Department of Education

University of Oxford

Being Latinx at the University of Oxford: Exploring Graduate Students' Identities

Linacre College

Luisina Anahí Bello

Supervisor:

Dr Xin Xu

Master of Science (MSc) in Education (Higher Education), 2023

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE AS AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION

1. I understand that I am the owner of this dissertation and that the copyright rests with me unless I specifically transfer it to another person.
2. I allow the Department to deposit on my behalf a copy of this dissertation in the Oxford University Research Archive ('ORA') where it shall be freely available online for use in accordance with ORA's Terms and Conditions of Use [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/terms_of_use].
3. I understand that this dissertation should not contain material that can be used to personally identify individuals or specific groups of individuals (unless permission has been obtained from the individuals) and that such material should be removed before this dissertation is deposited in ORA.
4. I agree to be bound by the terms of the ORA Grant of Non-exclusive Licence [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/deposit_agreements] and I warrant that to the best of my knowledge, making my thesis available on the internet will not infringe copyright or any other rights of any other person or party, nor contain defamatory material.
5. I agree that my dissertation shall be available for download in ORA in accordance with paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 above.

Signed:	Luisina Anahí Bello
Date:	10/08/2023

To Ana and Hugo, thank you for being my pillars of strength and inspiration.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for their unconditional love and support. My deepest thanks to my mum, Ana Núñez, and my dad, Hugo Bello, for always encouraging me to pursue my goals and for being such great examples of perseverance and generosity.

Second, I wish to express my gratitude to my loving friends from Argentina who have accompanied me in every step of the way. I count myself incredibly lucky to have such amazing friends I can count on, no matter where we are in the world. My heartfelt thanks to Dr Macarena Rojo and Celeste González for always being there for me and reminding me of my strengths. I would also like to thank Belén Tarantino, Noelia Arévalos, Natalia Gramajo, and Julieta Langaret for regularly checking in on me and sending me your affection. Additionally, I wish to thank my friends of the Master Swimming Team of Club Los Cooperarios, for supporting me in every sense of the word. My special thanks to Edgardo Del Negro, Pablo Giannini, Mariano Siccardi, and Sebastián Scotto for always cheering me on and pushing me to improve.

Third, I would like to extend my thanks to Dr María Rosa Mucci, Dr Beatriz Castiñeira, and María Eugenia Giussani for their ongoing support throughout my academic career. I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr Xin Xu for her guidance throughout the research process and for her support and patience when challenges struck. I am also very grateful to the participants of this study, who kindly donated their time and ideas to contribute to this project.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the wonderful people I have met here, who have made this such a unique experience. To my closest friends from the cohort, Julianne Downing and Xishu Li, thank you for everything you have taught me this year and for your constant encouragement. My very special thanks to my partner, Simone Moriconi, whose loving support has helped me tackle the emerging challenges and made me feel closer to home.

Thank you all so much for helping me make this dream come true!

Abstract

Over the past years, the number of Latinx students enrolled in higher education institutions in the UK has increased considerably. Nevertheless, Latinx students constitute a minority which has not received much research attention. The lack of Latinx representation in higher education is such that Latinxs have been referred to as "the invisibles" in the literature (Robertson et al., 2019) despite their continuous efforts to gain recognition. In fact, the existing literature on Latinx students is mainly US-based and features deficit-based approaches that portray individuals negatively (Dueñas & Gloria, 2022).

Motivated by this gap in the literature, this dissertation set out to explore how Latinx graduate students at the University of Oxford construct and develop their identities. This qualitative case study applied two lenses to the analysis of students' identity formation: Markus and Nurius' Possible Selves and Latinx Critical Theory. The research included 12 participants who were Latinx graduate students at the institution. The data consisted of the personal statements that participants wrote to gain admission to the university, and one-to-one semi-structured interviews, which were analysed applying reflective thematic analysis.

Findings indicate that interpersonal relations played a key role in Latinx students' identity formation throughout their academic experiences. Participants' social contexts and backgrounds influenced the formation of their like-to-be and like-to-avoid selves, and aided reflection on their current selves and intersectional identities. Low Latinx representation was found to have a significant impact on students' experiences and positionalities. Furthermore, this study found that Latinx students faced several challenges at the institution in relation to their intersectional identities, which include discrimination and microaggressions. Despite the hardships Latinx students faced, the University of Oxford was regarded as a place where students can position themselves as producers of knowledge and agents of change.

List of Tables, Figures and Abbreviations

Tables

TABLE 1 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS 22
TABLE 2 MAIN THEMES AND CODES 27

Figures

FIGURE 1 GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS 23

Abbreviations

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CRT	Critical Race Theory
LatCrit	Latinx Critical Theory
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and more
PWI	Predominantly White University
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ..... *i*

Abstract ..... *ii*

List of Tables, Figures and Abbreviations ..... *iii*

1. Chapter One – Introduction *1*

1.1. Background **1**

1.2. Theoretical Underpinnings **2**

1.3. Methodological Considerations **3**

1.4. Outline of the Dissertation **4**

2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review *5*

2.1. Introduction **5**

2.2. Origin and Rationale of *Latinx* **5**

2.3. Latinxs in Higher Education **7**

2.4. Latinx Students in UK Higher Education **9**

2.5. Students' Identity Formation and Positionalities **10**

2.6. Theoretical Framework **13**

2.6.1. Overview 13

2.6.2. Possible Selves Theory 14

2.6.3. Latinx Critical Theory 15

2.7. Research Aims and Research Questions **17**

3. Chapter Three – Methodology *19*

3.1. Introduction **19**

3.2. Philosophical Underpinnings **19**

3.3. Research Design and Case Study **20**

3.3.1. Participant Sampling and Recruitment 21

3.4. Data Collection **24**

3.4.1. Research Instrument 24

3.5. Data Analysis 25

3.6. Rigour 28

3.7. Researcher's Positionality 29

3.8. Ethical Considerations 30

3.9. Limitations 31

4. Chapter Four - Findings 33

4.1. Latinx Identities 33

4.2. Construction of Possible Selves 36

4.2.1. Application Process 36

4.2.2. Being in Oxford 39

4.3. Intersectional Positionalities 40

4.3.1. Race 40

4.3.2. Gender 41

4.3.3. Language 42

4.3.4. Age 43

4.3.5. Financial Status 44

4.4. Latinicity at Oxford 44

5. Chapter Five - Discussion 48

5.1. RQ1 How do students define and perceive their Latinx identities? 48

5.2. RQ2 In what ways do students construct and develop their identities at the university? 50

5.3. RQ3 How do Latinx students position themselves in UK higher education? 52

5.4. What does being Latinx at the University of Oxford mean to the students? 54

6. Chapter Six – Conclusion 56

7. References 58

Appendix A 66

Appendix B *67*

Appendix C *68*

Appendix D *69*

Appendix E *70*

Appendix F *71*

1. Chapter One – Introduction

1.1. Background

Latinx students' enrolment in higher education has increased exponentially over the past years (UNESCO, 2019). Nonetheless, global trends of academic mobility indicate that English-speaking institutions are the most popular recipients of international students (Shields, 2013). Hence, prestigious institutions such as the University of Oxford attract individuals from all around the world and Latinx students are not an exception. As of December 2022, international students constitute 59.5% of the total graduate student body, of which 1,69% (225 students) come from Latin America (University of Oxford Student Statistics Website, n.d.).

Despite this growth in overseas tertiary participation, little research has been conducted to investigate Latinx students' experiences in higher education. In the UK, students who identify as Latinx constitute a minority despite their efforts to gain official recognition (McIlwane & Burge, 2016; Robertson, 2019a), which means that little is known about their higher education experiences. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating how Latinx students construct their identities at an elite UK institution.

As individuals start their university applications, they begin to envision future contexts and self-images they can identify with, which motivates them in their application processes (Oyserman et al., 2015). Thus, students engage in an active process of identity formation that is fuelled by their expectations and self-representations and that is shaped by their experiences and social context. In the case of international students, the construction of their identities takes place within conditions of disequilibrium with the host culture that bring about challenges that are beyond their control (Marginson, 2014). In this context, the difficulties students face have a direct impact on the development of their identities and might make them feel "like a fish out of water" (García et al., 2021).

This research focuses on the construction of Latinx graduate students' identities because this is largely under-researched in British academia. Studies regarding the experiences of Latinx students are rather scarce and what has been published is frequently situated in the US. Latinx students constitute a minority in the UK, they have no formal ethnic minority status, and have been referred to as "the invisibles" in the little existing literature (Robertson et al., 2019) which has significant implications for the construction of their identities. Therefore, this study aims to explore the processes of identity formation of Latinx students at a globally renowned British university and the ways in which their intersectional identities inform their positionalities.

1.2. Theoretical Underpinnings

This study set out to explore Latinx students' processes of identity formation by posing the question: What does being Latinx at the University of Oxford mean to students? In order to address this question, two theoretical lenses were applied to the analysis: Markus and Nurius' Possible Selves Theory and Latinx Critical Theory. These lenses are briefly presented in this section and explained in detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Based on a conception of identity as fluid and dynamic (Derrida, 1981; Hall, 2011), this study considers that individuals began their processes of identity formation as Latinx students in Oxford during their university applications. As individuals envisioned themselves as future students at university, they created self-representations (Markus & Nurius, 1986) that shaped their self-perceptions. These self-representations informed the personal statements they wrote to gain admission to the university; therefore, these documents illustrate how students perceived and envisioned themselves. The analysis of individuals' possible selves provides insights into their current and projected identities, and it also serves as a tool for reflection and self-growth (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Moreover, this study considers that Latinx students' minority status directly influenced students' processes of identity formation. Therefore, the application

of Latinx Critical Theory as a lens to analyse the complex intersections between Latinx identities and other intersectional identities at this particular institution is fit for purpose. As a strand of Critical Race Theory, Latinx Critical Theory (LatCrit) focuses on the ways in which Latinxs are othered, oppressed and discriminated. Thus, LatCrit seeks to denounce the forms of oppression that Latinxs experience and to provide Latinxs with opportunities to share their stories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

By bringing together these two theoretical lenses, Latinx students' identities were analysed and explored in a way that highlights individuals' experiential knowledge. Detailed descriptions of these two lenses are provided in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

1.3. Methodological Considerations

Given that this study explores Latinx students' processes of identity formation through the application of two theoretical lenses, data collection was carried out in different stages. First, the personal statements that students wrote to gain admission to university were collected and analysed. Since these documents prompt individuals to present their scholarly identities in a convincing manner (Chiu, 2016), they were used to analyse how applicants portrayed their possible selves to their intended audience (Bhatia, 1993; Brown, 2005; Hyland, 2012). Second, Latinx students participated in semi-structured interviews where they answered questions about their identities, self-perceptions, and positionalities. This type of interview allows the follow up on information that is deemed important by both interviewer and interviewee, which makes it appropriate for this kind of exploratory study (Cohen et al., 2018; Brinkmann, 2020). Finally, the personal statements and the interview transcriptions were combined as one dataset for thematic analysis. Further information about the processes of data collection and analysis are provided in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

1.4. Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the study and the research site. Chapter two reviews the existing literature, presents the theoretical lenses applied to the analysis and introduces the research aims and research questions. Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study, including the research design, the methods of data collection and analysis, the researcher's positionality, ethical considerations, and limitations. Chapter four presents the findings generated from the analysis of participants' personal statements and of the interviews. Chapter five discusses the findings in relation to the research questions. Finally, chapter six concludes the study by providing a summary of the main findings and implications for further research.

2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature pertinent to this study. The first section provides an overview of the origin of the term *Latinx* and states the rationale for its use in this study. Then, the second section deals with Latinxs in higher education, exploring not only the uses of the term but also the existing literature and gaps. The third section focuses on Latinx students in the UK higher education context. Next, the fourth section delves into conceptualisations of identity formation and explores Latinx students' positionalities within higher education. The fifth section presents the theoretical framework that will be applied to the analysis, which comprises two theoretical lenses: Markus and Nurius' Possible Selves and Latinx Critical Theory. Finally, the last section introduces the rationale of the study as well as the research aims and questions.

2.2. Origin and Rationale of *Latinx*

The term *Latino*, which has traditionally been used to refer to individuals of Latin American descent, has evolved within the literature and terms such as *Latin*, *Latina*, and *Latinx* began to come up in academic discussions. In Spanish language, there are two main grammatical genders: feminine and masculine (Real Academia Española, 2010). Thus, a female Latin American is commonly referred to as *Latina* while a male Latin American is usually called *Latino*, yet in a group of people with only one male the plural form would be *Latinos*. Although the term *Latino* is commonly used to encompass female and male individuals both in Spanish and English, this has caused discomfort especially among LGBTQIA+ communities, which have sought alternative terms to refer to themselves, fuelled by "a collective aim to move beyond the masculine-centric 'Latino'" (Scharrón del Rio & Aja, 2015, para.1). In this vein, Milian posits that the substitution of the *o* for the *x* enables people to ungender the language and ask questions about inclusion (2017). While it may not be possible to pinpoint the exact time and place where the term *Latinx* originally emerged, it

is worthwhile to explore the ways in which it has been used and the meanings assigned to it.

According to Salinas and Lozano (2019), the term *Latinx* began to appear on the internet in 2014, and researchers have used it as a population descriptor often without providing an explanation or discussion of its meaning. Motivated by this gap in the literature, Salinas (2017) proposed the interpretation of the term *Latinx* using the concepts of *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder* (lost/repressed voices and powerful voices, respectively). The author explains that the construction of *Latinx* is related to the fact that some individuals' identities have been made invisible in some linguistic practices, i.e., silenced, hence this new term constitutes new possibilities of empowerment and acknowledgement for the oppressed (Salinas, 2017). In the same vein, Ramos et al. state that *Latinx* "is not intended to erase identities, but rather to bring them forth *so that everyone has a voice that is heard* [emphasis added]" (2022, p.5).

Nevertheless, the uses of the term *Latinx* have been criticised on the grounds that by aiming to be "neutral", the oppression around gender identity and sexuality is ignored and the fact that some people do identify with a gender is not considered (Contreras, 2017). That is why some other authors have proposed alternatives to the term such as Zentella's *LatinUs* (2017), Hernandez's *Latin* (2017) or Mahler's *Latin@* (2018) in an attempt to reach gender inclusivity. It is worth noting, however, that the term *Latinx* is just one possibility among many others, and that it purports to be inclusive of cisgender as well as gender nonconforming communities; as Scharrón del Río and Aja assert, "to demand that everyone identify as Latinx is counter to the proposal of the term itself" (2020, p.11).

Furthermore, the usage of *Latinx* has also been connected to indigenous languages such as Nahuatl or Zapotec, and to Chicano culture in the US (Guidotti-Hernández, 2017; Pharao Hansen & Tlapoyawa, 2018). Thus, the term can be understood as giving voice to indigenous communities and to

"'mestizo', 'brown' and/or multiracial races" as well (Santos, 2017, p.9). Nevertheless, since the term contains an *x*, this makes it difficult to pronounce for some communities, which somewhat hinders its representativeness (Salinas, 2020). For instance, Quechua language does not contain the letter *x*, which illustrates that even when the term *Latinx* purports to be geographically inclusive, it may not be linguistically inclusive for all peoples of Latin American descent. Even so, the extension of the discussion of the term Latinx from gender and sexuality towards an acknowledgement of resistance to racism and colonialism serves to exemplify the reach and implications that the term has.

This dissertation uses *Latinx*, rather than Latino, with the aim to be inclusive of different genders and languages. Although it is not possible to be inclusive of all possible identities by employing just one label, the intentional use of *Latinx* here is grounded in Vidal-Ortiz and Martinez's premise:

> *Latinx is a more encompassing term that invites cisgender straight Latino men; gender-conforming trans Latinas; cis-gender professional Latin American gay men; and feminist Latina women (cis or trans), to conceive themselves as part of a category of collective identification that is rooted neither in a gender binary (Latino/a) nor on an androcentric gendered hierarchy (Latino).* (2018, p.394)

Therefore, this study strives to provide a space where Latinx voices can be heard and become *voces de poder*, while the use of the *x* in *Latinx* aligns with DeGuzman's stance "to include all those forms of abjected "Latin" being: the refugee, the migrant, the undocumented, the incarcerated, the stateless, and so on" (2017, p.221).

2.3. Latinxs in Higher Education

While there are various forms of understanding and using the term *Latinx*, little research has been conducted on the topic in the field of higher education. Among the most salient works, Salinas and Lozano (2019) mapped the uses of the term in higher education and found that *Latinx* tended to be employed interchangeably with the term *Hispanic*. This usage was controversial since *Hispanic* refers to people who are from countries where Spanish is the first language, which is not representative of Latinx peoples from non-Spanish-

speaking countries (Delgado-Romero et al., 2006). To illustrate this point, it should be noted that in South America 37 language families and 448 languages are used (Thompson, 2013), which highlights the inaccuracy of equating *Latinx* with *Hispanic*.

In their study, Salinas and Lozano (2019) found nine academic papers where the term *Latinx* was used, and pointed out that only two of them included a definition of how the term was employed. According to Armus (2015), *Latinx* began to emerge within higher education as college students started to change the names of their organisations, for example at the University of Maryland where the "Hispanic Heritage Coalition" changed its name to "The Coalition of Latinx Student Organizations" (Logue, 2015). Nevertheless, it was not until 2016 that *Latinx* started to be used in academic conferences and congresses (Armus, 2015; Salinas & Lozano, 2019). Another interesting fact is that while students and faculty members began to actively use the term, in many cases institutional recognition did not accompany this. For instance, in higher education institutions with a Latino Centre or Latino Studies programmes, the term *Latino* was not modified, which in Salinas and Lozano's words, "at the very least, (…) is an indication of incongruence between how faculty members prefer to self-identify and how their institutional departments label them" (2019, p.310).

In addition to being othered in official government statistics, Latinxs in the UK have been offered the same limited identity categories when they apply to higher education institutions (Hayashi, 2019). With a view to addressing this, a student group called LatinXcluded has been campaigning to include *Latinx* in the UCAS ethnic categories under the slogan "No Soy Other", i.e., I am not other (Robertson, 2019a). This group has also worked in tandem with King's College London, where the application forms have changed to acknowledge Latinx students' identities (Robertson, 2019b). In this context, achieving visibility and recognition becomes a daunting task but Latinxs continue to push forward through activism, campaigning, research, and other activities. Motivated by these efforts, this dissertation seeks to shed light on Latinx

students' construction of their identities in the UK at an elite institution by offering a space where Latinx voices can be heard.

Given the incongruences and debates pertaining the use of *Latinx* in higher education, it is important to explore how Latinxs perceive, understand, and identify with the term, and how this influences their identities. Motivated by these discussions, Salinas (2020) produced the first academic paper examining how Latinx students use and make sense of the terminology employed to refer to them. The author found that the majority of Latinx students he interviewed used the term in academic settings but not with their families or communities when they went back home (Salinas, 2020). Drawing back on his previous work (2017), Salinas explained that these students saw themselves as privileged because of their education, i.e., as having *voces de poder* (powerful voices) that could potentially overshadow the *voces perdidas* (repressed voices) of their communities, so they opted not to use the term at home. In sum, students acknowledged the strength of the term and its potential for transformation, although they reserved its use for higher education settings.

It is worth noting that research focused on Latinx students in higher education is limited and that it tends to focus on factors that negatively affect students' academic achievement (for example, Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015; Arteaga, 2015; Baker & Robnett, 2012; Gloria & Kurpius, 1996) or the challenges they encounter such as discrimination and racism (for instance, Comeaux et al., 2021; García & Solorza, 2021; Thompson & Martínez, 2022). Moreover, the majority of existing literature explores the US context, where Latinx student enrolment has grown exponentially over the past few years (de Brey et al., 2019), while little research has been carried out in other contexts where Latinxs study and where Latinx participation has also grown.

2.4. Latinx Students in UK Higher Education

In the UK, there is limited data on the size and characteristics of the Latinx population and their involvement in higher education (Robertson et al., 2019). A recent study estimated that there are around 250,000 Latinxs in the UK

(King's College London, 2020) although there is neither formal ethnic status for them nor formal information about their representation in different spheres. In fact, Latinxs in the UK have been referred to as "the invisibles" in the literature due to the lack of official data about them (McIlwaine et al., 2011; McIlwaine & Burge, 2016; Robertson et al., 2019). In Tamborelli's words:

> *They call us 'the invisibles', los invisibles. For all our colours, flavours and rhythms; Latin Americans would expect all before invisibility. We pride ourselves in our joy, musical spirits and loud voices. The grinding reality of being Latin American in the UK has made invisibility a new custom for our community, one that is hard to escape.* (as cited in Robertson et al., 2019)

This lack of Latinx representation can be evidenced in the results of the last census, where it was found that 0.1% of the population of England and Wales identified as "Hispanic or Latin American" (Office for National Statistics, 2021). This figure corresponds to approximately 76,000 individuals who chose to complete the write-in response under the category "Other Ethnic Group: Any Other Ethnic Group" (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Therefore, it can be seen how Latinx people are excluded from the main categories of White, Black, Asian, or Mixed, and are openly othered in official statistics. It is worth mentioning that prior to the census, a petition was presented to the UK Government requesting them to include Latinx/Hispanic as a category, but it was rejected (Petitions UK Government and Parliament, 2021).

2.5. Students' Identity Formation and Positionalities

Given the lack of literature focused on Latinx students, this study set out to explore how they develop their identities at the University of Oxford. As aforementioned, Latinx students in the UK context have been othered and underrepresented, which has implications for the formation of their identities. Sen (2000) argues that by contrasting an individual's identity with other people, an "identity baseline" (p.23) is created. According to the author, self-knowledge of one's identity is directly influenced by the presence and interactions with others, and this can shape individuals' self-perceptions (Sen, 2000). This incidence of context is also highlighted by Markus and Nurius (1986) in their

study of individuals' self-concept, where they state that each self-conception has a particular effect on individuals' behaviour, and that the self-images they create derive from "the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences" (p.954).

It is worth noting that traditional conceptions of identity consider it as fixed and provide a conceptualisation of the self as unified and structured (for instance, Cooley, 1902; Erikson, 1968). In contrast, post-structuralist and deconstructivist approaches offer conceptions of identity as fluid, unstable and dynamic (for example, Derrida, 1981; Butler, 1993; Wenger, 1998). As Hall notes, identity can be understood as a process: "not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves" (2011, p.14). This study adopts the latter approach to identity, understanding it as a process that is continuously evolving and that is shaped by individuals' contexts.

Sen (1999) also conceives identity formation as a process whereby certain identities become more salient than others depending on the context. Moreover, the author highlights the importance of agency, i.e., a person's capacity to make decisions and act on their own behalf, as a key factor in the development of identity (1985). Building on this conception of students as active agents in their own development, Marginson (2014) explains that international students engage in a process of self-formation in which they "manage their lives reflexively, fashioning their own changing identities, albeit under social circumstances largely beyond their control" (p.6).

In this dissertation, Latinx students' agency and desire for self-formation are understood as catalysts for action, and their influences on individuals' identities are explored. It is worth mentioning that substantial research on international students has analysed both agency and identity, particularly regarding mobility

(e.g., Holt, 2012; Marginson, 2014; Kim, 2017; Tran & Vu, 2018; Fakunle, 2021), although research on Latinx students' experiences is scant. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap in the literature by focusing on how Latinxs form their identities in contexts with less research attention.

Based on the outlined conception of identity as dynamic and fluid, individuals can be conceived as agents that actively construct their identities within their contexts. Therefore, the analysis of individuals' positionalities helps uncover the tensions and challenges present in their surroundings and provides a space where their identities can surface and interplay. Positionality, defined by Takacs as the multiple and unique experiences that situate us (2003), can be applied as a critical lens to articulate individuals' personal and professional knowledge and identities within "shifting networks of relationships, which can be analysed and changed" (Maher & Tetreault, 2001, p.164). Thus, reflecting on one's positionality helps uncover how individuals stand in relation to power.

According to Espino (2018), describing one's positionalities entails more than explaining one's identities: it involves understanding how different identities, values and experiences can help uncover truths of lived experiences. Therefore, analysing the ways in which individuals' identities interplay can help reveal how systems of oppression affect and shape their positionalities. Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality proves useful to address this multi-faceted phenomenon. In her words, "intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects (…) it is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power" (Crenshaw, 2018, as cited in Gunda Werner Institute in the Heinrich Böll Foundation & the Center for Intersectional Justice, 2019). Thus, applying an intersectional lens to the analysis of individuals' identities fosters understanding of the uniqueness of each person's experiences of discrimination and privilege.

As aforementioned, previous research on Latinxs in higher education has focused mainly on negative aspects of their experience, with a few studies

focusing on their struggles with racism and discrimination (for instance, Thompson & Martinez, 2022; Iwama, 2023). This type of negative experience is abundant in predominantly White institutions (PWI) where Latinxs lack spaces to share their voices and address issues of underrepresentation, otherness, and discrimination (Flores & García, 2009). According to Gonzalez (2010), PWIs are characterised by an overwhelmingly White population throughout their long history, which means that students, faculty, and staff significantly outnumber minorities such as Latinxs. This illustrates Shahjahan and Edwards' claim that Whiteness acts as a superstructure which privileges "predominantly White metropolitan centres of knowledge" (2022, p. 757) and favours the marginalisation of non-white individuals. The University of Oxford, selected as the case institution of this study, falls into the category of PWI due to its long history of predominantly enrolling White individuals compared to other ethnic groups (University of Oxford, n.d.).

The prevalence of Whiteness in elite institutions causes minority students to feel "like a fish out of water" (García et al., 2021, p.108) despite institutional claims to promote diversity and inclusivity. As an example, it is worth mentioning Cerezo et al.'s (2020) study, which analysed the ways in which a group of Latinxs described living at the intersection of their minority status in terms of their race and gender identities. The researchers found that participants perceived their Latinx identity as a form of resistance to white power (Cerezo et al., 2020). This has significant implications for research focused on Latinx identities, especially in higher education contexts where individuals engage in a process of construction of their identities and positionalities as producers of knowledge.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

2.6.1. Overview

Being a Latinx student at the University of Oxford brings together contrasting contexts and diverse factors that directly influence individuals' processes of identity formation. The lack of research on Latinx students in the UK context

and particularly at this elite institution amounts to the relevance and importance of this study. To explore how Latinx students form their identities at the university, this study applied two theoretical lenses: Markus and Nurius' Theory of Possible Selves and Latinx Critical Theory. The following two sections outline these theoretical lenses.

2.6.2. Possible Selves Theory

In close connection with studies of identity, Markus and Nurius (1986) developed the concept of *Possible Selves*, which serves as a theoretical lens to analyse how individuals perceive themselves and how they envision future versions of themselves. Literature on self-concept has explored the links between the complexity and richness of self-knowledge and its roles in regulating and shaping behaviour (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1982; Gergen, 1972; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984). In this context, this study applies the concept of possible selves to explore the links between Latinx students' self-concept and their perceived future potentials, and analyses how this intersects with their positionalities.

Markus and Nurius (1986) define possible selves as representations of the self in the future which derive from their past and present experiences and beliefs, which encompass a wide range of both desired and undesired possibilities. In their words, "an individual's repertoire of possible selves can be viewed as the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats. Possible selves provide the specific self-relevant form, meaning, organization, and direction to these dynamics" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p.954). Although possible selves are personal representations, they are shaped by each individual's socioeconomical and historical context, which illustrates the ways in which the self is socially determined.

Moreover, Oyserman et al. (2015) pose that the motivational power of a possible future identity is context sensitive, i.e., dependent on the fit between the individual's context and the accessibility of the possible self. According to the authors, individuals analyse whether context is failure-likely or success-

likely when projecting their ideal future selves and this can fuel or hinder their motivation levels (Oyserman et al., 2015). This amounts to the fact that self-concepts are not fixed, but dynamic and changing (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1982; Gergen, 1967), which can also be related to Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (1982). According to Bandura, perceived self-efficacy is "concerned with judgements of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (1982, p.122). Thus, individuals set themselves goals to meet the standards against which they evaluate their performance and, in turn, foster their self-motivation to achieve success.

In the field of higher education, researchers have explored the complex relationships between students' possible selves, expectations, access, and attainment among many others (Frazier et al., 2021; Hardgrove, 2015; Harrison, 2018; Harrison & Waller, 2018; Oyserman et al., 2006). For instance, the latter study found that students' positive and negative future identities were sources of motivation dependant on individuals' perception of their contexts, whether success-likely or failure-likely (Oyserman et al., 2006). In addition, the application of possible selves as a theoretical lens has also served to steer discussions on students' aspirations towards the interplay between their expectations and relative likelihoods (Harrison & Waller, 2018). In the UK, higher education policies aimed at improving access have stemmed from a discourse that prompted students to realise their potential through the obtention of a higher education degree, which indirectly tapped into individuals' possible selves (Harrison & Waller, 2018). Given that possible selves function as incentives for future behaviour, this study sought to analyse the ways in which Latinx students have projected their possible selves at an elite institution in the UK and their incidence on their processes of identity formation as well as their positionalities.

2.6.3. Latinx Critical Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) exposes the ways in which race and racism shape individuals' lived experiences and investigates how marginalised identities

interact within the social hierarchies that oppress them (Solórzano & Yoso, 2002). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) is one of the frameworks that CRT scholars apply to their analysis of power structures to expose forms of oppression that include not only racism but also sexism, classism, heterosexism, among many others. A complimentary strand of CRT is Latinx Critical Theory (LatCrit), which addresses issues pertinent to Latinx communities, bringing attention to the intersections of elements such as language, culture, ethnicity, and migration (Rolón-Dow & Davidson, 2021). According to Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, "LatCrit theory is conceived as an antisubordination and antiessentialist project that attempts to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community" (2001, p.312). Thus, LatCrit aims to challenge the prevailing ideologies that present institutions as inclusive, neutral, and diverse, while in reality they perpetrate inequalities and stratification whereby Latinxs are continuously oppressed.

The application of LatCrit as a theoretical lens helps uncover the intersections of race and racism with other forms of oppression that Latinxs experience and, at the same time, provides racially subordinated groups with opportunities to share their stories and put forth their knowledge (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Moreover, LatCrit extends beyond the Black and White paradigm exploring the challenges that Latinxs face because of their identities. Therefore, LatCrit scholars move from the essentialist view of Latinx identity as fixed and posit that "the experiential knowledge of Latinx people is necessary to understand how they simultaneously navigate educational systems and systems of oppression" (Bañuelos & Flores, 2021, p.5). That is why considering Latinxs as holders and creators of knowledge is imperative to confer visibility to their experiences which have been omitted and silenced within educational settings. As Delgado Bernal (2002) states, LatCrit provides an appropriate lens to analyse Latinxs as producers of knowledge who have the potential to uncover the ways in which they are systematically disadvantaged.

It is worth noting that LatCrit research is a relatively new area of studies and that, as aforementioned, research on Latinx students is scant in academia as well as mainly US-based. Despite this, some recent studies have yielded significant findings that illustrate the kinds of challenges that Latinx students face in PWIs. For instance, Holguín Mendoza et al. (2023) found that Latinx students have been judged by the whiteness of their skin and accused of being either too Latinx or not Latinx enough. This sharpened students' feelings of social otherness and exclusion, although they did not indulge in victimhood; rather, displayed resilience and agency to overcome their difficulties. Another interesting study by Wright-Mair et al. (2023) explored the ways in which Latinx students experienced imposter syndrome in PWIs and found that their families and communities' advice and support played a key role in helping students overcome their struggles and strengthening their self-confidence.

In sum, LatCrit is a valuable tool to explore how Latinx students construct their identities and to analyse how these identities intersect at PWIs. Latinxs come from a variety of backgrounds and do not identify with only one race or language, which enriches the multiplicity and diversity of their experiences. Considering Latinxs as producers of knowledge not only challenges the white power structures present in higher education institutions, but also fosters representation and empowerment of a minority that has been regarded as invisible (Robertson et al., 2019). Therefore, this study applied LatCrit as a theoretical lens to explore the intersections of Latinx students' identities and positionalities at an elite PWI with the purpose of contributing to the discussions on Latinxs.

2.7. Research Aims and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how Latinx students at the University of Oxford form their identities. Given that Latinx students constitute a minority that has been largely overlooked in research, this study aims to contribute to the little existing knowledge about Latinx students in the UK context. To this end, this dissertation addresses the following main research question:

- What does being Latinx at the University of Oxford mean to students?

Based on a dynamic and multidimensional conception of identity, this dissertation explores how Latinx students construct their identities and how these identities intersect and shape their positionalities.

Therefore, this study proposes the three research questions below:

→ Research Question 1: How do students define and perceive their Latinx identities?

→ Research Question 2: In what ways do students construct and develop their identities at the university?

→ Research Question 3: How do Latinx students position themselves in UK higher education?

3. Chapter Three – Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used to conduct this study. It begins by explaining the philosophical underpinnings of the research. Secondly, the research design is presented offering an elaboration on case study research and the strategies used for participant sampling and recruitment. This is followed by detailed descriptions of the research instrument and procedures of data collection and analysis. Then, the approaches to ensure research rigour are analysed, followed by the researcher's positionality statement. Next, the ethical issues pertinent to the study are discussed as well as the measures taken to address them. The final section reflects upon the limitations of this study.

3.2. Philosophical Underpinnings

This study is underpinned by constructivism. Under the constructivist paradigm, researchers aim to gain knowledge through the interpretation of how subjects perceive and interact within a social context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Constructivists strive to understand the meanings of lived experiences based on the assumption that reality and knowledge are co-constructed and dependent on individuals' contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

In keeping with the constructivist paradigm, this study sought to understand how Latinx students construct their identities and positionalities through semi-structured interviews with the participants as well as the analysis of the personal statements they prepared as part of their university applications. This study acknowledges that each participant's reality is relative, and that the constructivist researcher's purpose is to produce knowledge that reflects their subjects' reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, findings about the construction of Latinx students' identities and positionalities were co-constructed by the participants and the researcher.

3.3. Research Design and Case Study

This study employed a qualitative research design to gain in-depth insights on Latinx students' perceptions on the intersections of their identities and positionalities at the University of Oxford. In this dissertation, case study design was adopted since it involves the "exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context" (Simons, 2009, p.21). According to Cohen et al. (2018), case studies usually employ semi-structured interviews, descriptive accounts, and document analysis to foreground participants' knowledge. Moreover, case study research is noteworthy for its need of an approach that acknowledges different contextual levels of analysis and offers vivid narratives with a strong grip on reality (Chong & Graham, 2013; Wellington, 2015).

The case institution has been ranked first in global university ranking Times Higher Education in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 (Times Higher Education, 2023). For 2022/2023 entry, over 37,500 applications were received for 6,065 postgraduate places (University of Oxford, n.d.). As of December 2022, the total number of graduate students is 13,325, of which 1,69% (225 students) come from Latin America (University of Oxford Student Statistics Website, n.d.). Even though international students make 59.5% (7,930) of the total of graduate students, the majority of them come from the EU (14%), the USA (10%) and China (8%).

As regards gender diversity, the data provided by the institution categorises students into two groups: male and female. As of December 2022, it is reported that around 49% of postgraduate students are female while 51% are male (University of Oxford Student Statistics Website, n.d.). No information is available on the institutional website regarding other genders outside the binary male/female.

In terms of ethnicity, the 2022 intake indicates that 59% of students are White, 36.5% identified as BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and 4.5% are classified

as “not known”. Similar trends are reported as regards graduate students: 54% are White students, 41% identified as BME and 5% are “not known” (University of Oxford Student Statistics Website, n.d.). Based on the data reported by the institution, the University of Oxford falls into the category of PWI given its high numbers of white students over other ethnicities. In this context, Latinx students are an underrepresented group in an elite university, which deems case study design fit for purpose based on the unique characteristics of both the institution and the participants.

3.3.1. Participant Sampling and Recruitment

Participants of this study were students reading for graduate courses at the University of Oxford who self-identified as Latinx or synonymous identities. Since this study aimed to investigate not only Latinx students’ processes of identity formation but also their positionalities within an elite university, the sampling focused on graduate students due to their prior academic experiences. Individuals’ past experiences influence the ways in which they envision their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and, therefore, the construction of their identities, so a focus on graduate students – as opposed to undergraduates – has different implications for the construction of their possible selves. In addition, the fact that participants are students and researchers at the same time constitutes another aspect to be considered in the analysis of their intersectionalities and amounts to the reflection on their identity construction.

Participant recruitment was mainly carried out through snowball sampling. In May 2023, the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) was posted on one college’s Facebook Group and, also, potential participants from the researcher’s academic and personal networks were invited to participate by email (see Appendix B). One participant responded to the Facebook post while three participants replied to the email, agreed to participate, and offered contacts of other Latinx students. Three potential participants expressed their interest by email but did not respond when invited to fill in the consent form while four

potential participants did not reply at all. Due to the limited number of Latinx students at the case university, it proved difficult recruiting more participants despite many attempts of communicating with them.

In total, 12 participants were recruited and interviewed. As part of the recruitment process, participants were invited to share the personal statements they wrote to gain admission to university: 10 participants sent their statements before the interview while 2 of them did not share them. One participant had done a master's course before at the University of Oxford and was doing a DPhil at the time of the interview. This participant provided both personal statements to contribute to this dissertation.

The profile of participants is shown in Table 1. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities, and participants were offered the option to choose their own fictitious names. The final list included 12 pseudonyms, half of which were chosen by participants themselves. With a view to contextualising participants' perceptions and experiences, I asked for consent to include their country of origin in the study. Given that Latinx students are a minority in the institution and that the research sample is small, there is a risk that participants might be identifiable. Therefore, I chose not to link other information with each participant, but to report it in an aggregated manner.

Table 1 Profile of participants

PSEUDONYM	NATIONALITY
SOL	Puerto Rican
GABRIEL	Colombian
AMELIA	Brazilian
ALMA	Chilean
ALEX	Panamanian
SAMUEL	Brazilian
MARISOL	Brazilian

LIONEL	Colombian
BRUNO	Mexican
ARIEL	Peruvian
OSCAR	Mexican
MARÍA	Peruvian

In order to achieve diversity in the pool of participants, I sought to find a gender balance in the sample and tried to avoid overrepresentation of one gender over others. Participants' gender is shown in Figure 1.

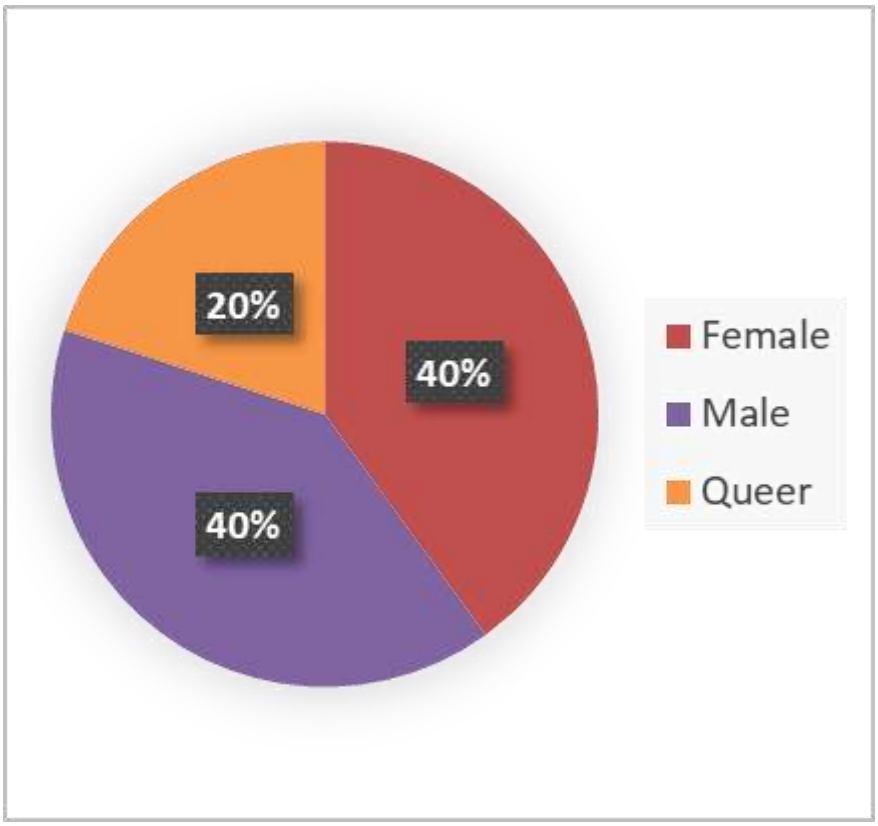


Figure 1 Gender of participants

In terms of disciplines, 9 Latinxs studying Social Sciences and Humanities, and 3 reading for Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine (STEMM) were recruited. While participant sampling aimed for diversity, the fact that

Latinxs are minority students meant there were limitations on finding participants and ensuring complete equal representation in every dimension.

3.4. Data Collection

In this study, the personal statements participants wrote to gain admission to university were collected prior to the interviews. Since the aim of the study was to explore Latinx students' identities, personal statements were collected because they constitute a means of self-representation and self-identification that prompts individuals to promote their identities (Chiu,2016). Personal statements informed the interview questions and participants were asked questions based on the information provided in them.

Two participants did not share their personal statements although they did participate in the interviews. One participant declared they did not feel comfortable sharing their statement for this study. They stated that the only person who had access to their personal statements was their sibling and that they wished not to discuss the matter further with the researcher. The other participant stated that they had not been able to locate their personal statement, but had they had it, they would have shared it. Once participants sent their personal statements by email, they were uploaded to Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business provided via the University of Oxford's student Microsoft account.

3.4.1. Research Instrument

This study employed semi-structured interviews as its research instrument. An interview protocol was designed before the interviews were conducted, based on the research questions, existing literature, participants' personal statements, and the researcher's own experience as a Latinx graduate student at the institution. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they "have the aim of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkman, 2018, p.1002). The interview protocol was tested in a pilot interview with a personal contact who was also a participant in the study. As a Latinx graduate student, this

participant offered feedback on the sample interview questions and the interview design. Based on the feedback received, the questions were adjusted. Since the interviews were semi-structured, additional follow-up questions were asked based on each participant's answers. A sample version of the interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

The process of data collection was carried out through one-to-one interviews: eleven of them were conducted in person in a college library's study room while one took place online. All interviews were recorded using Microsoft Teams and on average, they lasted around 45 minutes. The majority of interviews were carried out in English, with the exception of one in which the participant requested to speak Spanish. Given that Spanish is my mother tongue, the participant's request was fulfilled accordingly.

At the beginning of each interview, I established rapport with participants by expressing my gratitude for their participation and stated the purposes of the dissertation. The signed consent form was reviewed, and participants were allowed to ask any questions they may have had. The interview protocol served as the basis of the interview process, while adjustments were made accordingly in each interview. Given that some participants shared their personal statements while others did not, pertinent questions about these documents were asked in each particular case.

3.5. Data Analysis

After the data collection procedure, the interview transcriptions were analysed and coded. While Microsoft Teams transcribes recordings automatically, the transcriptions are not always accurate, so they required examination. Moreover, the interview that was conducted in Spanish was not transcribed by the software, therefore, it required the researcher's transcription. I kept the original language of the interview and did not quote the participant since they did not give their consent to be quoted, so the transcription was used only for thematic analysis. Once transcriptions were complete, they were thematically coded for analysis.

Participants' personal statements were collected and read prior to the interviews, and they informed the interview questions. As aforementioned, semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study, which meant that questions were tailored to each participant. The interview transcriptions and personal statements were combined as one dataset for analysis and thematic analysis was chosen as the appropriate analytical method. Thematic analysis entails classifying text by themes, and it is appropriate for constructivist research because it can be used to investigate how experiences are conditioned by various discourses and because it brings forth participants' narratives (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2022).

For the analysis of the data, this study followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase guide of reflexive thematic analysis (2022). Firstly, I familiarized myself with the dataset by reading and rereading the participants' personal statements and the interview transcriptions thoroughly. Secondly, I identified data segments that were relevant to the research questions and produced initial code labels combining a range of levels: I included explicit surface meanings (also called *semantic*) as well as more conceptual or implicit meanings (also termed *latent*). Thirdly, I started generating initial themes, that is, identifying shared patterned meanings across the data. While some themes were informed by the literature, inductive themes were also recognised. Then, I developed the main themes and did "radical revision" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.35), which involves checking that the themes made sense in relation to the coded extracts and the main data set. The next phase involved refining and naming the themes with reference to the research questions. Finally, I weaved together the narratives and the themes to address each research question. Throughout the process, I engaged in critical reflection, revisiting research questions on the light of the developed analysis and interpretation and, also, shifted between phases, since thematic analysis is not necessarily linear (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A table of the main codes derived from the thematic analysis can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 Main themes and codes

	Theme 1: Latinx identities
Codes	Latinx awareness Latinx culture Latinx representation Latinx label
	Theme 2: Construction of possible selves
Codes	Rejection prospects and diversification Role models and guidance Insider's view/No idea Decolonisation in readings
	Theme 3: Intersectional positionalities
Codes	Being a minority English as privilege and barrier Financial burdens Microaggressions
	Theme 4: Latinicity at Oxford
Codes	Positive experience Potential for future success Privilege and responsibility

3.6. Rigour

Research rigour is a key part of research design because it is closely related to the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ary et al., 2002). To ensure rigour, researchers can take a variety of measures that help foster research quality. Within the constructivist paradigm, research rigour can be examined through the application of four aspects: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Cohen et al., 2018). These criteria were applied to the design of this study and decisions were made to meet appropriate standards of research rigour that are discussed below.

According to Cohen et al. (2018), credibility is related to the "truth value" of the interpretations and results. With the aim of ensuring credibility, I provided thick descriptions in the write up of this dissertation and included verbatim quotations from the data in the findings to support the points made. Yin (2009) argues that in order to achieve credibility in case studies, researchers must provide the "chain of evidence" (p.122) that guided their results and ensure that the entire data are accounted for. Another measure I took to increase credibility was member checking, i.e., I contacted participants during the analysis stage to verify that my interpretations from the quotes were accurate. The strategies of member checking and thick descriptions (Cohen et al., 2018) were implemented to increase the reliability of the findings.

Dependability is related with the consistency and stability of the findings (Cohen et al., 2018). The handling of data in this study followed a thorough and consistent procedure by the application of Braun and Clarke's (2022) process of reflective thematic analysis. The analysis was applied to the different data sources and the interpretations were thoroughly checked in tandem with my supervisor. To illustrate how the data was coded and interpreted, I provided a detailed description of the procedure followed and included a sample of the interview questions in Appendix C.

Transferability, also called generalisability, is limited in case study research (Yin, 2009). As Thomas (2010) notes, "exemplary knowledge" is an appropriate

concept to understand the rationale and aims of case studies. Given the philosophical underpinnings of this dissertation and the understudied research topic and participants, generalisability was not sought. Instead, this study aims to contribute to the scarce discussions on Latinx students in the UK and foreground their knowledge through rich descriptions.

As regards confirmability, Cohen et al. relate it to the degree of neutrality that researchers maintain in their interpretation, as well as the extent to which findings are grounded in the data obtained (2018). It should be noted that holding a neutral or objective position in research is not possible, since researchers inevitably bring their own positionalities into their studies. Even though the constructivist paradigm presents researchers as co-constructors of knowledge, there are certain measures that can be taken to increase confirmability. According to Creswell (2014), one such strategy is to provide an explanation of the researchers' background since it may influence the interpretation of the findings. To address this issue, I have provided a reflection on my positionality and my relationship with the participants in the next section as well as explained the measures taken to ameliorate possible negative influences. Furthermore, the limitations of this study are discussed at the end of this chapter.

3.7. Researcher's Positionality

> There's no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all. (Hall, 1990, p.18)

As a Latinx graduate student at the University of Oxford, I have a vested interest in addressing the literature gap on Latinxs. This dissertation is grounded in CRT, which holds that as racialised subjects, we have particular ways of viewing events, perceptions and conversations (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Particularly, this study applies LatCrit as a theoretical lens, understanding Latinxs as producers of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) and the constructivist approach adopted entails the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participants. In this vein, I can be considered as an insider who has easy access and understanding of the culture being studied

(Merriam et al., 2001) and who constructs knowledge along with the participants of the study.

In this dissertation, being an insider facilitated communication and weakened the asymmetrical power relations between the participants and me as a researcher. It also enabled me to establish relational intimacy with them (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Nevertheless, being an insider researcher is typically criticised for the risk of lacking objectivity and being prone to researcher bias (Cohen et al., 2018). It is worth noting, however, that this dissertation adopted Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis (2022) as its methodology, which prompts researchers to embrace their subjectivity as a tool for the analysis, which means that in this case researcher bias does not constitute a risk.

Finally, it should be noted that the traditional insider/outsider dichotomy in research has begun to fall into disuse and the fact that researchers can occupy both or neither position is acknowledged (Breen, 2007; Mullings, 1999; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The researcher's positionality in this study is aligned with the constructivist paradigm adopted, and the positionality statement provided aims to demonstrate the advantages of being an insider in this particular case. As Stanley and Slattery (2003) assert, by locating researchers' contexts, egos, biases and agendas in the study, the quality and integrity of the research project is enhanced.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Since ethical considerations arise at different stages of research, this study underwent several iterations of ethical scrutiny along the research process. This dissertation received approval by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) under the reference EDUC_C1A_23_201 (Appendix D) and I adhered to British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018) throughout the research process.

Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with an information sheet containing the details of the study (Appendix E) and informed consent was

gathered from all participants (Appendix F). It was made explicit that participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time without providing explanations. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, all participants were pseudonymised and individual responses were presented through thematic analysis to avoid deploying identifiable participants' voices.

Given that Latinx students are a minority in the institution and that the research sample is small, there is a risk of identification of the participants. To address this, limits were placed on the reported information and the handling of data to protect participants' identities. For instance, in addition to the use of pseudonyms, the gender-neutral pronoun "they" was used to refer to all participants and in the case of quotations with sensitive information, pseudonyms were replaced by the phrase "one participant". Individual responses were presented through thematic analysis to avoid deploying identifiable participants' voices.

Personal data, participants' documents and interview transcriptions were collected and uploaded to Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business provided via the University of Oxford's student Microsoft account. The data were deleted upon submission of the dissertation and the consent records will be deleted three years after the publication of the dissertation in Oxford University Research Archive.

3.9. Limitations

As a master's dissertation, this study was restricted by time constraints. In addition, participants constitute a minority group in the research context, which affects sampling and recruitment significantly. Although the study aimed at avoiding overlapping in the participants' nationalities and, also, sought to recruit individuals who identified outside the androcentric heteronormative gender categories, efforts were only partially fruitful.

Another significant limitation is the lack of studies based on Latinx students in general and, particularly, the lack of research in the UK context. While this illustrates the relevance of this dissertation, it influenced the research focus

and motivated a shift from the original intention to analyse Latinx students' experiences, to study their processes of identity formation and positionalities, and to generate in-depth knowledge about Latinx students' perceptions. Given the complexity and dynamism of the object of study, this study could have benefited from a bigger pool of participants.

It should also be noted among the limitations that the case institution has very special status and features and is not representative of all UK higher education institutions. The University of Oxford is an elite university with a long-standing reputation for education and research quality, in which "there is no typical student, and no single Oxford experience" (University of Oxford, n.d.).

Another limitation to consider is that two participants did not share their personal statements. Since this study combined the analysis of these documents as well as the interview transcriptions to generate meaning, the fact that two personal statements were not shared impacted on the size of the dataset.

Finally, the small size of the participant sample entailed the risk of individuals' identification from the research outputs. The measures taken to address this issue were discussed in the methodology section of this study. Despite its limitations, this study aimed to provide a space where Latinx students could share their voices, by providing detailed descriptions and deploying interconnected interpretive methods, "seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience that have been studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

4. Chapter Four - Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the thematic analysis of the participants' personal statements and the interview transcriptions. The purpose of this dissertation was to provide a space for Latinx students to share their voices, therefore, the use of direct quotations is prevalent in the report of the findings. In order to protect participants' identities, pseudonyms are used in the quotations and the gender-neutral pronoun "they" is used to refer to all participants. The chapter has four sections that focus on the main themes generated in the analysis: Latinx identities, construction of possible selves, intersectional positionalities, and Latinicity at Oxford.

4.1. Latinx Identities

Almost half of the participants in this study stated that they began to reflect on their Latinx identities once they were in the University of Oxford. For instance, Oscar expressed that *"in Latin America, you don't realise that much of that identity because everyone behaves very similarly to you. Then when you get out of your country, you feel that identity stronger"*. Similarly, Sol and Ariel stated that being in the UK made them reflect upon their behaviours as well as the everyday customs they followed in their home countries, which also drove them to look for other Latinxs to feel closer to home. Gabriel explained:

> *I've discovered what being a Latino is when I got here actually. There's only here, by contrast with non-Latinos and the other similarities that I had with the ones that were Latin American that I realised 'Oh there is there is an air of familiarity, there is a common trait'.*

In the same vein, Alma admitted they started thinking about what being Latinx means to them upon arrival, as they reflected on some aspects that they had naturalised which are not part of their stay in Oxford, such as being on alert for muggers when they were out on the street. In their words:

> *Back in Chile, of course I have to grab my bag when I'm on the street because someone might try to steal something from me. But here it's a completely different world. My friends here don't share my same experience and I realised 'oh I normalised my experience of South American'.* (Alma)

In this vein, Maria expressed that coming from Latin America *“gives you more a sense of knowing how the world works instead of just being somewhere that everything works pretty well”*. In this sense, many participants referred to Oxford as a bubble and reported they had more practical knowledge of the world as well as more experience with lack of resources in comparison with non-Latinx students. In Samuel’s words, *“coming from Latin America, we have our intimate experience with poverty, with scarcity of resources, it is one of the aspects that define Latin American identities”.*

In their personal statements, half of participants explicitly mentioned their home countries and referred to the aforementioned lack of resources. For instance, participants mentioned coming from *"an under-resourced and disadvantaged community"*; reported that *"some days there was no bread to put on the table"*; and described their home country as a place where *"social conditions create an environment where adolescents are recruited for drug trafficking or other illicit activities that put their lives at risk"*. These hardships were present in most participants' personal statements as well as in the interviews and the majority of individuals expressed their pride to have endured them, while also claiming they felt stronger and *"more prepared for the real world"* than non-Latinx students at Oxford.

When asked about their Latinx identities, several participants defined them as having been born in a Latin American country as well as sharing with others cultural elements such as music, food, humour, family values, language, among others. Lionel summarised it thus: *“being Latinx means sharing a festive spirit, it means enjoying life. It means dancing through life”*. Most participants stated that they looked for other Latinx students because *"it is easier to make jokes and become friends"* (Bruno); *"to get that extension of what it feels like to be back at home with people who cook similar food"* (Ariel); *"to be with people who understand why family is so important to me"* (Marisol). These elements were valued by all participants, who highlighted the importance of sharing; in Lionel's words: *"being Latinx means having an orientation towards supporting*

and sustaining and pushing forward our region of the world and representing it in the best way that we can in the rest of the world".

An element that was mentioned by several participants is the importance of language and identity; half of them reported that speaking their mother tongue was a necessity. In this vein, Sol and María narrated that they joined the Oxford Hispanic Society in the hopes of meeting Latinx students and speaking Spanish, and they expressed their dissatisfaction at the fact that members of the society were mainly Europeans who were interested in Spain, and that since most members came from non-Spanish speaking countries, English was the language used for communication in the events.

In general, participants reported having negative feelings towards Latinx representation at the university; in fact, over half of participants stated that they were the only Latinx student in their cohort. Lionel expressed: *“I was certainly negatively surprised that I didn't really see any Latin American representation in in my department”* while Alma stated that in addition to being the only Latinx in their cohort:

> *In my programme I'm the only one that didn't study in the US or the UK or France. It has been only here that I have been subject to being like, “oh she's Latin American, she must, I don't know, live in in like a hut or something”. And I had never faced that before*.

Low representation was reported to having impacted Latinx students negatively in terms of their overall well-being: many participants expressed feeling othered and unseen, which made them feel uncomfortable. For example, Sol narrated:

> *Here in Oxford, I remember one of the first classes, the professor was saying like “oh, we don't have anyone from like Africa or Latin America”. Like I understand what she's saying, because Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, so my passport is a US passport. So, we have some privileges, but it's a colony. In terms of culture, history, and all of that we are completely Latinos. That’s very important to me.*

Participants who reported this lack of representation stated that they *"expected more"* from the university since they had envisioned the institution as inclusive and diverse. In the cases of Alma and Sol, they expressed that they felt their

Latinx identities *"stronger"* and reaffirmed their desire to go back home after finishing their studies.

Finally, as regards the use of the term *Latinx*, two participants stated their resistance and disagreement. Bruno declared *"I don't like Latinx, because I think that I do love the traditional way of saying things. Latinx? I feel that they are hitting me"*. Amelia explained "*The problem is often the word gets mistaken for or understood as an ethnic identity instead of a geographic descriptor. I don't think Latinx is an ethnic identity. It can't be. Has anyone looked at Latin America? We're too diverse".* Other participants did not express any opinions as regards the use of the word and used the terms *Latinx*, *Latin American*, *Latino*, *Latina,* and *Latin* interchangeably throughout the interviews.

4.2. Construction of Possible Selves

4.2.1. Application Process

As for the construction of Latinx students' identities, all participants talked about the prospects of not being accepted by Oxford as well as their strategies to cope with a potential rejection. Eleven participants out of twelve stated that they applied to other universities at the same time they applied to the University of Oxford. Most participants envisioned negative possible selves: *"I was completely sure I was not going to get into here. I'm not gonna get into Oxford. It's Oxford"* (Alma); *"I'm applying to Oxford, but I will not be accepted"* (Samuel); *"I didn't think I had enough things published, the grades… I simply thought I wouldn't get in"* (María). The only participant who did not apply to other universities had applied to the Oxford programme some years before and received an offer, but they could not take it up due to financial reasons. So, they stated they were determined to apply again and obtain another offer and they explicitly stated this in their personal statement:

> *In XXXX, I was offered a place to study in Oxford. It was the happiest moment of my life so far. However, mainly due to financial and language requirement reasons, I was not able to take that opportunity (...) Over all this years, I have never abandoned my purpose, thus I have decided to apply again to the same degree.*

This participant explained that the first time they applied to Oxford, they applied to three other institutions as well, but they did not do that in the second application.

Even though many participants reported feeling insecure when they were preparing their applications, in their personal statements they described themselves as *"confident"*, as *"a strong candidate"*, and as *"a valuable asset"*, *"a well-fitted candidate",* among others. As participants envisioned themselves as future Oxford students, they attempted to position themselves as knowledgeable and well-prepared. One participant explained *"in my personal statement I was seeking validation, so I put a lot of energy in terms of 'I read these people, here are 1,000 footnotes just to show you that I am part of the circle'"*. Another participant expressed *"you basically have to give the impression that you know a lot even if you actually don't"*. Several participants stated that preparing their personal statement was a positive experience because it made them reflect on their past accomplishments and, also, on what they might want to do in the future. The process of writing a personal statement was generally regarded as a difficult process but considered as *"having served its purpose"* by most participants.

Moreover, all participants narrated that they had sought guidance from other people to prepare their applications. Gabriel referred to this part of the application process as *"doing the homework"*, which entailed asking previous successful candidates for help regarding the preparation of personal statements and research proposals as well as obtaining insights from life at Oxford. For another participant, being in contact with a Latinx who did a short course at the University of Oxford was a source of motivation: *"she had a positive experience and her being like a female from abroad who didn't also think she's really good at her skills, made me realise that it could also be really helpful for me"*. In the same vein, Sol expressed that when they were preparing their university application, they were in a scholarship group with other Latinxs where they *"realised if these people that have my same scholarship are applying maybe I can also go to Oxford".* Although not all participants contacted

Oxford alumni, all participants received support and mentoring from other individuals, including their potential supervisors, previous professors, friends, family, and in one case, from a company whose job is to help students in their university application processes. Those participants who were in contact with people who already were Latinx Oxford students reported that they served as role models they could identify with.

Some participants had studied in the UK before, and they expressed that they had *"an insider's view"* of the UK system. This aided their application: *"I felt like an insider already. I've done it before. I've done it twice and successfully"* (Amelia); *"One of the big advantages I had is that I was very well familiarised, and I knew the UK system very well"* (Lionel). Conversely, over 40% of participants stated they *"had no idea"* about the UK system in general and about Oxford in particular. They expressed: *"I had no expectations at all and I had no idea what was gonna happen"* (Gabriel); *"I had no idea about the collegiate system, of how important it is"* (Samuel); *"I had no idea what a college was, I was so unprepared"* (Oscar). Another participant explained:

> *I didn't know what they expected. I didn't know how the system worked. I had no idea about anything, so I was very, like, insecure and stressed. Like, am I doing this right? Am I doing this wrong? Also, my parents are not academics. I had no one that could advise me on how to do this.*

In sum, the formation of Latinx students' possible selves was directly related to and influenced by their interactions with other people. Participants who were in contact with Latinx Oxford students and alumni explained that they served as role models who provided guidance and support, which aided the projection of positive possible selves. However, all participants envisioned negative possible selves related to being rejected by the university, so they applied to other universities to increase the projection of positive possible selves. In the case of students who had studied in the UK before, they envisioned themselves positively with more ease than those applying for the first time due to their prior experiences. Conversely, participants who *"had no idea"* about the university system were found to envision mostly negative possible selves. Overall,

personal statements were regarded as a useful tool that helped students reflect on their identities and project themselves into their imagined futures.

4.2.2. Being in Oxford

With regard to the construction of their Latinx identities once they were part of the university, one important aspect that participants reported is the fact that the majority of the documents in their reading lists were written by white Western authors, even the ones that were labelled as "decolonising". Alma expressed their dissatisfaction thus:

> *Many times I think 'I've read this from an author from South America who said the same thing citing indigenous knowledge, and this white person is saying it afterwards, citing Western authors. And I have to read this one and not that one. Why?'*.

Many participants explained that as graduate students at a globally renowned university, they expected more diversity in the study material as well as more opportunities for debating in class where they could *"be themselves"*. They narrated that they had expected to occupy places *"of power"* (Amelia) and bring their Latinx identities into the class discussions, for others to learn about Latin America. For example, Marisol declared *"when I come to these spaces, I see that the discussions they are having about people like me are not made by people like me. That is not inclusive"*. In this vein, many participants stated that their Latinx identities became stronger and that this fostered their desire to go back home. Conversely, other participants stated that this lack of non-white knowledge prompted them to embrace their Latinx identities and to speak up to denounce the effects of colonialism. For instance, a participant described an occasion where they attended a social exchange between the University of Oxford and another university. In their words:

> *The coordinator of the programme in the department was showing this map of the world and saying like "oh, we have students from all around the world" and she was like praising the department for that. And then someone asked like "oh, but the map of Africa, there's only like 3 countries, it's completely empty". Also, there were not a lot of students from Latin America. The coordinator was like "oh no, at least we are doing some research in Africa, even though they maybe don't come here*

> *as much. But the university is doing some efforts going there. This is a question we should ask ourselves, why is this happening". And then I raised my hand, and I was like, "this is a question that has an answer already, a historic answer, we know why these things happen. So, you have to stop treating us like 'oh this is something that is happening', like you don't know why this happens, you have to acknowledge that this is a problem that is happening". How are we gonna solve it?*

In sum, findings showed that being in Oxford foregrounded participants' Latinx identities, fostering either a desire to openly advocate for non-white knowledge or a desire to go back home. The lack of Latinx representation in the reading lists had a significant impact on the participants of this study, who expected the institution to acknowledge colonialism and take a stand against it. Moreover, this influenced participants' projection of their possible selves, particularly for those who had envisioned producing and sharing Latinx knowledge at prestigious institutions.

4.3. Intersectional Positionalities

As discussed in the literature review, individuals' positionality is shaped by different intersecting identities. In the interviews, several participants expressed that they felt as *"a minority"* and elaborated on their minority status not only in relation to their Latinx identities, but also regarding race, gender, language, age, and financial status. The findings on students' intersectional positionalities obtained from the analysis of the personal statements and interview transcriptions are presented below.

4.3.1. Race

As part of their interview answers, some participants commented on their Latinx identities and how race intersected with them. One participant who identified as white expressed that in comparison to their home country, people in Oxford *"have a hard time understanding that I am Latinx"*. They explained that they are Latinx because they were *"born in Latin America"* and expressed their dissatisfaction with people questioning their Latinx identity based on their skin colour. This participant stated that the whiteness of their skin made people

"*doubt that I am Latinx"* and added that *"people in Oxford need to understand that Latinxs can also be white".*

Another participant stated: "*I am Latina and I am black. These intersectionalities really shaped my experience. Oxford should understand all those things, understand Latin America not just from a white point of view"*. According to this participant, being a black Latinx student at the university entailed having to explain to others that Latin America has African connections, which they considered as *"an opportunity to represent, to teach people about Latin Americans".*

4.3.2. Gender

Findings indicate that the intersections between Latinx identities and gender identities are varied, and that participants perceived and experienced them in different ways. For example, one participant explained: *“I consider myself a minority group because of being Latin American and also being a woman. Even in Latin America, I’d be considered a minority because of the women's side, women's not always having the best”*. This participant reported that talking to a Latinx woman who had been to Oxford inspired them to apply and that they hoped to be a role model for other women who were considering applying. In this vein, another participant narrated that they were motivated to apply to Oxford because their potential supervisors were women. They stated:

> *I liked the fact that they were two women. Um, I'd love to say that it's only because of their work, but as a young woman I wanted that rapport with my supervisors. Not that I had traumatic experiences with male supervisors, but I never had women's supervisors, so I was excited to work with women*.

Moreover, two participants who identified as queer participated in this study and shared their experiences and perceptions on the intersection between their Latinx identities and their gender identities. While both participants explicitly referred to their queer gender identity in their personal statements, one of them wrote about how this motivated them to pursue their studies in Oxford: *"as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, growing up in Latin America cultivated a*

deep concern in regards to the institutions around me and empathy for vulnerable groups who suffered the consequences of their inaction".

As regards gender identities and Latinx students' experiences, one of them stated "*coming from Latin America and living here, I feel like it's much easier to live a lesbian life, a lot of people like my closest friends here are also queer. I've found this to be like a good place".* Conversely, the other participant explained:

> *It's like, we include you if you fit into my structure. It's not like the structure changes according to the needs of the students. It's like you have to fit into this very rigid, very Western, very white, very heterosexual structure. I'm queer and I don't feel there's space for queerness in this university. Or it's like again, I accept you, but in my own terms. We put up the queer flag and we're like 'Oh Pride Month', but then we don't have queer authors in my department readings. We just have the flags.*

4.3.3. Language

Language was reported to have had a significant effect in participants' identity formation and academic experiences. Since the importance of speaking one's mother tongue as an expression of Latinx identities was introduced in an earlier section of this study, this section focuses on the influence of English on Latinx students' intersectional positionalities.

In this study, all participants shared that they studied English privately and many of them stated that that they felt privileged for having received this education. At the same time, most participants declared that English acted as a barrier to their academic development and evidenced their minority status. Several participants reported negative feelings caused by their English skills both during the preparation of their personal statements as well as during their studies.

Concerns regarding English impacted negatively on participants' academic performance and overall well-being. Alma expressed: *"at the beginning I cried every day, I was very concerned about this language barrier and if I was able to manage it".* They also reported: "*my teachers were always concerned, like if*

I understood the instructions. And I was like "I mean I passed the IELTs, I probably can understand".

María stated that at the time of the interview, language was still a concern: *"English is huge reason why I've been really stressed because I'm the only one in my programme that doesn't have an English undergrad, I am way behind my classmates and it has been a struggle".* Moreover, a significant number of participants pointed out that writing in English took them quite a lot of time; one participant explained: *"I know it's not right, but what I do is I write in Spanish and then try to translate. I have to make a double effort".*

4.3.4. Age

Several participants associated their Latinx identities with having to put in more effort to have access to the same places in comparison with non-Latinx people. For example, among participants who expressed their surprise at being the oldest person in their cohort, María stated *"I guess that happens to a lot of Latinx. Yeah, because we have to study longer and work harder to be here".* They explained that in Latin America, undergraduate degrees generally take a minimum of five years to complete and that in many cases it takes students longer to graduate because they need to work alongside their studies. In this vein, Samuel explained:

> *Most of the Latin students have to balance work and study at the same time. It's very very rare to have the opportunity to just like spend 10 years dedicated to your academic career. Some of my professors and members of the academic staff of my department have almost my age. This is where I see a clear difference between us.*

In sum, findings indicate that it takes Latinx students more time to obtain their qualifications in comparison with students who come from other backgrounds. Moreover, participants reported that the price of the fees acts as a barrier for Latinx students to access the institution, given their usually disadvantaged backgrounds. This is briefly reported in the next section.

4.3.5. Financial Status

Financial difficulties constituted another element that intersected with and shaped Latinx students' identities. As aforementioned, one participant obtained a place at the institution some years ago but could not afford it: "*I didn't get the money. I had no scholarship. And I had no economic possibilities to get a loan. And I had no savings. So, I had to reject the offer".* As aforementioned, this participant included information about their financial impediments to take up the offer in their personal statement and they also wrote: *"some people can go further than others because they have different opportunities".* During the interview, the same participant narrated that they had had to work for six years and take on a loan to afford their studies in 2023.

In a similar vein, other participants reported: *"I've been in an extremely vulnerable situation financially"*; *"In the grand total of my difficulties here, finance is the greatest"*; *"I had to take on a loan and I've had 2-3 different part time jobs along my studies"*; *"it's a gamble really, even if you have a lot of merit, money is the most important element"*.

The financial difficulties reported had a significant impact on participant's development. The challenges they faced prompted their reflection on the minority status that Latinx students hold as well as the financial hardships related to Latin America. As Samuel explained: *"if Latin Americans want to come here, the steps are studying, working, studying, working, studying, working... I think people in Brazil or maybe Mexico or Colombia have a similar experience because of the economic background".*

4.4. Latinicity at Oxford

Despite the negative experiences reported, all participants regarded being Latinx at the university of Oxford as positive overall. Over half of them referred to the institution as *"the best university of the world"* and stated that they considered themselves as privileged to be part of it. Many participants referred to being Latinx at the university as *"better than expected"*, *"above my expectations"*; *"it is even better than I ever imagined".* Moreover, many

participants valued the institution's potential for their future careers: *"I am educated where the best leaders are educated, I will have a degree from the best university"*; *"I am where the top notch are, and I will be occupying powerful places".*

In addition, many participants expressed their discontent with the challenges that Latinxs face and considered the University of Oxford as a place of empowerment and change. For instance, Marisol explained:

> *There are many intersectionalities related to what it means to be part of Latin America that are not discussed, or not discussed the way they should be. Even in top-notch institutions, there is still a lot to be done. Once you're here, you can be part of the transformation of this place as well. If you want to start a revolution from inside institutions, you are in the right place*.

Moreover, they added that being an Oxford student entailed that others would see and acknowledge them and that this constituted an opportunity to represent Latin America: "*if you're not in Oxford, if you're not in [another elite institution] it's really difficult for important people to look at you, you know"*. The transformative potential of Oxford was also present in some participants' personal statements, where they stated that the institution would *"allow me to deconstruct and construct a better system for Latin America"* or *"offer me the education I need to propel my participation in the emergent Latin American academic community".*

Another aspect that participants mentioned not only in the interviews but also in their personal statements was the desire of giving back to their communities. As regards their personal statements, participants wrote statements such as *"I feel the responsibility to give back to my university and country"*; *"I wish that, returning to my home university, I may become a leader on this subject and will be able to serve others"*; *"I want to help solve the developmental challenges South American countries face".* Among the various examples mentioned in the interviews, one participant explained that the Oxford Colombian Society created a programme to help Colombian students in their university applications. In their words:

> *The idea was to provide a mentorship programme to Colombian students who wanted to apply to Oxford, and it was based on the idea that, you know, put capable students who will have a good chance of getting into Oxford in contact with students who are already here in Oxford (...) most people in Colombia can't afford to pay £80 so we targeted universities with students who could pay. We contacted certain professors for help and in the end, we picked five people and connected each of them with one student doing the same or a similar programme that they wanted to do. One is coming next year. The other four were terribly constrained by the lack of money. So unless the economic situation in Colombia gets better, I don't see more people coming here. But we have to work with that and hopefully at some point more Colombians will be studying here.*

In this vein, other participants also highlighted the value of Latinx representation and participation and expressed their wish to contribute to it, such as Ariel:

> *As someone who is from a minority background, I understand that a lot of algorithms are unfair for different people for like colours, for languages, all this AI's not always perfect for people outside of like the Western, specifically American Society. And I want to be able to bring that component of my culture, my representation as a person of colour. This is important for me; they have to see that Latin America is also coming into the tech world.*

While participants generally regarded the University of Oxford as an institution which provided them with a privileged and transformative experience, the majority of them highlighted the challenges that Latinxs face and expressed their wishes for that to change. To illustrate this last point, this chapter concludes with Lionel's reflection on being Latinx in the UK context and their statement that Latin Americans *"exist in their own grey space"* outside the BAME community:

> *As a Latin American, you're not part of, in the UK there's this thing called the BAME community, right? And there's like special probations attached to this ethnic community because that's what they're considered. They're considered minority communities, but Latin Americans just kind of exist in their own grey space. I don't actually know why. So we are not subject to these kinds of special provisions. So, I know, for instance, there's plenty of scholarships for African students to come to Oxford. And for certain underprivileged students in South Asia, there's lots of those. But for Latin Americans, I've never seen one from the university or the UK government that is, you know, targeted for Latin*

American students. So, we do have it a little more difficult than other minority groups in the UK.

5. Chapter Five - Discussion

This chapter discusses the research findings in relation to the theoretical lenses applied to the analysis and the reviewed literature. The chapter is divided into different sections that focus on each research question. The first part examines the perceptions and descriptions of Latinx identities that students provided. In the second part, the construction and development of Latinx identities is discussed in relation with their projections and expectations. Next, the third part analyses Latinx students' positionalities in UK higher education. Finally, the last part addresses the main question of the study.

5.1. RQ1 How do students define and perceive their Latinx identities?

According to the findings of this study, students mostly associate their Latinx identities with their home countries and with sharing cultural elements with others. As students left their homes and moved to Oxford, their Latinx identities became more salient, which is consistent with the reviewed literature. This is supported by Sen (1992), who argued that certain individuals' identities are foregrounded depending on the context. In this study, participants shared that as they interacted with other non-Latinxs, they acknowledged and embraced those aspects and traditions of their Latinicity that differentiated them from the rest. In addition, participants reported that they looked for other Latinxs to foster a sense of belonging and sharing the same language, music, food, among others. Therefore, sharing their Latinx cultures with others was found to be constitutive of what Sen (2000) called "identity baseline" which stresses how social interactions directly influence individuals' identities and self-perceptions. As Lionel stated, *"being Latinx means having an orientation towards supporting and sustaining and pushing forward our region of the world and representing it in the best way that we can in the rest of the world".*

In this vein, it can be seen that Latinx identities are related not only with sharing cultural elements with others but also with representation. As discussed in the Literature Review, Latinxs have been referred to as "the invisibles" in UK higher education (McIlwaine et al., 2011; McIlwaine & Burge, 2016; Robertson et al., 2019), which is evidenced in Sol's account where their professor claimed that

there were no students from Latin America in the cohort, failing to acknowledge the presence of the Latinx student in front of them. Similarly, Alma reported that their professors and classmates thought they *"must live in like a hut or something"* because of their origins, which denotes the lack of awareness of Latinx experiences which caused them to feel discriminated against. In some cases, negative experiences such as these were reported to have triggered participants' desires to go back home.

Latinx identities were also defined in relation with having *"knowledge of how the world works"*, which participants tied to their coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. In this vein, Latinx students bring with them their own system of knowing (Ladson-Billings, 2000) that is shaped by their lived experiences and that stands in sharp contrast with Western epistemologies. Latinx students' experiential knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) made them feel prepared to deal with issues such as lack of resources and insecurity and prompted them to embrace their Latinx identities in the new context. This can be seen in Latinx students' questioning of their assigned reading lists, which they found *"too Western"* and *"too White"*. Furthermore, participants acknowledged that the intersections of race, gender, language, age, and financial status played a significant role in shaping their identities, fostering their reflection on their positionalities within the established power structures.

To conclude this section, it can be argued that Latinx students perceive and define their Latinx identities as being highly influenced and shaped by their interactions with other people and by the context they are in. Not only interactions with other Latinx students fostered a sense of social identity but also the contact with non-Latinxs strengthened participants' Latinx identity baseline (Sen, 2000). Moreover, representation played a key role in the delineation of students' Latinx identities since they expressed their shock at finding themselves to be the only Latinx student in their group as well as finding no Latinx representation in their study material. This lack of representation has a significant influence in the ways in which individuals understand their present and potential self-representations (Hall, 1992), which is why the next section

focuses on how Latinx students constructed their perceptions and self-images and the implications this has had for the formation of their identities.

5.2. RQ2 In what ways do students construct and develop their identities at the university?

According to the findings, interacting with others played a key role in students' identity formation. When asked about their identities at university, all participants highlighted the importance of having received help and support from other people. A significant number of participants explained that they contacted Oxford students and alumni for guidance when they were preparing their university applications. This is related to the fact that individuals create their possible selves by comparing their own characteristics and behaviours to those of "salient others" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p.954). Thus, being in contact with individuals who had been successful in their Oxford applications enhanced participants' like-to-be selves since these individuals served as pertinent role models (Oyserman et al., 2015)

Another way in which other people had a positive influence on Latinx students' formation of possible selves can be evidenced in Sol's narrative. As Sol explained, they felt motivated to apply after seeing other students who won their same scholarship prepare their Oxford application. In this case, Markus and Nurius' (1986) premise of "what others are, I could become" (p.954) also becomes pertinent, as other participants such as Sol declared that they "*realised*" they could "*also*" go to Oxford when they saw others doing it. Not only were students motivated by their role models and/or peers, but they also declared that they received support from previous teachers, family, and friends, which amounts to the importance of the social context for identity formation.

Although social interaction favoured the construction of like-to-be selves, students expressed that they also envisioned possible selves that they wished to avoid. In most cases, these negative possible selves were related to being rejected by the University of Oxford. Motivated by diverse levels of concern regarding a potential rejection, participants actively diversified their possible

selves by applying to other institutions at the same time. Even though there was one participant who did not apply to other institutions this academic year, they had applied to Oxford before and obtained a place, so they can be considered along with the rest. Based on students' accounts, it can be seen how their actions had a direct impact in their processes of identity formation and helped them to further develop their agency (Sen, 1985). Thus, participants' decision to diversify was motivated by their desire to hinder the realisation of their like-to-avoid selves (Oyserman et al., 2015) and their social interactions provided them with support and guidance in the process.

Participants also displayed high levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), which helped strengthen their identities throughout their academic development. During the interviews, participants reflected on their trajectories since they started their applications and, in various cases, manifested their pride in having obtained an offer. Furthermore, findings revealed that most participants were satisfied with their efforts to overcome the challenges set by having to use English as a means of communication. Even though feelings of anxiety, fear and insecurity were reported in relation to writing and speaking English, several participants expressed that their efforts *"served their purpose"*. As Latinx students achieved their goal of obtaining a place at the university and overcame the challenges they encountered, they experienced high levels of satisfaction, which in turn boosted their motivation and fulfilment (Bandura, 1982).

In sum, Latinx students projected both like-to-be and like-to-avoid selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 2015) which were highly influenced by their social contexts. In the case of like-to-be selves, Latinx students highlighted the importance of interacting with others and having role models who motivated them and provided support and guidance. On the other hand, like-to-avoid selves were addressed through Latinx students' decision to apply to various institutions to increase the chances to materialise positive selves who would be recipients of an offer. Thus, it can be argued that Latinx students' construction of possible selves directly influenced their processes of identity formation, mainly in two ways: firstly, by interacting with salient individuals who

served as their role models, students could envision themselves as potential Oxford students with higher levels of self-confidence; secondly, reflecting on their projections and expectations fostered students' evaluation of their current selves and the acknowledgement of their own potential as role models for others. In other words, being a Latinx student at the University of Oxford became the materialisation of participants' like-to-be selves and brought about feelings of satisfaction and self-efficacy towards their accomplishments as well as the acknowledgement that they have the potential to become role models for others.

5.3. RQ3 How do Latinx students position themselves in UK higher education?

In accordance with the findings of this study, Latinx students at the University of Oxford saw themselves as a privileged minority. Studying in "*the best university in the world"* operated as a symbol of prestige as well as motivation and participants expressed that they felt privileged to be part of the institution. Furthermore, they added that having been able to afford private English instruction evidenced their advantaged position in comparison with other Latinxs. This acknowledgement of privilege is valuable to address the unequal structures of power, especially for those who experience discrimination and exclusion (Crenshaw, 2018). Being a member of an elite PWI implies holding a certain privileged status, although this does not erase the fact that Latinx students are a minority not only in the UK but also in the case institution.

The findings of this study indicate that Latinx students were subject to discrimination and microaggressions that impacted on their well-being and shaped their positionalities. Although the little pre-existing research on Latinx students mainly focuses on the US context, this dissertation found that Latinx students at the University of Oxford had similar negative experiences to those in the US (Rolón-Dow & Davidson, 2020; Bañuelos & Flores, 2021; García et al., 2021). In the case institution, Latinx students reported being othered and invisibilised as well as having faced several challenges where their

intersectionalities in terms of race, gender, and age, among others, made them feel at a disadvantage. While in some cases microaggressions caused participants to desire to go back to their home countries, others tapped into their agency and demanded that the PWI must change and be more inclusive.

Moreover, a salient pattern in the findings indicated that Latinx students engaged in different strategies to cope with the difficulties they encountered. Many participants of this study embraced their Latinx identities as spaces of resistance (Cerezo et al., 2020) to the oppression and discrimination experienced and spoke up to defend themselves. Thus, they denounced the lack of visibility and understanding of Latinx individuals beyond the black/white male/female binaries as well as the lack of acknowledgement of their positionalities as producers of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). In most cases, being subject to discrimination and racism, whether intentional or not, fostered Latinx students' resilience and prompted them to form communities where they could share their experiences and, also, teach others about their cultural identities (Holguín Mendoza et al., 2023).

In addition to looking for support and a sense of belonging in interactions with other Latinx students, participants of this study reported their wish to address the inequalities present in institutional spaces and many of them highlighted their desire to represent Latin America through their academic work. Thus, they sought to make their *voces de poder* heard (Salinas, 2017), embracing their positionalities as students at an elite institution. This was also present in their personal statements, where they explicitly stated their desires to help their communities upon completion of their studies. Furthermore, participants explained that getting together with other Latinx students fostered feelings of empowerment and provided spaces to discuss how to improve Latinx students' experiences. These findings are in keeping with Wright-Mair et al.'s (2023) whereby Latinx students engaged in strategies to counter the negative feelings generated by racism and discrimination instead of falling into victimhood.

To summarise, findings of this study served to illustrate the ways in which Latinx students agentically positioned themselves as subjects and producers of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). By questioning Latinx underrepresentation not only in terms of involvement at the institution but also in the study material, participants of this study exposed the white superstructure (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2022) underpinning this PWI. This serves to highlight the need for institutional acknowledgement and understanding of the experiences of students' racialised bodies. Thus, findings suggest that the multiple intersections between Latinx students' identities are such that students find themselves in a *"grey area"* (Lionel) which prompts them to forge positionalities that would allow them to be seen and heard.

5.4. What does being Latinx at the University of Oxford mean to the students?

As reported, Latinx students placed great value on being members of the institution despite their minority status and the difficulties they experienced as a result. Obtaining an offer from such a prestigious university boosted participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy and set the ground for future self-images (Bandura, 1985; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Although Latinx students experienced several difficulties throughout their academic trajectories at the institution, they acknowledged and elaborated on how white structures operate and highlighted their potential for change (Maher & Tetreault, 2001). Findings suggest that Latinx students did not agree with the reigning hierarchies that favour White and Western centres of knowledge (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2021) and advocated for the acknowledgement and representation of Latinx epistemologies.

Results also indicated that Latinx students actively engaged in reflections on their identities and positionalities, and that their communities played a key role in the development of their identities at this PWI. The fact that participants joined different Latinx societies with a view to fostering a sense of belonging and that these groups continuously tried to attract more members to share

Latinx experiences and cultures illustrates how Latinx identities evolve and interact. Moreover, Latinx students' efforts to increase representation not only illustrate their positionality of resistance (Cerezo et al., 2020) but they also serve as models upon which other individuals can project their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This, together with participants' desires to give back to their communities highlights the value they confer to their social relations.

To sum up, findings suggest that being Latinx at the University of Oxford meant being a minority within a predominantly white institution with high prestige and reputation, and that this entails a combination of negative and positive aspects. On the one hand, Latinx students experienced several challenges due to their intersectional minority identities. Among the difficulties they faced, invisibilisation was the most reported: throughout their university experiences Latinx students were openly ignored and unacknowledged. In addition, those with racial and gender identities that did not specifically align with the assumed binaries of black/white and male/female were often subject to microaggressions. Other challenges included financial burdens and economic uncertainty throughout their studies, English language difficulties that were still not overcome after several months of being in Oxford, and lack of Latinx representation in terms of students, university staff and study materials. On the other hand, Latinx students valued the prestige conferred by the status of the university and prided themselves in having obtained an offer.

On the whole, Latinx students saw themselves as holders of knowledge and as agents of transformation at the same time and expressed their strong desires for a change in the white structures that systematically oppress minority groups. Despite the hardships they endured, Latinx students described their experiences at the university as positive and enriching overall. Therefore, obtaining a place at the University of Oxford can be regarded as a pathway to make Latinx students' voices heard, or in Salinas' words (2017), to convert them from *voces perdidas* (repressed voices) into *voces de poder* (powerful voices), although there are many aspects that call for improvement.

6. Chapter Six – Conclusion

Being Latinx at the University of Oxford brings together different intersectional identities and positionalities. This study aimed to contribute to the little existing body of knowledge of Latinx students in UK higher education by providing concrete evidence of how their intersecting identities shape their positionalities as a "privileged minority". This research highlights Latinx students' voices, which have been largely underrepresented in academia, by foregrounding individuals' perceptions and experiential knowledge. The intentional use of the term *Latinx* in this dissertation has found little resistance among the participants of this study, which amounts to its relevance and pertinence to refer to individuals who not only have Latin American descent, but also challenge the binaries black/white and male/female.

The main research question of this study was: What does being Latinx at the University of Oxford mean to students? To address this question, two theoretical lenses were applied to the analysis of the data obtained from participants' personal statements as well as from the interviews. The results of the analysis indicate that Latinx students consider interpersonal relationships with other Latinxs as key to experience a sense of belonging. This has motivated them to look for other Latinxs and find a community that would support them. Moreover, being geographically distant from their homes has fostered their understanding of their Latinx identities and, through contrast with other individuals, it has prompted them to embrace their Latinicity.

Despite the challenges that Latinx students faced throughout their studies, which included microaggressions, discrimination and othering, the University of Oxford was found to provide satisfactory and enriching experiences overall. The intersections of race, gender, age, language, and financial status aided Latinx students' reflection on their backgrounds and expectations and helped them shape their positionalities as agents of change. On the whole, Latinx students valued their experiences at the University of Oxford and considered

themselves as privileged for having obtained an offer in spite of their minority status and expressed their strong wishes for more Latinx representation.

As this study had several limitations such as time constraints and sample size, it is recommended for future research to recruit a bigger pool of participants to investigate Latinx students' identities in more depth. Additionally, a longitudinal study covering more than one academic year would prove useful in increasing the body of knowledge available on Latinx students. Furthermore, research focused on Latinx students could be carried out in a variety of other institutions, not necessarily UK-based. By comparing and analysing Latinx students' identities across various institutions and different contexts, further research could gain understandings of Latinx students' experiences in a more comprehensive way. Finally, investigations focused on expanding knowledge on Latinx students would benefit higher education institutions by providing them with information upon which they could devise strategies to improve Latinx students' experiences and increase Latinx representation.

7. References

Aguinaga, A., & Gloria, A. M. (2015). The effects of generational status and university environment on Latina/o undergraduates' persistence decisions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 8*(1), 15. https://doi.org/10.1037/

Armus, T. (2015, October 7). Student groups shift toward use of Latinx to include all gender identities. *Columbia Daily Spectator*. http://columbiaspectator.com/news/2015/10/07/student-groups-shift-toward-use-latinxinclude-all-gender-identities

Arteaga, B. E. (2015). Applying cultura in the community college counseling practice. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 39*(8), 708–726. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.876374a0038465

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to Research in Education* (Sixth Edition). Wadsworth Group.

Baker, C. N., & Robnett, B. (2012). Race, social support and college student retention: A case study. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*(2), 325–335. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0025

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *The American Psychologist, 37*(2), 122-147.

Bañuelos, M. & Flores, G. (2021). 'I could see myself': professors' influence in first-generation Latinx college students' pathways into doctoral programs, Race Ethnicity and Education, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2021.1969906

Bhatia, V. K. (2004). *Worlds of written discourse: A genre-based view.* London, UK: Continuum.

Bonner, A., & Tolhurst, G. (2002). Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nurse Researcher, 9*(4), 7.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Thematic analysis : A practical guide to understanding and doing. SAGE.

Breen, L. J. (2007). The Researcher 'in the Middle': Negotiating the Insider/Outsider Dichotomy. *The Australian Community Psychologist, 19*(1): 163–174.

Brinkmann, S. (2018). The Interview. In N. Denzin & Lincoln, I. (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 997-1038) SAGE.

Brinkmann, S. (2020). Unstructured and Semistructured Interviewing. In P. Leavy (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 424-456). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.36

Brown, R. M. (2005). *The rhetoric of self-promotion in personal statements.* The University of Texas at Austin ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies That Matter.* London: Routledge.

Cantor, N., & Kihlstrom, J. E (1982). Cognitive and social processes in personality. In G. T. Wilson & C. Franks (Eds.), *Contemporary behavior therapy* (pp. 142-201). New York: Guilford Press.

Cerezo, A., Cummings, M., Holmes, M., & Williams, C. (2020). Identity as Resistance: Identity Formation at the Intersection of Race, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 44*(1), 67-83.

Chiu, Y. (2016). 'Singing your tune': Genre structure and writer identity in personal statements for doctoral applications. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 21*, 48-59.

Chong, P. W. & Graham, L. J. (2013). The 'Russian doll' approach: developing nested case-studies to support international comparative research in education. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education, 36*(1), pp. 23–32.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education.* Taylor & Francis Group.

Comeaux, E., Grummert, S. & Cruz, N. (2021). Strategies of Resistance among Racially Minoritized Students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution: A Critical Race Theory Perspective, *The Journal of Higher Education, 92*(3), 465-498, DOI:10.1080/00221546.2020.1851569

Contreras, R. (2017). The X factor: The struggle to get Latinos in US news stories amid a Latinx push and a changing journalism landscape. *Cultural Dynamic, 29*(3), 177–185.

Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1*(8), 139–167.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* 4th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

de Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., Branstetter, C., & Wang, X. (2019). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2018 (NCES 2019-038). U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid= 2019038

DeGuzmán, M. (2017). Latinx: ¡Estamos aquí!, or Being "Latinx" at UNC-Chapel Hill. *Cultural Dynamics 29*(3): 214–230.

Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Theory, and Critical Raced-Gendered Epistemologies: Recognizing Students of Color as Holders and Creators of Knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 105-126.

Delgado-Romero, E. A., Manlove, A. N., Manlove, J. D., & Hernandez, C. A. (2006). Controversial issues in the recruitment and retention of Latino/a faculty. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 6*, 34–51.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2017). Critical Race Theory (Third Edition). NYU Press.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Fifth ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.

Derrida, J. (1981) *Positions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dueñas, M. & Gloria, A. (2022): Para honrar los sacrificios de mi familia: Motivating persons and processes of Latinx undergraduates attending a predominantly White institution, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, DOI: 10.1080/09518398.2022.2098403

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insideroutsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 54-63.

Engel, P. (2017). On naming ourselves, or: When I was a spic. *Cultural Dynamic, 29*(3), 193–201.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Espino, M. M. (2018). Positionality as Prologue: Encountering the Self on the Journey to Transforming Latina/o/x Educational Inequities*. Teachers College Record (1970), 120*(14), 1-16.

Fakunle, O. (2021). International students' perspective on developing employability during study abroad. *Higher Education Quarterly, 75*(4), 575-590. DOI: 10.1111/hequ.12308

Flores, J. & Garcia, S. (2009). Latina testimonios: a reflexive, critical analysis of a 'Latina space' at a predominantly White campus, *Race Ethnicity and Education, 12*(2), 155-172, DOI: 10.1080/13613320902995434

Frazier, L. D., Schwartz, B. L., & Metcalfe, J. (2021). The MAPS model of self-regulation: Integrating metacognition, agency, and possible selves. *Metacognition and Learning, 16*(2), 297-318.

García, I., Jackson, A., Harwood, S., Greenlee, A., Lee, A., & Chrisinger, B. (2021). "Like a Fish Out of Water", *Journal of the American Planning Association, 87*(1), 108-122, DOI: 10.1080/01944363.2020.1777184

García, O. & Solorza. C. (2021). Academic language and the minoritization of U.S. bilingual Latinx students. *Language and Education, 35*(6), 505-521, DOI:10.1080/09500782.2020.1825476

Gergen, K. J. (1967). To be or not to be a single self. Existential-perspectives on the self. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.

Gergen, K. J. (1972). Multiple identity: The healthy, happy human being wears many masks. *Psychology Today 5*, 31-35, 64-66.

Gloria, A. M., & Kurpius, S. E. R. (1996). The validation of the cultural congruity scale and the university environment scale with Chicano/a students. Hispanic *Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 18*(4), 533–549. https://doi.org/10.1177/07399863960184007

González, J. (2010). Report highlights disparities in graduation rates among whites and minority students. *Chronicle of Higher Education.*

Greenwald, A. G., & Pratkanis, A. R. (1984). The self. In R. S. Wyer & T. K. Srull (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition* (pp. 129-178). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Guidotti-Hernández, N. M. (2017). Affective communities and millennial desires: Latinx, or why my computer won't recognize Latina/o. *Cultural Dynamic, 29*(3), 141–159.

Gunda Werner Institute in the Heinrich Böll Foundation & the Center for Intersectional Justice (2019). Reach Everyone on the Planet…: Kimberlé Crenshaw and Intersectionality. https://www.gwi-boell.de/sites/default/files/endf_crenshaw_web_gesamt_en_0.pdf

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford. (Ed) *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 2–27). Lawrance & Wishart.

Hall, S. (2011). Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'? In DuGay, P., & Hall, S. (Eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: SAGE Publications.

Hardgrove, A., Rootham, E., & McDowell, L. (2015). Possible selves in a precarious labour market: Youth, imagined futures, and transitions to work in the UK. *Geoforum, 60*, 163-171.

Hayashi, E. (2019). 'UCAS ignores Latin Americans in application forms': Meet LatinXcluded. https://thetab.com/uk/kings/2019/03/14/ucas-ignores-latin-americans-in-application-forms-meet-latinxcluded-24788

Hernandez, D. (2017, December 7). The Case against Latinx. *LA Times*. https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-hernandez-the-case-against-latinx-20171217-story.html

Holguín Mendoza, A., Taylor, L., Romero Montaño, L. Lucero, A. & Dorantes, A. (2023). Too Latinx or Not Latinx Enough? Racial Subtexts and Subjectivities in

a Predominantly White University, *Journal of Latinos and Education, 22(*3),1138-1153, DOI: 10.1080/15348431.2021.1920945

Holt, B. (2012). Identity matters: The centrality of 'conferred identity' as symbolic power and social capital in higher education mobility. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16*(9), 929-940.

Hyland, K. (2012). Disciplinary identities: Individuality and community in academic discourse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Iwama, J. (2023). Advancing Latinx Diversity in Academia and Why It Matters. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, DOI: 10.1080/10511253.2023.2186452

Kim, T. (2017). Academic mobility, transnational identity capital, and stratification under conditions of academic capitalism. *Higher Education, 73*(6), 981-997.

King's College London (2020). A voice for change. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/a-voice-for-change

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincolns (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 257–278). SAGE.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* SAGE.

Maher, F. & Tetreault, M. (2001). Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Mahler, S. (2018). Special issue: Monolith or mosaic? Miami's twenty-first-century Latin@ dynamics. *Latino Studies, 16*(1), 2-20.

Marginson, S. (2014). Student Self-Formation in International Education. Journal of *Studies in International Education, 18*(1), 6-22. DOI: 10.1177/1028315313513036

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. *The American Psychologist, 41*(9), 954-969.

McIlwaine, C. & Bunge, D. (2016). *Towards visibility: the Latin American community in London.* London: Trust for London. https://trustforlondon.fra1.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Towards-Visibility-full-report_QqkSbgl.pdf

McIlwaine, C., Cock, J.C. & Linneker, B. (2011). *No Longer Invisible: the Latin American community in London.* London: Trust for London. https://tfl.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/No-Longer-Invisible-report.pdf

Merriam, S., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G. & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: Negotiating insider / outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 20*(5), 405-416.

Milian, C. (2017). Extremely Latin, XOXO: Notes on Latinx. *Cultural Dynamic, 29*(3), 121– 140.

Mullings, B. (1999). Insider or Outsider, Both or Neither: Some Dilemmas of Interviewing in a Cross-Cultural Setting. *Geoforum; Journal of Physical, Human, and Regional Geosciences, 30*(4): 337–350.

Office for National Statistics. (2021). 2021 Census. https://www.ons.gov.uk/census

Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible Selves and Academic Outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*(1), 188-204.

Oyserman, D., Destin, M. & Sheida Novin (2015). The Context-Sensitive Future Self: Possible Selves Motivate in Context, Not Otherwise, *Self and Identity, 14*(2), 173-188, DOI: 10.1080/15298868.2014.965733

Pharao Hansen, M., & Tlapoyawa, K. (2018). Aztlán and Mexican transnationalism: Language, nation and history. In S. Brunn (Ed.) *Handbook of the changing world language map* (pp.667–684). Springer.

Ramos, S. Raquel, Portillo, Carmen J., Rodriguez, Christine, & Gutierrez, Jose I. (2023). Latinx: Sí, Se Puede? A Reflection on the Terms Past, Present, and Future. *Journal of Urban Health, 100*(1), 4-6.

Real Academia Española. (2010). Nueva gramática de la lengua española. Espasa Libros.

Riger, S. & Sigurvinsdottir, R. (2016). Thematic analysis. In L. A. Jason & D. S. Glenwick (Eds.), *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods* (pp. 33-42). New York: Oxford University Press.

Robertson, A. (2019a). *'No Soy Other' – A Spotlight on Latinx young people in the UK*. https://cfey.org/2019/11/no-soy-other-a-spotlight-on-latinx-young-people-in-the-uk/

Robertson, A. (2019b). *No soy other – challenging the invisibility of London's Latinx community.* https://wonkhe.com/blogs/no-soy-other-challenging-the-invisibility-of-londons-latinx-community/

Robertson, A., Baars, S. & Bowen-Viner, K. (2019). Representation, engagement and participation Latinx students in higher education. Centre for Education & Youth, King's College London. https://cfey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Latinx-students-in-higher-education-Nov-2019.pdf

Rolón-Dow, R. & Davison, A. (2021). Theorizing racial microaffirmations: a Critical Race/LatCrit approach, Race Ethnicity and Education, 24:2, 245-261, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2020.1798381

Salinas Jr., C. (2017). Transforming academia and theorizing spaces for Latinx in higher education: voces perdidas and voces de poder. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 30*(8), 746-758, DOI: 10.1080/09518398.2017.1350295

Salinas Jr., C. (2020). The Complexity of the "x" in Latinx: How Latinx/a/o Students Relate to, Identify With, and Understand the Term Latinx. *Journal Of Hispanic Higher Education, 19*(2), Pp149-168. DOI: 10.1177/153819271990038

Salinas Jr., C. & Lozano, A. (2019). Mapping and recontextualizing the evolution of the term Latinx: An environmental scanning in higher education. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 18*(4), 302-315, DOI: 10.1080/15348431.2017.1390464

Santos, C. E. (2017). The history, struggles, and potential of the term Latinx. *Latina/o Psychology Today, 4*, 7–14.

Scharrón-Del Rio, M. R., & Aja, A. A. (2015). The case for "Latinx": Why intersectionality is not a choice. *Latino Rebels*. http://www.latinorebels.com/2015/12/05/the-case-for-latinx-why-intersectionality-isnot-a-choice/

Scharrón-del Río, M. R., & Aja, A. A. (2020). Latinx: Inclusive Language as Liberation Praxis. *Journal of Latinx Psychology, 8*(1), 7-20.

Sen, A. (1985). Well-being, agency and freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984. *The Journal of Philosophy, 82*, 169-221.

Sen, A. (1999). Global justice: Beyond international equity. In I. Kaul, I. Grunberg, & M. Stern (Eds.), *Global public goods: International cooperation in the 21st century* (pp. 116-125). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (2000). Other people - Beyond identity. *The New Republic, 223*(25), 23-30.

Shahjahan, R., & Edwards, K. (2022). Whiteness as futurity and globalization of higher education. *Higher Education, 83*(4), 747-764.

Shields, R. (2013). Globalization and International Student Mobility: A Network Analysis. *Comparative Education Review, 57*(4), 609-636.

Simons, H. (2009). *Case Study Research in Practice*. SAGE.

Solórzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. Urban Education, 36(3), 308–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. Qualitative Inquiry, 8(1), 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103

Stanley, C. A., & Slattery, P. (2003). Who reveals what to whom? Critical reflections on conducting qualitative inquiry as an interdisciplinary, biracial, male/female research team. *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(5), 705–728. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403253004

Takacs, D. (2003). How does your positionality bias your epistemology? *Thought & Action, 19*(1), 27–38.

Thomas, G. (2010). Doing case study: abduction, not induction, phronesis not theory. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16* (7), pp. 575–82.

Thompson, I. (2013). Indigenous languages of South America. *About World Languages*. https://www.mustgo.com/worldlanguages/indigenous-languages-of-south-america/

Thompson, J. & Martinez, D. (2022) Linked fate, cumulative discrimination, and panethnic identification: awareness and use of 'Latinx' among a nationally representative sample of Hispanics/Latinos. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 48*(19), 4503-4526, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2022.2081838

Times Higher Education. (2023). World University Rankings. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2023/world-ranking

Tran, L., & Vu, T. (2018). 'Agency in mobility': towards a conceptualisation of international student agency in transnational mobility, Educational Review, 70(2), 167-187, DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2017.1293615

UK Parliament Petitions. Include Latinx/Hispanic as an ethnic group in the 2021 census. https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/557528

UNESCO. (n.d.). UNESDOC - UNESCO Digital Library. https://unesdoc.unesco.org

University of Oxford. (n.d.). Student statistics. University of Oxford. https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/student-statistics

Vidal-Ortiz, Salvador, & Martínez, Juliana. (2018). Latinx thoughts: Latinidad with an X. *Latino Studies, 16*(3), 384-395.

Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational Research* (second edition). London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity.* Cambridge University Press.

Wright-Mair, R., Ramos, D., & Passano, B. (2023): Latinx College Students' Strategies for Resisting Imposter Syndrome at Predominantly White Institutions, *Journal of Latinos and Education*, DOI: 10.1080/15348431.2023.2180366

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (fourth edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zentella, A.C. (2017). "Limpia, fija y da esplendor": Challenging the Symbolic Violence of the Royal Spanish Academy. *Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures 1*(2): 21–42.

Appendix A

Latinx Postgraduate Students' Experiences in a UK University

Ethics Approval Reference: EDUC_C1A_23_201

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Luisina Bello, I am a Latinx master's student at the University of Oxford, Department of Education. For my dissertation, I aim to get in contact with Latinx postgraduate currently studying at the University of Oxford who are willing to share their perceptions and opinions.

The purpose of this study is to explore Latinx postgraduate students' experiences. It focuses on students' previous expectations about academic life in the UK, the difficulties they encountered during their application process and their present-day experiences at university.

I am looking for postgraduate students who self-identify as Latinx and currently attend the University of Oxford. You are invited to share your experiences at an interview, which would be carried out either in Oxford or online. The interview would take between 40 to 60 minutes of your time. You would be asked a series of questions about your application process, your expectations before coming to university and your current experience. Also, you would be asked to share your personal statement with me prior to the interview, with the purpose of gathering more information about your experiences. You can withdraw yourself from the research without giving any reasons.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact Luisina Bello at luisina.bello@education.ox.ac.uk, Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY. There is no obligation to take part.

Thank you!

Luisina Bello

Appendix B

Mail to potential participants:

Dear [participant's name]

My name is Luisina Bello, I am a Latinx master's student at the University of Oxford, Department of Education. For my dissertation, I am conducting research and interviewing Latinx postgraduate students who are currently studying at the University of Oxford to hear about their experiences applying to university and their perceptions of academic life in the UK. If this is something that you might be interested in, please do let me know.

I would ask you to send me the personal statement you wrote to gain admission to the university (if you would like to share it); and, also, I would like to have a 45-60 minute interview with you to learn about your experiences and opinions. If possible, I would like to conduct the interviews in person, but if you prefer it, we can have it online, on Microsoft Teams. There are absolutely no wrong answers and the information you share with me will be extremely valuable for my study. I have attached an information sheet with all the details.

Moreover, should you know any other Latinx postgraduate students who might be interested in sharing their voices, could you please offer names/contacts? Please let me know if you are interested, or if you have any questions I can answer!

I look forward to hearing from you, and I hope your term is going well.

Kindly,

Luisina

Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions

- What does being Latinx mean to you?
- Where are you from?
- How did you envision your life as a Latinx graduate student in Oxford?
- What were your expectations regarding your course, your cohort, academic life in general?
- Why did you choose to apply to this university?
- Could you tell me about the process of writing your personal statement?
- At this stage, what do you think about the personal statement you wrote?
- Are there any challenges that you had to face which you did not foresee?

Appendix D

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk; staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk



Luisina Bello luisina.bello@education.ox.ac.uk
Department of Education, Social Sciences Division
University of Oxford

15 May 2023

Dear Luisina,

Research ethics approval

Research title: Latinx Postgraduate Students' Experiences in a UK University
Research ethics reference: EDUC_C1A_23_201

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Education Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the University's procedures for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of the information provided to the DREC, ethics approval has now been granted for this study.

Please note the following:

Personal data: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all personal data collected during the project is managed in accordance with the University's guidance and legal requirements.

In-person activities: Any data collection involving in-person interactions with participants must have an up-to-date fieldwork risk assessment in place; further guidance is available from the Safety Office's website.

Amendments: Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval, as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available on the SSH IDREC webpage.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk / student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk or ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

James Carroll
DREC member

cc: Dr Xin Xu xin.xu@education.ox.ac.uk

Appendix E

Latinx Postgraduate Students' Experiences in a UK University

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: EDUC_C1A_23_201

1. Introductory paragraph

You are invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

2. Why is this research being conducted?

This research is being conducted by Luisina Bello (me) and supervised by Dr. Xin Xu. I am conducting this research to write a dissertation (a 20,000 word research paper) which is a requirement to earn an MSc in Higher Education from the University of Oxford. This project will explore Latinx Postgraduate students' perceptions of their academic experiences during and after their application process to attend the University of Oxford.

There are few studies focusing on Latinx students' experiences in higher education, especially regarding their expectations, application processes and current experiences. I am interested in investigating the difficulties Latinx students face while applying to a prestigious UK university, their perceptions of academic life before their application and what their experiences are like after having received an offer.

I will ask you three main questions about your experiences:

1) Before applying to university, how did you envision your life as a Latinx graduate student in the UK?
2) As part of your university application, you were required to write a personal statement in English. What challenges/difficulties did you experience in the process?
3) Now that you are a graduate student, how would you describe your UK university experience as Latinx in comparison with your previous expectations?

It will be interesting to determine whether you and other participants have had significantly different experiences, or if there are meaningful overlaps. You will be contributing to an area of literature that will shed light on Latinx students' experiences, so any information you share with me will be valuable since it could help improve future Latinx students' experiences in the UK.

Appendix F

Consent to take part in "Latinx Postgraduate Students' Experiences in a UK University"

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference: EDUC_C1A_23_201

Purpose of Study: This study will interview Latinx Postgraduate students who are attending the University of Oxford and hear their perceptions of academic life as Latinx, their prior expectations, the difficulties encountered and their current experiences.

	Please initial each box if you agree with the statement
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until June 30, 2023, without giving any reason.	☐
I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	☐
I understand that I will not be identifiable from any publications or other research outputs here, including presentations.	☐
I consent to being audio and video recorded.	☐

I understand how audio recordings, videos and my personal statement will be used in research outputs. ☐

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option): ☐

a) I do not wish to be quoted. **or**

b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable.

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information. ☐

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint. ☐

I agree to take part. ☐

_____	dd / mm / yyyy	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature

_____	dd / mm / yyyy	_____
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature