Perna, 2010; Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2008).

However, findings on the number of hours students worked, and the effects on their academic performance and persistence were mixed. Some scholars argued that the amount of hours students spent at a job interfered with the amount of time for studying, participating in extracurricular opportunities, and socializing with their peers (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Riggert et al., 2006). Other research found that moderate amounts of work (10-19 hours) had a positive effect on student employees' academic persistence (Beeson & Wessel, 2002).

There was a sizable body of research on the effects and the impact of student employment on academic performance, time to degree, and retention (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Bozick, 2007; Dundes & Marx, 2006; Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Mamiseishvili, 2010). Some research, such as Light's (2004) longitudinal study concluded that there was no significant relationship between the number of hours worked and academic outcomes. "Students who work a lot, a little, or not at all show similar patterns of grades or persistence" (p. 27). However, many studies regarding student employment and academic outcomes, such as performance (GPA) or time to degree (persistence) and retention, among higher education students, suggested that the amount of time spent working either can hinder (Elling & Elling, 2000) or promote (Dundes & Marx, 2006) the student's academic trajectories.

For example, researchers have consistently found that working more than 20 hours per week while attending higher education full-time has adverse effects on academic performance and diminishes the likelihood and prolongs the completion of earning a degree (Astin, 1993; King, 2006; Stinebricker & Stinebricker, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005; Perna, 2010). Tinto (1993) stated that working over 15 hours limited a student's ability to become academically and socially integrated into the campus, thereby weakening a student's commitment to the institution

and degree completion. Consequently, the likelihood of the student leaving the institution before completing their degree was increased. For example, the time students spent at a job took them away from chances to participate in extracurricular opportunities that would integrate them into the campus (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Riggert et al., 2006). Accordingly, in a study by Nunez and Sansone (2016), students expressed that time spent working sometimes interfered with the amount of time from studying and socializing.

On the other hand, Dundes and Marx (2006) found that students working 10-19 hours per week had higher grades than a student who did not work. Their study suggests that students who work, prioritize and structure themselves more productively. Moreover, their research showed that working students learned how to balance and prioritize their time, which was critical to their educational success. Similarly, Beeson and Wessel's (2002) study discovered that when first-year students started working right away, their persistence was higher and showed that working students had higher graduation rates than their non-working peers. In contrast, Elling and Elling (2000) found that working below 15 hours or more than 19 hours had neither a positive or negative effect on academic performance or persistence.

Mamiseishvili (2010) found that when working students perceived higher education as a priority and saw the job as relevant or beneficial to their academic interest or career goal, it yielded a positive effect on students' academic pursuits, regardless of how much they worked or where they worked. On-campus work in moderation (15-19 hours) appeared to be the consistent finding among the literature of yielding positive outcomes in terms of academic performance, persistence, and graduation (Astin, 1993; Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Bozick, 2007; Elling & Elling, 2000; Lundberg, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, for student employment to play a decisive role in students' academic trajectory, the entire institution had to be involved

(Astin, 1993; Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Bozick, 2007; Kuh, 2009; Mamiseishvilli, 2010; Tinto, 1993). Therefore, it is critical that colleges and universities help students balance the number of hours they work, plus, separate the competing roles of being a student and an employee.

The role of employment location (off-campus vs. on-campus). In addition to the number of hours worked, existing literature suggests that where a student works (on or off-campus) can contribute significantly toward their post-secondary experience and academic outcomes (Beeson & Wessel, 2002). Similar to the research addressing the number of hours worked and its effect on student outcomes, the findings varied depending on whether the student worked on-campus or off-campus. Research has consistently demonstrated that working off-campus is associated with lower levels of academic and campus engagement and in turn, lower academic achievement (Kuh, 2009; Yeh, 2010; Lundberg, 2004; Astin, 1993). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2004), for example, argue that working off-campus has negative consequences for students' educational experiences.

Spending time off-campus working could restrict the availability of time for engaging in educational activities such as studying for classes or meeting with faculty (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Elling and Elling (2000) found that students who worked off-campus were less connected to their institution. Their study showed that students who worked off-campus had a difficult time balancing life away from campus and being engaged on campus. In a different study, Nunez and Sansone (2016) found that students who worked off-campus spent more time traveling to and from work, and were more likely to forfeit other activities to meet off-campus work commitments. However, students who worked off-campus often got paid more; therefore, students with severe financial need found that they had to work off-campus because of the pay (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007).

In contrast, the literature on student employment has consistently demonstrated that on-campus employment could motivate students to increase their investment of time and effort in their educational endeavors, as they make connections between the classroom and their work environment (Kuh, 2009; Kuh et al., 2011; Cheng & Alcantara, 2007). Astin (1993) speculated that the positive effects of on-campus work were related to the potential for a student's time spent on campus, which could enhance their engagement in campus life. Subsequently, on-campus employment has been positively associated with academic outcomes (Astin, 1993; Yeh, 2010). Research shows that students who worked on-campus were more likely to make connections with faculty and staff, which had been positively associated with higher student engagement, connectedness to campus, and degree completion (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005; Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1993).

Aside from academic outcomes, on-campus work can also increase student engagement. Many studies of working students were based on a framework outlined by Tinto (1993), who suggested that student success was part of a function of students' ability to engage and form strong academic and social connections with their institution. Tinto's (1993) framework looked at the effect of work on student involvement in co-curricular activities, peer interaction, and engagement (Elling & Elling, 2000; McCormick et al., 2010; Salisbury et al., 2012). Kuh (2009) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) similarly found that students who worked on campus participated in higher levels of engagement across each of the National Survey of Student Engagement benchmarks. Specifically, on-campus jobs provided opportunities for students to engage themselves on campus while developing relationships with people who could help them be successful in higher education (Astin, 1993; Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Kuh, 2009; Mamiseishvili, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Another study showed that

students who worked on-campus reported gains in interpersonal competence, decision-making, and time management (Kuh et al., 2011), which students attributed to their on-campus employment.

Moreover, Cheng and Alcantara (2007), found that students preferred to work on-campus because of the convenience. Furthermore, a qualitative study by Nunez and Sansone (2016) found that students employed on-campus perceived their positions to positively influence their higher education experiences, through enhanced friendships, skills, and career development. This body of work is significant because it shows that more universities are focused on identifying ways to engage students in and out of the classroom (Kuh, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2011; McCormick, Moore, & Kuh; 2010). However, most student engagement programs within higher education neglect to consider student employment as a possible area for engagement (Kuh, 2009; Kuh et al. 2011). Creating more meaningful opportunities for working on-campus could help students intergrate to their institution as well as develop skills that could be applicable towards their careers (Tinto, 1993; Elling & Elling, 2000; Kuh, 2009; McCormick et al. 2010; Salisbury et al., 2012).

The role of gaining work experience. A third key finding, from the literature on student employment was the potential advantage of work experience. Gaining work experience was an essential factor in students' decision to work. Undergraduate student employees used employment opportunities to explore career options (Perna, 2010). Through the opportunity to integrate the experiences of work and school, students could align their interests and abilities with careers that utilized those skills and matched their interests (Salisbury et al., 2012). Employment provided the student with the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills, self-reliance, relationship management, and organizational skills. In Nunez and Sansone's (2016)

study, participants stated that working helped them with their time management skills as well as with developing relationships and contacts that helped them navigate successfully within their work environment.

Students and employers considered it essential to have some work experience on their resumes by the time they graduated (Fede et al., 2018; Perna, 2010). Students hoped to utilize their work experience to further their academic and career aspirations. Employers valued work experience over academics; it demonstrated that those students with work experience were prepared to work, showed self-motivation and self-discipline, and, on average, earned more than their non-working peers after graduation (Curtis & Williams, 2002). Establishing a body of work experience was essential to new graduates' ability to obtain employment after they graduated. Having a post-secondary degree was no longer enough to ensure success post-graduation, and students were increasingly expected to gain work experience in order to have a competitive edge over other graduates (Fede et al., 2018; Perna, 2010; Salisbury et al., 2012)

Summary on Student Employment

To summarize, work had become an expected part of life for many higher education students in the United States and abroad. I noted that the research on student employment had shown three main themes. First, working more than 20 hours per week could negatively affect students' engagement on campus and with educational endeavors. Second, working on-campus yielded better academic and personal outcomes than off-campus work. While off-campus jobs pulled students away from campus, on-campus jobs conveyed greater benefits as they tended to limit hours worked and channel student time and energy toward activities that deepened learning, engagement, and self-efficacy (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Yeh, 2010).

Student employment facilitated the students' integration into campus life (Kuh, 2009; Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), while off-campus employment physically removed students from campus, and thus negatively influenced their connection to the institution (Elling & Elling, 2000; Lundberg, 2004). Third, work experience could help students gain skills for their future careers. There has been a limited amount of student employment research focused on first-generation Latinx student employment experiences. However, with so many of them working more to pay for spiraling higher education costs, and many devoting a considerable amount of time to work, it is essential to draw focus on understanding this student demographic and their workplace experiences further (Cataldi, et. al., 2018, Mamiseishvili, 2010; Kuh, 2009; Kuh, et. al., 2011; Nunez & Sansone, 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna, 2010; Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005; Yeh, 2010).

First-Generation Students

According to Cataldi et al. (2018), approximately 33% of students enrolled in higher education in the United States are first-generation students. Though the definition of first-generation students differs among researchers, Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) identified first-generation students as those whose parents never attended higher education. Similarly, Thayer (2000) defines first-generation students as those whose parents never earned a higher education degree. For the purpose of this study, I used Thayer's (2000) definition to describe first-generation students. First-generation students tend to be older, female, Latinx, low socioeconomic status, from large families, and employed full-time at a higher rate than their non-first-generation classmates (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Furthermore, Thayer (2000) and Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) pointed out that most first-generation students have other obligations when enrolled in higher education, such as caring for younger siblings.

Latinx Students

Latinx is a growing demographic in the United States and currently the largest population of ethnic minority students enrolled in U.S. higher education (Nuñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vazquez, 2013). The term Latinx is used as a gender-neutral identifier of individuals of Latin American descent (Salinas & Lozano, 2017). A recent report found that the rate of Latinx students enrolled in higher education after graduating from high school is at 62%, which increased about 10 percent over the last twenty years (Kena et al., 2016). Unfortunately, this student demographic also had the lowest educational completion rates of any racial/ethnic group (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). According to Krogstad (2016), merely 15% of Latinx people in the United States between the ages of 25-29 have earned a bachelor's degree. This percentage is drastically low when compared to White Americans, whose degree attainment is around 41%. Across all types of institutions, a national study found that the six-year graduation rate for full-time Latinx undergraduates was equal to 53% , but lagged behind White students (63%) (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Nonetheless, Latinx have increased their share of bachelor's degree attainment from 1.9 million in 2004 to 4.7 million in 2015 (Santiago, Calderón Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Higher education remains and is undoubtedly an aspirational goal for most Latinx students to help achieve upward social mobility (Krogstad & Flores, 2016). The data supports that there is more work that needs to be done to close the educational attainment gap between Latinxs and other students in the United States.

Latinx Students and Hispanic Serving Institutions

Higher education enrollment of Latinx students has increased, primarily due to increases in the proportion of Latinxs in the United States (Garcia, 2017; Nunez, Crisp, & Elizondo; 2016). Consistent with the growing number of Latinx students, is the growing number of institutions in

the United States classified as Hispanic-serving. Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined as accredited, degree-granting two-year and four-year institutions with at least 25 percent enrollment of Latinx undergraduate students (Excelencia in Education, 2019; Garcia, 2017; Núñez, Hurtado, & Calderón Galdeano, 2015). HSIs enroll large numbers of first-generation students and play a critical role for Latinx populations and their success in attaining a post-secondary degree (Cataldi et al., 2018; Garcia, 2013; Garcia, & Okhidoi, 2015; Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2016). Research shows that many Latinx students begin their path toward higher education at an HSI (Nuñez & Bowers, 2011; Nuñez & Elizondo, 2012; Santiago et al., 2015). Over the last ten years (2007-2017), the number of HSIs has almost doubled, growing from 264 to 523 (Excelencia in Education, 2019).

HSIs in America are throughout 27 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, representing 17% of all institutions of higher education (Excelencia in Education, 2019). The majority of HSIs (69%) are within four states and territories in the United States: California (170), Texas (94), Puerto Rico (63), and New York (34). The proportions of HSIs that are 2-year or 4-year are roughly the same: 46% and 53%, respectively. Among 4-year HSIs, 25% are public institutions and 28% are private institutions (Excelencia in Education, 2019). HSIs are essential points of access to higher education as they enroll 66% Latinx students (Excelencia in Education, 2019). Subsequently, HSIs serve massive proportions of low-income, first-generation students (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015; Núñez, Hurtado, Calderón-Galdeano, 2015), many of whom work while enrolled in higher education (Nunez & Sansone, 2016). HSIs were responsible for conferring a large portion of the degrees awarded to Latinx students in the United States (Garcia, 2013), which suggests that HSIs and the type of institutional resources available students, play a role in not just the enrollment of first-generation Latinx students, but in their success in higher

education. However, it is unclear how, and to what extent, HSIs serve Latinx students according to Garcia and Okhidoi (2015). Therefore, studies that draw from first-generation Latinx students' perspectives and their experiences at HSIs, such as the present study, aimed to contribute to the existing gap in student employment research.

Summary of the Literature

Of note, the majority of the literature that focuses on student employment has prioritized students from predominantly white institutions and residential campuses. Few studies focus on non-traditional universities such as HSIs and commuter campuses, which tend to serve more first-generation working students (Nunez & Sansone, 2016). There are several impacts resultant from employment both on- or off-campus for first-generation students (Cataldi et al., 2018; Cheng & Alcantar, 2007; Mamiseishvili, 2010). First-generation students tend to work more hours (McCormick, Moore, & Kuh, 2010), make work a priority over school (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998), work off-campus (Engle & Tinto, 2008), and are significantly less engaged with the campus community (Cheng & Alcantar, 2007), as compared to students with parents who have earned a higher education degree.

As more Latinx students enter postsecondary education, the role that HSIs play on advancing the degree attainment of first-generation Latinx students in the United States will also increase (Nuñez, 2015; Santiago, Andrade, & Brown, 2004). With 328 emerging HSIs in the United States (Excelencia in Education, 2019), it is essential to understand how a Hispanic-serving institution, as an employer, can support and contribute to first-generation Latinx students' working experiences and postsecondary trajectories. Derous and Ryan (2008) and

Mamiseishvili (2010) suggested that a student's perceptions of their work, social orientation towards work, and their work relationships are far better indicators of a student's

academic pursuits and engagement on campus, regardless of how much they work or where they work. Furthermore, they stated that it was essential to understand what opportunities existed for the university to structure student employment so that Latinx first-generation students received the most out of their higher education experience. Social capital and organizational brokerage theories could support this line of inquiry by considering how on-campus employment could promote social capital formation through the brokerage of relationships in students' workplace (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Small, 2009).

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study intended to gain a better understanding of how work environments and relationships impacted how first-generation Latinx student employees developed social capital and navigated through higher education. In this study, I draw from social capital theory to help understand the workplace experiences of student workers by placing attention to their social relationships and networks. Social capital theory is specifically used to explore how first-generation Latinx student employees drew upon or acquired the necessary capital (e.g., knowledge, relationships, skills) to navigate higher education (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). In the following section, I provide a brief synthesis on social capital theory, focusing on two theorists: Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988, 1990), followed by Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory.

Organizational brokerage was the theoretical framework upon which the present study, its primary research question, and interview protocol were guided. Important to note was that extensive scholarly work on social capital exists and has been reviewed. Social capital theories such as Lin's (2001) and Putman's (2000) were considered as possible frameworks, but I eventually decided on using Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory for this study.

Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory was used to build on traditional social capital frameworks to uncover how employing organizations fostered networks by and for student employees who work on-campus. Specifically, Small (2009) challenges social capital theory by proposing new assumptions about where social capital comes from and how people acquire it. Organizational brokerage theory shifts the focus to the organization, rather than to the person, to show how organizations offer individuals opportunities to develop and attain social capital.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital was defined as the resources that existed within social networks and how people accessed them and put them to use (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988, 1990). It had to do with the interactions and relationships that existed between people. Coleman (1988) argued that social capital was a resource dependent on context and activities, used by people to achieve desired ends. The seminal work by Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988, 1990) were among the most cited in educational research. While these researchers may not agree with all of each other's claims about social capital theory, each of their contributions to the social capital literature is fundamental to understanding the process of social capital formation among first-generation Latinx student employees.

Bourdieu (1986)

Bourdieu defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 21). It means building reliable, useful social networks, and networks that are trustworthy. From those networks, people can obtain opportunities and advantages in society (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu argued that all human action takes place within the societal structures in which people associate. Bourdieu (1986) further

claimed that someone's social capital is influenced not only by the size of one's network but also by that individual's ability to mobilize and leverage the social capital possessed by those to whom one is connected. In other words, social capital is the mutually beneficial resource accessed by individuals as a result of their membership in a social network. Thus, it is not just who you know, but also who your connections know.

Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as having a group benefit, with the added nuance that social resources embedded in social relations served the purpose of creating and reproducing an unfair type of advantage. Put simply, social capital was accessed and accrued by an individual as a result of membership in a social network and could exist somewhat like a cause and effect relationship. However, one of Bourdieu's (1986) fundamental assertions regarding social capital was rooted in the inequities in which social class played a significant factor towards social capital attainment.

He argued that those within higher social class circles had access to resource-rich social capital networks; whereas those who were poor, did not. Wealthy people, through their networks, had certain access to resources whereas poverty-stricken people did not. For example, specific industries like Wall-Street appealed to wealthy and affluent investors who through their contacts in the industry knew where to invest and make more money. On the other hand, not only did poor people not have access to these individuals in Wall-Street, but they also did not have the excess financial capital to invest, because they lived in poverty.

It is worth mentioning that, per Bourdieu, there is a very specific process in how capital is produced. Social reproduction theory, according to Bourdieu, relates to the social processes in which people produce capital. Bourdieu (1986) viewed capital as economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. Economic capital had to do with money and assets, such as property. Cultural capital

focused on cultural goods and services which can include education. Social capital had to do with the acquaintances and networks possessed by an individual. Finally, symbolic capital focused on the legitimization of capital. Capital, as a general term, is best understood as the amount of capital individuals possess, the factors that compose one's capital, and the capacity of the capital to help individuals transcend their positions in society (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital shapes people in how they live and interact with society.

There could be difficulty in conceptualizing Bourdieu's (1986) theory as it relates to higher education because of its many overlapping components, as well as often cited (Stanton-Salazar 1995, 1997, 2011; Yosso, 2005) social inequities that exist in higher education. The basic "capital" argument from scholars such as Stanton-Salazar (1997) and Yosso (2005), was that Stanton-Salazar described how higher education can at times lack equality and promotion of capital opportunity and differential access to capital among minority students. Yosso (2005) challenged Bourdieu's limited scope used to describe assets and resources that were valued in society.

Involvement, integration, and engagement are all observable actions that stem from the acquisition of capital and socialization into cultural systems such as higher education. It is worth noting that the different forms of capital often interact and overlap with one another. Bourdieu's relational framework offered a perspective to help understand how individuals come across capital within organizations, such as higher education. Bourdieu (1986) concluded by stating that one's network is produced and reproduced through continuous social interactions requiring considerable time and energy (labor)—with the hope of establishing deep, lasting relationships. Therefore, one's network did not merely exist; it was developed and fostered over time.

Coleman (1988, 1990)

Coleman (1988) defined social capital as existing inside the “structure of relations between actors and among actors” (p. 98). Coleman identified social capital as relations that brought about social action. Like Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988, 1990) believed that social capital resided in the ties between people. Moreover, he considered having relationships with others as a social form of “capital” because those ties contained resources. In Coleman’s view, social capital took on different forms that were characterized by two parts: First, that social capital existed within social structures, and second, that social capital enabled actors within social structures to take action (Coleman 1990). He also viewed social capital as a resource in and of itself. Coleman (1988) outlined three different forms of social capital: obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms.

According to Coleman (1988), obligations occurred as a mutual exchange that characterized the relationship between two or more individuals. A benefit of social networks was through the favors and obligations that existed, which provided mutual acts of kindness and help between and among members of a social network. To illustrate this concept, consider the following scenario of two individuals. Individual A picked up a working shift for individual B, because of an individual emergency Individual B needed to attend to. As a result of the social network that existed between the two individuals, and the favor that had been performed, it was explicitly or implicitly expected that individual B would eventually return the favor in some form to individual A. Therefore, this interaction established an expectation in Individual A and an obligation on the part of Individual B. For Coleman (1988, 1990), trust was an essential building block of social capital in how members of a society believed that obligations must and should be adhered to. In order for the example above to have worked, trust needed to be established

between both individuals engaged in the action. The higher the degree of social capital, the greater the degree of trust among members.

Social capital also laid in what Coleman (1988) called “information channels.” These referred to the relations that help people find and collect information, which was essential and provided a basis for action. For example, a student seeking employment on-campus had a friend who worked on-campus. Their connection gave the one seeking employment “knowledge” of how to apply for a job and/or potentially a connection to someone within their friend network who was looking to hire a student employee. In that instance, the social tie became an information channel and gave the employment seeker access and knowledge. While there was no real obligation, those relations could be mutually beneficial in that they provide information that could later influence or lead to action.

Coleman (1988) also considered social norms as providing social capital. He referred to the shared expectations of behavior for any given social circumstance. According to Coleman (1990), social norms “specified what actions were regarded by a set of persons as proper or correct, or improper and incorrect” (p. 243). In other words, social norms were informal rules that governed behavior and motivated people on how to act in groups and societies. Such norms, according to Coleman (1988), were necessary among groups, organizations, communities, and societies to encourage people to help one another. “A prescriptive norm within a collectivity that constituted an especially important form of social capital, was the norm that one should forgo self-interest and act in the interests of the collectivity” (p.104). Generally, that meant people would act selflessly in the interest of others if that was the community’s expectation; like working for the public good.

Differences Between Bourdieu and Coleman.

One key difference between Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988; 1990) in their views on social capital was that for Coleman, social capital attainment was accessible to all individuals. Coleman placed the individual within a structure of networks that informed peoples' relations, and thus their social capital. Contributions by individuals would benefit the collective. Like Coleman, Bourdieu (1986) acknowledged the importance of social networks, and at the same time, recognized that how these networks came to affect individuals, was not equal because of differential access to all forms of capital. Bourdieu (1986) took inequality into account much more than Coleman (1988; 1990). According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital increased integration within certain groups but also reproduced social inequality. So, merely having a network or belonging to an organization did not mean that everyone shared the same access to resources as another.

Organizational Brokerage Theory

The research using traditional social capital theory in higher education was robust. However, traditional social capital theorists have been critiqued for neglecting to explain how people, more importantly students, form social capital. More recent social capital scholarship by Mario Small (2009), challenges researchers to look at "how do people make the social ties that provide access to resources and the processes from which ties arise" (p. 8). Small (2009) argued that in a theory of network, where social ties are useful and seem to be advantageous for people to do better, it is important to understand why some have more ties than others and how these ties were formed. Small offered an alternative proposal to social capital in which he asked how people made connections and claimed that the answer laid within the organizations in which people participated in daily.

Also, Small argued that organizations could effectively create social capital for individuals even when they did not intentionally act to create it; organizations could improve an individual's access to resources, information, and social ties. Small (2009) offered an approach to social capital, not merely to personal networks which had been addressed by Bourdieu (1986) of potentially favoring those of affluent backgrounds, but also to the relationship between networks and inequality. "Like most social capital theory, the perspective looked for the roots of inequality in personal ties, but asked where those ties were embedded—and probed the consequences of this embeddedness" (p. 190).

Unlike traditional social capital theorists, Mario Small (2009) focused on how individuals formed and sustained social ties within organizations. Small posited that social capital formation should no longer be conceptualized as an individual action. Instead, he proposed that the "organizational contexts in which individuals participate affect social capital formation, including whether a person makes ties; what kind of ties are made; whether resources in those ties are available to the person, and how those resources are acquired" (p. 17). Moreover, how much people gained from their connections depended substantially on institutional conditions and everyday processes that people often did not control and may not even be aware of. Understanding the supports and barriers surrounding on-campus student employment required a focus not only on student employees but also, and perhaps more importantly, on the students' workplace that structured their work experiences and the individuals that controlled these experiences (Allard & Small, 2013; Small, 2009).

Brokerage. Theoretically, brokerage was one of a small number of mechanisms by which individuals (or groups) could interact economically, politically, and socially (Stovel & Shaw, 2012). In other words, when people—and occasionally organizations—make

introductions, help us find jobs, advocate on our behalf, or make sense of the world for us, they act as brokers. Without such acts of brokerage, Stovel and Shaw (2012) claimed that societies would all live much narrower and, in many respects, more underprivileged lives.

Organizational brokerage. Different from social capital theories that focus directly on individual relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988, 1990), Small (2009) suggested that what people gain from their relationship networks depends upon the organization in which these relationships are embedded. Small argued that organizations create a source of social capital. The number and kind of interactions that individuals have with others are primarily affected by their organizations. Organizations function as connectors or brokers.

Broadly speaking, “Brokerage is the process of connecting actors in systems of social, economic, or political relations in order to facilitate access to valued resources” (Stovel & Shaw, 2012, p. 141). Brokers, whether individual actors or organizations, bridge a gap in obtaining social capital by connecting resources, information, opportunities, or knowledge. Small (2009) defined organizational brokerage specifically as “the general process by which an organization connects an individual to another individual, to another organization, or to the resources they contain” (p. 19).

Social and organizational tie formation. Small identified two kinds of social capital ties. The first were social ties, or connections that individuals had to other individuals within the organization. In the case of on-campus student employment, these were the ties that a student employee had with their colleagues or supervisor. The second type of ties were connections to organizations. Small (2009) referred to these as organizational ties. Organizational ties could be conveyed as accessing the resources of an organization within the organization’s network. For

example, a student employee could be connected to a career development program that partnered with the institution.

According to Small, organizational brokerage could be realized at the individual level, through encounters and engagement with peers and supervisors; and at the organizational level, through institutional student employment policies or mandated training. As examples, on an individual level, a student employee's supervisor may connect a student to a career counselor to help explore his or her career options, while at the organizational level, the university may bring career exploration opportunities through a career fair so that the student explore his or her interest further. Thus, both the student supervisor and the university engaged in brokering activities, "which together comprised the organization's contribution to students' social capital acquisition" (Duncheon & Relles, 2018, p. 6).

Organizations broker social ties for people in many different ways (Duncheon & Relles, 2018). Organizations that foster purposeful, regular, and ongoing interactions nurture meaningful relationships. In turn, individuals gain more capital when they are connected to other people and can utilize other people's resources. These relationships become useful networks of support, which can lead to the collecting and sharing of resources. Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory rests on three principles: (1) that actors form ties either purposely or nonpurposely; (2) forming ties depends on the context of social interactions; and (3) context of interaction can be shaped significantly by organizations (p. 11).

Social capital theory literature suggests that people invest in networks with hopes of acquiring social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; 1990). Such action, according to Small (2009), is considered a purposive action. A purposive action is usually motivated by an objective that involves action and a purpose. For example, if a student is looking for a job (objective), the

student must request a job application (act) in order to apply for the job (purpose) (Small, 2009, p. 11). By contrast, a nonpurposive act has no conscious objective. Regardless of one's purpose or lack thereof, Small (2009) stated that people form social ties as a result of four types of action. The first is when the purpose of one's action is to make a tie.

This type of action could be commonly seen at conferences or social networking events. The action involves introducing oneself to make a connection or gain access to an individual's resources. In the second type, the purpose of the action is to achieve some other objective besides forming a social tie. This action could be explained through the following. A doctoral student signs up for a dissertation writing seminar and, in this seminar, consequently meets other doctoral students. In this case, the student's purpose was to get help with his or her writing; however, meeting other doctoral students in the seminar resulted in building social capital. In the third type of action, an actor forms a tie when their action had no purpose other than itself. This action happens unintentionally and primarily in an informal situation. For instance, a student employee listening to a conversation between their supervisor and a colleague sparks a reaction (e.g., laughter or gasp).

Though the student's reaction had no purpose, the reaction could potentially trigger the student's supervisor to have a direct conversation with the student. Fourth, an actor could form a tie when the action had no purpose whatsoever because the action resulted from preexisting dispositions. For this, Small (2009) referred to someone saying "bless you" after someone sneezes, which is often said out of habit. A similar action to this is seen when someone holds the door open for someone else. In most cases, this habitual action initiates a social response. Though nonpurposive, such habitual action, in both cases, can lead to unexpected social ties resulting from social interactions from strangers. This example of nonpurposive, unintentional

brokered connections challenges the traditional framing of social capital theory, where theorists assume that people develop social ties on purpose. In this case, Small (2009) conveyed that ties among people sometimes happen accidentally when a person is not trying.

Because social ties could form purposively or nonpurposively, to understand how individuals form social capital, one must know about the context of the individual's social interaction (Small, 2009). First, Small asserted that "social ties depend on whether actors interact at all—that is, on the availability of opportunities to interact with strangers" (p. 13). Meaning that the root of building relationships depended in the opportunities people had to interact with one another. Next, Small (2009) stated that creating ties with others depends on "how actors interact with others; how long they interact, how frequently, how intensely, and while performing what activity" (p. 14). Among these concepts, how frequently and while performing what activity has shown to be necessary for people becoming closer and more likely to trust each other. In the case of students working on-campus, Small (2009) suggested that when coworkers encounter each other repeatedly, they become increasingly likely to develop strong social ties. Nevertheless, essential to note here is that making ties also depends on "how" individuals interact with each other. Small acknowledged that not all interactions produced new ties in equal measure.

Lastly, "the formation of social ties depends on the conditions under which people interact" (p. 14). Here, Small was referring to the degree of competitiveness and the degree of cooperation. When the interaction is competitive, engaged individuals are competing over a particular resource. For instance, if a professor offers an internship opportunity to his students in his class over the summer, though all students in the class have a chance to the opportunity offered by the professor (access to capital), competition among peers may arise as to who will

get it. According to Small (2009), competition makes opponents of people, undermining trust and the formation of ties.

On the other hand, in a cooperative interaction, those involved may work together to achieve an outcome. For example, when students are asked to work in groups on projects, not everyone knows each other. However, their social interactions and collaborations in working together to complete their project contributes to their social capital formation. In summary, where a student works and what opportunities exist to create ties, can determine the nature of the work environment as being competitive or cooperative. For example, if a student works in a competitive environment such as a sales job at a cell phone store which is based on commission, the relationships within the workplace and the chances of tie formation may be limited because employees are competing over customers.

The opposite could be said in a cooperative work environment. In cooperative workplaces, those within the organization work together to accomplish a collective goal. An excellent example of this can be seen at non-for profit organizations. In most cases, those working at non-profits tend to coordinate and find a way to work together towards the organization's mission. Put simply, individuals are more likely to form ties when they are not competitors, and when they have reason to cooperate (Small, 2009). Applying these three concepts can be useful in understanding the organizational context, workplace relationships, and social capital formation experienced by on-campus student workers.

Furthermore, Small (2009) addressed that organizations shape context of interaction. This concept regards to how individuals engage with one another within the organizations in which they participate. An organization is referred to as both, "the individuals who compose the organization and the institutional practices that organize their behavior" (Small, 2009, p. 15). In

this case, the organization involves the student employee's place of employment. The individuals who compose the organization could be the supervisor or department director, and the institutional practices that organize behavior could be the institution's mission or policies. Both the specific workplace (e.g., department employing the student) and university are relevant organizational contexts that attribute to students' tie formation. Also important to note, according to Small (2009), is that an organization's actors "influence tie formation to the extent that they determine how people interact" (p. 15). Using my example from above, a student's supervisor could ask their student employees to introduce themselves when greeting new people who come into their workplace.

Small (2009) additionally addressed two types of institutional practices which shape the context of interactions: normative and cognitive. *Normative* institutional practices are referred to as embedded norms within an organization that govern social relationships. An example of this in a student's workplace is when an office requires a dress code. Mandating a particular attire informs the students how they should look in the workplace, which can influence their behavior around their coworkers and superiors. *Cognitive* practices "shape the individual's perception of their circumstances" (p. 16). For instance, a student employee perceives a co-worker's action or remember actions that they have performed, like greeting people in the office or answering the office phone. In summary, Small (2009) claimed that the organizational context under which people engage in, were shaped by both the individuals and the institutional practices that exist within the organization. Therefore, organizations were likely to influence the social capital formation and its access among participants.

Networks in Small's (2009) work also represent a critical component of social capital, but he again highlights the importance of organizational context. A network is defined as "a group of

actors who are connected through a set of different relations or ties” (Daly, 2015, p. 4).

Collective resources increase when networks include people who have access to other people, goods, and services. Inherent within network connections are the members’ responsibilities to help others in the network, especially if they have been helped already (Daly, 2015). Reciprocity becomes expected, and an individual’s social capital increases due to assistance from existing members (Coleman, 1998; Small, 2009). In the case of student employment, the more resources a student employee’s network has, the better the student does in navigating, and the greater their social capital. All of the connections, information, and goods possessed by all the actors in the network comprise each others’ overall social capital.

Small (2009) studied child-care centers’ networks of parents and employees. His study showed that being connected to other parents in the child-care center proved advantageous for mothers. Networks available through the child-care centers possessed a significant amount of social capital and created access to many collective resources. Small (2009) noted that the frequency and nature of interactions that individuals had with others were fundamentally affected by their organizations. Organizations that focused on purposeful, regular, and ongoing interactions could establish meaningful relationships. In turn, these relationships became channels towards an individual’s social capital formation.

Summary of Small’s (2009) Organizational Brokerage Theory

To reiterate, Small’s emphasis on organizations shifted the attention away from individual relationships as noted by traditional social capital theorists, and towards the organizational context and its processes to generate social capital opportunities for individuals. An important characteristic of organizational brokerage is that some interactions or resources brokered by the organization are not always actively pursued by the individuals involved within

the organization. By this notion, “organizational brokerage theory introduces the possibility of acquiring resources while exercising little agency in the process” (Small, 2009, p. 155). The notion that brokerage intercedes agency is relevant to student employment, given that working could help student employees acquire professional skills as well as develop relationships and contacts. This notion could lead students to navigate successfully within their work environment and the university (Nunez & Sansone, 2016).

In the present study, Small’s (2009) organizational brokerage theory was used to investigate social capital formation among first-generation Latinx student employees and identify how employing organizations at a Hispanic Serving Institution supported student workers; specifically, how students’ work environment helped student employees’ build social capital, network, and navigate through their higher education. Small (2009) called attention to the student’s work environment to help institutions understand how a student’s workplace could support or impede student employees’ social capital formation.

For example, a student employee’s supervisor’s willingness to share their contacts to help the student could not only enhance their professional network, but also influence the student’s social capital. The supervisor is an actor in the student employee's network, but when the supervisor shares his or her network with the student, such as inviting the student to participate in a professional development training or introducing the student to a colleague who is seeking student volunteers, the supervisor (actor) is contributing to the student’s individual social capital.

Small’s (2009) perspective on social capital and organizational brokerage theory could help examine how educational institutions, workplace environments, and student employee supervisors shape how students develop social capital from their on-campus student employment. By calling attention to everyday interaction and organizational contexts, Small’s

(2009) embeddedness perspective brings to light the cumulative effects of those participating within the organization.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The key to high-quality research is a study's research design. A research design is the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions (Creswell, 2013). There are many decisions a researcher must make when deciding on the best approach for his or her research design, but perhaps the most fundamental is whether to engage in quantitative or qualitative methods. The number and types of methods of inquiry available to educational researchers are plentiful. The difficulty lies in determining which approach is best suited to address one's topic of interest. My focus was on on-campus student employment, first-generation Latinx students, and HSIs. Specifically, I was interested in understanding how student employees formed social capital through the relationships and networks that existed within their employing organization. More importantly, I was interested in investigating how student employees' employing organization, either helped or hindered, their ability to make those connections and get resources from their relationships or networks. A qualitative study was best-suited because I was interested in the processes of brokerage and the process of social capital formation among student employees.

Qualitative Approach

As discussed in chapter two, most research on student employment has been quantitative with a focus on institutions where the majority of the student populations rarely use first-generation Latinx students in their studies. The body of research on student employment consists of looking at outcomes associated with the number of hours worked, place of employment, and its correlation to GPA, retention rates, and other student success outcomes. Few studies seek to understand students' working experiences at HSIs or look beyond the number of hours worked,

or location of employment to determine how student employment specifically influences first-generation Latinx students.

Qualitative research can be useful to unpack these nuances beyond these previously used indicators. Qualitative research provides greater context and more in-depth insight into human behavior (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) and generates data through observations, interviews, and personal experience (Yin, 2015). Also, qualitative data collection and analysis focus on participants as they describe their experiences (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). In education, qualitative research provides greater insight into complex interactions between students and the environment (Brown, Stevens, Troiano & Schneider, 2002). Qualitative research was appropriate for this area of study because the focus was on the process in which students perceived and experienced the complex social phenomenon of social capital formation within their student employment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Additionally, this study aimed to understand the processes of how student employees' work environments brokered relationships and resources, and how social capital influenced students' higher education trajectories. I also believe that those in higher education, too often, do not listen to their students. Higher education research tends to measure student characteristics, track student success, and evaluate their abilities, but often does not to listen to their personal experiences. Approaching my research qualitatively, provided the liberty for the participants to express themselves in their own words emphasizing lived and personal experiences.

Therefore, I employed a qualitative case study design to examine the phenomenon of on-campus student employment at an HSI and investigated social capital formation among first-generation Latinx student employees. Specifically, I identified how employing organizations at a Hispanic Serving Institution located on the U.S.-Mexico border supported student workers—and

how Border University, as an employer, helped student employees' build social capital, build their professional network, and navigate through higher education.

Case Study

To build upon the work of Small (2009), a qualitative case study was the best means to examine how the institution brokered social capital for student workers. "A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system like a program, event, activity, a process of one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2015, p. 465). Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detail information using a variety of data collection procedures over a period of time. Furthermore, "case" or "cases" can be situated with their larger context, such as geographical, political, social or economic settings" (Creswell, 2015, p. 466). Case study research enables the examination of complex social phenomena by looking closely at the details (Yin, 2017). A case study design becomes an option when the researcher seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions.

Case study research also provides an effective platform to review contemporary issues in which researchers possess little or no control. When a case study is employed correctly, it becomes a valuable method for researchers to develop theory, evaluate programs, and create interventions. Yin (2017) argued that the case study method remains a useful tool to investigate contemporary phenomena in a real-world context. Qualitative case study methodology also provides tools for researchers to understand a particular phenomenon exhibited in multiple occurrences or a specific context (Creswell, 2015).

Any useful research study should delineate the context, culture, and population being examined (Creswell, 2015). Understanding the site necessitates a thorough understanding of the U.S.-Mexico border. For too many years there has been a tendency by many researchers to

devalue the experiences and knowledge of individuals working, living, and learning on the border of the United States and Mexico (Staudt & Coronado, 2016). The particular border where the proposed site was situated is one of the most impoverished and most under-educated areas of the country.

Context of Region

Unique issues arise from being located in a border area, including language, poverty, and cultural differences. For many of these same reasons, there are limited opportunities for students in this region. As one of the only institutions of higher education in the area, Border University pulls the majority of its student population directly from the local region. Its geographic isolation has limited Border University's ability to attract students from other metropolitan areas. This has resulted in having a campus where many of the students have similar characteristics. The majority of the student population speaks both English and Spanish, is Hispanic, and is often the first in their family to attend a university. The demographics of Border University, therefore, mirror the demographics of the city in which the site university is located.

As this area has grown in size, many have failed to recognize the growing influence that individuals from the border area are having on the policy, politics, and population of the United States (Staudt & Coronado, 2016). At an institution of higher education situated on the U.S.-Mexico border, the student population exists in an environment where multiple cultures meet and interact daily. Given the unique characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border, a border context likely has implications for student employment outcomes and students' higher education trajectories in higher education. Most research on student employment has taken place at predominantly white institutions (Nunez & Sansone, 2016). A border context provides a research context that is

majority-minority, which likely influences students' educational and employment experiences (Staudt & Coronado, 2016).

Context of Setting

The site for this study was a public, four-year, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) located on the Mexican-U.S. border. Since its inception, Border University has played a significant role in providing educational opportunities for the Latinx population. The school is an accredited four-year institution and is a major urban research university in the heart of an international, binational metropolis of nearly 2.5 million inhabitants. Border University commits itself to provide quality higher education to a diverse student population. Classified as a Carnegie Doctoral/Research-Intensive University, the university continues to extend educational access to a region that had been geographically isolated, with limited economic and educational opportunities for many of its people (Border University, 2019). As a research/doctoral institution, Border University fosters a climate of scholarly inquiry, with a particular focus on applying innovative interdisciplinary approaches to explore and address issues that confronted the multicultural, U.S.-Mexico border region.

Border University envisions capitalizing on its bi-national location to create and maintain multicultural, inter-American educational, and research collaborations among students, faculty, institutions, and industries. Border University embraces its role as an intellectual, cultural, and socioeconomic asset to the region, offering programs to meet human resource needs and contribute to the quality of life of its students. The university's mission of ensuring access is coupled with a commitment to excellence reflected in academic programs and processes that prepared students to make significant contributions to their professions, their communities, and the world (Border University, 2019). The accomplishment of its mission and goals through

continuous improvement of educational processes and programs, enabled Border University to aspire to be a national leader in a changing economic, technological, and social environment: a new model for American public research universities.

Border University is one of the few major research universities in the country whose students are predominantly Latinx, specifically Mexican American. The university's student population closely mirrors the demographics of the region, from which Border University draws more than 90% of its students—80% are Hispanic; 4.8% are Mexican Nationals, most of whom commute daily across the international boundary from Mexico. With the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S., Border University gained recognition for its innovative teaching methods and programs designed to help post-traditional students succeed.

Border University's faculty members are teachers as well as researchers, mentors, civic leaders, and activists. The university employs more than 1,000 full- and part-time faculty committed to fostering the academic achievement and aspirations of their students. Border University has one of the highest percentages of minority faculty among major universities in the United States—over 40%. Border University has 1,510 non-faculty staff members (professional, technical, clerical, skilled, and service) and 297 administrative and professional staff members (executive, administrative, and managerial). Hispanics comprise 78.5% of non-faculty staff and 56.2% of administrative and professional staff (Border University, 2019).

This particular institution was chosen in part because of its location, but also because of the large number of first-generation Latinx students it enrolled. It was also selected because the majority of students enrolled at this university (72%) worked at least part-time on, and off-campus (Border University, 2019). Of those 72% working students, this institution employed close to 3,500 student employees on-campus across 90 different university departments. Taking

both context and site into consideration, this site was an ideal place to look at student employment and situate this case study accordingly.

Sample

This qualitative study relied on purposeful sampling. This study included a total of 16 participants, 10 of which were student employees, and 6 were student employee supervisors. Selection criteria for each student employee participant included enrolled undergraduate students who were sophomores, juniors, or seniors, Latinx, first-generation, and employed on-campus at least one year. Participation from student employee supervisors included individuals that worked as full-time staff, directly supervised student employees, and whose office paid students using institutional funding. I decided that participants in research or grant-funded positions were to be excluded from this study. The reason for this criteria was that research- or grant-funded student employment positions were not often directly supervised by a faculty or staff member; they were often supervised by a graduate student. For this study, I sought to interview student employee supervisors that had direct oversight over the daily functions of their student employees in the workplace.

Recruitment of Participants

Both student and supervisor participants were recruited via an email that was sent to student employees (See Appendix A) and student employee supervisors (See Appendix B). A total of one-hundred sixty students were emailed using a data base offered from the Office of Student Affairs. These student employees were participants of Border University's annual Student Worker Training program. Twenty-three student employee supervisors were emailed using the same database that was used for student participants, since these supervisors were the ones who sponsored their students on the training. Interested and eligible participants contacted

the researcher to receive information regarding the overall purpose of the project, including informed consent documents, time commitments, and interview schedules.

Forty students responded, of which eighteen met the sample criteria; of the student employee supervisors, ten responded. Participants who met the study criteria, and who expressed an interest in participating in the study, were provided with an informed consent form via email, ahead of scheduling an interview (See Appendix C and D). Participants had the opportunity to thoroughly review the consent form before signing up for an interview. A total of fourteen undergraduate Latinx first-generation student employee participants, and nine full-time student employee staff, agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Qualitative case studies involve the collection of data without changing the environment to reveal patterns and connections (Yin, 2015). Data collection techniques for this study included interviews, written freelist exercises, and document analysis (Bernard, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

Interviews. Interviews are a qualitative method used to gain insight into participants' perspectives on the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to collect data which provided the researcher with the flexibility to ask open-ended questions, respond to the respondent's perspective, and draw new ideas on the research topic from the respondent's responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the use of these interviews offered interviewees with the opportunity to illustrate questions that disclosed personal insight related to their on-campus student employment experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In a study of student workers, it was useful to conduct one-on-one interviews with all students and their employers in the sample.

All study participants were provided with an overview of the study, as well as an informed consent letter prior to their interview. The interview dates were set up according to the participant's availability. All of the interviews took place in the researcher's office. Prior to the interview, the researcher reviewed the consent form with the participants, had participants sign the informed consent forms, and provided a copy for participants to keep. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts of all interviews were transcribed with Otter.ai, a transcription software tool used to transcribe audio transcript using artificial intelligence (ai) technology.

A total of 10 student participants were interviewed. Interviews took anywhere between 45 to 80 minutes of the participants' time. Interview questions for student employees focused on their perspectives pertaining to their work experiences and work environment. Questions for student employee participants were designed to elicit information about how participants perceived their on-campus student employment experience and were centered on their relationship with their supervisors. They also focused on recognizing the social supports and resources embedded within their place of employment, and how they contributed to their social capital formation. Sample questions included: (1) Share with me the resources, support, or advice you have encountered in your place of employment. (2) How has your student employment experience at Border University been influenced by the people you have met through work? The student interview protocol is included in Appendix E.

A total of 6 student employee supervisors were interviewed. Interviews with student employee supervisors took between 50 to 80 minutes. Interview questions for student employee supervisors were centered around their relationship with their student employees and organizational context supporting student employment. Specifically, the questions focused on

supervisors explaining the type of support systems available to students such as training, mentoring, and evaluation that existed or lacked in their place of employment. Such questions were designed to solicit responses that could offer insight of how the students' place of employment offered opportunities for them to foster social capital. Sample questions included: (1) How, if at all, do you see on-campus student employment as introducing students into a profession's culture? What skills are student employees learning? (2) What, if any, types of feedback do you provide to your student employees? Why is this important for student employees? The student employee supervisor protocol is included in Appendix F.

Freelist exercise. A freelist exercise is a mental inventory of items an individual thinks about, regarding a given category and writes them down on a piece of paper. Freelist was used to reveal cultural "salience" of particular notions within groups, and variation in individuals' relevant knowledge of the explored topic across groups (Bernard, 2017). Freelist helped introduce a simple way to engage the participants to think about their experiences towards student employment. Freelist helped the researcher define concepts, get an understanding of variances in opinion, and identify perceptions surrounding the research topic. Every participant was asked to partake in a freelist activity. The freelist activity was completed before the interview protocol commenced. Participants were given a piece of paper and a pen, and were instructed to jot down phrases or words that came to mind when hearing the word "on-campus student employment". Participants were given as much time necessary to complete the task. Participants took anywhere between 40 seconds to three minutes to complete. The words and phrases that were shared offered the research insight on how participants viewed on-campus employment.

Documents. Lastly, documents were used and served the researcher as a source of background information to gather a better understanding about the site and participants in this study (Creswell, 2015). Having access to a variety of documents pertaining to student employment at Border University became useful. Documents collected by the researcher consisted of public and private records. Documents included: student employee handbooks, institutional policies, and digital documents such as websites about on-campus student employment at Border University. The purpose for collecting and reviewing these documents was to provide the researcher with the historical and current context of the site under study, uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to on-campus student employment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Reviewing student employee handbooks, policies, and websites, provided the researcher with an understanding on how the Border University embedded and offered social capital formation opportunities to its student employees. All of this data is public and accessible.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of separating aggregated data into smaller segments of meaning (unit of data) for close consideration, reflection, and interpretation (Saldaña, 2016). Data analysis is a complex process of making meaning that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, description and interpretation. The practical goal of data analysis is to find answers to the study's research questions. The "constant comparative" method was an analytical technique used in this qualitative study (Glasser & Strauss, 2017). It involved going back and forth between the data to inductively identify and describe patterns therein, relative to answering the study's research question.

Data analysis began during data collection and transcription, with notes and memos written concurrently (Saldana, 2015). Interview transcripts were coded. Coding can be described as the “critical link” between data collection and their explanation of meaning (Charmaz, 2001). Qualitative data were coded using two operations. First, open and closed coding was used to reduce the raw data into categories based on valid inferences and interpretations (Saldaña, 2015). Next, category sets were established to help form themes (Saldana, 2016). The data coding for this research involved an iterative process. The process included the development of preset codes, the identification of emergent codes, and the refining of all codes to achieve finalized themes (Saldaña, 2016).

Trustworthiness

Merriam and Tisdale (2016) suggested that the interpretation of data in qualitative research involves an act of articulation. In other words, accuracy in reporting remained a crucial component of qualitative research. Proper results in a case study require the triangulation of information (Yin, 2017). Triangulation involved the use of multiple sources to gain an accurate picture of the phenomenon in question (Yin, 2015). For example, obtaining different forms of data through interviews, freelist exercise, and documents supported triangulation. The credibility of this study also came from the methodological triangulation used to gather the data: member checks, notes ,and analytical memos (Saldaña, 2015). Data resulted from using interview data from two sources (i.e., student employees and student employee supervisors) on the same topic.

Member Checking. Data analysis began with conducting member checks of the interview transcripts. The sixteen semi-structured interviews occurred during the months of October through December of 2019. Research participants received a copy of their interview transcriptions in a word document and were asked to review their transcripts to check for

accuracy and validation. The process of member checking was used to increase the study's credibility and proved to be an effective process; all but four participants emailed back saying they had no substantive changes or contributions to add to the transcript. There were two student participants who did not respond because they graduated, and two supervisors who did not respond because they were no longer employed at the university at the time.

Notes and Memos. Analytical memos were used as well to reflect and expound the data, which helped identify emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions in the data. Coding and analytic memo writing were concurrent qualitative data analytic activities used, for there is a “reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon” (Weston et al., 2001, p. 397). The researcher jotted notes, journaled personal memos, and reviewed recordings of the interviews to capture verbatim comments and accurate responses from the study participants. Throughout the interviews, emerging ideas were captured and follow-up questions were asked via email to ensure clarity and understanding. The researcher noted the sixteen study participants seemed actively engaged during the interviews. All participants were eager to share their perceptions of on-campus student employment.

Researcher Positionality

As Director of On-Campus Student Employment at the university where I conducted the research, I have a personal and professional investment in learning how students perceive their work experiences and how employing departments broker social networks, resources, and opportunities for student employees. The topic of student employment was particularly important to me because of my positionality. As a former first-generation Latinx student employee, and student employee supervisor at Border University, a layer of familiarity and empathy was

integrated with the data analysis. Through this study, I want to be able to provide a framework for higher education to support first-generation Latinx student employees, so they may have enriching experiences in their workplace. To avoid personal bias in my findings, I employed reflective journaling throughout the study. To become aware of my own biases, values, and assumptions (Delamont, 2016), I reflected on my own experiences and wrote them down. I also made a note of any emotional reaction to what a participant said. It was essential for me to make a note of such incidents because it helped me identify how I might be influencing the data, based on my own opinion. A limitation of this study was that the sample group were a self-selected group. Meaning that most participants were self-motivated and incurred constructive work experiences. This led for them to want to share their story and participate in this study. Also, as the Director of Student Employment, participants might have felt the need to share positive outcomes tied to their on-campus student employment. I hope that the findings from this study of student employment help explain to university administrators and student employee supervisors how on-campus student employment environments shape students' access to networks and resources. Furthermore, this research illustrates that understanding social capital formation among student employees, requires a focus not only on student employees but, and perhaps more importantly, on the students' workplace that structures their work experiences and the individuals who control these experiences (Small, 2009).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings for the study. The chapter includes three sections. The first section describes the context of the phenomenon of student employment at Border University. This section utilizes data made available through Border University's Quality Enhancement Plan. Also, institutional documents such as employment guidelines, policies, websites, were used to discover insights related to on-campus student employment. The second section of the chapter presents a brief description of each of the departments where the participants were employed, plus profile summaries of the student and student employee supervisor participants in the study. This section drew upon each participants' free list exercise that took place at the beginning of each interview. The freelist exercise offered an understanding of how participants viewed and thought about on-campus student employment. A brief participant summary from the freelist exercise, describes participants' on-campus student employment perceptions at Border University. The final section of the chapter present themes drawn from the data collected through semi-structured interviews with on-campus student employees and their student employee supervisors.

Context of On-Campus Employment at Border University

Working through college is a proud tradition at Border University. In fall 2019, more than 3,500 students were employed by Border University. The university saw its student employees as essential contributors to its workforce. Border University prides itself on supporting its student employees and strives to provide a platform for students to build fundamental skills that will help them throughout their careers (Border University, 2019). Document data showed that Border University offered on-campus student employees with year round professional developmet opportunities. Trainings included an annual Student Worker

Training workshop, mid and yearly performance evaluations, professional development that includes resume and interview services offered by the University Career Center, plus professional support through mentorship opportunities.

Document data from past Student Worker Training program agendas indicated that Border University focused on its student employees developing essential transferable skills like time management, customer service, communication, and leadership skills. Another goal of the university was to offer its student employees with flexible work schedules. Every hiring department worked around students class schedules and other commitments; this was a critical layer of support that students often cannot find in off-campus jobs.

As part of this institution's new quality enhancement plan, Border University identified on-campus student employment as one of ten "high-impact" practices to enhance student success experiences. A campus-wide investment with an asset-based philosophy for change, student employment is administered as an interconnected experience that helps students identify and apply their strengths while making contributions to their workplace. On-campus student employment is widely recognized across this university as a strategic priority with a focus on advancing student learning.

Students, Supervisors, and their Places of Work

Participants who participated in the study provided plenteous data on their perceptions of on-campus student employment, which was presented during their free list exercise and semi-structured interviews. The student participants are identified throughout the study as Amanda, Ana, Alexa, Carlos, Daniela, Eduardo, Eli, Laura, Olga, and Pamela. The supervisors are recognized throughout the study as Catherine, Imelda, Larry, Sergio, Sylvia, and Terri. A summary offered from the participant freelist exercise of where the participants worked and their

perception towards on-campus student employment at Border University is presented in the proceeding paragraphs.

Advising. The advising office at Border University supported undergraduate students through holistic, comprehensive, and post graduation advising services. The office employed advisors, administrators, support staff, and students dedicated to providing guidance and support to students as they entered and made their way through the university.

Imelda, a full-time staff member, worked and supervised ten student employees in Advising. Imelda worked for three years as a student employee and five as a staff member in the same department. She described her role as being challenging but playing to her strengths. She talked about the importance of training her student employees and how these pieces of training helped students build skills that would help them in their jobs and their future. “Working in our office gives you access. Access to knowledge and training that help you with customer service and problem-solving. These skills are important for our students because we deal with a lot of situations in our office that deal with people and things that people want to be done.”

Olga, a biology major senior, was introduced to working on-campus by her older sister. Olga has worked in Advising, as Imelda’s student employee for two years. Olga saw how working on-campus helped her sister shape her professional decisions. Therefore, she decided to work at the same place of employment as her sister and follow in her footsteps. As a peer advisor, Olga assisted students with basic advising services which included reviewing of documents and helping them apply for enriching opportunities on and off-campus. Olga shared that working alongside professionals offered her many opportunities to grow as a student. “There are a lot of opportunities, I know, for example, my supervisor always asks—are you feeling challenged, is there something new that you want to do here, or how can we help you further

develop. Within student employment, there is an opportunity to grow. So as far as your supervisors, they want you to develop, not only in your professional development but personal as well.”

Federal Grant Program. This Federal Grant Program is part of the Federal TRIO programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. This office employed four professional staff and ten student employees. The office assisted and supported first-generation students enrolled in their program with academic and personal support services such as tutoring, peer mentoring, leadership, and personal development workshops.

Catherine, a full-time staff member, had worked for this federal grant program for two years and supervised ten student employees. Collectively, Catherine had worked at Border University for six years. Catherine shared that her experience working with student employees reminded her of her time working at the same university and reflected on how networking as a student employee introduced her to a career in higher education. “I was also a student employee. Therefore, I try to present my student employees with opportunities, opportunities such as networking. Networking is so important because it connects you to resources, resources that can open up doors that you never knew existed.”

Alexa, a mechanical engineer junior, had been a student employee under the supervision of Catherine for two years in the same federal grant program department at the university in this study. She had served in three different student roles in her office. At the time of this study, Alexa was a peer mentor. Alexa felt that her job as a peer mentor played to her strengths and allowed her to do what she did best, which was teach. Alexa saw working on-campus as an opportunity to learn and grow every day from people she interacted with at work. "Working on

campus helps you be able to learn how to deal with people, different people from different backgrounds.”

Carlos, a mechanical engineer senior, who graduated the semester the interview was completed, was employed in the same federal grant program department as Alexa, but only worked with her for two years of the four years he had been there. Catherine served as Chris supervisor for all four years. Similar to Alexa, Carlos had served as a tutor and peer mentor. Carlos took great pride in who he was as a first-generation college student and credited working on campus with helping him be a better student. “As a first-generation student, who had to figure all these things out; to know what kind of things to expect from my classes, and my professors; it helped me greatly knowing that I can count on the advice and guidance from a supportive group of people at work to help me better myself and to complete my degree.”

Eli, a biomedical major senior, had been working at Border University for three years, but only two of those three years were as a tutor in the same federal grant program department as Carlos and Alexa. Catherine was Eli’s supervisor for two years. Eli had found that working on-campus had provided him a home away from home. “my co-workers have become my friends, so I guess it has given me a sense of belonging, they are my second family that has form and shaped me over the years.” Additionally, working on campus had not only granted him a reliable support system but an opportunity to be a part of something more than just a student on campus. "Working on campus means that I am just not a student. I am part of this university. I feel that sense of pride being here. I am willing to put my experiences into helping others."

Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs at Border University was responsible for the oversight of academic colleges, schools, departments, and programs. Specifically, this office within Academic Affairs was responsible for the promotion of a campus wide student success

initiative. This office employed two full-time staff and eight student employee ambassadors. The team offered pedagogical and asset-based strategies to support all enrolled students to persist and graduate from college.

Silvia, was the first staff hired to fill this new position focused on student success initiatives within Academic Affairs. She had been in charge of her role for four years. She supervised a total of six student employees, four undergraduate and two graduate students. Silva's department focused on promoting and introducing enriching experiences to students across the university from different academic majors and disciplines as part of an institutional student success initiative. As a former student employee herself, Silva encouraged supervisors to mentor their student employees. "So, I take any experience that I had as a student employee, and I tried to be a lot better than what my supervisors were. I used to work as a student at a selective, affluent school, and so there were a lot of things that I wish my supervisor could have done better."

Ana, a corporate communications major junior, had been a student employee with the university in this study for two years. Those two years she worked in Academic Affairs within the same department which Silvia supervised. Ana was the communication specialist for the office. In her role, Ana was in charge for the outreach and marketing efforts of the office. Ana said she enjoyed working with "high level" university administrators and was grateful for working with such a small, caring, tight-knit group of co-workers. Ana stated that working on campus had given her a strong value of who she was, and a strong sense of identity. "Working at Border University has given me a strong foundation of who I want to be in the future. I know who I am, and I know where I want to go next."

Daniela, a kinesiology major senior, had worked on campus for three years. Daniela had worked in several diverse locations across campus. This was her first year working for Silvia in Academic Affairs. Daniela served as the student liaison and ambassador for Border University's student success initiative. She was responsible for advocating and formally presenting the student success initiative across campus to students, staff, and faculty. She described working on campus as the perfect gateway to many opportunities. Daniela credited working on-campus as a significant reason for being exposed to many experiential learning experiences that helped shape her career interest and trajectory after college. "Working on campus has opened up so many doors. I have been given opportunities to partake in committees and involved with many projects at Border University, which have given me the preparation that my school cannot. I am getting first-hand experience in higher education by working on-campus."

Student Affairs. With 34 departments, 241 full-time staff, and over 300 student employees, Student Affairs was one of the largest divisions at Border University. Departments included: Residence Life, Recreation Center, Student Engagement and Leadership Center, Student Life, to name a few. Notably, student affairs hired the most student employees among other departments and divisions. With over 300 student employees, student Affairs focused on offering students with enriching experiences that took place outside the classroom and focused on enhancing student growth and development. Also, student affairs founded Border University's annual Student Worker Training program for all student employees across campus.

Larry, had worked in two different departments at Border University. However, in his current role, this was the first time he had worked for Student Affairs and have direct supervision of student employees. He supervised twenty student employees who worked at high traffic, customer service, information center in Student Affairs. Larry described enjoying many different

aspects of his current role, including interfacing with multiple stakeholders, plus the focus his role had on building a customer-centric organization. He enjoyed working with students and developing into young professionals. “As a mentor to these student staff, I feel that it is my responsibility to provide mentorship. I do that by leading by example. Everything that I ask of my students, I will do myself. I try to model and show them how to do their job.”

Sergio, was a former student employee where he was now a professional staff member. Sergio worked with Leo as colleagues and they both together supervised the twenty student employees in their department in Student Affairs. Sergio spoke of his work with passion and excitement. He shared that most often, student employees were inexperienced and needed support with becoming a professional employee. “Student employees come in *green*, like a fruit, meaning that they are yet ripped or ready to eat. Often, student employees are nervous for their interview, they struggle communicating their thoughts, and their demeanor shows that they just aren’t comfortable in a professional environment. They are *green* to the workplace environment.” He explained that developing student employees was very important to him, and he enthusiastically accepted responsibility to build his student employees professionally.

Eduardo, a business major sophomore transfer student, had been working on-campus in Student Affairs for one year under the supervision of both Larry and Sergio. This was Eduardo's first job he had worked. He found beneficial having two supervisors like Larry and Sergio. Eduardo served as an event and program specialist for his office. He was responsible for the design and implementation of programs and events for students on campus. Eduardo had found that working on campus had provided him with a smooth transition to a new campus, plus working on campus helped him feel connected to the university. “I feel that my work contributes to the university. I am here on campus all day, which helps me be aware of what is going,

understand more about the campus, and connect to the campus so that all the programs that I am putting together help the university community.”

Laura, a business major sophomore, had a full-ride scholarship and chose to work on-campus because of the professional experience. Laura was employed in Student Affairs at the same place as Eduardo, because Eduardo had told her about it. Laura worked in the front desk as a customer service specialist at Border University’s visitor information center. Larry, was Laura’s direct supervisor. Laura was responsible for adhering to peoples questions and helping them get to where they were looking to go. “Working on campus in a professional setting has given me the practice of how to conduct myself and what to expect when I go out and work for a company. Something that I learned working here [Border University], was how to work in teams and to value the relationships with those that you work and those that you serve.”

Pamela, a mechanical engineer major junior, had worked in multiple roles across campus. At the time of this interview, Pamela was Eduardo’s peer colleague working as a program and event specialist in Student Affairs. She shared that working for Larry was the first time she felt understood and supported in her place of employment. Pamela lived in Mexico and crossed the international border every day to come to school and work. Because Pamela was a Mexican national student, working on-campus was the only place that Pamela could work. Pamela liked her current role and described it as much different from the jobs she had in the past because the position and department she worked for, had nothing to do with her major. She described working on-campus had allowed her to learn from the people she worked with, plus gave her the platform to be a role-model to others. “I have learned to keep everyone in mind. Working on campus has taught me to prepare for many challenges and anything that comes my way. I see

that people notice the work that I am doing, and I think the biggest takeaway is to inspire others to do the same thing.”

Student Media. The student media department at Border University was a student-led office that published a campus newspaper and a bilingual quarterly magazine. It had five professional staff and 16 student employees. The newspaper had been serving the campus community since 1915. It served as a platform for students to cover and report on-campus and off-campus news, entertainment and sports.

Terri was a new hire at the university and in the Student Media department. Nevertheless, Terri had supervised many study employees at her previous place of work. When asked what she thought when she heard the term student employment, she asserted to helping students gain experience in a real job by advising them of what to expect in the workplace. Terri asserted that leading a student run department was unique experience to her. “I don't think I know of anybody else that has a job like mine. Where I oversee a student-run organization, and I am present to guide and support their developments. Therefore, I utilize my experiences of working outside higher education and share those with students to guide our student employees to achieve their own goals.”

Amanda, a multi-media communications sophomore, had worked with the university in this study for two years. She had worked in two different roles with two different departments before being hired in Student Media. This was her first semester working under Terri’s supervision. Amanda worked as a student reporter for the university’s school newspaper. Amanda described enjoying both the professional development and network opportunities that working on-campus provides. She defined working on campus as, “growth, pure growth; whether you are growing as an individual, whether you are growing in your career, whatever the

thing, whatever it is, it is shaping you up to be better than how you initially came in.” Amanda was very positive about her work, her team, and the support she received from her supervisor. She loved the freedom and flexibility that she was given to prioritize her work and to be able to work flexible hours when needed.

Table 1

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Job Description</u>	<u>Years Employed</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>
Advising					
Imelda	Staff	Supervisor	2	Female	30
Olga	Student	Peer Advisor	3	Female	21
Federal Grant Program					
Catherine	Staff	Supervisor	6	Female	30
Alexa	Student	Peer Mentor	2	Female	20
Carlos	Student	Peer Mentor	4	Male	22
Eli	Student	Tutor	3	Male	21
Academic Affairs					
Sylvia	Staff	Supervisor	4	Female	35
Ana	Student	Ambassador	2	Female	20
Daniela	Student	Ambassador	3	Female	21
Student Affairs					
Larry	Staff	Supervisor	8	Male	40
Sergio	Staff	Supervisor	1	Male	25
Eduardo	Student	Program Coordinator	1	Male	20
Laura	Student	Front Desk	2	Female	19
Pamela	Student	Event Coordinator	1	Female	21
Student Media					
Terri	Staff	Supervisor	1	Female	40
Amanda	Student	Journalist	1	Female	17

*Note: Students participating in these interviews worked in various and diverse locations across campus in the same role for at least one year. The names of each department provided a broad background and context of where each participant worked. Each student employee supervisor participant supervised one or more of the study's student participants.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

From the beginning of this study, I wanted to better understand the phenomenon of on-campus student employment in the context of student employees who worked at a Hispanic Serving Institution. I wanted to hear about the students' experiences working on-campus and to understand the student employee supervisor's role in supporting student employees. Insights from interviews with six student employee supervisors and ten first-generation Latinx student employees are offered in this section. Student employment has been traditionally excluded from the research when addressing social capital formation in higher education (Nunez & Sansone, 2016). However, students in this study reported that their social capital formation was tied directly to the networks and opportunities presented to them from their student employment experiences at Border University. This study found that employing organizations at Border University brokered social capital opportunities for student employees. Three major interrelated themes were identified in this study, addressing how student employees' workplace supported student employees in developing social capital. The themes included: (a) supportive environments, (b) on- and off-campus networks, (c) enriching experiences through embedded networks.

In what follows, I draw focus to the participants' place of employment and to the embedded relationships that exist within their work environments. Specifically, how Border University used supportive environments, networks, and enriching experiences to broker the social capital embedded within the workplace. I describe each theme individually through the collective responses of all respondents. Data is presented to (1) illustrate how student employees formed social capital from their on-campus student employment experiences, as well as from the individuals they encountered in their workplace; (2) demonstrate how Border University

brokered social capital for student employees; and (3) identify the manner through which student employees' access to social capital was garnered, and how student employees used that social capital.

The Workplace Fosters Supportive Environments

The theme of supportive environments emphasizes the importance of what a supportive work environment can do for students. Having a supportive work environment helped with the development of participant's social capital acquisition, which was made possible through the empathetic contributions from both their peers, and supervisors. It was evident from the participant's responses that employing departments, at Border University, focused on ensuring that student employees felt cared for and understood in their workplace. Numerous supportive experiences and examples in the workplace were shared throughout the interviews, which served as confirmational data. The participants' place of employment helped them transition into higher education, share cultural bonds, develop a sense of belonging to the campus, and establish positive social interactions in the workplace. This summarizes how students' supportive workplace environment contributed to developing their social capital.

Transitioning to higher education. Most families with first-generation college attendees valued and cultivated their children's post-secondary aspirations (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Still, their families did not know what to offer them or what to expect when they enrolled in higher education. This was often the case for most students in this study as it was evident in some of their responses. Pamela had been crossing the U.S.-Mexico border every day since she was in the seventh grade. As a Mexican National student, Pamela was raised by a single mother due to the death of her father. As early as middle school, she felt like she needed to help out and pitch in around the house. Pamela's mother always pushed the importance of education and made her

attend school in the United States. Her mother hoped that having Pamela receive an education in the U.S. would better her chances to succeed in life. Important to note is, that the only place of employment for international students, such as Pamela, was on-campus because of their citizenship status. Therefore it was often the case that other international students who look for employment while enrolled in higher education, diligently look to work on-campus. In her third year in higher education, Pamela reflected on her experience as a first-generation Latinx student employee at Border University.

As a first-generation college student, it is tough to seek help about college from your parents. I remember my mother being so frustrated because she could not help me in that area. Still, where she could not help me about college, she made up for it emotionally and supportively.

Pamela shared that the only other time that she felt that same level of support was during her time as a student employee at Border University. She expressed that working on-campus and meeting other students like herself helped with her transition into higher education.

Transitioning into higher education could be difficult for most first-generation Latinx students (Cataldi et al., 2018). Carlos shared something similar to Pamela about his experience as a first-generation Latinx student, “it sucks, having to figure all these things out on your own.” He, too, like Pamela, found support transitioning to higher education through his on-campus job. Student employees and student employee supervisors emphasized the importance of having a supportive work environment for students to transition and acculturate successfully onto campus. Olga described how working on-campus offered her a space to feel at home, and made her transition to higher education that much easier. About this, Olga shared,

So everyone in my office is incredibly supportive, including my supervisor. You know, she always mentions that she is here to talk, whether it's about work or whether it's about classes, whether it's about just something in your personal life, they're always there to listen. So it really does feel more than a relationship, it feels like family. I am treated beyond being just an employee. It's like a culture of care. They care about your needs and how you're doing.

This culture of care expressed by Olga, was something that was expressed among student employees and supervisors, consistently. Both, participants and supervisors, emphasized the importance of creating a supportive work environment so that student employees could easily acculturate to higher education, and focus on school. Olga's supervisor, Imelda, said that in her office, they tended to establish a support system for students that consisted of staff and students to help them transition onto campus. "We are a group of advisors, that is what we do, that is our job, to help students." Imelda also shared that she was always interested in how her student employees were doing in school. Every semester she made sure that once grades were posted, she checked on her students' GPA as a way to monitor their academic progress. Imelda expressed that monitoring their progress had served as a way to engage with her student employee. Imelda shared an example about a freshman nursing student employee, employee who was placed on academic probation after his first semester, while working in her office. Imelda offered,

This frequently happens with first-year students at Border University. They come in and are overwhelmed with everything. This nursing student was in our office, crying and scared of not making it. We talked and came up with some strategies, some goals, and a plan to help the student. Because you see, we just don't want to preach, but we also want

to help students be successful. Now, this student is in phase three of his nursing program.

He is still working with us because of what we give him, a support system, and attention.

You know that is important because maybe he doesn't get that at home.

Support systems and understanding supervisors, such as Imelda, were evident and consistent throughout this study. Often, it was the support received by supervisors that helped student employees adjust and navigate higher education. This was important for the student participants in this study, because as mentioned before, first-generation college students do not always have the resources or information to help them adjust and navigate higher education.

Similar to Olga's experience, Carlos, who worked as part of the federal TRIO grant program, saw the people he worked with as his actual family. As a child, Carlos experienced a tragic event that involved his father being kidnapped and murdered, causing his family to uproot and seek asylum in the United States. He, his mother and brother began a new life without knowing anyone in the U.S. At some point, Carlos and his family were homeless and struggling to survive. Carlos felt lost and scared through most of his adolescence. He found it hard to trust people and struggled to make new friends.

However, all of that changed when he was recruited in high school to participate in a federal grant program offered by Border University, which targeted first-generation, low socio-economic students, like Carlos. It was through this program that he got introduced to, and provided with the opportunity to work on campus. Reflecting on this experience that happened four years ago, Carlos shared the following,

So, a lot of people say that sometimes your work family is your second family. But for me, my work family has always been my actual family. So, here's my first experience when I came here, not knowing anybody, right? College is huge. We have like 25,000

students here, right? I'm going to know absolutely nobody, even though some of them probably went to my high school, but I was very selective with certain people. So then I came here [Border University], I joined that program. And then all of a sudden, I just felt a very, very, very welcoming environment that I've never felt before. And there are only very few instances that I felt that before because since I moved around so much, and I've gone through all these types of experiences, it's it makes you realize how important family is and who will stick with you throughout tough times.

Carlos's story brought focus to the importance of the organizational context and how the student's capacity to access and use social capital depended on the organizations in which students routinely participated in. Organizations have the ability to affect not only its relationships, but its resources—specifically, the access a person has to them and how they make use of them (Small, 2009).

Sharing cultural bonds through work. Sergio, a first-year student employee supervisor and former student employee, expressed the importance of building cultural bonds within the workplace by sharing the following, “I think it is important--giving our students that sense of community, to make them feel that they're a part of the university and to make them be part of something bigger than themselves.” Similar to Sergio, Sylvia, a student employee supervisor who oversaw a highly visible and supportive institutional initiative at the university, stressed the importance of forming and building cultural bonds within the student's workplace environment. A former Latina first-generation college student, Sylvia was a student employee at a selective, predominately white institution. She shared that her experience as a student employee at her undergraduate institution left her feeling as if she did not have any support; nor was there any effort by the people at her place of employment to make her feel included. She expressed that

being at a predominately white institution isolated her and that the people at her work did not make any effort to get to know or understand her, or her cultural background. Sylvia shared that supporting student employees culturally was critical for her when helping minority students acculturate onto a college campus. About this, Sylvia stated the following,

So I take any experience that I have had as a student employee, and I try to be a lot better than what my supervisors were. Okay. Because I used to work at an elite, selective, predominately white school. And so, there were a lot of things. I wish that my supervisor could have done better. I go back to so many situations where I wish I had maybe like a Mexican American supervisor versus an Anglo or white guy because they don't understand the culture. I just think it's a lot different when you have like a white supervisor that doesn't know what the Mexican culture is, right?

Border University offered Latinx student employees with the benefit of working in an environment where staff and peers shared similar cultural backgrounds. Students related and connected to their supervisors because often they [supervisors] were Latinx, and each other, when they were in college. This shared familiarity of ethnic and cultural background, further offered empathy and support towards student employee participants.

Developing a sense of belonging through work. Student participants described feeling connected to campus and having a sense of pride about working on campus. They often shared that their workplace made them feel a sense of belonging within the university. Students also described that their contribution to the campus as employees made them feel essential. Many student participants expressed not only the ability to build cultural bonds in their places of employment, but experienced an overall sense of belonging. In the words of Eli, “I am getting the chance to feel a part of the campus and integrate myself into the university community.” Eli

reflected on his experience before working, and he stated that prior to his job on-campus, he would just drive to school, go to class, and head back home. Now working on-campus, Eli felt like he found a place (his job), that he could visit during class breaks and hang out to study. It also helped that most of his co-workers were now his friends, which made him feel a part of something. "So I guess I get that kind of sense of belonging, kind of like a family, a second family somewhere else that has formed and shaped me." Alexa, who worked with Eli, expressed a similar sentiment of feeling connected with the campus and the people she worked with:

I guess it [her job on-campus] has helped me meet some of my closest friends. Moving a lot from schools, I never found like a huge support of friends, but, starting at Border University and being a part of the program and then eventually become staff. I've met some of like the coolest people I know. I've met one of my best friends who he's in my same major, and he's pushed me even when I thought I couldn't. I don't know, it just helped to have a more reliable, more stable support group. Whereas when I moved schools, like, I met people, but sometimes I would move again, and I would lose contact with them. But here working at Border University, being a student and meeting students like me, working with students like me, helps me connect with the campus, which I am sure is going to last a lifetime.

The relationships Alexa was able to build while working on-campus provided her with a support system that she lacked due to her high mobility. Being able to depend on relatable peers, further strengthened her sense of belonging within the university. Feeling a "sense of belonging" was a significant benefit of working on-campus, according to participants. Time and again, Alexa credited the academic, emotional, and motivational support she received from peers and supervisor as essential to her success in college.

These nurtured bonds that occurred in the workplace came to no surprise to Eli and Alexa's supervisor, Catherine. Catherine understood the importance of establishing a community with her student employees. As a former student employee at Border University, Catherine empathized with what her students were going through in their day-to-day routine. She accentuated that building a sense of belonging was vital for the productivity of her office. To establish this in the office, Catherine shared that at her work, everyone participated on an annual two-day retreat.

On this yearly retreat, all employees of the office, which included the Director of the program, program staff, and student employees, all traveled to a remote location where they spent two days participating in ice-breakers, team-building exercises, and leadership development training. When asked to share a little bit of what went on during their retreat, Catherine said the following:

We always kick it off with a cookout. Nothing brings people together like a good old cookout. We use this time for people to talk and get to know each other outside work. Afterward, we do some ice-breakers and play some interactive games. The following day, we hit the ground running. Most of the day is jam-packed with team building activities such a "ropes course," and other activities such as "True Colors," a personality trait assessment, we use this assessment to evaluate the different personalities in our office so we can learn how to interact with one another. The last day of the retreat brings everyone closer together. It's called the "Jigsaw Puzzle." Every person is giving a blank piece of a jigsaw puzzle, about the size of a laptop, and they are charged with decorating their piece to represent who they are. Once everyone is done, each person shares about what their piece means to the entire group. Once they are finished, they place it on the ground. The

same goes for everyone until everyone has shared their story. At the end of the activity and after everyone shared their story, they see on the floor that all the pieces connect, representing that every piece contributes to the collective of the team.

Catherine's excerpt addressed how building a sense of belonging among student employees could impact social capital outcomes. Sense of belonging in the workplace was inferred by the influence of not only adults, but of their peers as well. For Catherine, having played the role of belonging during her team-building activities, had a great impact on her student employees.

Positive social interactions in the workplace. Overall, student participants enjoyed working on-campus and expressed feeling a genuine sense of support in their workplace. Additionally, all shared having positive social interactions with their co-workers and supervisors. Students often credited their supervisors for showing a genuine interest in their college success. Participants considered their supervisors supportive when they took the time to get to know them and ask about their day. Amanda who worked in the Student Media Department, described her supervisor, Terri, as caring and present. "She is present and attentive to everything that I do. Not just work-related stuff, but things outside of work like at school or home." Amanda felt that her supervisor, Terri, was always there for her and that she wanted her to succeed. She was appreciative of the trust that she has established with her supervisor [Terri] and the guidance that she had received from her. Amanda felt that she could count on her whenever she needed it. To Amanda, her relationship with her supervisor Terri was built on care and trust. About this Amanda shared,

Her door is literally always open. Whenever I have a question, she encourages me to ask her those questions. She encourages me to, you know, go out there and apply for internships. Sometimes she will send me like links to internship applications that deal

with my major and offers help with the application process. So in most ways, she has become, you know, like a mentor to me, and I feel comfortable approaching her. I feel comfortable talking to her. I feel like I can talk to her as a friend without you know, losing that, that line of, you know, my superior and my friend.

Student-supervisor relationships, contributed to student success, especially when students, like Amanda, viewed their supervisors as mentors. These types of ties could represent more than just mentorships; they could provide long-lasting support system post-graduation. Other students, like Ana, who worked in Academic Affairs, found that talking or building trust with supervisors could be challenging. "It can be kind of hard, for a first-generation student to talk to a Ph.D. or director; it can be very intimidating." However, Ana did say that she thought Border University did a great job at making interactions with faculty and staff less intimidating. On this, Ana shared,

Border University does a great job of helping its students. Not only because, you know, most of our student body is Hispanic, but I think through the characteristics that sometimes Hispanics can have. Whether it's like, you know, the whole responsibility, the whole, you know, hard workers; I think, those are some of the things that you can see, not only in student employees, but you can also see in the supervisors. Border University as a whole, influences your experience. It is that you really feel like you're working with people who have been in the same position, and they want you to be better. And it all goes back, to you know, having people that understand you. And you see that here at Border University.

Ana worked hard to make sure her supervisors thought well of her. Other students, made mention of the developed respect, loyalty, and for some, a friendship toward their supervisors.

Working two years in the same office, Ana shared about her supervisor and disclosed that she had gained a friend and someone who believed in her.

I've gained a strong sense of an *I can do it type of mentality*. She [Sylvia] has given us, through her constant support and assurance, that we can do the work that we want to do in the professional world.

Pamela, who worked in Student Affairs, echoed how important it was to her to work in a place where she could have someone who empathized and understood her situation as a student. As mentioned previously, Pamela lives across the U.S.-Mexico border on the Mexico side. She crossed an international border each day, sometimes taking as long as 45 minutes. She shared that her supervisor was fully aware of her situation and that he supported her by providing her with a flexible work schedule. Pamela shared how important having an understanding supervisor was to her:

Larry [supervisor] is so understanding about my situation, especially like that I cross. He's always said, do you think you can make it? If not, we'll work around your hours. Or he will understand the situation of everything happening, how I cross the bridge, and how I do this. And he says if you're going to be stuck in traffic or late, let me know what time works better for you. And having that type of support, it's just nice to have. It's one less thing to worry about. Now, I don't want to say I have like a free pass, but having someone who understands the circumstances and works around with you, you know, instead of being like, "oh, I don't care if you live over there [Mexico]. This is what's going to happen, and I want you here at 6:30 in the morning." So I think it's just it's really nice to see someone so understanding.

Pamela's supervisor, Larry, shared that understanding his student employees was a cornerstone of his supervisory responsibility. Larry oversaw twenty student employees and realized that his students were dealing with a lot. Larry strived to provide an environment where students were comfortable and felt supported by someone who took the time to know his student employees. About how he went about understanding his student employees, Larry shared the following:

I speak with the students staff all day every day, and reflect on my past experiences and try to provide some guidance on that, you know, when they're overwhelmed with work with school with extracurricular activities, and think to myself "how I overcame that," these kids are stressed with so many things that are out of their control, you know, so I advise them on my previous experience, and hopefully some of them use my advice, or may not take every advice that I give them. Still, they know that I empathize with them and that I understand what they are going through. And that. I will work with them because of that.

Eduardo, who worked for Larry, stated the following about him, "He [Larry] focuses on you being a student first. Comparing this to my other job, because my school schedule was so crazy, I was constantly at risk of losing my job. But, Larry, is different, he is always willing to accommodate. Again, there is that focus on being a student."

Students also expressed enjoying the opportunity to meet peers, who also served as critical sources of capital for encouragement, and understanding and navigating college life.

Laura, who also worked in Student Affairs, but in a different area as Pamela and Eduardo, shared that working with other students made her feel welcomed. In her office, Laura stated that she had learned so much from her peers and that her interactions at work had influenced her on how she viewed others:

I have gotten to know people from different backgrounds, and I think it is really enriching to have a conversation with somebody from different backgrounds than you, or that they are not in the same field of study or major as you. They have and bring so many different perspectives. And it's so nice to hear somebody's different views, then, the same people that you sit with the same people you take classes with, so it's refreshing.

Brokered relationships that occurred between peers in each participant's workplace offered social inclusion, which often led to feeling supported in their workplace. Eduardo, for example, stated that feeling a part of a team made a whole difference in how he approached work. He claimed that there was a team culture in place in which student employees helped each other out and collaborated to help get tasks done. Eduardo stated, "everyone knows that like everyone needs to help each other out. And I think it's been made clear to us that in helping each other out, we all succeed."

Sergio, who also supervised Eduardo, Pamela, and Laura, along with Larry, made sure to embed a collaborative peer environment within the workplace. Sergio, a former student employee himself, reflected that to him, the social support among his peers was what got him through college. This could be said as well for other student employees in different departments at Border University.

Carlos was graduating the semester when this interview took place, and when I asked him to what or whom he credited graduating from college, Carlos replied:

Support from my coworkers is one of the primary things that has helped me out and to stay in college. I've rarely told many individuals this, but probably in my second year of college, I would have dropped out if I had not had the support from my coworkers, which are now my family, from my peers who are now best friends. They are family to me. If it

weren't for that support system that I had, I probably would not be where I'm standing at this moment, a month away from graduating. If not for them, I could be doing some other stuff that, you know, would have led me to a different path. Therefore, support is such a crucial thing when it comes to working on campus.

Thus, working on-campus could offer possibilities for students to develop “comfort zones” (Nunez & Sansone, 2016) that are critical in helping first-generation or Latinx students to feel part of the university. As is the case at Border University, student employees’ workplace fostered purposeful, regular, and ongoing interactions that led to meaningful relationships and supportive work environments.

The Workplace Fosters On- and Off-campus Networking

The theme of off- and on-campus networks placed focus on how student employees’ network and relationships, established through their on-campus student employment workplace, contributed towards their social capital formation. Participants shared that the networks built through their student employment, helped them connect with influential off- and on-campus individuals who assisted them in acquiring social capital. In part, this was because participants engaged with such influential individuals, that it exposed them to many campus resources and transformational opportunities; hence, guided them to navigate higher education. The following section offers how students’ workplace environment fostered networking opportunities, and how those networks influenced student employees’ social capital acquisition.

Networking represented proactive attempts by individuals to develop and maintain personal and professional relationships with others for mutual benefit in their experiences. Such experiences could include education, work, or career whose links could enhance one’s social capital (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Friar & Eddleston, 2007). Building a network in higher

education typically required navigating social settings effectively. The ability to form social networks that included faculty, staff, and students was important for expanding participants' social capital. Indeed, these networks often proved more important than the work itself for enhancing students' college trajectories.

Participants shared how working on-campus helped form social capital by networking and collaborations with people within and outside their workplace. For example, Carlos talked about how in his job as a peer mentor, he had the opportunity to serve on a committee on campus and meet other working professionals because his supervisor told him about the opportunity. About this, Carlos stated,

Working on campus has given me a lot of networking opportunities...provides me with experiences to participate in on-campus committees, which helps build my network. So, you know, there are those types of experiences that you get when you are working here [Border University], and the variety of professional individuals that you see and meet, are a lot here at the school.

Opportunities to engage in campus committees like the one shared by Carlos, should not be overlooked. When individuals were starting to build their network, it often happened through casual or purposeful encounters as the ones stated by Carlos. It was through these relationships that students were able to find and collect information, as well as build their social capital.

Carlos's supervisor, Catherine, shared that she offered her student employees to go network and interact with other departments. She believed that it played to her student employees' advantage to interact and learn about other departments. "When students learn about other departments, they are more aware of the resources available to them. It is an advantage that otherwise would not have happened if they did not work on-campus." For Latinx students,

networking did not only serve as an opportunity for student success, but as a valuable resource for future career endeavors (Nunez & Sansone, 2016; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Alexa, who worked for Catherine, expressed similar thoughts as her co-worker Carlos, regarding her supervisor, when connecting her and her peers to the university.

Our boss [Catherine] is really good at involving us with other departments. For example, we have had retreats for work, and she invites people from all over campus to interact and share with us about the many resources available on campus. She is also really good at making sure that we work closely with other offices.

Having exposed students like Alexa and Carlos to different departments and campus resources, positioned them with the opportunity to grow their social capital; in other words, to share their knowledge of capital to other students, such as those that were involved in their grant program whom they mentored and tutored. Eli, who worked with Alexa and Carlos, used his network to connect the students he mentored to the campus resources. “The cool thing about mentoring is you are always trying to find out about cool things to get your students to go or do, so yeah, that helps us with being connected with the campus.” Eli also used his working experience to mentor his younger brother, who will be graduating high school and going to Border University next year.

I tell him, —it’s great you're going to college, it’s great you're going to do well in class, but don’t forget the other things you're going to learn in life while in college because you may never have another chance to learn that after college. So, I am telling him to get a job on-campus. And get to know many people.

Exploring opportunities for his mentees to connect with campus, and mentoring his younger sibling, offered Eli the chance to further network with campus personnel and identify resources

on campus. This in turn, resulted in Eli acquiring new knowledge and broadening his social capital. Students also described that working on campus made them feel connected to the university. Participants expressed feeling a sense of pride to their campus because of their jobs. Pamela, held a position in the Student Activities Center in Student Affairs and was responsible for creating events and programs for students on campus. She shared that her work helped her connect to many people on campus and valued this part of her student employment experience the most.

Influential networks. Throughout the study, students indicated that several administrators knew them well and were aware of the value they added to their universities because of their role as student employees, which led to a sense of empowerment experienced by students. Students felt valued when encouraged by their supervisors, to take on specific roles outside their department. As shared by Larry, “Student employees were the face and the lifeblood of many departments at Border University; they brought enormous assets to the workplace.” In an institution such as Border University, students were at the front lines of serving the operations of a department, according to supervisor participants. Ana credited her on-campus job for making reliable connections with individuals within the university, which often ended up connecting or offering her other opportunities. Ana stated,

The most significant thing about working on-campus had been the networking opportunities. I’ve met so many wonderful people that have given me great advice through my job. My job has given me a chance for me to meet great people and make strong connections. Connections that are going to be great contacts for me in the future. Connections that have become strong letters of recommendation even. I feel like if I, if it weren’t for this job, maybe I would have met them in another way. But they wouldn’t

have seen me in the way that I work in the way that I present myself, you know, as a student and as a student worker. I am already, you know, building those relationships that a typical student would not.

Networking was critical for students' social capital formation. As put by Sergio, "networking is big for student employees, simply because, you know, working on a college campus, you basically have to be talking to people constantly." Similar to what supervisors stated, students shared that a significant benefit of working on campus was that it exposed them to meet a lot of people; people like professors and professionals that knew about the careers students' were interested in.

These people became a resource for the students. Their knowledge and experiences, when shared, could be transformative for students. Amanda shared that by working on campus, you got to meet a lot of professionals. Not only people who worked for the university but people that were experts in her major. Amanda stated, "universities have experts, like professors who have, in a sense, a relationship with what you want to one day go and do hopefully." Developing relationships and networks with faculty supported student success and a greater sense of belonging for minority students (Nunez, 2009). Amanda described how she planned to capitalize on her network:

One of the things that you take out of networking is just getting a glimpse of what everyone's doing and getting a glimpse of how you can fit into all those things that everyone's doing that at the end of the day are going to make you grow. Having those relationships, I'm not saying like, you're using them for the future, but it's kind of like, Oh, well, you know, they can help you on in the future if you build those strong, and close relationships where, you know, something can grow out of it in the future.

Amanda was hoping to graduate with a multi-media degree in journalism. Her supervisor, Terri, was a former journalist and editor for a local newspaper. Terri emphasized the importance and value of networking, “Making on-campus connections and networking provided for a better future. It gave them [student employees] a competitive edge over some of their peers.” Terri also stated that connecting students to professional organizations and encourage them to present and participate at conferences, gave students an excellent opportunity to network with people in their field from all over.

Leveraging the network of others, in this case, supervisors’ or peers’, was a fundamental principle of social capital. Networks connected and introduced people to opportunities that they may not have known existed. In Laura’s case, having attended a campus committee meeting with her supervisor led her to meet the President of the university, who later acknowledged her at an off-campus event. Other student participants in this study shared that knowing a significant number of individuals, expanded and offered ways for them to further their connections on- and off-campus. These students reflected on the value and benefits of their interactions and connections, such as relationships with university administrators and faculty members. Vice presidents, deans, faculty, and directors of various offices and programs were among the key people with whom on-campus student employees had cultivated meaningful relationships. Having interacted with campus administrators of similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the relationships that students established with them were meaningful because they could easily identify with them.

It was not always the case in which first-generation Latinx students knew how to network. Sylvia, a student employee supervisor, reflected on her student employment experience and wished that someone would have pushed her to network and meet people. Sylvia felt that she

never had that opportunity in college. Like many students at Border University, Sylvia shared that when she was in college, her only focus was going to school. Sylvia stated that she regretted not networking more when she was in college because she now knew the enormous value it offered to students. But, she also blamed her supervisor for not pushing to meet new people “I never had the opportunity to do that [network]. No one really pushed me, nor anyone really gave me the courage to go speak to other people.” Sylvia expressed that offering students with opportunities to network was one of the major benefits of working in her office, and she made sure that her student employees took full advantage of it. Sylvia recounted her view of her role in helping students network:

So, what I do with my students is I give them that chance and opportunity to draw connections and network. If there's a meeting or presentation that our office has to do to an academic department, and it's related to one of my student's major, okay, I push them to go to that meeting or help present. Giving them face time with professors and deans of their major can go a long way.

Sylvia saw her role here not just as an employer, but as someone who was responsible for cultivating her students' academic and long-term professional interests. Specifically, she recognized the importance of helping students connect with key, institutional agents within their major. She then used her position as their employer to facilitate those connections, and to make students aware of resources, such as presentations. Without these attempts to “broker,” students might not have obtained these connections and resources. In addition to connecting students to resources relevant to their major, Sylvia tried to develop students' networking strengths more broadly, to help them connect with campus administrators. She said, “Working in our office, with the provost, of course, I push all my students to talk to the provost, and to their deans, like

when the deans are waiting to speak to the provost.” Here, she encourages her employees to make connections with important agents on campus, that they might not otherwise have the courage or initiative to make on their own. Placing students and pushing them to network, such as how Sylvia did for her students, ties directly to the “brokerage” term as described by Small (2009). Put simply, the broker, who in this case was Sylvia, brought two previously unconnected people together.

Ana, one of Sylvia’s student employees, shared a specific incident in which Sylvia brokered an opportunity for her.

I am grateful for this one meeting that they had with the communications department.

And she (Sylvia) right away thought of me. She was like, "I want you to go to this, and I want you to introduce yourself to the professors." And I did, even though it was outside of my work hours, I was thrilled to have been chosen, and that I had been the person that she (Sylvia) thought of when she heard about this event

Like Sylvia, there were other supervisors in this study that attested to finding value in brokering networking opportunities for their students. For Imelda, she shared that connecting her students and giving them access to knowledge, resources, and people, was an advantage that they had over students who do not work on campus.

Daniela, a student who worked at four different departments at Border University, also described how important networking had impacted her experiences on-campus. Daniela shared how her networking experience was different than most of her peers. She was recruited by a faculty member from the theater department to audition for a university skit focused on promoting a campus-wide student success initiative. Daniela went on to be the poster child of this campaign. She performed the skit for everyone, including new students at new student

orientations, as well as for faculty and staff at convocation. Daniela recalled this moment as the moment that transcended her life as a college student. She stated that all of this publicity helped her get noticed and helped open many doors for her. Daniela reflected on this moment and shared the following:

I got a lot of exposure doing these presentations and doing these presentations in front of many people and at a time in front of somewhat important people. And so once I started doing these presentations, these individuals began to take an interest in me, which led to a domino effect.

Two things were to be said about Daniela's unique experience. First, Daniela did not know the faculty member who approached her and offered her to audition for the skit. The faculty member approached her because they shared a mutual acquaintance. This mutual acquaintance and broker of the connection was Daniela's high school theater arts teacher. Had it not been for this connection, who knows if Daniela's college trajectory would have been the same. Second, was that of the domino effect. Because of her exposure to so many people, many took notice of Daniela's skills and talent, thereby growing her connections. Through those connections, new opportunities presented themselves to her. In essence, these opportunities helped Daniela network by branding herself to others.

Eduardo could relate to the domino effect of networking, like in Daniela's case. Eduardo was no stranger to networking or understanding the power of networking. The value of networking was instilled in him at an early age growing up. "My mom, my dad, and my grandpa, they always like told me like, connections are the way in the world." Eduardo's job as a student program coordinator had offered him many networking opportunities to make connections on campus. Eduardo told me about these connections:

I've been able to make tons and tons of connections because of my job. Whereas, like, if I didn't work on campus, I wouldn't know all these people. So I've been able to meet with a lot of different department heads with a lot of different professors just because of the position that I hold with here on campus. So yeah, and only, I think just in general, like connections again, this was instilled in me, and I live by this. Like connections run the world or like the world is run on connections.

Eduardo expressed with confidence that networking was one of the biggest perks of working on-campus. All of these connections had not only expanded Eduardo's network, but having these connections and knowing who to reach out to, had made his job more manageable. Some of Eduardo's connections had led him to participate in several campus events, meet with dignitaries who visited the campus, and interact with campus leadership like the president of the university. Pamela, who worked with Eduardo, was responsible for creating events and programs for students on campus. She shared that her work helped her connect to many people on campus and valued this part of her student employment experience the most.

Laura also felt that networking was one of the most significant benefits of working on campus. Laura shared that because of her opportunity to work on-campus, she was able to expand her network of people, which included staff, faculty, and peers from different fields of study. Her network had helped her in an array of ways. However, Laura expressed that the most profound way that her network had impacted her was by knowing that she could count on a group of people that would vouch for her. About this, Laura shared the following:

Through my network and my supervisor, I have somebody that can vouch for me, and my professionalism. And you know, what I bring to the table as a student employee. So, as a first-generation student, it's nice to come to a job, and you know, working on campus can

offer that professional mentorship. And then, it can also have that person [supervisor] that can vouch for me whenever I need the person to vouch for me or whenever I need a recommendation letter.

Relationships built through networking made it easier to contact people who could share information about potential opportunities or introduce individuals to others who had this information (de Janasz and Forret, 2008). The experience of “vouching” that was shared by Laura was something that was echoed by many of the student participants. Participants expressed connecting their on-campus student employment networking experiences to an individual who they identified served as an advisor, mentor, or recommender. Reinforcing those trusting relationships established by students and the people that they connected with through work, could increase the likelihood of encounters with individuals that could be of assistance in their future endeavors.

Students also discussed other networking opportunities that happened on their on-campus employment. Alexa credited working on-campus to meeting a diverse group of people. She said that by meeting different people, it helped her understand other students’ backgrounds. “It gives me a chance to meet people. I get to help people and learn from different people. I can learn how to deal with people, different people than me, and from different backgrounds.” In a time where multi-culturalism continues to grow in higher education, interactions with diverse populations were ever so meaningful for Alexa. Such interactions positioned Alexa to develop social capital through diverse interactions and perspectives from others.

Student participants recognized the benefits associated with their connections to campus staff, faculty, administrators, and peers, and most were convinced that they would sustain those relationships after they graduated from Border University. They considered themselves fortunate,

mainly because most of their peers who were not employed on-campus were not afforded the same degree of engagement with their network and the corresponding access to privileged information about campus resources and opportunities that came with it. In addition to connections and networks, the student participants also gained access to enriching opportunities such as internships, fellowships, and professional development training. How this access to enriching opportunities was presented and used is described in the next section.

Enriching Experiences Through Embedded Networks

Beyond gaining access to people and information networks, the student participants benefited from an institutionalized culture that invested on-campus student employment. At Border University, student employees were afforded with professional connections and enriching experiences so that students could be successful during their time on campus, and after they graduated from higher education. Such enriching experiences offered to students were expressed throughout participant interviews. Three enriching experiences were consistent among all participants in offering them with the best opportunity to form social capital. These were internships, professional skill training, and early career experiences.

Internships. Among the many opportunities afforded to student employees, introductions to internships were amongst the most valued. Participants often used their established networks from their student employment to access or learn about an internship opportunity through someone in their network, and when informed about various internship opportunities, they applied. Eli shared an experience he encountered that led directly to taking advantage of an opportunity that was presented to him because of relationship to his supervisor. He told me about a time he was at a basketball game on campus. He was waiting in line at the concession stand and the person in front of him, an older man, was wearing a jacket with Greek letters on it. Eli,

remembered seeing his Director wear the same jacket as the man in front of him. Eli summoned the courage to ask the man in front of him if he knew his boss, Jorge. The man turned around and happily replied “yes”. The man then asked Eli how he knew Jorge, to which Eli responded that he was his boss. Shortly after that, the man asked Eli what he was majoring in. Thereafter, the man handed Eli his business card and told Eli to call him if he were ever interested in interning with his company. Eli followed up with the man and as a result of that encounter, he will be interning for the man’s company beginning that Summer.

Though several opportunities came their way, the participants also felt comfortable proactively approaching their network to get information. Also, when students were invited to be a part of on-campus events that would afford them access to influential persons, they accepted the invitations. For example, Ana established a strong relationship with an Associate Provost through constant interactions at numerous university events. Because of their frequent interactions, the Associate Provost at Border University took notice of Ana’s skills which made an impression on him. The way Ana carried herself among university administrators impacted that the Associate Provost in such manner, that he ended up recommending her to a prestigious summer internship program at Harvard. “I wouldn’t have even known about all of these internship opportunities if I didn’t have such a close relationship with him [Associate Provost]... other students miss out on these sorts of things.” Ana applied and got into the Harvard summer internship program in part because of her student employment, and her relationship with the Associate Provost. In addition to her admission to the program, Ana received funding to cover her program cost. Ana shared that without the financial support from her workplace, she would not have been able to attend the program.

I mean, as a first-generation student, as soon as I got accepted into the program, I was thinking, what the hell am I gonna do in this place like Harvard, like What? How? And how am I going to pay for it? Soon as I saw that I needed to fund my plane ticket, I got discouraged. I was like, I have no money to get a freaking \$700 plane ticket right now. But, I was at my workplace actually, when I found out that I was invited to go to Harvard. I was so excited that I ran to share the news with my supervisor. She was amazed and proud of me. Knowing that I couldn't afford the program, she offered to seek out funding for me, and she did.

Often, first-generation and low-income students deterred from internship opportunities presented to them because of lack of funding. In most cases, student employees relied on their source of income from their on-campus job and therefore, did not find it feasible to forfeit their job to go out and seek an internship (Perna, 2010).

Experiences like the one shared by Ana, were instrumental in supporting first-generation Latinx students as they explored their academic and professional endeavors. Ana's story further supports the value of how supportive work environments and their networks could introduce students to information [social capital] through their student employment, which in turn could help them achieve their academic aspirations. In addition to financial support, the student participants often relied on their network for recommendation letters for internships. In many cases, students asked for a letter of recommendation, even if the person from their network never extended the invitation to be solicited. This was best shared through Daniela's reflection of when she asked her supervisor for her endorsement to a summer internship.

I went to his [supervisor] office and asked if he can write me a letter for an internship, and he said yes. Even though he never offered, I just feel I have a close enough

relationship with him to ask him without him feeling weird about it. The best part of it was he shared the letter with me. It was very compelling to read his letter and to read what he thought about me. Afterward, I couldn't contain myself and started to cry. I had no idea how much he valued me. Just imagine, I would have never known any of this if I never had to ask.

Professional endorsements such as recommendation letters are often the gateway to enriching experiences tied to networks that students usually don't have access to. Other stories were shared about how student participants viewed internships. About the importance of internships, Olga noted, "Employers look at your resume, and they're looking for more than just a 4.0—they want someone who's involved and has people skills and leadership. Students who aren't involved cannot convince employers that they can do more than just get good grades." Participants considered it essential to have some work experience or internships on their resumes by the time they graduate.

Employers often valued experiences such as student employment or internships over academics because, according to them, it demonstrated that students with these types of experiences were prepared to work, showed self-motivation and self-discipline (Curtis & Williams, 2002). As a result of the capital they acquired through their student employment, the following participants shared the following with me: Laura earned an internship at PricewaterhouseCoopers; Pamela at Lockheed Martin; Efrain with a local engineering firm; Carlos with Intel; Eduardo with Edward Jones; Alexa at Texas Instruments; Daniela at Walt Disney World; Amanda at her campus newspaper; Ana at the Mexico Institute in D.C.; and Olga at the Federal Reserve in Dallas.

Professional skills training. Students discussed how their work helped them to build professional skills. An introduction to a professional work environment was a priority as a supervisor for Larry in his department. Larry recognized that students who work on-campus need guidance in adjusting to work, especially if its their first job.

A lot of our students, this is their very first job. So, we are molding them and showing them, you know, job interview experience, writing of a cover letter and resume. All those things we ask are things that will be asked of them (student employees) in future jobs. Larry also pointed out that working on-campus prepared students for what to expect in the workplace after they graduated and transitioned into their professional careers.

It is important for us to provide our student employees with training which focuses on developing their professional skills like communication skills, phone etiquette, time-management, and team building, all of which our students can later use in future careers. Most student participants were also conscious of the fact that working on-campus increased their employability, as it had allowed them to gain and sharpen professional skills.

Border University offered professional development training annually to all student employees. Border University's Student Worker Training program introduced a broader foundation for office-specific training. The program supported skill development and engaged students in empowering conversations about their role within the university community and the value of being a student employee. Students who participated in the Student Worker Training program reported being trained about the campus resources available on-campus, so that they could be referral points for the students they served through their jobs. Because of this training program, student employee participants became more aware of campus resources, were able to navigate the university effectively, and their use of campus resources was enhanced. Whereas

training about campus resources was designed to help undergraduate students navigate the university, student employee participants asserted that they benefitted from the knowledge presented to them.

Carlos summarized his training experience in the following way: “if it weren't for my on-campus job sponsoring me to attend this training, I wouldn't have known so much of what the university had to offer.” An added benefit to student on-campus employment was increased knowledge of how to access on-campus student services. “When I first thought of getting a Masters, and when it came time to apply, finding the graduate office to get questions answered was easy.” Carlos, who was graduating the semester when the interview took place, mentioned that because he had been trained and exposed on the location of offices around campus and what they did, he found applying to graduate school more easily.

Border University also offered an annual professional development training to student employee supervisors. This training was geared to help student employee supervisors understand their students, plus identify resources to best support the academic and professional goals of each student. The purpose of this training was to assure that each student employee supervisor had the resources and tools to create work environments that fostered professional opportunities and growth for its students. Supervisors echoed similar sentiments as of those experienced by student employees. Supervisors shared that any training or professional development workshops targeted towards supporting student employees were highly beneficial to them.

Such training was especially helpful to a young, first time supervisor like Sergio, who a year ago was a student employee himself. He shared that supervising students was different than what he expected. Therefore, any trainings that were offered to support his students, were

helpful. When asked about how he was adapting to his new supervisory role, Sergio had this to say:

I thought I knew how to connect with students, because, hey, I was a student not so long ago, but that is not the case when you become their supervisor. You need to act differently and distance yourself and be professional. You realize that you cannot be their friends. The student employee supervisor training showed me how to manage and develop my student employees.

Participants also mentioned seizing opportunities and learning from different trainings offered at their workplace. Laura who worked for Sergio shared that in her place of work, trainings were offered once a month. She praised her office leadership for providing professional development trainings to student employees. For Laura, having developed skills such as communication, phone, and email etiquette, and customer service, gave her an edge over her peers. “I am lucky to have pieces of training that help me be a better employee and professional, you know, my friends who work outside of campus don't have access to these trainings” Overall, Laura thought that what she had learned and developed through her trainings could help her in career after college. Similar to Laura's experience, Amanda credited the university for having offered student employees professional opportunities, not only to acquire and develop specific skills, but to test these learned skills as student employees. Amanda reflected on this by offering the following statement:

Working on campus provides you with professional experiences and learn from professionals. You get to develop, develop as an individual; you get to learn and grow, you get exposed to know stuff from other professionals, you know, whether it's know

how to answer phones professionally, whether it is knowing how to interact with individuals professionally. It's there [trainings] to help you grow.

Participants stressed the importance of these embedded opportunities that existed in their workplace. Students credited the opportunities offered at their workplace in developing professional skills that could be of benefit to them in their careers. In recognizing the effect of the professional training that took place in the students' workplace, and its direct impact on student's access to social capital, these trainings should be accessible for all students.

Early career experience. The participants were not intentionally thinking about their on-campus job impacting their career outlook when they took the job, but they realized it was a resume builder that offered opportunities to think of new career interests. Students described being exposed to new professional career fields because of their on-campus student employment. Alexa talked about how her job as a tutor and mentor for low socio-economic, first-generation students helped her to develop new career interests.

I am a mechanical engineering student, but I enjoy helping and teaching students. I never saw myself as potentially teaching after I graduate, but I figured that if it doesn't work out as an engineer, I can always try and be a professor, or something like that.

These students explored new areas of knowledge beyond their academic interests, and in some cases, developed new traits such as confidence. "I think I am a good role model for my students [peer mentees], said Eli." Peer mentoring helped Eli build his sense of confidence. In addition to raising his self-confidence, his work mentoring students about how to excel in college, inspired Eli to consider a career in higher education administration and student affairs.

Daniela, who was a kinesiology major, said that she was using her experiences working on-campus to prepare her to work in higher education. "I think of it as an internship of sorts. An

internship that I have been doing for a long..long..time.” Daniela further explained that her four years working for several departments on campus had exposed her to see how a university works and functions. It had served as her motivation to pursue a master’s degree in higher education administration.

For Ana, working on-campus had offered her a pathway into a career in politics. Ana was the student who participated in the summer program at Harvard. Ana shared that the people that she met and connected with at Harvard helped her get her fellowship in D.C. She never thought that these opportunities would ever have happened to her as a student at Border University.

It’s been quite a ride, freshman me would have never thought that I would have these experiences like going to Harvard and intern in D.C. I have my foot in the door to meet people that relate to my career and that connect to the things I want to do in ten years, and that is to be an elected official.

Students working experiences offered them greater insight and opportunities to better prepare and succeed for life after college. Other students were able to sharpen their career prospects. Olga expressed that a significant advantage of working in her office was that it gave her access to staff members that knew the recruiters that recruited at Border University and gave her advice about them. Olga said,

I understand that the people in my office can always support me and just provide me with credibility and also just give advice on you know, maybe it's a particular company, perhaps it’s a certain employer, they always seem to kind of have a network of they see this person who knows this person. And I think that’s definitely helped me in terms of just, you know, having an advantage.

Olga's interactions and access to these recruiters enhanced her career prospects because of the many different employers and companies that visited Border University. Her exposure to many employers gave her an advantage over many of her peers.

Exploring these students' descriptions of their working experiences provided insights about how employment on-campus offered many benefits to first-generation Latinx students. Overall, student participants expressed gratitude for their jobs, the people associated with their jobs, and for all the opportunities and capital that they had acquired because of it. The subsequent chapter will relate the findings back to the extant literature and discuss implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISSCUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the process of social capital formation among first-generation Latinx on-campus student employees from a Hispanic Serving Institution located on the U.S.-Mexico border. Specifically, the study aimed at understanding how first-generation Latinx students' work environment and their relationships with those encountered through work, affected how they formed social capital and navigated through higher education. Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) and Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory guided this study. A social capital lens was used to help understand the workplace experiences of student workers through attention to their social relationships and networks.

Social capital theory has been used in many studies to explain patterns tied to people, resources, or both (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital research argues that an individual's connections to people and the resources they contain have intrinsic value (Coleman, 1998; Lin, 2001). Social capital theory assumes people use their connections and their network—that is, relationships with those they encounter, in this case, their workplace—to acquire information, resources, and forms of support. Small (2009) contested that social capital formation and processes were more complicated because organizational context intervened on how individuals encountered, accessed, and used social capital, and by extension, what they gained from it.

Small's (2009) organizational brokerage theory posited that an individual's capacity to access and use social capital depended on the organizations in which individuals routinely participated and in the relationships that existed and were embedded within those organizations. Small was not the first to suggest the importance of organizational context for social capital attainment. Scholars such as Stanton-Salazar and Dornbush (1995) explored how organizations

and environments “transmit directly or negotiate the transmission of institutional resources and opportunities” (p. 117). Small’s (2009) work, however, challenges social capital theory by proposing new assumptions about where social capital comes from and how students acquire it. Small (2009) organizational brokerage theory shifts the focus to the organization, rather than to the student, to show how organizations offer individuals opportunities to develop and attain social capital.

Organizational brokerage theory (Small, 2009) was the foundation upon which I built my study and how it guided the study’s primary research question and interview protocol. A freelist exercise was used as part of the data collection process, and was completed before commencing the interview protocol. The freelist exercise helped define concepts and gather participants’ perceptions surrounding the study’s topic. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten first-generation Latinx student employees enrolled at Border University, who held diverse positions across the university. The interviewees also included six full-time staff student employee supervisors, who supervised the student participants. Documents such as student employment handbooks, policies, and digital documents, were also used as part of the data collection process to offer the researcher an understanding, as well as to discover insights relevant to on-campus student employment of the site under study.

Reflecting on my own experience, this was particularly important because of my positionality. As a former student employee and student employee supervisor at Border University, a layer of familiarity and empathy was integrated into the data analysis. Data analysis techniques were drawn from Saldaña (2015), and Merriam and Tisdale (2015). Saldaña (2015) and Merriam and Tisdale (2015) offered solid basic qualitative research practices for this study. Interviews were transcribed and data were analyzed from the transcriptions. A deductive method

to organize how student participants formed social capital was employed, before the data were categorized into themes. As the data were analyzed into themes, the findings were categorized according to the original research question:

1. How do employing organizations at Border University influence first-generation Latinx on-campus student employees' ability to form social capital and navigate through higher education?

Three major interrelated themes were identified in this study, addressing how student employees' workplace supported student employees in developing social capital. The themes included: (a) supportive environments, (b) on- and off-campus networks, (c) enriching experiences through embedded networks.

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to illustrate how building social capital through networks that motivate, help, and share a common goal towards student success outcomes, could help first-generation Latinx students with their college trajectory. First-generation Latinx college students often transition into higher education with a limited understanding on how to navigate higher education (Cataldi et al., 2018; Longerbeam et. al., 2004; Nunez, 2011; Perez, 2018).

Subsequently, as was the case with student participants from this study, many students cannot rely or ask their families for help in navigating higher education. Student participants often expressed feeling stuck and looking for ways or people to help them acculturate into higher education. Students found that working on campus provided them with opportunities for support with their transition to higher education and college success, which overpowered the potential money earned off campus.

The findings in this study supported Small's (2009) Organizational Brokerage Theory. Having explored participants' descriptions of their perspectives of on-campus student employment, provided insight into how Border University brokered and offered social capital to first-generation Latinx students. The results of this study suggested that student employees' supportive environments, on- and off-campus networks, and enriching experiences through embedded networks, helped them navigate higher education successfully.

Supportive Environments and Trusting Relationships

The opportunity to build social capital through supportive environments and trusting workplace relationships was demonstrated in this study. This finding was especially important to Latinx first-generation students' social capital development as indicated by Nunez et al. (2013). Their study suggested that Latinx students come from particularly relational and social cultures, and that supportive environments could result in long-term college success for them. From this perspective one can further argue that on-campus student employment through an organizational context, brokers social capital opportunities, as illustrated by Small (2009). Participants shared how their workplace experiences with their peers and supervisors were both supportive and intrinsically positive. Tierney and Colyar (2005) found that having a "web of support," bounded by meaningful relationships, was a crucial factor in students' development of self-efficacy, and that self-efficacy impacted higher education success.

Additionally, this finding indicated that on-campus working experiences helped establish trusting relationship which helped each participant build confidence and focus on their academics. The role that trust played for student employees had a great impact on how they perceived their work experiences. As supported by Stanton-Salazar (2004), Latinx students had been shown to rely on the advice of trusted people. Such trusting interactions in their workplace,

made students feel more connected with their peers and with their university, creating a sense of belonging amongst them.

The findings regarding the effects of supportive workplace environments and trusting relationships in this study were consistent with much of the previous literature on integration and sense of belonging in higher education (Elling & Elling, 2000; Kuh, 2009; McCormick et al. 2010; Salisbury et al., 2012; Tinto, 1993). Findings in this study support that participants experienced feeling connected and an overall sense of belonging through their on-campus student employment. Through their supportive working environments, and their established trusting relationships, participants expressed feeling an overall sense of belonging and connectedness to their campus.

Building community and having a sense of belonging on-campus, was a key developmental charge for Latinx students, in helping them transition onto higher education as pointed out by several scholars (Nuñez, 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This study highlighted the importance of the role people played whom participants worked with. Through their narratives, student participants shared that the contributions of, both peers and supervisors they encountered at their place of work, were of importance to them. Overwhelmingly, students reported feeling supported at their workplace, and described the people they worked with as individuals who cared about their success in higher education. These people played an intricate role in supporting their personal and professional growth throughout their higher education experience.

Kuh (2009) argued, that working on campus could be a developmentally powerful experience for student employees if student supervisors intentionally created opportunities to maximize their development. The finding of supportive environments and trusting relationships found in this study indicated that student participants' supervisors and peers, both contributed

significantly to students' social capital formation, acculturation into the university, sense of belonging, and professional development. In addition, students benefitted from good advice, encouragement, and increased access to resources and knowledge because of their relationships at work.

The literature on student employment has consistently demonstrated that on-campus student employment could motivate students to increase their investment of time and effort towards their educational and professional endeavors (Kuh, 2009; Kuh et al., 2011; Cheng & Alcantara, 2007). Participants shared having benefitted from receiving help with cover letters and resumes, and several supervisors also provided letters of reference. Subsequently, supervisors told their student employees about opportunities on campus, and often recommended and encouraged their student employees to participate in them. It was important to note that the supervisors' supportiveness impacted how student employees perceived their jobs. As a result of feeling supported and cared for, participants expressed feeling more integrated with the university because of the relationships they fostered with their supervisors and peers.

On- and Off-Campus Networks

The role of student employees' network in their acquisition of social capital in this study was noteworthy. Participants shared that the networks built through their student employment opportunity helped them navigate higher education. In part, this was because participants were often exposed to many campus resources and campus personnel to guide them. The finding of engaging relationships and networks directly aligns with Nunez and Sansone's (2016) study. Their study claimed that working, the workplace, and the relationships built through their student employment opportunity, could help first-generation students navigate both their work and higher education.

Participants expressed that working at Border University exposed them to a network of people that expanded their social and professional network. This network, consisting of professionals, peers, and faculty, helped connect them to opportunities within and outside the campus. The findings from this study confirmed that students who worked on-campus were more likely to make connections with faculty and staff, which is positively associated with higher education attainment and success (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005; Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1993), especially when these students are minorities (Nunez & Sansone, 2016; Stanton-Salazar, 2010).

The importance of a student's relationship with faculty and staff was further evidenced by studies of race/ethnicity among faculty and administrators, which demonstrated that identifying ethnically similar role models correlated with increased student success outcomes for students of color (Nunez, 2009; Nunez et al., 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Because over 70% of Border University staff shared the same ethnicity with student participants, students emphasized that the empathy that their supervisors demonstrated due to that familiarity, led them to feel supported and understood. Having interacted with campus administrators of similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the relationships that students established with them were meaningful because they could easily identify with them.

Students valued the relationships they were able to make with staff, faculty, and other students, through their student employment. As supported by Small (2009), the interactions that emerged from routine activities that student employees performed at work, led to increase their network. Opportunities to build relationships and connections with campus role models could be especially key to Latinx students' college success as addressed by Nuñez et al. (2013). It was important to acknowledge that some student employees gained access to influential university

personnel such as Provosts, Vice-Presidents, and alumni. From this perspective, according to Stanton-Salazar (2001; 2004), engaging and interacting with such influential people on campus served as critical sources of capital when wanting to understand how to navigate higher education.

It was clear, in the current study, that access to such influential people on campus led to transformational opportunities for student participants, which resulted in many privileges. Without exception, student participants expressed that they would not have established the connections, nor would they had been made aware of the many campus resources or opportunities available to them had they not been employed on-campus. The results of this study highlighted the importance of networking as it is often found in social capital research (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, Coleman, 1990; Lin, 2001; Putman, 2000). The relationships that students had with others became a resource that in turn provided new ideas, information, opportunities, and social support (de Janasz & Forret, 2008).

Enriching Experiences Through Embedded Networks

Not only did participants build meaningful relationships with students, staff, and faculty, they also learned new skills. Working on-campus helped students acquire skills to navigate successfully within their work environment, higher education, and career (Tinto, 1993; Elling & Elling, 2000; Kuh, 2009; Nunez & Sansone, 2016; McCormick et al. 2010; Salisbury et al., 2012). Students were exposed to new experiences that were intrinsically rewarding as opposed to their peers that did not work on-campus.

Nunez & Sansone (2016) suggested that creating more meaningful and enriching opportunities when working on-campus could help first-generation Latinx successfully navigate higher education. Participants expressed that working on campus revealed new knowledge and

skill development like professional development training and enriching experiences such as internships. Beyond the connections and network experienced through individual relationships and supportive environments, students expressed that their social capital formation was increased through their engagement with their campus and the enriching experiences afforded to them during their student employment.

Research showed that on-campus jobs provided opportunities for students to become engaged on-campus, which in turn offered pathways towards a successful higher education trajectory (Astin, 1993; Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Kuh, 2009; Mamiseishvilli, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). The findings regarding the involvement of student employees on campus, in this study, were consistent with much of the previous literature on student engagement. Student's ability to know about events, attend them, and utilize campus resources, enhanced their overall social capital and ability to navigate higher education successfully.

Participants recognized that they were afforded opportunities that were typically not extended to non-working students. For instance, some participants shared they were often invited to serve as members on university committees and advisory councils. Students described receiving many levels of attention through their participation in these committees. Therefore, campus leadership was more likely to extend to participants more considerable attention and personal access to them.

Lastly, a useful service identified by students in this study was having access to Border University's professional development training that was offered to on-campus student employees. The empowering professional culture and practices associated with this institutionalized expectation of student employees became a source of social capital from which

students could draw from. Through this institutional commitment, students shared that they felt prepared and had developed confidence in doing their job.

This study called attention to the students' work environment to help higher education understand how a student's workplace could support or impede student employees' social capital formation. Small's (2009) perspective on social capital and organizational brokerage theory helped examine how workplace environments shape how students develop social capital from their on-campus student employment. Small's (2009) emphasis on organizations shifted the attention away from individual relationships as noted by traditional social capital theorists, and towards the organizational context and its processes to generate social capital opportunities for individuals.

An important characteristic of organizational brokerage was that some interactions or resources brokered by the organization were not always actively pursued by the individuals involved within the organization. By this notion, "organizational brokerage theory introduces the possibility of acquiring resources while exercising little agency in the process" (Small, 2009, p. 155). The notion that brokerage intercedes agency was relevant to this study, given that on-campus student employment at Border University could help student employees acquire social capital as well as help students navigate successfully within their work environment and higher education.

This study illustrated many examples of purposive and nonpurposive acts, as described by Small (2009). In this case, ties among people sometimes happened accidentally when students were not trying. Students expressed in numerous occasions, throughout the study, that their connections with influential individuals happened unwillingly, or because their supervisor

introduced them to them. These brokered connections challenge the traditional framing of social capital theory, where theorists assume that people develop social ties on purpose.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Research

This study offered diverse directions for future research. Student employment, Perna (2010) stated, needs to be conceptualized as an experience that benefits students' educational and professional outcomes. It was suggested that studies were needed that focused on improving the quality of students' employment experiences to enable working students to navigate higher education (Perna, Cooper, & Li, 2006). Small (2009) offered that employment experiences should not be left as an individual action. Instead he proposed that organizations such as the ones where students worked should offer opportunities for participants to acquire social capital.

This study of first-generation Latinx student employees and their workplace environments has illustrated a perspective on personal networks and the social capital resources that existed through them. The findings of this study were significant and suggested further exploration. Findings identified how the relationships embedded within a student's on-campus student employment experiences built social capital for first-generation Latinx students. Developing social capital was important for first-generation Latinx students. As supported by Stanton-Salazar (2004), Latinx students' social capital attainment served as a critical source for their understanding and navigating of higher education. Social capital helped student participants garner tools such as the ability to network, understand diversity, explore new learning opportunities, and become members of formal organizations such as universities (Nunez & Sansone, 2016). Future social capital research should look into exploring the differences and similarities experienced between Latinx student employees enrolled in Border University, and

those enrolled in institutions that are geographically positioned in a non-border region (Nunez & Sansone, 2016).

Small (2009) offered an alternative model: organizational embeddedness. The organizational embeddedness perspective suggested, above all, that “what researchers had called a person’s social capital, depended substantially on the institutional practices of the organizations in which the person routinely participated” (p.177). This perspective suggested that how people acquired and formed social capital did not lie on the person, but in the organizations to which the person belonged to. Small (2009) recommended that students benefited from structured, embedded organizational support, suggesting that there should be an intentional and institutionalized effort in supporting student employees’ social capital attainment.

Border University’s approach to organizational brokerage implied that exposing student employees to as many resources as possible, through supportive environments and trusting relationships, would yield beneficial results to their social capital formation and higher education trajectory. Therefore, further research on trust, specifically the notion of organizational trust, may help explain why students pursue resource opportunities, which in turn, could inform institutional support options (Duncheon & Relles, 2018). Moreover, if embedded in the right organizations, a person could acquire significant advantages through their networks and the resources that existed within their organization (Small, 2009). Participants in the current study reported that the majority of opportunities afforded to them was in part because of the campus culture, supportive workplace environments, and institutional investment of resources towards student employees at Border University. It had been reported that Latinx student employees that did not work on-campus were not fully aware of the existing social capital opportunities that were present with on-campus student employment (Nunez & Sansone, 2016).

One could have argued then, based on this study, that students who chose to not work on campus were reportedly excluded from developing social capital at the same magnitude as those who worked on-campus because of its embedded opportunities and resources. This belief warrants additional exploration, as some first-generation Latinx students may have been aware of the benefits associated with working on-campus, yet still decided to work elsewhere. Studies that investigate how universities initially develop relationships for students—how and why these decisions are made, and by whom—would be useful to understand the nature of a university’s network and its potential influence on students’ social capital.

Research to further understand brokerage in higher education is also recommended (Small, 2009). This study offered an approach to focus on the value of networks and the relationships that existed within a student's workplace. The findings suggested that students had a vast amount of opportunities to connect with people who contributed to their college trajectory and success. As discussed previously, one of the major benefits that student employees expressed obtaining when working on-campus, was having the opportunity to connect with administrators and build their network. By calling attention to everyday interaction and organizational contexts, Small (2009) organizational embeddedness perspective, brought to light the advantages sustained by student employees at Border University.

Since many first-generation Latinx students come from particularly relational and social cultures (Nuñez et al., 2013), more research should focus on helping Latinx students build relationships within on-campus structures. Such research could be fundamental to first-generation Latinx students’ success and should be further explored. Also worth noting, was the fact that working on-campus often afforded students with the opportunities to develop other forms of capital, including cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Students discussed developing

cultural capital, when they described how their work experiences helped them to: (a) navigate the university better, (b) enhance their work skills, (c) handle their time management to balance responsibilities and tasks.

Even though the focus of this study did not underscore personal demographic information on the participants, it was important to highlight, that throughout the course of their interviews, students revealed other social identities that were germane to their perception of where they worked. Students talked about race, sexuality, gender identity, nationality, and ethnicity. Some of the participants felt that their identities were interrelated to the work they did. This may offer an opportunity for future research when looking at how students' work environment related to establishing their identity through their student employment. For example, future research could address how other social identities that are salient for many Latinx college students, such as immigration or citizenship status, condition how student employment shapes their college experiences.

Supervision emerged as an essential component of students' student employment experiences. This study revealed that student employees work and interact closely with their supervisors, underscoring the importance of the supervisory relationship. Supervisors in this study offered as much personal access and as many opportunities for meaningful interactions to students participants. The appreciation with which student participants spoke of such relationships with their supervisors was particularly striking. However, the literature on student employment had not delved into the value of relationships with student employee supervisors. A study to explore what kind of value first-generation Latinx college student relationships with student employee supervisors may have to student employees' overall college success could be worth exploring.

While the data in this study helped describe students' experiences with their on-campus employment and how it facilitated student employees' social capital formation, it fell short of addressing a model for how that may happen. The development of a model explaining student employment's social capital formation would be instrumental and should be pursued. As the number of HSIs increases, there is a need for more research that is relevant to supporting students like those enrolled in this current study. "Rather than assuming that increased access at HSIs will lead to increased graduation, leaders at HSIs must be more intentional in their efforts to develop support structures that lead to student success" (Garcia & Ramirez, 2018, p. 377).

Future research should extend Small's (2009) social capital framework to other higher education institutions who plan to recruit, enroll, and employ Latinx students. Subsequently, a comparative study can be applied at another minority-serving university such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and explore the organizational context and the relationship between student employees and their supervisors in those institutions. Such research can further examine how universities and their embedded relationships use their social capital, networks, and resources to empower students in higher education.

Lastly, More qualitative studies surrounding student employment should be explored further. Qualitative research as shown in this study could help inform institutional personnel on how to develop more supportive and capital-rich workplace environments. The collection of qualitative data from students could inform institutional personnel about which work experiences contribute most to student success (Mamiseishvili, 2010; Pusser, 2010). Such research could help challenge existing literature and commonly held assumptions about the role of work in students' college experiences.

Implications for Practice

The practical implications recommended here were drawn from students' comments about their on-campus student employment experiences. The current study contributed to the literature on student employment and our understanding about on-campus student employment in higher education. Analysis of the data indicated that through their student employment experiences, networks were built and enriching experiences were offered. In turn, this led participants to realize the gains from social capital through supportive environments, and helped them establish an overall sense of belonging to the campus. Through student participants' descriptions of their work experiences, insight was provided on how on-campus student employment could offer benefits beyond financial support to first-generation Latinx college students. In the ensuing section, implications are offered to higher education professionals to reevaluate and enhance on-campus student employment practices.

First, findings from the current study suggested the need to offer more students with the opportunity to work on-campus so that students could benefit from the outcomes, access to networks, and capital associated with on-campus student employment. Universities should consider investing in institutional centers focused on not just hiring more student employees, but also offer and teach them how to acquire and take advantage of social capital opportunities that exist on campuses, such as those discussed in this study. The types of social capital opportunities presented to student employees at Border University were unique, but were not accessible to every student on campus. If more first-generation Latinx students were made aware of the privileges afforded to student employees like those in the current study, perhaps they would seek to work on-campus.

Secondly, employing departments or supervisors should actively recruit students and not wait for them to apply for their open positions. Findings showed supervisors and their relationships with student employees to be a key factor in student employees social capital formation. Therefore, supervisors should act as advocates in sharing the benefits and opportunities offered in their workplace, with prospective student employees. However, it could be challenging to get students to work on-campus because employment outside the university pays more, or in general, because of the commitment, time, and demands working had on students. Therefore, universities should offer competitive wages, above the minimum wage to compete with off-campus employers.

Third, student employees participating in this study reported benefits from their on-campus employment experience such as building community and an overall sense of belonging. Through their on-campus student employment experience, many students said that they were able to construct familial relationships, friendships, and an overall sense of belonging. Student participants indicated numerous ways on how they felt cared for, and how they mattered to their supervisors and their peers. Furthermore, students felt they were part of a family and members of the university, they were seen and known and ultimately sensed that their contributions as student employees were significant. This finding underscores the significance of the role of belonging and what it could mean to a first-generation Latinx college student. Understanding how on-campus employment helps students develop a sense of belonging to their campus, could be a critical developmental initiative for higher education institutions to consider, when identifying ways in supporting Latinx students (Nunez & Sansone 2016).

Another suggestion for higher education to consider could be to offer trainings to student employee supervisors as those mentioned in this study. The training could draw focus to learning

how to make student employees feel respected, accepted, cared for, included, part of a team, and most importantly, valued. Also, developing practices focused on empathy towards student employees could help support students' sense of belonging and connectedness to the campus. Additionally, employing staff that represent their institutions' student demographic so that students do not feel alienated in their place of employment such as hiring alumni could provide students with strong institutional and culturally relevant knowledge pertaining to their place of employment.

Also, Small (2009) suggested that what people gained from their relationship networks depended upon the organization in which relationships were embedded; the more extensive one's social network, the more access to gather information and resources from others. It was relevant to point out that much of the social capital opportunities that were brokered in the student's workplace were tied to those they worked with and how they brokered social capital opportunities for them. Supervisors drove many of the brokered opportunities. In most cases, supervisors acted out of empathy and personal motivations, rather than what their job mandated. Knowing this, universities should consider providing resources to supervisors and empower them to develop enriching programs and trainings that create capital-rich environments, for their student employees. Specifically, environments that foreground purposeful, regular, and ongoing interactions that nurture meaningful relationships (Duncheon & Relles, 2018).

Finally, the relationships that existed in the workplace for the participants were significant to this study. Future practice suggests that students need to spend time with their supervisors and peers, alike (Stanton-Salazar 2004; 2011). Collaborative spaces and open door policies are encouraged in the student's workplace to remove any stigma that exists about supervisors not being available or approachable. The goal for employing organizations is to

make on-campus student employment an engaging experience. Student employees need to understand from their supervisors to what extent their work matters, by offering them frequent and constructive feedback. Therefore, it is important that the supervisors supporting these students, make sure they are communicating effectively with them.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The findings in this study have implications for higher education leaders who are committed to creating social capital networks and enriching experiences to serve minority students. For universities that are designated as HSIs, this study provided information about how networks and supportive environments could support and empower first-generation Latinx students. In applying Small (2009) framework to higher education, it became evident that a supportive organizational context and the relationships embedded within them made the difference in how first-generation Latinx students formed social capital and navigated through higher education successfully. The current study applied to first-generation Latinx students, as they continue to experience an increased need for student employment opportunities on-campus, especially at HSIs. All things considered, higher education researchers and practitioners should consider the extent to which social capital opportunities are present in on-campus student employment. It is also important to contemplate the process that student employees follow to acquire social capital, as well as the sufficient organizational capital that higher education possesses to broker it.

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APPENDIX A: STUDENT RECRUITMENT SAMPLE E-MAIL SCRIPT

Greetings:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Administration Ed. D. Program at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and I am conducting a qualitative research study. I am writing to ask for your participation in a research study that will focus on understanding how students' work environment and their relationships with student employee supervisors affect how first-generation Latinx student employees build social capital, their professional network, and navigate through higher education. To be eligible for inclusion in this study, you must be a first-generation, Latinx, on-campus student employee.

The purpose of this study, a first-generation student, is defined as someone whose parents never completed post-secondary education. I am asking student employees like you to answer a few open-ended questions related to your student employment experiences at UTEP. The goals of this study are to recognize the social supports and resources first-generation undergraduate students who work on campus encounter in their place of employment. This study also seeks to understand how student employee's relationships with their supervisor influence their work experiences.

Participants will be asked to read and sign an informed consent form prior to participating in this pilot study. Individual interviews will take approximately one hour. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and *confidential*. Names of participants will not be used in the study but rather participants will have an opportunity to select a pseudonym (pretend name) to protect their identity. All information gathered from the interviews will be kept confidential and secured.

Interviews will take place at UTEP at a date and time that is most convenient to the participant. Every effort will be made to best accommodate the participant.

I appreciate your time and consideration in participating in this study. It is through your participation that we can better understand the attitudes and perceptions of student employees concerning their on-campus work experiences.

If you have any questions about this survey, I can be reached by email at ccorrales@utep.edu or by phone at 915-747-6403.

Thank you for your participation.

Christian Corrales

Principal Investigator

Director of Campus Student Employment

The University of Texas at El Paso

APPENDIX B: SUPERVISOR RECRUITMENT SAMPLE E-MAIL SCRIPT

Greetings:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Administration Ed. D. Program at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and I am conducting a qualitative research study. I am writing to ask for your participation in a research study that will focus on understanding how students' work environment and their relationships with student employee supervisors affect how first-generation Latinx student employees build social capital, their professional network, and navigate through higher education. To be eligible for inclusion in this study, you must be a full-time staff member at UTEP who directly supervises student employees.

I am asking student employee supervisors like you to answer a few open-ended questions related to your experience supervising student employees at UTEP. The goals of this study are to recognize the social supports and resources first-generation Latinx undergraduate students who work on campus encounter in their place of employment. This study also seeks to understand how student employee's relationships in their workplace influences their work experiences and social capital formation.

Participants will be asked to read and sign an informed consent form prior to participating in this pilot study. Individual interviews will take approximately one hour. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and *confidential*. Names of participants will not be used in the study but rather participants will have an opportunity to select a pseudonym (pretend name) to protect their identity. All information gathered from the interviews will be kept confidential and secured. Interviews will take place at UTEP at a date and time that is most convenient to the participant.

Every effort will be made to best accommodate the participant.

I appreciate your time and consideration in participating in this study. It is through your participation that we can better understand the attitudes and perceptions of student employees concerning their on-campus work experiences.

If you have any questions about this survey, I can be reached by email at ccorrales@utep.edu or by phone at 915-747-6403.

Thank you for your participation.

Christian Corrales

Principal Investigator

Director of Campus Student Employment

The University of Texas at El Paso

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

UTEP Student Employees

Protocol Title: BROKERING SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ON HOW A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION FOSTERS SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR FIRST-GENERATION, LATINX, ON-CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYEES

Principal Investigator: Christian Corrales

UTEP: Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study focusing on student employment in higher education. This study is being conducted by Christian Corrales, a doctoral student from The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). You are being asked to be in the study because you are an undergraduate, Latinx, first-generation student and a part-time student employee at UTEP. Please take as much time as you need to read this form; you may keep this form for your records. You may also decide to discuss it with your family or friends. You must be 18 or older to participate. If you agree to participate, you will be given a copy of this form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand how students' work environment and their relationships with student employee supervisors affect how first-generation Latinx student

employees build social capital, their professional network, and navigate through higher education. This study aims to interview 10 to 15 students both male and female. Recruitment of UTEP student employees will be recruited through emails by the principal investigator (PI), Christian Corrales.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to take part in the following research activities:

1. *Interview:* You will be asked to meet with the researcher for one interview. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience and will take place at UTEP. During this interview, you will be asked to answer questions about (a) your experiences working as a student; and (b) your relationships with supervisors and peers. Interviews will last approximately one hour. If you agree, the interview will be audiotaped. If you do not want to be audiotaped, handwritten notes will be taken. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. The researcher may contact you for a follow-up after the interview, to make sure that I understood your answers and to see if you have any thoughts to add.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no other foreseeable risks or discomforts to participating in this study. Participation may include a small risk of psychological discomfort as a result of evaluating one's personal experiences related to their work experiences, for example, if someone got fired. The interviews will be conducted at UTEP in a private space to help participants feel safe disclosing any potentially negative information. Information shared by the participant will be strictly confidential and never shared with their employer. The only inconvenience might be setting aside time to talk to the researcher.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will not directly benefit from your participation in the study. However, some participants appreciate the opportunity to share their perspectives with an objective listener. In addition, your

insights have the potential to inform research related to on-campus student employment in higher education.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. I will assign a pseudonym (pretend name) to ensure anonymity for interview participants. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if you decide to discuss the contents of your interview outside of the research period.

The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer. You have the right to review audio recordings or transcripts of your interview. Data will be maintained indefinitely and may be used in future research studies. If you are not comfortable having your anonymous data used in future studies, please let the researcher know and your data will not be retained after the present study concludes.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your name.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

Your alternative is to not participate. Your employment/relationship with the university will not be affected, whether or not you participate.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please feel free to contact Christian Corrales at (915) 497-2827 or ccorrales@utep.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) directly at (915-747-7693) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

AUTHORIZATION STATEMENT

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on the results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name _____ Date _____

Participant Signature _____ Time _____

I consent to allow my anonymous data to be kept for future studies. I know that if I change my mind, I can tell the researcher and my data will be destroyed.

Participant Signature _____

Consent form explained and witnessed by:

Researcher Name _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Time _____

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

UTEP Student Employee Supervisor

Protocol Title: BROKERING SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ON HOW A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION FOSTERS SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR FIRST-GENERATION, LATINX, ON-CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYEES

Principal Investigator: Christian Corrales

UTEP: Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study focusing on student employment in higher education. This study is being conducted by Christian Corrales, a doctoral student from The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). You are being asked to be in the study because you supervise student employees at UTEP. Please take as much time as you need to read this form; you may keep this form for your records. You may also decide to discuss it with your family or friends. You must be 18 or older to participate. If you agree to participate, you will be given a copy of this form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand how students' work environment and their relationships with student employee supervisors affect how first-generation Latinx student

employees build social capital, their professional network, and navigate through higher education. This study aims to interview 6 to 8 supervisors both male and female. Recruitment of UTEP student employees will be recruited through emails by the principal investigator (PI), Christian Corrales.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to take part in the following research activities:

1. *Interview:* You will be asked to meet with the researcher for one interview. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience and will take place at UTEP. During this interview, you will be asked to answer questions about (a) your experiences supervising student employees; and (b) your relationships with student employees. Interviews will last approximately one hour. If you agree, the interview will be audiotaped. If you do not want to be audiotaped, handwritten notes will be taken. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. The researcher may contact you for a follow-up after the interview, to make sure that I understood your answers and to see if you have any thoughts to add.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no other foreseeable risks or discomforts to participating in this study. Participation may include a small risk of psychological discomfort as a result of evaluating one's personal experiences related to their work experiences, for example, if someone got fired. The interviews will be conducted at UTEP in a private space to help participants feel safe disclosing any potentially negative information. Information shared by the participant will be strictly confidential and never shared with their employer. The only inconvenience might be setting aside time to talk to the researcher.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will not directly benefit from your participation in the study. However, some participants appreciate the opportunity to share their perspectives with an objective listener. In addition, your

insights have the potential to inform research related to on-campus student employment in higher education.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. I will assign a pseudonym (pretend name) to ensure anonymity for interview participants. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if you decide to discuss the contents of your interview outside of the research period. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer. You have the right to review audio recordings or transcripts of your interview. Data will be maintained indefinitely and may be used in future research studies. If you are not comfortable having your anonymous data used in future studies, please let the researcher know and your data will not be retained after the present study concludes. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your name.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

Your alternative is to not participate. Your employment/relationship with the university will not be affected, whether or not you participate.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please feel free to contact Christian Corrales at (915) 497-2827 or ccorrales@utep.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) directly at (915-747-7693) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

AUTHORIZATION STATEMENT

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on the results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name _____ Date _____

Participant Signature _____ Time _____

I consent to allow my anonymous data to be kept for future studies. I know that if I change my mind, I can tell the researcher and my data will be destroyed.

Participant Signature _____

Consent form explained and witnessed by:

Researcher Name _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Time _____

APPENDIX E: STUDENT EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW SAMPLE PROTOCOL

Introduction:

The objective of the following participant interview protocol is to understand whether and how participants form ties (social capital) and how they understand the embedded relationships within their employing organization. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I have some questions that will help me learn more about your working experiences and how on-campus student employment are designed and supported at UTEP. I also have a consent form for you to sign. Thanks. And is it OK if I record this conversation?

Written Freelist Exercise

This task is called a free-list, and what I'm looking for are single words or short phrases that immediately come to mind when you think about the term "on-campus student employment." So, can you write down words or short phrases that come to mind when you think about "on-campus student employment"? I plan to give the participant about 2 minutes to complete this activity.

Let's talk about the first couple of terms on your list. What word or phrase did you write down, and why?

1. Please help me understand your background by telling me a little bit about you, any events or people that supported or helped you in your decision to attend college?
2. Can you briefly describe where you work, and how you found this job?
 - a. Can you please describe what you do exactly in your role as a student employee?
 - b. How has working on campus been for you?
 - c. How do you think your duties as a student employee have helped you personally, socially, or professionally?

3. Imagine that you have a friend who is enrolling as a freshman and who wants to work on campus but doesn't know how to find a job, based on your experiences finding your job, what advice would you give them?
 - a. Again, based on your experiences so far, what would you tell your friend are the pros and cons of working on campus rather than off-campus?

4. Can you describe whether or not you had a supervisor or mentor at your place of employment, and if so, what exactly did they do as a supervisor or mentor?
 - a. What was that interaction like?
 - b. Were you working more independently, or were you closely supervised?
 - c. What have you gained from such a relationship?

5. Please describe for me the people you work with, which may include your supervisor and peers.

6. Share with me the resources, support, or advice you have encountered in your place of employment?

7. How has your experience at UTEP been influenced by the people you have met through work?
8. What are some issues, events, situations, or struggles that you would consider an obstacle to working on-campus?
9. What role do you think your student employment will play in your future? Was there any specific experience at work that affected the way you think about your future career?
10. What, if anything, do you think you have gained from working on-campus?
11. What recommendations do you have for UTEP to better support students like you who work on-campus?

Thank you very much for your time. Are there any last observations or thoughts you'd like to share with me before we wrap up?

APPENDIX F: SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW SAMPLE PROTOCOL

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I have some questions that will help me learn more about your work and how on-campus student employment are designed and supported at UTEP. I also have a consent form for you to sign. Thanks. And is it OK if I record this conversation?

Written freelist exercise

This task is called a free-list, and what I'm looking for are single words or short phrases that immediately come to mind when you think about the term "on-campus student employment." So, can you write down words or short phrases that come to mind when you think about "on-campus student employment"? I plan to give the participant about 2 minutes to complete this activity.

Let's talk about the first couple of terms on your list. What word or phrase did you write down, and why?

1. Can you briefly describe your supervisory position?
2. How does student employment look like at UTEP?
 - a. How about within your department?
 - b. How is student employment in your department: (a) organized and (b) funded/resourced
3. How does your organization recruit, student employees?
 - a. What is the screening process like for student employees?
4. Who is responsible within your department for training and/or supervising student employees?
 - a. Describe the day-to-day supervision of student employees

- b. Describe the type of training student employees receive
5. What types of tasks are student employees typically asked to do? Is there any work you would not assign to student employees?
6. What, if any, types of feedback do you provide to your student employees?
7. How, if at all, do you see on-campus student employment as introducing students into a profession's culture?
 - a. What skills are student employees learning?
8. Why does your department hire student employees? What are the benefits, if any, of your department having student employees? What do you think are the benefits for students?
9. What are the drawbacks, if any, of your department having student employees? What are the drawbacks for students?
10. What are some challenges your (campus or dept) faces in operating a student employment program? What challenges do students face participating?
11. What additional resources do you think are necessary at UTEP to support on-campus student employment better?

Follow-up section

- Is there anything that you think is important that we didn't discuss yet?
- Can you recommend to me any colleagues whom you think I should talk for this research to learn more about how on-campus student employment is supported at UTEP? If I contact any of these individuals, I will not identify as a participant in this study.

Thank you very much for your time – I really appreciate it.

VITA

Christian Corrales was born in Matamoros, Tamaulipas and raised in Brownsville, Texas. He graduated high school in 2000 from Homer Hanna High School. He earned his Bachelor of Science with a concentration in Exercise Science from The University of Texas at El Paso in 2005. In 2013, he received his Masters of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Reading from the University of Texas at San Antonio. In 2016, he pursued his doctoral degree.

Christian Corrales has presented at regional, state, and national conferences. His most recent presentation was on student employment in higher education at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), First-Generation Conference in Orlando in the summer of 2019. In addition, Mr. Corrales has presented on leadership development, and networking strategies. Christian Corrales is currently working as an Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. He began working in this role at the beginning of 2020. Prior to that, he worked for The University of Texas at El Paso as the Director for Community Relations and On-Campus Student Employment. In total, Mr. Corrales has been working in higher education for 10 years. His long-term goals include developing future leaders, and continue working in higher education at any administrator leadership capacity.