

Psychological Well-Being and the Role of Social Support:
A Qualitative Exploration of Black Women and Latina College Student Experiences
Alexis K. McDonald

Honors Thesis

Department of Psychology, The University of Texas at Austin

Faculty Advisor: Mary A Steinhardt, PhD

Graduate Student Advisor: Jaylen Wright, M.S.

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Dedication

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This thesis is dedicated to every Black woman and Latina student who might feel like their voices are never heard. Know that your experiences matter and you are never alone.

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Abstract

Objective: The transition to and through college can be a difficult and challenging experience for college-aged young adults. Historically marginalized women, specifically Black and Latina, are considered to be at an increased risk of experiencing psychological distress and unique barriers throughout their college-years. This qualitative study explored the narratives of Black women and Latina college students, and how their utilization of social support resources influenced their mental health and well-being. **Participants.** Participants (N=14) were undergraduate students currently enrolled in a college or university, age 18-25 years, and self-identified as female and Black/African American (10) or Latina (4). **Methods.** A qualitative descriptive thematic analysis was performed on participants' responses to a free-response questionnaire that they completed online. **Results.** Key themes that emerged as barriers to psychological well-being were developed into four major categories: discontinuity barriers, resource barriers, social support barriers, and overall barriers to positive mental health outcomes. Key themes that emerged as the types of support to aid psychological well-being were developed into six major sources: programs, peers, faculty/staff, institutional level, academic, and psychological. **Conclusion.** Across all key themes, this study found that our Black women and Latina student's sense of belonging and ethnic or identity similarity to their academic and social environments play key roles in their experiences of positive psychological well-being. Given the vulnerability of historically marginalized students, future research should continue to explore the relationship between social support resources and positive health outcomes, and develop necessary interventions to help young Black women and Latinas thrive in the face of adverse circumstances.

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Psychological Well-Being and the Role of Social Support

The study of resilience, or bouncing back from adversity, is of paramount importance for young adults attending college today. Approximately 91% of counseling center directors at American universities report a recent increase in the prevalence and severity of psychological problems on their campuses (Gallagher, 2011). Furthermore, young adults experience developmental challenges transitioning to adulthood, such as identity formation, separation, individualization, and intimacy (Chan et al., 2019). The adjustment to college can also pose a threat to mental health. Among American colleges, 62.3% of students reported overwhelming anxiety during the school year, and nearly 42% of students reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function (American College Health Association, 2018). The need to address mental health problems among young adults is a growing concern among researchers, but there is a gap in addressing the unique needs of students of color within the young adult population.

According to the minority stress theory, negative mental health outcomes are related to minority stressors, such as, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression (Meyer, 2003), therefore there is reason to believe that minority students are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress. In fact, the sole characteristic of being a racial/ethnic minority was found to be a strong predictor of negative mental health outcomes, regardless of being a part of the majority or minority status at their respective university (Smith, Chesin, & Jeglic, 2014). Despite the recognition of minority mental health, there is still little known about women of color, in particular. In order to explain the oppression of African American women, Crenshaw (1991) coined the term “intersectionality” to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics “intersect” with one another and overlap. The current knowledge of intersectional identity argues that multiple minority statuses can enhance oppressional forces and stressors

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(Crenshaw, 1991). While racism negatively impacts mental health, minority women are exposed to “gendered racism” (i.e., discrimination based on race and gender), which is significantly correlated with depression (Essed, 1991). The combination of stressors related to transitional-age youth (e.g. the demographic spanning older adolescence to young adulthood (Wilens & Rosenbaum, 2013), college adjustment, minority status, and gendered racism are the factors driving this study to explore resilience and effective coping sources among Black women and Latinas.

One known source of positive coping is social support, which has been linked to better mental health outcomes (Bockting, Miner, Romine, Hamilton, & Coleman, 2013; Budge, Adelson, & Howard, 2013). In fact, college students generally report low help-seeking behaviors, especially as it pertains to mental health concerns (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). If the general population of college students are struggling to find institutional support on campus, then we predict minority students are more at risk for support. The risk for minority students is related to the combined consequences of marginalized intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Further exploration of the utilization of social support among Black women and Latinas on college campuses is necessary to understand the process of effective coping. For the purposes of this study, we will conduct a qualitative descriptive thematic analysis, collecting responses from students who identify as Black women or Latinas, to discover the types of social support utilized by this population, how they utilize them, and why they utilize them. The study implication is then to understand which interventions are necessary to help young Black women and Latinas thrive in the face of adverse circumstances.

Psychological Resilience and Well-Being

Resilience can be defined as the ability to cope with adversity, bouncing back from failure, or positive adaptability to individual stress (Goldberg & Williams, 1988; Chmitorz et al., 2018). In the 1950s, the study of resilience began to surface as researchers became interested in the process of coping. The term was first conceptualized and measured by Block (1950) as “ego-resiliency”, or the capacity of an individual to adapt in the context of environmental forces and maintain internal equilibrium (Block & Kremen, 1996). The concept developed within the literature as a personality trait, characterized by the ego (Kararmak & Figley, 2017). More studies began to support this theory of resilience as a relatively stable trait that exists across time and context. For example, Wagnild and Young (1993) defined resilience as a positive character trait that alleviates stress and promotes adaptability. In the study of child development, Masten & Garmezy (1985) identified high self-esteem and autonomy as personal characteristics of “resilient children”. Similarly, Tamannaefar and Shahmirzaei (2019) found a relationship between resilience and personality traits, such as extroversion, agreeableness, and openness. From an etiological view, Terock et al. (2019) found an association between stress-related genes and the development of trait resilience after exposure to childhood trauma. The common finding for all the above studies is the idea that resilience is a trait, a relatively stable characteristic of self that is not easily modified by external factors. However, the idea that resilience is a stable personality trait continues to be challenged by other researchers. The competing hypothesis is that resilience is a state or dynamic process that can be manipulated (Garmezy, 1991; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1982). Stewart, Reid, and Mangham (1997) found that resilience could be influenced by external and internal sources and represented the capacity for individuals to adapt. Moreover, a longitudinal study by Werner and Smith (1982) on a group

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of high-risk children found that resilience could be moderated by social support. This finding supports the hypothesis that resilience acts as a dynamic process of growth that is not static, but rather exists on a continuum of vulnerability (Haddadi & Besharat, 2010). This idea of resilience is in contrast to the previous hypothesis that resilience is an ego-specific, stable personality trait (Karairmak & Figley, 2017). Therefore, we have two competing ideas that challenge the operationalization of resilience.

Understanding the concept and the process in which resilience works is important due to it being identified as a protective factor against psychological distress. The particular type of resilience that protects against psychological distress is known as psychological resilience, and it involves adaptive psychological functioning and the interplay between behavior, cognition, and affect (Ijntema, Burger, & Schaufeli, 2019). For the purposes of this study, resilience will be operationalized as psychological resilience. Furthermore, psychological resilience has been defined as either a stable personality trait or a dynamic process that can be mediated by external factors. Ijntema et al. (2019) reviewed 286 studies on psychological resilience and found that in most of these studies psychological resilience was identified as a dynamic process, especially if the study focused on adaptability, coping with adversity, and resilience-building interventions. Therefore, we will study psychological resilience as a dynamic process that unfolds over time in the context of the environment.

In order to understand the development of psychological resilience, we must determine the external factors that drive resilience. In other words, what factors predict psychological resilience in individuals? Southwick and Charney (2012) identify ten factors that drive positive adaptability, they call “resilience factors”, one of these factors being social support. Specifically, they found that low levels of social support is associated with depression, PTSD, and medical

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morbidity, while high levels of social support is associated with greater sense of control, enhanced immune function, lower levels of depression, and resilience (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Moreover, Newhart, Mullen, & Gutierrez, (2019) found social support to be especially influential to college students and their mental health. However, less is known about the specific types of social support resources that impact resilience. In addition, there is a gap in addressing the utilization of social support resources by Black women and Latinas at college campuses. Given that female students of color are at risk for psychological distress (Robinson-Brown & Keith, 2003), this study will explore the nature of social support in relation to resilience, specifically to Black women and Latinas.

Social Support as a Protective Factor

Among all the factors that influence adaptive coping and positive psychological outcomes, social support is one that has been widely studied. Social support is an important external resource that buffers the outcome of chronic stress (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). For example, Caron, Latimer, and Tousignant (2007) found that the presence of social support had the potential to mediate the relationship between mental health problems and poverty. On the other hand, Adamczyk and Segrin (2015) found that even if individuals report low levels of stress, their mental health still benefits from social support. In order to understand why social support is strongly correlated with mental health, our study utilizes multiple theoretical frameworks. One is the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, which holds that positive emotions broaden one's thought-action repertoire (e.g. help-seeking behaviors and formation of new relationships), build one's enduring personal resources (e.g. social support and resilience), and finally enhance one's mental health, survival, and personal fulfillment (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). The other is the theory of relatedness or sense of belonging. This theory holds that human

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experience involves a search for meaningful interpersonal relationships, and without this, humans might experience biological and psychological disturbances (Sargent, Williams, Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, & Hoyle, 2002). This is similar to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs which characterizes human needs as a pyramid, with a sense of belonging next to the bottom, being only preceded by safety and physiological needs. Finally, we also utilized a "barriers to minority success model", which analyzed strategies that successful minority students employ to overcome barriers to academic success. Within their framework, they identified four major barriers to minority academic success: discontinuity, resources, lack of presence, and nurturing barriers (Padilla et al., 1997). These theories serve as a framework for our study in exploring the relationship between social support utilized by college students and their psychological resilience.

Given that social support has been shown to be influential on overall mental health (Adamczyk & Segrin, 2015), colleges and universities have made efforts to implement forms of institutional support for their students. Means and Pyne (2017) reviewed the types of institutional support implemented across college campuses and found learning communities (e.g., Cambridge-Williams, Winsler, Kitsantas, & Bernard, 2013; Habley & McClanahan, 2004; Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002), tutoring centers (e.g., Habley & McClanahan, 2004), student organizations (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012); faculty members (e.g., Freeman et al., 2007; Hausmann et al., 2007), and academic advising (e.g., Habley & McClanahan, 2004) to be the most common types of institutional support. From the types of support identified on college campuses, we are interested in studying which types are fully utilized by students. Our study intends to bridge the gap between the implementation of institutional social support and the outcome perceived by students. Moreover, Hefner and

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Eisenberg (2009) confirmed that students with social disadvantages, such as low socioeconomic background, international status, and ethnic/racial minorities are more at risk for social isolation. Therefore, our study will intentionally explore the role of social support through the experiences of students who identify as women of color.

Research suggests that social support can be measured and defined in a variety of ways. For example, Kathryn Ecklund (2013) measured social support using a narrative approach to explore successful recommendations for first-generation ethnic minority students. From these narratives, she found that first-generation ethnic minority students require a different approach in advising and mentoring because they may not have interpersonal support, familial support, or knowledge of the pathways that would allow them to successfully apply their capabilities in the college setting. The implication from this study was that minority students conceptualize their social support in unique ways and specific interventions should be tailored to their lived experiences. Due to the alternative methods that can be utilized to holistically examine the role of social support for Black women and Latina students, a qualitative descriptive approach will serve as the primary method for this study.

Intersectional Identities for Women of Color

National data conducted on colleges and universities indicates a growing concern for student mental health. According to the Spring 2018 National College Health Assessment sponsored by the American College Health Association (ACHA, 2018), 41.9% of college students reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function, 1 in 8 students reported that they seriously considered suicide during the preceding 12 month period, and 57.6% of college students reported more than average or tremendous levels of stress. Within the college population, certain groups might be more at risk for depression and anxiety, including females,

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racial/ethnic minorities, students with low socioeconomic status, relationship stressors, low social support, and a history of sexual victimization (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). However, most studies have looked at specific marginalized groups (e.g. women, racial minorities, LGBTQ community, etc.), separate from one another. For example, Nadal and Haynes (2012) found that gender discrimination is a major contribution to why women in college are more at risk for depression and anxiety, which is consistent with reports by college women that they experience sexism, demeaning comments, gender-role stereotyping, and sexual objectification at least once a day (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). On the other hand, racial minority students have also reported to be at risk for mental health problems (Cokley, Hall-Clark, & Hicks, 2011). For example, Kearney, Proper, & Baron (2005) found that minority students seeking college counseling services reported greater psychological distress than their white peers. This is potentially related to additional stressors unique to minority students, such as, discrimination, prejudice, racism, microaggressions, and underrepresentation of racial minority faculty and advisors (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009; Guevara, Adanga, Avakame, & Carthon, 2013). Microaggressions, in particular, are related to mental health through the framework of racial battle fatigue⁷. This phenomenon occurs over time, with the accumulation of emotional, psychological, and physiological distress, as a result of constantly battling a hostile environment of overt or subtle racial microaggressions (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). This is consistent with students of color reports of physical and emotional fatigue when coping and defending against microaggressions (Smith, 2009a; 2009b). The outcome is a heightened stress response that has an overall negative effect on psychological well-being (Hernández & Villodas, 2019). This led Smith, Chesin, and Jeglic (2014) to ask the question: Will psychological distress still be high for racial/ethnic minorities even if they

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represent the majority population of their institution? They found that even when students of color represented the majority racial demographic within their college, there was still higher psychological distress in racial/ethnic minorities than their white peers (Smith, Chesin, Jeglic, 2014). In other words, this study indicated that it is not the status of being a minority at an ethnically diverse college, but rather, the identity as a student of color that predicts poorer mental health outcomes, such as loneliness, depression, and suicidality. The implication from this study was that future research needs to study psychological outcomes for different racial groups. In addition, interventions and treatments related to the mental health of adolescents and college students must adapt to the diverse needs among students.

Intersectionality is the idea that multiple social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. overlap (or intersect) to form interdependent systems of oppression and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). The term was first coined by Crenshaw (1989) who argued that gender was not a homogenous category, and women of color experienced different forms of oppression than white women during the early feminist movements. Since the introduction of this idea, scholars have now created an intersectional theoretical framework for analyzing the complex dynamic of social identity and mental health (Morrow & Hardie, 2014; Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). Crenshaw (1991) claimed that any analysis of racism or sexism that does not utilize the idea of intersectionality cannot fully address the experience of Black women. This is similar to the research on “gendered racism”, a term coined by Essed (1991), that refers to discrimination based on the combination of race and gender. Gendered racism has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the mental health and wellbeing of women of color (Cottonham, 2018). Given these findings about the importance of addressing overlapping social identities, our study is specifically designed to focus on the unique needs of students who

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identify as a Black or Latina woman. There is a gap in the literature in addressing the vulnerability of women of color and psychological distress. Therefore, more knowledge is needed on what coping strategies are useful for producing psychological resilience among this intersecting group.

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

This study aims to explore the utilization of social support by Black women and Latina students and its association with resilience. Research methods used to previously evaluate social support and resilience have included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. For example, Nunez (2009) conducted a study on Latino students' sense of belonging on college campuses, using quantitative methods. Furthermore, Sossou, Craig, Ogren, & Schnak (2008) conducted a qualitative investigation of seven refugee women to explore underlying resilience factors from their experiences. Finally, Zumbrunn, McKim, Buhs, and Hawley (2014) conducted a mixed methods study that utilized quantitative and qualitative methods and found that social support in the classroom is a strong predictor of academic resilience. Given that multiple methods have been used to study social support and resilience, it is important to evaluate which research method is most appropriate for this study's questions. According to Hammarberg, Kirkman, and Lacey (2016), quantitative methods are appropriate when general information is sought on opinions, beliefs, or attitudes, when variables can be isolated and defined, when data based on 'factual' evidence is required to answer the question, and when the research question is known, clear, and unambiguous. On the other hand, qualitative methods are more appropriate when the research questions are about experience, meaning, and perspective of the participant, when the researcher aims to better understand a problem, when follow-up information is needed for future direction, when issues at hand are complex, when quantitative statistical analysis does not fit the

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problem, or when voices in the population have traditionally been silenced (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and Lacey, 2016; Creswell, 2013). For the purposes of this study, a qualitative approach was determined most appropriate because we are exploring questions about experience and meaning, addressing issues that are complex in nature, and seeking to give voice to the experiences of Black women and Latina students, a traditionally marginalized group on college campuses. To further support this approach, Nunez (2009) suggests in the quantitative study of Latino's sense of belonging on college campuses, that future research ought to draw on the power of multidimensional methods (i.e. qualitative methods) to uncover the inconsistencies that underlie how students of color perceive social support on campus. Therefore, there are advantages to qualitatively collecting data in a systematic way, so that we can better understand differences in experience.

Conclusion

The objective of this study is to explore sources of support utilized by Black women and Latinas on college campuses. Marginalized women of color are uniquely vulnerable to psychological distress during their college years because of factors related to minority stressors (e.g. prejudice, discrimination, and microaggressions), developmental transitions, and sense of belonging. One known source of resilience against psychological distress for college students is social support. Although institutional support, including learning communities, tutoring centers, student organizations, academic advising, faculty members, and counseling centers have been widely implemented on college campuses, there is a gap in the literature in addressing the utilization of these services, especially among Black women and Latina students. This qualitative study will be one of the first, to our knowledge, to give a voice to Black women and Latinas on college campuses in relation to their psychological resilience. We aim to discover alternative

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forms of support unique to women of color, in order to recommend intentional support interventions for Black women and Latina students.

Methods

Design Overview

This study took a qualitative approach, using a qualitative descriptive research design. We drew on narrative inquiry, or the study of experience as a story, because it had the advantage of analyzing experiences told from the perspective of participants and shedding light on marginalized identities (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of this research design was to bring traditional marginalized voices, Black women and Latina students, to the forefront of discussion and provide additional insights into this phenomena. By using qualitative descriptive methodology, we were able to collect individual responses through an in-depth, free-response, online questionnaire among college-aged, female students who identified as Black or Latina. The questionnaire was designed to allow these students to explain in their own words where they experienced sources of support on their college campus. We explored their perceptions of barriers to social support, use of alternative sources of support, and how their experience of social support contributed to their overall psychological well-being. Data collection and analysis included the coding and recoding of thematic material within questionnaire responses. We expected to find a positive association between the social support of women of color and psychological well-being, where the more a student feels well-supported by familial, academic, or social sources, the better perceived psychological health & well-being. We also expected to identify an underutilization of current institutional support services, consistent with previous research (Eisenberg, 2009). This finding would allow us to discover the alternative forms of support that are utilized and unique to Black women and Latina college students, for the purpose of driving future research.

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Participants

The participants in this study were fourteen undergraduate students currently enrolled in a college or university, age 18-25 years, who met the following criteria: (a) self-identified as female, (b) Black/African American or Latina. In keeping with the qualitative research approach, a “purposeful sample” dictated that the researcher be intentional about the individuals they selected to provide an informed understanding of the research problem in the study, and where 80% of data saturation will have been reached by at least 6-8 individual interviews (Creswell, 2013). After IRB approval of this study [IRB Study: 2020-02-0027], the participants were recruited through the distribution of an online questionnaire in April 2020, if they met the participant characteristics. The selected participants did not receive compensation for their participation.

Data Collection and Procedures

In keeping with the qualitative descriptive analysis approach, the main tool for data collection for this study was an in-depth, free-response, online questionnaire. This questionnaire was intended to replace in-person interviews that could not be conducted at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the safety of participants. The questionnaire consisted of informed consent to the study, demographic questions, and eight in-depth, free-response questions. The nature of the demographic data collected included race/ethnicity, age, sex, year in school, first-generation status, on/off campus living status, official campus organization involvement, and self-reported disabilities. This information is reported below in Table 1.

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Table 1Demographics of Sample Population From Online Questionnaire

Factor	N	%
Sex (% female)	14	100
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	10	71.4
Hispanic	4	28.6
Year in School		
Freshman	0	0
Sophomore	5	35.7
Junior	1	7.1
Senior	8	57.1
First-generation (% yes)	3	21.4
Living status		
On Campus Dorm	1	7.1
West Campus	8	57.1
Other Off-Campus	5	35.7

Note: n=14. Participants were on average 20.6 years old.

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Interviews. According to Patton (1990), qualitative interviewing first begins with the assumption that people have stories to tell that are meaningful and informative. The free-response questionnaire allowed the participants to provide rich data about their experiences of social support in college and their psychological well-being, in lieu of an in-person interview. Each online questionnaire began by informing the participants of the nature of the study, which was to examine the role of social support in their college experiences. If participants consented to participating in the study, they were then asked to provide a series of demographic information, and finally, to respond freely to eight in-depth questions. The completion of the questionnaire was expected to take anywhere between 15 and 30 minutes of the participants time, and could be done from home in an online setting. Participant responses were collected and stored in a password secured, online data management program owned by the principal investigator. Microsoft Word was used to transcribe each interview, and Microsoft Excel was used for the coding and thematic data analysis of the interview transcripts. The full list of interview questions can be found below in Table 2. The nature of the data collected came from sharing experiences that pertained to the participant's overall health and well-being as a college student and the areas or levels of support they received since entering college. The questions started out by asking the participants to reflect on their barriers or challenges they may have experienced coming into college. From there, the participants were asked a series of questions related to perceived social support and utilization of institutional support. Finally, the questions also asked participants to reflect on how their responses might be related to their identity, which underlies the purpose of the study, to shed light on social support of traditionally marginalized voices and in-person interviews.

Table 2**Interview Questions**

1. As you think back to when you started college, did you have any barriers or challenges that you think made it difficult to be successful? What about as a Black/Latina woman?
 2. Who or what (people, programs, events, classes) began to help you overcome or start to address some of those barriers?
 3. What was it that they said or did that helped? What was it about that (event, program, class) that helped?
 4. As you think about your recent experiences in college, do you feel supported and why/why not? Can you give me an example?
 5. Were there times during this period where you didn't feel supported and what did you do to address that?
 6. What are some good things that the university or college is doing to promote your health/well-being? What about as a Black/Latina woman?
 7. What are some things that you think the university or college could do to improve?
 8. If I were a Black/Latina woman about to enter into my first semester of college, what advice would you give me?
-

Note: These questions were included in an online questionnaire, rather than an in-person interview. Participants were instructed to respond freely, openly, and in-depth.

Qualitative Methodology

Data analysis of qualitative studies leads to meaning making and is often reported as descriptive accounts of a participant's experience and themes that cut across all participants in a given study (Merriam, 2009). No data transformations and calculations were used to analyze this set of qualitative data. Instead, a qualitative descriptive thematic analysis was performed. This process included the interview transcript creation from questionnaire responses, codebook development, three cycles of thematic coding, and finally, development of a thematic map to visually display the results of the study. A thematic analysis was used to analyze and construct

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the data of 14 Black women and Latina college students. The data analysis process followed a four-phase plan: Phase I was the review of questionnaire responses and documented transcripts of each in-depth interview. Phase II was the actual analysis of in-depth interviews using the qualitative descriptive thematic analysis method. This method is described in more detail below. Phase III was the peer review, which involved a second coder analyzing the in-depth interviews. The purpose of a second coder was to ensure that the themes, key words, and statements align with the interviewer's analysis, and reached saturation. The second coder was the graduate student advisor with prior background knowledge on the qualitative research methods and the underrepresented college student population. This phase was crucial in ensuring the reliability and consistency of the data. Finally, phase IV was the translation of the findings. During this phase, we discussed the findings, created visual content of the results, and wrote up the report.

Qualitative Descriptive Thematic Analysis

The qualitative descriptive method is a type of qualitative analysis that aims to summarize, in a comprehensive manner, specific experiences of an individual or group (Lambert, V. & Lambert, C., 2012). According to Sandelowski (2000, 2010), qualitative descriptive research is categorical, less interpretive, and does not require a highly abstract conception of data. This type of method draws on naturalistic inquiry, in which the researcher seeks to observe phenomena in its natural state and does not attempt to manipulate or influence the outcome of events (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Data collection involves individual interviews to discover information about the who, what, and where of events, while data analysis involves what is called *directed thematic analysis*, which is used in studies where existing theory or research exists, i.e. the broaden and build theory (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Within the 4-phase qualitative descriptive analysis plan, there were 8 steps that this study used to analyze the thematic data

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across the interview transcripts. These steps of analysis were performed for each individual's responses, therefore, we went through multiple cycles of data analysis until code and thematic saturation across the interviews had been reached. **Step 1.** We created a coding manual derived from theoretical frameworks and previous research. Codes will be chunks of text or labels reflecting themes that appear regularly. For the purposes of this study, we used multiple theoretical frameworks to help inform the development of our codebook. These were the barriers to minority success model (Padilla et al., 1997) and the broaden and build theory (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). (**Step 2.** The researcher used the margins of each transcript to mark pre-analytic comments or remarks that suggest connections, leads, or new interpretations. These remarks added meaning and clarity to transcripts. **Step 3.** The research then proceeded with first-level coding, which involved slicing the data into large chunks. These chunks were divided into meaning units and one or more codes were applied during this phase. The purpose was to condense the data and trigger units for deeper reflection. **Step 4.** Next, conceptually similar codes were organized into categories by revisiting the theories framing the study. Then, second-level or pattern coding were used to group data into smaller sets. Miles et al. (2014) is used to provide examples for creating and categorizing sets. **Step 5.** Pattern codes were then revised and redefined in the coding manual. Examples from the text were then added to the manual. **Step 6.** Analytic memos are the documentation of the researcher's thoughts, reflections, and assessment of the data (Miles et al., 2014). These can be brief or extensive and begin during data collection. During this phase, the researcher began summarizing analytic memos and creating additional memos that combined similar observations. **Step 7.** Next, data displays and visual representations of concepts were created, which is another helpful process to analyze the data and allowed the research to enhance categorization. **Step 8.** Finally, the researcher determined

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what is the best way to represent the findings in a creative and rigorous way (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Miles et al., 2014; Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012; Stake, 2010; Wolcott, 2009). Overall, the purpose of using the qualitative descriptive method was so that I could embed the key findings from the interview responses into previous theoretical frameworks (i.e. the broaden and build theory), which then helped to explain our expected outcomes.

Results

The results of this study are best summarized as answers to two major research questions: What are the barriers for psychological well-being, and what are the types of social support resources utilized by Black women and Latina college students? Therefore, I will present the results in two major sections, corresponding to these research questions. Overall, the analysis and coding from 14 participant questionnaires yielded 41 themes. The themes were analyzed for similarities and then grouped into various categories developed from two theoretical frameworks: broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) and barriers to minority success model (Padilla et al., 1997). There were four major categories that all of the themes were linked to: discontinuity barriers, resource barriers, activities and relationships, and overall mental health outcomes. Table 3 below lists the frequency of each theme and its corresponding category.

Table 3

Category and Themes (Frequency)

Category	Themes
Discontinuity (50)	outlook/mindset (18) high school (10) academic preparedness (8) familial education and involvement (5) affording school (4) college transition (2) home environment (2) culture shock (1)

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Resources (18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mental health services (10) disability services (4) Scholarships (2) financial aid (1) on/off campus job (1)
Activities/Relationships (183)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic/professional support (8) academic/professional support (lacking) (10) ethnic or identity similarity (23) extracurricular activities (10) faculty/staff support (13) faculty/staff support (lacking) (4) familial support (7) familial support (lacking) (1) institutional support (3) institutional support (lacking) (15) mentorship (10) one on one support (10) peer pressure (2) peer support (17) peer support (lacking) (3) prejudice/racism (6) program support (21) program support (lacking) (2) psychological support (9) psychological support (lacking) (7) spiritual/religious support (2)
Mental Health Outcomes (92)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sense of belonging (26) psychological distress (24) Help-seeking (12) knowledge and skills (11) Strengths (9) purpose seeking (6) self-care techniques (4)

Major Finding: Barriers to Psychological Well-Being

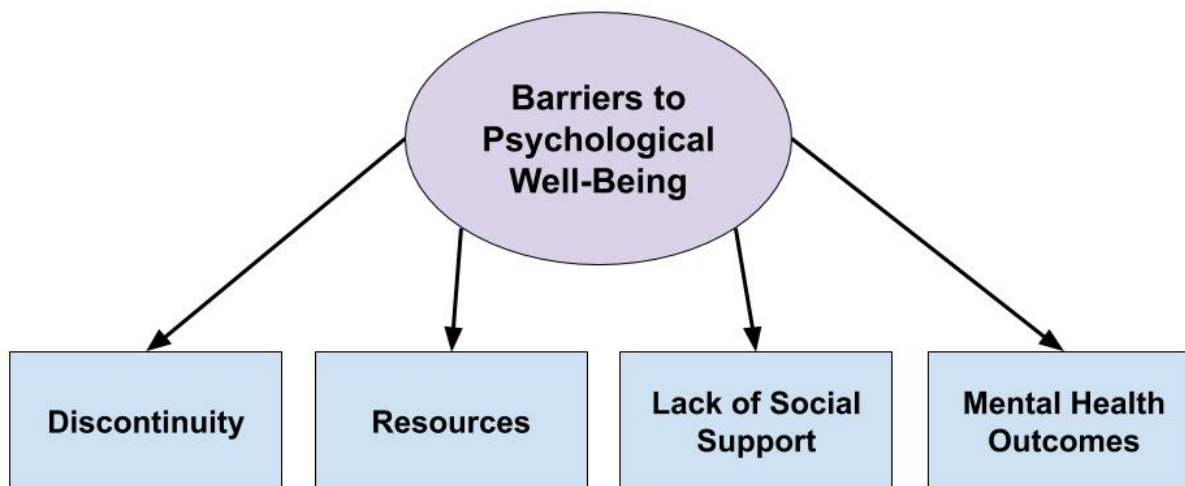
The first major research question was: What are the barriers to psychological well-being for Black women and Latina students? We found that the key themes that emerged as barriers to psychological well-being fit into four major categories: discontinuity barriers, resource barriers,

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lack of social support barriers, and overall mental health outcome barriers. This finding is summarized in Visual 1 and discussed in more detail below.

Visual 1

Four Major Barriers to Psychological Well-Being



Discontinuity Barrier. The first major categorical barrier that emerged was a discontinuity barrier from high school to college. This category was defined as the obstacles and experiences that students faced as they transitioned from their home environment to that of the campus community. This included home experiences, high school experiences, and college decisions that affect the way a student feels well-adjusted to their college environment. We identified eight key themes within this category: outlook and mindset, high school, academic preparedness, familial education and involvement, affording school, college transition, home environment, and culture shock. “Outlook and mindset” was the highest recorded theme from overall participant responses, with a frequency of 18. The theme was defined as a student’s perception of their barriers, which could be a negative or a positive perception. It was coded for

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any time students spoke about their mindset coming into college or about a general willpower to persevere while in college. For example, participant 3 spoke about her mindset coming into college and how it shifted once she got there:

Additionally, I came into college very confident. I was the valedictorian of my high school and I underestimated how hard UT was going to be. Every single semester I've been here I've either dropped or barely passed a class or both.

In addition to outlook and mindset, another frequently recorded theme under the category of discontinuity was “high school”. This code simply describes any time a participant mentioned “high school” when describing their experiences in college. The frequency of this code was 10, and it was often coded alongside another theme, “academic preparedness” (frequency of 8). Students reported how their experiences either prepared them or failed to prepare them for the transition to college. For minority students, not only did they speak about academic preparedness, but they also spoke about the ethnic or identity background in which they came from. Finally, the other themes in this category were reported as well, but with less frequency among all of the responses: familial education and involvement (5), affording school (4), college transition (2), home environment (2), and culture shock (1).

Resource Barriers. The second major categorical barrier we found was related to resources. Resources were broken down into financial burdens and disability or health burdens. This category refers to the difficulty that students may have with finding assistance or support and the process of acquiring it. It included how students are paying for college, accommodations and support for physical or psychological disabilities, and how students are accessing and benefiting from mental health services. There were only five key themes identified within this category. These included: mental health services (10), disability services (4), scholarships (2),

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financial aid (1), and on/off campus job (1). Mental health services was the highest recorded theme in this category with a frequency of 10, and it was recorded if students mentioned an assessment, diagnosis, treatment, or counseling in a professional relationship. These services could be either on campus or off campus, but the emphasis was on professional services for mental health. For example, this group of students from the University of Texas at Austin often mentioned “CMHC”, the Counseling and Mental Health Center, a professional mental health service or resource for students. When speaking about mental health services, they reported difficulty accessing, paying, or feeling a sense of connectivity to these services. For example, participant 4 spoke about her experience assessing mental health services multiple times and a perceived barrier of feeling underserved:

I struggled with mental health and bounced around a couple counselors in the CMHC, none of which seemed too invested in my well-being or well-versed in working with black women.

Outside of mental health services, participants also reported a lack of or a need of more services for students with disabilities. In addition, financial burdens were also reported, but less frequently in this category.

Lack of Social Support. Out of all the categories, “activities and relationships” was the largest with a total of 21 themes. It was defined as the building of supportive relationships through interactions with people or groups. It consisted of types of social support on campus, activities of involvement, and themes that describe the nature of these relationships. To answer our first research question and determine which themes were considered barriers to psychological well-being, we divided types of social support into presence and “lack of”. There were a total of 7 themes that were recorded as a “Lack of Social Support”: academic and

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professional support (lacking), faculty and staff support (lacking), familial support (lacking), institutional support (lacking), peer support (lacking), program support (lacking), and psychological support (lacking). The difference between the presence and lacking code for any type of social support is that we coded “lacking” if the participant refers to the lack of, need for more, or overall negative consequences from the type of social support. These types of social support resources that were lacking for participants were considered as our third type of categorical barriers to psychological well-being. Institutional support was found to be the number one form of social support that was lacking for female, racial minority students with a frequency of 15, followed by lacking academic and professional support (10), lacking psychological support (7), lacking faculty and staff support (4), lacking peer support (3), program support (2), familial support (1). A lack of institutional support was defined by students as feeling like the university is not taking action on their behalf against acts of discrimination or against acts of sexual misconduct. It also included a perception of the university failing to address the unique struggles of these students and putting in the necessary action to eliminate some of the barriers. Institutional support was separate from faculty and staff. Instead, it was reported as the “university” itself, campus administration (President, Provost, Dean of Students, etc.), and university departments on campus (Counseling and Mental Health Center, University Housing and Dining, etc.) supporting students. For example, participant 3 spoke about the barrier of navigating institutional support from University Housing and Dining:

I had to deal with a messy, unclean, passive-aggressive roommate, and UT just said "deal with it" basically. I hate how they make it so hard to break a housing contract and how there is such a lack of housing accommodations for students with bad roommates. I emailed Housing and Dining and talked to RA, nothing was done.

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In addition to a lack of institutional support, students also reported a lack of academic or professional support. Academic or professional support was defined as a student feeling supported in the classroom, supported with academic advising, and feeling that there was an overall positive learning environment that allowed students to discover their career goals. For example, participant 14 spoke about a need for more academic or professional support, especially during registration process:

I think specifically during registration and class selection I wish there was more support around that. I also wish there was more help with navigating different career opportunities/experiences. I wish I was exposed to more non-profits, policy careers, technology, business, marketing roles, etc. I think that would have been very helpful.

I also found that this lack of support was oftentimes coded along with “psychological distress”. If a student reported psychological distress, their grades and academics tended to slip, which supports the idea that a lack of social support is a major barrier to psychological well-being.

Finally, outside of the seven themes related to a lack of social support, there were also several themes that described the nature of activities and relationships that were related to barriers of psychological well-being. These themes include: ethnic or identity similarity, peer pressure, and prejudice or racism. Ethnic or identity similarity to participant’s environments was one of the highest coded themes, with a frequency of 23. Most of these codes occurred when participants spoke about the positive presence of ethnic similarity, however, it sometimes served as a barrier if participants spoke about a lack of ethnic or identity similarity or a need for more. For example, participant 7 spoke about the intimidating experience of being a racial minority at a large institution:

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Yes, college is intimidating especially being in a school predominantly made of white males. There is a lot of condescension when you don't know something whether or not they know it for themselves and asking for help can be awkward. Sometimes you don't necessarily know what you don't know and that makes it difficult to get help.

Similar to ethnic or identity similarity, peer pressure and racism/prejudice also served as key themes in this category, but were reported less frequently.

Negative Mental Health Outcomes. The fourth and final major categorical barrier to psychological well-being were overall negative mental health outcomes. This category consisted of positive and negative mental health outcomes, with a total of seven themes: sense of belonging (26), psychological distress (24), help-seeking (12), knowledge and skills (11), strengths (9), purpose seeking (6), and self-care techniques (4). Unlike the social support themes, we did not distinguish these themes from presence and absence. This means that “sense of belonging” was coded for if participants mentioned it at all, whether they felt it was there or not. A sense of belonging was the highest coded theme throughout the entire study, with a frequency of 26. We identified that a lack of sense of belonging served as a major barrier to positive psychological well-being. For example, participant 11 described imposter syndrome, or the persistent inability to believe that one's success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved, as a part of her experiences (Cokley et al., 2013):

I had something called "Imposter Syndrome" because I didn't feel like I belonged at UT because I wasn't getting the success that I had been used to my entire life.

In addition to a sense of belonging, we found psychological distress to be the second highest code throughout all of the participant responses, with a frequency of 24. For this study, we defined psychological distress as a state of emotional suffering associated with stressors and

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demands that are difficult to cope with in daily life. It was coded for if participants indicated any instances of “struggle”, stress, anxiety, depression, or an overwhelming feeling. Almost every single participant had one encounter of psychological distress, which supports previous research that psychological distress is common among college students (Gallagher, 2011). For example, participant 8 spoke about an experience of psychological distress during her junior year:

There was a time during my junior year where I felt very depressed and alone. I definitely did not feel supported during this time. I was not really talking to my friends and I would just isolate myself.

Finally, participants also reported experiences of help-seeking behaviors, with a frequency of 12. “Help-seeking” refers to the action of seeking help or support, and many students indicated that it can feel difficult to seek help for fear of being judged or overlooked. For example, participant 12 spoke to this by saying:

I feel like I had resources, but I wish I would’ve done more to reach out to them.

Sometimes I felt as if I was going to be judged for asking for help

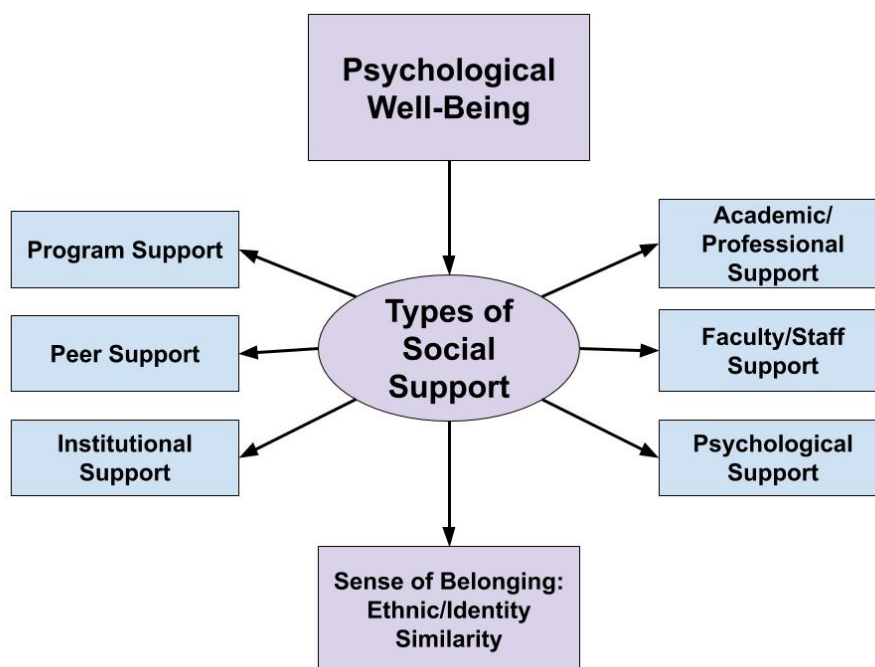
We found that minority students seeking help are looking for help that is culturally sensitive and addresses their unique needs. This behavior of seeking help is similar and related to the theme of knowledge and skills, which was recorded 11 times. The act of help-seeking can be seen as a skill developed overtime based on lived-experiences and knowledge gathered, such as self-efficacy, competence, and resilience, which then empowers a student enough to seek help (Crowe et al., 2016). If a student reported a lack of knowledge and skills related to help-seeking, this served as a major barrier to psychological well-being for Black women and Latina students.

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Major Finding: Types of Social Support Utilized

After analyzing the barriers to psychological well-being, the subsequent research question was: What are the types of social support resources utilized by Black women and Latina students and how are they meaningful to their college experience? Overall, we found eight types of social support resources to be meaningful for Black women and Latina students: program support, peer support, institutional support, academic or professional support, faculty or staff support, psychological support, familial support, and religious or spiritual support. The idea of “meaningful” describes any type of social support resource that was talked about or mentioned at all within participant responses, regardless if it was mentioned as a desire for more of that resource (e.g. lack of institutional support) or a widely used resource (e.g. program support). Among the eight types of social support resources, we identified six that were very meaningful for Black women and Latina students because they had the highest frequency of codes. These were: programs (total frequency including presence plus lacking=23), peers (20), institutional (18), academic and professional (18), faculty and staff (17), and psychological support (16). In addition to the types of social support utilized by Black women and Latina students, we also found that a sense of belonging related to ethnic or identity similarity was highly talked about among all participants, especially in the context of a social support resource. A summary of this major finding is shown in visual 2 and is described in more detail below.

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Visual 2*Types of Social Support Related to Psychological Well-Being*

Note: Sense of belonging and ethnic or identity similarity was found to be the common factor among all of the different types of social support, related to psychological well-being.

Program Support. Among all the themes in this study, program support was the third highest coded theme overall and the number one type of social support resource coded for, with a frequency of 23. Program support is defined as any type of program led by staff members on campus that is specifically designed for supporting students. This type of support is different from peer-led organizations and extracurricular activities because it involves professional staff and intentional programming, or events geared toward directly supporting students. Black women and Latina students from our sample at The University of Texas at Austin mentioned

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these types of programs: FLI (Fearless Leadership Institute), LCAE (Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence), MEC (Multicultural Engagement Center), DDCE (Division of Diversity and Community Engagement), AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), TIP (Texas Interdisciplinary Plan) Scholars, and ULN (University Leadership Network). Students described these programs as meaningful to their psychological well-being because it created a sense of belonging and a source for a variety of resources. For example, participant 4 spoke about her experience with a few programs:

FLI surrounded me with women who looked like me and were going through the same things as me. And if they weren't, they cheered me on in my struggles. The MEC has support staff who provide students of color with tangible resources: academic tutoring, dynamic programming, student connection with black faculty and staff, leadership workshops, etc.

Program support was also found to be meaningful for Black women and Latina students because it provided a source of "holistic" support, meaning a source of support that holistically addresses all of the needs of marginalized college women. We found that students were looking for a program that was designed to support students in all areas of their college experiences, such as financially, academically, and socially. For example, Participant 14 said:

I think there is a lot of great programming for black students on campus but sometimes it can be very hard to find your different pocket of people. Really anything to make UT a bit smaller and finding people that you can go to with academic/advisor related help, social related help, economic/financial related help and more.

In addition, participants spoke about the need for even more programming, particularly for the transition to college. Participant 3 said:

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They need to create a transition program for freshmen. My friends at Stanford and UCSB had that for students and I'm 100% that's why they were so successful their freshmen years at their schools. It would've given me a chance to make friends, learn how college works, how to study, etc. before the Fall semester starts.

Participant 12 said:

I think there should be more elective classes or groups for first-gen or low-income students, programs specifically for freshman students that might now know where to get the help they need.

Overall, program support was a highly utilized type of social support, and it was meaningful for students because it created a community for students and involved a holistically supportive approach, rather than just providing one area of support.

Peer Support. Peer support was the next highest type of social support theme coded for among all participant responses, with a frequency of 20. We found that having negative interactions with peers can have a detrimental impact on psychological well-being, but having positive interactions contributes to psychological support and sense of belonging. Negative interactions included living with an incompatible roommate, peer pressure, and encounters of racism or prejudice. For example, participant 3 spoke about experiencing peer pressure from her roommates:

[My roommates] were nice but we clashed since they liked to drink and party a lot and I got peer-pressured into going out with them. That was really hard having five random roommates especially as a freshman in college.

However, we also found that peer support was important for students' well-being. In fact, peers were sometimes the first line of support for mental health struggles. Participant 4 wrote:

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I felt overwhelmed with some work for my animal behavior class as I had to watch hours and hours of fish mating videos for a research paper. My best friend saw that I was stressed and sat with me and helped me track all the mating behaviors so that I wasn't overwhelmed.

Similarly, participant 11 spoke about a difficult time of psychological distress and how her friendships served as a support system:

My face was breaking out and my hair was coming out and I was just stressed. Then, I went to Dubai and Cape Town, South Africa and found irreplaceable friends who really value me and care for me and wouldn't do anything to hurt me. My sophomore year, I have been really close to Destiny and my international friends, but now I have started to hang around the MEC and I'm meeting all of these new people that are just so amazing as people. I look forward to keep on making friendships.

Overall, we identified that peer support is meaningful for students, but it wasn't the frequency of these relationships that mattered, but instead the quality of these peer support relationships (e.g. experiencing closeness and trust within the relationship) that mattered the most.

Institutional Support. Institutional support was mentioned in the previous major finding section as the number one source of social support lacking for Black women and Latina students. It was defined by students as feeling like the university is taking action on their behalf against acts of discrimination or against acts of sexual misconduct. It also included a perception of the university addressing the unique struggles of these students and putting in the necessary action to eliminate some of the barriers. In this section, we are reporting findings of institutional support being a major social support resource utilized by Black women and Latina students, with a coded frequency of 18 (this includes presence and lacking). Although students reported a lack of

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institutional support as being a major barrier in their college experience, we also found that it is an important and meaningful resource for them because they talked about it a lot among their responses. It is a type of social support resource that they would like to see more of to improve overall psychological well-being. For example, participant 7 spoke about accessing services at CMHC, an institutional department on campus:

I had 2 counselors help me out immensely when I missed some school. They walked me through the course reduction process and helped me get myself together and access the student emergency fund. I have so many examples of not being supported, but when I did get support, it was outstanding.

In addition, participant 8 spoke about what the institution was doing well in to address the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic but also addressed a need for more support:

They provide counseling services and during this Coronavirus time they are allowing degree requirements to be fulfilled by pass/fail- so that is helpful. However, I cannot really think of ways the university is specifically helping Black women or Latinas. I think they could work on making campus more inclusive. I always hear things about how students are being racist to minority students by saying inappropriate things or by putting horrible signs up.. etc. However, I never hear about these students being punished for these things. Yeah [“The President”] will send an email saying that behavior like that is not tolerated, but I think it is all talk. I never see real action. Also, they need to do better at supporting lower income students. Textbooks and stuff like squarecap are so expensive and not every student has access to the things they need to be successful in their classes. I think this Coronavirus has especially shown that. UT needs to do better at supporting these students.

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Overall, we found that institutional support is a type of social support resource that is meaningful for Black women and Latina students, but marginalized students identified a need for institutions to provide more supportive action on their behalf.

Academic and Professional Support. Academic and professional support was also mentioned in the previous section related to barriers to psychological well-being. This type of support was found to be the second highest code among all the “lacking social support” themes, following only institutional support. In this study, we defined academic and professional support as a student feeling supported in the classroom, supported with academic advising, and feeling like there was an overall positive learning environment that allowed students to discover their career goals. Academic and professional support was coded for if participants mentioned support related to their learning environment, major, study habits, academic advising, grades, or career goals. For example, participant 9 spoke about feeling supported academically and professionally:

I think career wise and professionally UT is very supportive. My [academic] advisor is always there to help me and answer questions. I feel her genuine support.

Overall, the academic and professional support code had a total frequency of 18, and we found it to be another meaningful source of support for Black women and Latina students.

Faculty and Staff Support. Faculty and staff support are another meaningful source of social support for Black women and Latina students, with a total coded frequency of 17. This type of social support was similar to other themes, such as one on one support and mentorship. However, one on one support and mentorship can come from any person (e.g. a staff member, a peer, or a family member), while faculty and staff support was simply coded for any time a student mentioned receiving support from a faculty member or a staff member. We found that it was important for Black women and Latina students to have an adult at the university who really

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listened to their struggles and took the time and effort to get to know them and help them. Any time there was a lack of faculty and staff support, the students attributed it to them not caring about students. In addition, we found that faculty and staff support was important for advice-seeking, help-seeking, academic support, as well as psychological support. However, similar to our findings for peer support, we identified that negative faculty and staff interactions could have a detrimental impact on student experiences, which is why it was about the quality of these relationships that mattered the most. For example, participant 3 describes the nature of these quality relationships with specific faculty and staff:

Professors at UT literally don't care about their students, I've been really lucky to find Professor Uri Treisman and Mrs. Thais Bass-Moore. They acknowledge the barriers low-income, student-of-color, first-gen students are facing and they are active in helping every single student.

When asked what they did to help her feel supported, she said:

They listened to me!!!! They helped me!!!! They did what every single professor at UT should be doing!!! If I didn't show up to class for calculus for a few days in a row, they would reach out to me and figure out what's going on. In other classes, they couldn't care less and just start docking attendance points. They gave me extra help outside of class and asked me about myself in 1-on-1 office hours. They all actually know my name and I know I can ask them for anything.

Similarly, participant 4 mentioned her negative experience with faculty and staff and what she needed instead:

When I struggled academically, many professors told me that I wasn't doing well enough to move on to the next thing or encouraged me to repeat courses, despite being asked

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earlier in the semester, rather than encouraging me and equipping me with the support that I need to excel academically.

Finally, participant 11 gave us another example of how quality relationships with faculty and staff help students feel supported:

Dr. Bumphus was the first person I met to help ensure that I was going to be successful at UT. I came into UT wanting to be an anesthesiologist and she set me up with Dr. Jiminez to talk about the route that I should take to get to medical school. Even though my aspirations have grown, she has been a rock for me at UT.

When I started to feel like a failure because I failed my first chemistry exam, Dr. Bumphus and [my mentor] were there to encourage me and help me figure out what to do from that point forward.

Overall, we learned a great deal about how faculty and staff relationships can contribute to Black women and Latinas feeling supported on campus, especially if those relationships are based on meaningful and purposeful interactions that demonstrate to students they are cared for.

Psychological Support. Last but not least, psychological support was identified as the sixth type of social support resource most meaningful for Black women and Latina students. Psychological support intentionally overlaps with all of the other different types of social support, and in this study, it was defined as any type of support that aimed to protect or promote psychological well-being. To code psychological support, we were looking for students referring to mental and emotional support. This often included listening, words of encouragement, or advice, and it could come from any type of relationship, not just from mental health professionals. In fact, we found peers, faculty, and programs to be a main source of psychological support for students. From participant responses, we identified that students felt

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psychologically supported if they had someone go out of their way to encourage them and show them that they are cared for. For example, participant 8 spoke about receiving psychological support from her peers:

My friends that I met and studied with would always encourage me and remind me that I am smart and capable of doing anything I put my mind to.

Similarly, participant 11 opened up about her experiences of psychological distress and trying to receive support during that time:

When I didn't feel supported I sort of put on a brave face and just kept it pushing. When I get by myself alone, I would break down and just cry often. I believe that I was depressed. I talked with my parents, Destiny, Raven, and Dr. Bumphus and just some friends and they tried to keep me uplifted.

From these statements and more, we learned that psychological support was not about receiving treatment for psychological distress or trying to get rid of it, but instead the support was about helping students feel less alone in their struggles.

Sense of Belonging and Ethnic or Identity Similarity. To conclude our report of major findings in this study related to types of social support resources utilized by Black women and Latina students, we believe it's important to address sense of belonging and ethnic or identity similarity. The sense of belonging theme refers to any time a student mentions feeling like they belong, feeling a sense of acceptance, or a sense of community. This theme had the highest coded frequency across all themes in the entire study, with a frequency of 26. It is a basic human need (Maslow, 1954), and our results indicate that college students, particularly Black women and Latina students are looking for a sense of belonging. Moreover, in this study a sense of belonging was found to be related to ethnic or identity similarity to one's environment. This

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means that a sense of belonging was developed in an environment where there was ethnic similarity (e.g. relationships with other Black and Latina women) or other identity similarity (e.g. relationships with other first-generation students). Ethnic or identity similarity also had one of the highest coded frequencies in the entire study, with a frequency of 23. We include a series of examples below from participant responses. Participant 1 shared:

[FLI] was an inclusive place exclusively for people that looked like me.

Participant 12 shared:

The class was full of people that came from similar backgrounds as me (low-income and first-gen). Knowing that there were people at this school that went through similar struggles made me feel less alone.

Participant 5 shared:

Just having a space of really smart black people who are professional but really fun was definitely well needed and life changing.

Participant 4 shared:

FLI surrounded me with women who looked like me and were going through the same things as me.

Participant 6 shared:

[FLI and LCAE] Expanded on being a POC [Person of Color] at a PWI [Predominantly White Institution] and gave me an opportunity to connect with people of my community.

Overall, we found that every type of social support resource: programs, peers, academic and professional, institutional, faculty and staff, and psychological was meaningful for student's psychological well-being because it created a sense of belonging, and a sense of belonging for

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Black women and Latina students was developed through ethnic and identity similarity. This finding is summarized in Figure 2 at the beginning of this section.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to conduct a qualitative descriptive thematic analysis on participant responses to an online questionnaire to explore the relationship between psychological well-being and social support. This resulted in two major research questions: What are the barriers to psychological well-being, and what are the types of social support resources utilized by Black women and Latina students, and how are they meaningful to their college experiences? Overall, we found that major barriers to psychological well-being fell into four major categories: discontinuity barriers, resource barriers, lack of social support, and overall negative mental health outcome barriers. In addition, we found that the types of social support resources most utilized by Black women and Latina students were: programs, peers, institutional, academic and professional, faculty and staff, and psychological support. The results show that these were meaningful to Black women and Latina students because they contributed to a sense of belonging, which was related to their ethnic or identity similarity.

Psychological Resilience and Well-Being. There were two major theoretical frameworks driving this study: the barriers to minority student success model (Padilla et al., 1997) and the broaden and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004). The barriers to minority success model describes barriers that inhibit minority students from achieving academic success. From this model, they identified discontinuity barriers, resource barriers, nurturing barriers, and lack of presence barriers to be the four major barriers to minority success. This framework helped shape our study design and research questions. We found evidence to support the previous model because all of the four major barriers were present among participant responses. However, we expanded on the previous model to better reflect psychological well-being, rather than solely academic success. For example, resource barriers in the previous model

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only included financial burdens. While financial burdens were present in the study, we also identified a need for disability and health resources, so this was added to the model. In addition, lack of presence barriers were redefined as a lack of social support to better encompass all of the different types of social support resources that students felt they were lacking on college campuses. Moreover, nurturing barriers refers to the degree of support a student receives before and during college. Since the purpose of this study was not focused as much on participant's experiences before coming to college, this category became encompassed by discontinuity barriers and lack of social support. Finally, the themes from our results indicated another category of barriers that was missing from the previous model, which was overall mental health outcome barriers, such as psychological distress and a lack of sense of belonging. Therefore, the implication of these findings is that we were able to confirm the applicability of the barriers to minority success model, as well as, create our own model that might better reflect psychological well-being.

In addition to the barriers to minority success model, the broaden and build theory was another framework that helped drive this study. The broaden and build theory posits that the experience of positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought–action repertoires, which in turn serves to build their enduring personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001). We identified that a lack of positive emotions, also referred to as psychological distress, was related to a decrease in momentary thought-action repertoires, or help-seeking behaviors, which then led to a decrease in perceptions of social support and overall negative psychological well-being. Similarly, the presence of positive emotions, or a strong sense of belonging, was related to the presence of social support, and once again positive psychological well-being. This framework provided the underlying context for why social support and psychological well-being were related and why it

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was important for us to further explore the relationship for Black women and Latina students.

Overall, our results supported the broaden and build theory, and it pointed to another important characteristic of minority students: psychological resilience.

Resilience was a critical variable for our study because it is known to be a protective factor against psychological distress (Ijntema, Burger, & Schaufeli, 2019). We intentionally did not ask participants directly about their resilience, but instead, we were able to identify stories of resilience through documenting their lived experiences. Black women and Latina students in this study shared about the barriers to psychological well-being and how they used sources of support to overcome those barriers, hence psychological resilience. The implication of this finding is that previous research now has powerful narratives to support the understanding of resilience among marginalized students. We can now better understand how social support is an external resource that drives psychological resilience (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Finally, there was a gap in addressing the utilization of social support resources by Black women and Latinas at college campuses, so the implication of this study is that it can contribute knowledge about the types of social support resources utilized by this group.

Social Support As A Protective Factor. When evaluating social support, Nunez (2009) found that Latino students perceived sources of support and sense of belonging differently from the norms of the campus community, therefore, they suggested future research draw on qualitative methods to address the inconsistencies for students of color. There is limited research regarding how female students of color perceive sources of social support on college campuses and the factors underlying their psychological resilience, so this study attempted to fill the gap. We drew on intersectionality, which is the idea that multiple social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. overlap (or intersect) to form interdependent systems of

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oppression and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Participants in this study were purposefully selected as Black women and Latina students because this is a marginalized group on college campuses. Racial minority students have been reported to be at risk for mental health problems (Cokley, Hall-Clark, & Hicks, 2011), and we know from Smith, Chesin, and Jeglic (2014) that it is not the status of being a minority at an ethnically diverse college, but rather, the identity as a student of color that predicts poorer mental health outcomes. Given these findings about the importance of addressing overlapping social identities, our study was specifically designed to focus on the unique needs of students who identify as a Black or Latina woman.

The results from this study indicated that holistic support, a social support approach that is rooted in contributing all of the different types of support resources in one place, is very meaningful for Black women and Latina students. The major implication of this finding is that social support does serve as a protective factor for psychological distress, as shown by previous research, however, the unique experiences of marginalized students indicates that the better form of social support is delivered through a holistic approach and consists of ethnic or other identity similarity. Black women and Latina women are looking for representation, which matters to them because it helps them feel less alone and creates a stronger sense of belonging. Students want to feel like they belong to a community that understands their struggles related to their intersectional identity as a Black or Latina woman.

Limitations. This study had 14 participants who fit selective participant characteristics: undergraduate student, female, and Black/African American or Latina. Of the 14 participants, 5 were sophomores, 1 was a junior, and 8 were seniors. In this study, we did not receive any freshmen participation. The deficiency of first-year students may have limited the ability to gain awareness of first-year experiences and identify themes across all four years of college.

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Similarly, we had 4 Latinas and 10 Black/African American women, so there was a majority of Black/African American women that completed this study. Although Black/African American women and Latinas were grouped together in this study because they are both marginalized identities on campus, there might have been more variation of themes and unique experiences if we had more Latina students complete the study. We also recruited students only at the University of Texas at Austin. The majority of students mostly lived off-campus, rather than on-campus. The findings of this study are not inclusive of other schools and geographic locations. Moreover, out of 14 participants, we only had 3 first-generation students. We know that first-generation students have specific needs that are unique to their identity, so there was a limited opportunity to explore those needs in this particular study. It's important to note that the number of participants in a qualitative study does not lessen the importance of the findings, however, an increase in the number of participants and an increase of variability (e.g. first-generation status, classification, living on campus or off-campus) can only strengthen the experiences learned from this study.

Further limitations include the research design and generalizability. I conducted a qualitative descriptive thematic analysis. The purpose of this research design is not to generalize, but to provide a rich description of the experience depicted in easily understood language (Sullivan-Bolyai et al., 2005). Our goal is to discover and understand a phenomenon directly from participants' lived experiences. However, this method of design is only one way to study marginalized identities and psychological well-being. Other study designs, such as longitudinal studies, and comparative analyses using other racial groups can only strengthen the results from this study. The deficiency of other racial groups means that we cannot highlight the unique

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differences between majority and minority groups. Furthermore, longitudinal data would allow us to see the growth and benefits of receiving holistic support over time.

Future Research. All in all, we found that holistic social support, rooted in a sense of belonging and ethnic and identity similarity is meaningful for Black women and Latina students, and contributes to their psychological well-being. Since psychological well-being is currently an important area of research for the college student population, future research should continue to explore other variables that contribute to psychological well-being, keeping in mind the influence of intersectional identity. Moreover, this study was not intended to be generalized to other schools and geographic locations, so future research should continue to explore other institutions, such as community colleges and HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) to provide an additional set of unique experiences that can add to these findings. Although Black women and Latina students are the voices we intended to highlight, students have a large variety of identities that intersect, and there are other marginalized identities (e.g. first-generation) on campus that need to be explored.

Recommendations. Finally, once again the purpose of our study design was to bring traditionally marginalized voices, Black women and Latina students to the forefront of discussion. We asked participants in this study to identify various ways that institutions can help Black women and Latinas feel more supported. To conclude our discussion, we will provide their recommendations as a way to give voice to their unique experiences.

First and foremost, institutions should create more holistic social support programs for Black women and Latina students, similar to FLI (Fearless Leadership Institute) on college campuses. Holistic support means that the program is a place to feel supported in almost all areas of life: academically, socially, financially, and psychologically. In addition, this program should

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be designed specifically for Black women and Latinas students to feel like they belong, so creating a space where mentors and peers are ethnically similar is important.

They also recommended university administration provide additional institutional support for Black women and Latina students by making sure they publicly take action against acts of misconduct (e.g. discrimination or sexual misconduct), and provide university services (e.g. mental health and disability services) that are adept in addressing the unique needs of marginalized identities

Similarly, increasing representation and diversity on campus is another recommendation for institutions to better support the psychological well-being of marginalized identities. Black women and Latina students are looking for people who look like them in faculty and staff positions because it once again contributes to their sense of belonging, helps them feel less alone, and is a way to build stronger bonds based on a common ground of understanding.

Creating mentorship and one-on-one support opportunities on campus is also recommended for Black women and Latina students. Rather than focusing on increasing the quantity of relationships with students, faculty and staff should focus on increasing the quality of their relationships with students. Female students of color often get overlooked in large institutions, fostering relationships that are impactful and meaningful is helpful for increasing psychological well-being because Black women and Latina students are looking for types of social support that is unique to them, specific to them, and made for them. They are looking to be heard, understood, and encouraged.

In conclusion, Black women and Latina students recommended institutions address the need for better mental health resources on campus. Psychological distress is very common among students, and marginalized students are even more vulnerable. Institutions should work

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on improving access to mental health services on campus, decreasing the financial burden, and fostering psychological resilience. Once again, the results of this study indicate that a good place to start developing resilience is through increasing a sense of belonging. For Black women and Latina students, their sense of belonging is rooted in ethnic or identity similarity.

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