AN INVESTIGATION OF THE LINKS BETWEEN THE CRISTO REY
PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND ADJUSTMENT TO
COLLEGE

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Dedication

To my son: Ignacio deSantos

Let’s go for a walk
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ABSTRACT

College enrollment rates have increased over the past 30 years, but there continue to be gaps in college enrollment as well as graduation rates across demographics such as socioeconomic status and race. This is a social justice issue that affects the population of this study, which focuses on graduates of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School (CRPHS). Both positive social and academic adjustment, especially during the first year of college, is found to be strongly related to retention and persistence through college.

This study took a mixed methods approach and gathered data on the students’ academic and socio-emotional adjustment to college as well as the study participants’ high school experiences. Regression analyses determined any high school predictors of college adjustment. Results showed that a Cristo Rey graduate’s perception of their high school’s impact on their academic and social adjustment to college was a significant predictor of academic adjustment and sense of belonging on their college campus. A graduate’s high school academic performance was a predictor of sense of belonging, but not of academic adjustment. Student interviews revealed major themes of college readiness, the power of relationships and the importance of community on a student’s adjustment to college.

Analyses of findings from this mixed-methods study leads to implications for policy and research for both Secondary Schools and Higher Educational Institutions, particularly Predominately White Intuitions, on how to best support and value a Cristo Rey Philadelphia student’s adjustment to college.
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Chapter 1:
INTRODUCTION

Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely than others to earn more, be employed, live a healthier lifestyle, and be a more active citizen (volunteering, voting, etc.) (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). All students should have equal opportunity to graduate from college, not only for personal benefit, but for the betterment of all society. “Increasing college opportunity is not just an economic imperative, but a reflection of our values. We need to reach, inspire, and empower every student, regardless of background, to make sure that our country is a place where if you work hard, you have a chance to get ahead” (The Executive Office of the President, 2014). This is not the reality in our nation. Overall, college enrollment rates have increased over the past 30 years, but there continue to be gaps in college enrollment as well as graduation rates across demographics, such as socioeconomic status and race.

This study is based on findings from a previous pilot study I conducted with Cristo Rey Philadelphia’s first graduating class, entitled, “What does it mean to be ready for college?: Perspectives of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates in their 1st year of college.” The study revealed that academics played a major role in their adjustment to college, but students expressed that academic adjustment was not as difficult, or as much of a surprise to them, as their social-emotional adjustment, specifically concerning differences in race. Students voiced that they had to learn how to adjust and respond to their new college environments, which were much different than their high school experience, in order to preserve their dignity, their sense of self, and
their future goals. Through the voices of Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduates, I found that a student’s strong sense of belonging and positive self-concept, specifically in their self-efficacy, positively impacted their adjustment to college life.

The students’ responses caused me to reflect on the influence their Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School (CRPHS) experience had on their ability to positively adjust to college. The participants in this study, all students of color from low-income backgrounds who graduated from CRPHS in 2016 and 2017, offered their perceptions of both their academic and social adjustment to college. This, in addition to an analysis of data from their high school experience, allowed for an investigation into how their experiences at CRPHS influenced their adjustment to college. An inquiry into the link between college adjustment and one’s high school experience is important because research shows that a positive college adjustment leads to college persistence and graduation, which is the goal for all CRPHS students. CRPHS and possibly other secondary schools could learn what is truly beneficial in preparing students, specifically students of color from low-income backgrounds, for college life. Secondary school educators must think beyond high school graduation. As we form curricula and policies and build culture in our schools, we must ask: what is at stake if we do not properly prepare students for college?

A positive adjustment to college entails both the ability to do the academic work and the ability to adjust socially and emotionally. Tinto’s (1993) model of student persistence “identified integration into the social and intellectual fabric of the institution, as well as commitment to the institution and to the goal of obtaining a college degree, as the most important predictors of student college persistence” (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007, p. 803). In an attempt to explain the struggle for underserved urban
students to academically adjust to college life, Yavuz suggested that

Underserved urban students are not academically ready for college because many urban high schools serving underrepresented minority students are less likely to offer rigorous college prep courses, test preparation courses, or curricula. Underrepresented students who lack academic preparedness are more likely to drop out of college. (Yavuz, 2016)

CRPHS offers a rigorous college prep curriculum, which includes college counseling courses and advisory groups, but is this enough? In this study, I attempted to research how CRPHS graduates adjusted to college and the factors in high school that predicted college academic and socioemotional adjustment.

I examined students’ college adjustment experiences and their high school predictors in order to investigate ways in which high school experience can best prepare and support, academically and socioemotionally, college students on their various college campuses. Quantitative data I collected represent one dimension of the students’ experiences. The voices of students are not predominately featured in the current literature but can help us better understand the lived realities behind the quantitative data.

**Background and Context**

The first Cristo Rey High School was founded in 1996 in Pilsen, a neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago, Illinois. Today, the Cristo Rey Network consists of 35 Catholic, college preparatory high schools across 22 states and the District of Columbia. These schools currently serve 12,012 students and claim 15,505 graduates since the first school opened in 1996. The Cristo Rey Network schools seek to empower students and to develop their minds and hearts to become lifelong contributors to society. The faculty and staff of CRPHS stand by Cristo Rey Network’s mission to provide the students with an extraordinary college preparatory education and a unique four-year integrated corporate-
work-study experience, in order to transform urban America one student at a time (Cristo Rey Network Mission Statement, 2017). We believe that a college education allows the opportunity for all of our students to realize and live out their potential and pursue their goals and dreams, which they, along with every student, deserve to do no matter their income level, the neighborhood they live in, or the color of their skin.

The Cristo Rey Network seeks to reach a 70% six-year-college completion rate at a four-year institution for the class of 2020 (Cristo Rey Network Annual Report, 2016). We at Cristo Rey Philadelphia want to ensure that we are doing everything possible to make the goal of college graduation possible. When Cristo Rey students first arrive on their college campus, we want them to be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and resources to persist and graduate. All Cristo Rey students across the network are from economically disadvantaged families. The average family income for a family of four in the Cristo Rey Network is $37,000, just above the United States 2017 federal poverty level of $30,750. The students of CRPHS live in the poorest neighborhoods of Philadelphia, a city where 26% of its population lives below the poverty line (Philadelphia: The State of the City, 2018). Despite the disheartening statistics about students of color from low-income backgrounds and college graduation rates, our students apply to Cristo Rey Philly in order to pursue their goal of a college diploma (NSC, 2016).

CRPHS is a young school. We became the 25th high school in the Cristo Rey Network when we opened our doors in August 2012 to our founding freshmen class of 124 students. One grade was added over the course of four years, and we started the 2015-2016 school year as a full 9th-12th grade school. Currently, there are 499 students
enrolled at CRPHS, where our mission is to “nurture and challenge young women and men to recognize and realize their full potential as they grow to love God, respect others, and serve their community” (Cristo Rey Philadelphia Mission Statement, 2017). As a new school, we continue to evolve and improve our programs. We believe that, through the hard work of students, parents, faculty, and staff, Cristo Rey graduates will be able to adjust to college life and persist through college. As a new school, we will not have any college graduates until 2020; until then, we do not concretely know if and how our students’ high school experiences will lead to college graduation.

CRPHS graduated 161 students in its first two graduating classes (2016 and 2017). Of these 161 graduates, four never enrolled, three enrolled at a trade school, one entered the Navy, and 153 students enrolled in either a two or four-year college. Currently, 132 of these graduates are persisting in college, while 21 are labeled as “stop out,” meaning they are no longer enrolled in a college. What was the adjustment experience of the students who persisted into their second semesters of their first or second year of college and those who did not? In what way did Cristo Rey play a role in preparing students for life on their college campuses? While we know who is persisting, we do not concretely know if and how our students’ high school experiences supported both their academic and social adjustment to college, which leads to persistence. What can Cristo Rey and other high schools learn from this specific group of college students about the link between high school experiences, college adjustment, and college persistence?
Rationale and Significance

In our society, a college degree has a tremendous impact on one’s socioeconomic status, one’s employment, one’s health and healthy life choices, as well as on one’s involvement in public life. It is widely known that a college degree can lead to more economic opportunities in the United States. According to Isaacs, Sawhill, and Haskins (2008), when children born into the bottom fifth of the income distribution get a college degree, their chances of making it to the top nearly quadruple and their chances of making it out of the bottom increase by 55 percent. Research published by the Pew Research Center shows that a college degree is a way to combat the cycle of poverty. “Poverty has been on the rise among all young adults, and the increase has been greatest among lesser educated 25-32-year-olds. Among those ages 25 to 32, 22% with only a high school diploma are living in poverty, compared with 6% of today’s college-educated young adults” (Taylor, Fry, Oates, 2014, p. 26). A 2011 American Community Survey report demonstrated that educational attainment is by far the most important social characteristic for predicting earnings (Julian & Kominski, 2011).

Research also confirms that individuals with higher levels of education not only earn more but are also more likely than others to be employed. The Pew Research Center (2014) published that

On virtually every measure of economic well-being and career attainment—from personal earnings to job satisfaction to the full-time employment—young college graduates are outperforming their peers with less education. And when today’s young adults are compared to previous generations, the disparity in economic outcomes between college graduates and those with a high school diploma, or less formal schooling, has never been greater in the modern era. (p. 3).
A college degree may not always be the golden ticket out of poverty, due to the existence of many societal injustices, but it does allow for many more opportunities for employment and an increase in earnings, which all students deserve.

A college degree can also have a tremendous impact on one’s general well-being, which is not only positive for the student but also for their community and society as a whole. Research reveals that higher levels of education correspond to numerous health and societal outcomes. The benefits one earns through a college education have a large impact on our society (Baum et al., 2013). A college degree has a ripple effect on one’s personal life and on the surrounding community.

Unfortunately, the reality of today is that “Despite the many additional benefits associated with college completion, including better health, improved job security, and stronger families and communities, too few college students complete their postsecondary schooling” (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014). The benefits of a college degree are not equally spread across race and income categories. A report by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2017) on persistence at four-year public college institutions stated that Black students had the lowest six-year completion rate, at 45.9%, while Hispanic students’ six-year completion rate was 55.0%.¹ Meanwhile, over two-thirds of White (67.2%) and Asian (71.1%) students completed a degree within the same period. Nationally, 62.4% of all students who started in a four-year public institution finished a degree or certificate within six years. Both Black and Hispanic students’

¹ The data for this report were drawn from a voluntary sample made up of all high schools participating in the StudentTracker for High Schools (STHS) service administered by the National Student Clearinghouse. This is not a nationally representative sample of schools or of high school graduates. Compared to all U.S. high schools, participating STHS schools have greater representation among schools with more minority enrollments and more urban locales.
graduation percentages were reported to be much lower than the national percentage (Shapiro, et al., 2017). In terms of six-year college completion rates, graduates from “high-minority, low-income high schools” had the lowest rate, at 24%, while students from “low-minority, higher-income” high schools graduated at a rate of 50% (Tizon, 2015). This data has huge implications on the students of this study, graduates of CRPHS, a college preparatory school that fits the category of a high-minority, low-income school.

**Conceptual Framework**

Critical race theory, self-determination theory, social capital theory, and the stories of Cristo Rey graduates informed the variables measured, methods utilized, and lens of analysis for this study. An analysis of the data gathered in this mixed-methods study through the lenses of critical race theory, self-determination theory, and social capital theory allowed for a thorough understanding of a Cristo Rey graduate’s college-adjustment experience and an investigation into any links between their high school experiences and their adjustment to college. This study could add to the literature on how both college prep high schools as well as higher education institutions, specifically predominantly White institutions, can better prepare, support, and value students of color from low-income backgrounds in their adjustment to college. The students’ voices analyzed through these frames allow for a closer look as to who our educational systems and structures cater to and how we, as educational leaders, must address the opportunity gap by valuing, supporting, and promoting the social capital of all students, not just the dominant group of affluent, White students.
Further Explanation of Theoretical Frameworks

**Critical race theory.** The theoretical framework for this study, critical race theory, brings a lens to read and understand the insights of students of color from low-income backgrounds who will share their perceptions on their college adjustment and how their high school experiences impacted their academic and social-emotional adjustment to college. Critical race theory focuses on the “racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of communities of color and offers a liberatory and transformative method for examining racial/ethnic, gender, and class discrimination” (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 63). This mixed-methods study analyzes collected data on students’ high school experiences and takes a phenomenological approach when focusing on the students’ perceptions and experiences. The student’s voice is brought to the forefront of research and is a central component to understanding their adjustment to college life and the impact their high school experience had on their adjustment.

Ladson-Billings (2000) contended that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system. Yosso (2005) asserted that critical race theory “adds to efforts to continue to expand this dialogue to recognize the ways in which our struggles for social justice are limited by discourses that omit and thereby silence the multiple experiences of People of Color” (p. 73). Critical race theory challenges notions of neutral research or objective researchers and exposes deficit-informed research that silences, ignores, and distorts epistemologies of people of color (Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Looking through the lens of critical race theory means critiquing deficit theorizing and data that may be limited by its omission of the voices of people of color.

Much of the research literature on college adjustment and persistence focuses on
“underrepresented populations” and speaks to these populations as ones in need, or who are falling behind. The critical race theory lens allows the students’ voices to add depth of understanding to the quantitative data gathered and be a strong source of information that can lead to future educational insights. A mixed-method approach, informed by critical race theory, will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact a CRPHS graduate’s high school experience has on their adjustment to college, specifically to their sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and academic adjustment.

**Self-determination theory.** Through this study, I hope to better understand the impact of the CRPHS experience on a student’s sense of belonging, self-efficacy, loneliness, and academic adjustment during their college experience. Self-determination theory focuses on the “investigation of people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). Self-determination theory is a theory of motivation, personality, and development that proposes, intrinsic motivation influences one’s learning and engagement more so than extrinsic motivation (Guiffrida, et al., 2013, p. 121). This framework is important, for I will be analyzing both the students’ own growth and progression in college as well as the characteristics and conditions of their high school experience that may have nurtured and encouraged the development of processes that increase self-motivation and personality integration during their college experience. Ryan and Deci (2000) identified three needs that foster intrinsic motivation - competence, relatedness, and autonomy - which are essential for growth and integration as well as for positive social development and personal well-being. These needs correspond with the
variables of academic adjustment, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy that will be measured and analyzed throughout this study.

Utilizing the self-determination framework as a tool for analysis of students’ stories of their college adjustment experience, I can inquire if and how student’s needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness were or were not met in both their high school and college experiences. The self-determination theory framework moves away from the use of deficit language and offers a solid foundation for this study to build on in interpreting the collected data and trying to identify the factors in high school that can guide and nurture students in their personal and social development as they navigate their college experience and work to reach their destination of college graduation.

Social capital theory. Who holds the power? Whose social and cultural capital are valued and why? It is unfortunate, but these questions must be asked when analyzing college adjustment and persistence, specifically for students of color from low-income backgrounds. Wells (2008), influenced by the work of Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), wrote, “education is a means by which social and cultural hierarchies are reproduced and stratification is maintained” (p. 103); implying that educational systems maintain existing power structures and systems in society. It is not only that educational systems devalue other groups’ social capital, but they also do not even recognize that these groups—in this study, students of color from low-income backgrounds—have their own capital. Social Capital is an asset students can tap into in order to advance at school and in society, progress and increase outputs in their studies and work, and potentially receive economic gains. Social capital “is a type of resource that is socially reproduced, such as the possession of knowledge, accomplishments, or formal and informal relations and
network” (Brown and Davis, 2001, p. 41). Students whose social capital is not valued will have a more difficult time obtaining the knowledge, accomplishments and networking that may help them advance in their studies, internships and future careers. 

Harker (1984), emphasized Bourdieu’s research on schools and cultural capital, which states that schools “take the cultural capital (often coinciding with social capital) of the dominant group as the natural and only proper sort of capital, and treat all children as if they had equal access to it” (p. 118). Based on this theory, students, not in the dominant group, adjusting to their college campuses, are expected to assimilate to the dominate culture. This could have a negative impact on the student, who is not in the dominant group, adjustment and therefore persistence through college. This study uses social capital theory to analyze how the social capital of Cristo Rey students is valued on their campuses. Is social capital a resource the students can tap into to gain access to supports and networks to continue to achieve their goals? Finally, how do Cristo Rey graduates understand and maintain their value and worth on their college campuses, even when their social capital is not valued?

Academic research on the topics of college adjustment and college persistence has influenced many educational policies and programs in the United States. This study will speak to the topic of college adjustment through the lens of race and class using critical race theory, motivation and determination using social determination theory, and social network membership/power using social capital theory. This is important because this study, through the frameworks of critical race theory, self-determination theory, and social capital theory, looks to shed a positive light on the motivations, insights, and actions of students of color from low-income backgrounds.
through these lenses can provide insight into how educators can better foster the characteristics and conditions that lead to a positive adjustment to college for students of color from low-income backgrounds.
Chapter Two:

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The following literature review will first set the context as to what it means to adjust to college as well as the importance of the adjustment to college as it is linked to college persistence and graduation rates. Then it will describe the variables and the reasons for using these variables to measure the students’ adjustment to college, specifically for students of color from low-income backgrounds. Third, it will address the concept of a college readiness focus at college preparatory high schools. Finally, it will explain why this study is addressing a gap in college-adjustment literature and retroactively look at any predictors from a student’s high school experience that could explain their adjustment to college.

College Adjustment and Persistence

The transition from high school to college is a major life adjustment that includes the need for students to navigate new and unfamiliar academic, social, emotional, and, in some instances, cultural systems, all at the same time. The experience of adjusting to college can be exciting, but it is not easy and can also bring about a lot of stress. When students start their college career, they are confronted with changes, internally and externally, in social roles and relationships and introduced to new demands and responsibilities surrounding work, time management, academic schedule, and academic requirements (Fischer, 2007; Katz & Somers, 2017). All of these new experiences, demands, and responsibilities can lead to a negative adjustment to college if students do not know how to utilize their skills and resources to support themselves through this period of transition and change in their life. It is important to understand that there are
many variables that impact a student’s adjustment to college. Katz & Somers (2017) highlights that many researchers (Mounts, 2004a; Ratelle, Larose, Guay, Senecal., 2005; Adams, Ryan, Keating, 2000) emphasize that when we are analyzing college adjustment, we must consider the different individual and environment or contextual factors that impact a student’s experience. Every student’s experience, even if he/she graduated from the same high school, is unique.

Over the past 30 years, researchers have frequently used Baker and Siryk’s (1984) measure of adjustment to college, the student adaptation to college questionnaire (SACQ), to better understand the relationship between college adjustment and college outcomes, such as grades and retention. Through a synthesis of research focused on college adjustment, Baker and Siryk (1984) claimed that adjustment to college can be characterized by four broad categories: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. This study will focus on two categories of college adjustment: academic and social.

Academic adjustment, argued Baker and Siryk, reflects the degree to which students have adapted to their academic demands as reflected in their attitudes towards their course of study, their engagement with material, and the adequacy of their studying and academic efforts. Social adjustment reflects the degree to which students have integrated themselves into the social structures of university residencies and the broader university, are taking part in campus activities, meeting new people and making friends, as opposed to experiencing difficulties with loneliness or missing of family. (Crede & Niehorster, 2011, p. 135)

Research has found that both positive social and academic adjustment, especially during the first year of college, is found to be strongly related to retention and persistence through college (Astin, 1984; Jackson, 2014; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Tinto, 2001). This study focused on both academic adjustment and social adjustment as described by
Baker and Syrick (1984). A student’s academic adjustment will take into account their academic self-concept. A student’s social adjustment will be measured and understood through an analysis of their sense of belonging and self-efficacy on their college campus.

**Academic adjustment and college persistence, specific to students of color from low-income backgrounds.** Terrell Strayhorn (2011) wrote extensively on underrepresented students’ preparation for college. In his research, he found that within low-income and student of color populations, academic preparation is an important predictor of college enrollment and college success. Despite knowing that academic preparation is essential in the United States, not just for college admission, but for college persistence, approximately one-third of all entering postsecondary students require remedial or developmental work (Bettinger & Long, 2005).

Arnold, Lu, and Armstrong (2012) referenced (Adelman, 2006, McCormick & Lucas, 2011), stating “This connection between high school course taking and college success is particularly pronounced for blacks and Latinos” (p. 32). The U.S. Department of Education reported that low-income students, when asked by interviewers at age 26 why they did not continue their college education, 75% cited academic reasons (poor grades, didn't take the right courses); 57% indicated negative attitudes toward schooling (didn't like school, didn't see the importance of education, had all the education they needed for the job they wanted); and 37% cited financial reasons (couldn't afford it, had to work to support their family, would rather work and make money) (Adelman, 2006). Analyzing the academic adjustment of Cristo Rey graduates through their academic self-concept (attitudes towards course of study, engagement with material, and adequacy of
studying and academic efforts) is essential in order to better understand how we can best prepare and support students in their academic adjustment in college.

**Sense of Belonging and College Persistence, specific to students of color from low-income backgrounds.** A student who feels isolated or like they don’t belong on their college campus often does not persist through college. Sense of belonging refers to the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Bouwsema & Collier, 1992). Research suggests that social class and race shape who belongs at what kind of educational institution (Ostrove & Long, 2007).

Tinto (1993) found that college students of color, especially low-income students, have a more difficult time with academic and social integration on their college campuses than other students. Literature on social class and belonging suggest that whether one feels like they belong or not has serious implications on their college experience and performance. Students from less privileged social-class backgrounds are more likely to feel alienated and marginalized on their college campus (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Walpole, 2003). This is a huge issue, since students who believe they belong in their college academic community are likelier to persist and graduate, especially among minority and first-generation students (Walton & Cohen, 2011). This study sheds light on the students’ articulation of their social adjustment, specifically their sense of belonging, on their college campuses. The majority of Cristo Rey students enter into a campus life at predominantly White institutions that have different norms and cultures than their high school. This study will look to understand the students’ sense of belonging and whether their high school experiences influenced the development of this sense of belonging.
Self-efficacy and college persistence, specific to students of color from low-income backgrounds. Self-efficacy, or one’s perceived self-efficacy, is related to how much effort one will expend on a task and how long they will persist despite obstacles or tough experiences. Bandura (1982) explained,

when beset with difficulties people who entertain serious doubts about their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up altogether, whereas those who have a strong sense of efficacy exert greater effort to master the challenges. High perseverance usually produces high performance attainments. (p. 123)

Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to be more motivated, use more strategies, have higher achievement, and experience less stress and anxiety than do those with lower self-efficacy (Barry & Finney, 2009). Based on this research, we can conclude that students with high self-efficacy will be able to encounter adverse situations, work to overcome them, and continue to persist through college. This is especially important for students of color from low-income backgrounds who may experience more adverse situations in college due to their race and income level. Lightsey and Barnes (2007) found that African American students’ perseverance and ability to manage stress in the face of threatening and potentially discriminatory situations was related to their self-efficacy perceptions. African American persons with higher self-efficacy are likely to achieve a more favorable outcome (e.g., rectifying the situation) and experience less psychological distress relative to persons with lower self-efficacy.

Barry and Finney (2009) pointed out that, “rooted in Bandura’s social–cognitive theory (1986), self-efficacy is related to a number of psychological and competence-based constructs. Specifically, self-efficacy has been linked to motivational constructs, such as persistence, goals, and goal setting” (p. 197). These motivational constructs are
necessary for students to achieve their goals, especially when they encounter obstacles in their college journey.

**Loneliness and college persistence, specific to students of color from low-income backgrounds.** Hawkley and Cacioppo revealed that when loneliness is ignored it has serious consequences for cognition, emotion, behavior, and health (2010). McWhirter (1997) highlights that students experiencing loneliness often do not possess the social skills to develop close interpersonal relationships. These relationships are important to a student’s adjustment to college.

Loneliness is synonymous with perceived social isolation, not with objective social isolation. Peplau and Perlman (1982) explain “loneliness is the painful feeling of social isolation that accompanies perceived deficiencies in the number or quality of one’s social relationships” (as cited in Hawkley et al, 2008, p. S375). A student could live a life not surrounded by many others and not feel lonely, or could have many friends and belong to a lot of organizations, but still feel lonely. Lee and Goldstein (2015) mention that interruptions or problems in academic work may be due to stress-related problems and/or struggles in social relationships, like loneliness, that many college students experience. This study will look to understand the students’ levels of loneliness on their college campuses and if their high school experience influences their levels of loneliness.

**College Preparatory Schools/Programs and College Readiness**

Much is written on what it means to be a college preparatory school and a college preparatory student. Elementary and middle schools are even adopting college prep language in their school names and mission statements. But what college prep looks like in terms of curriculum and programming varies from school to school. How does one
know a college prep education results in a student who can adjust to college life and successfully persist to college graduation?

   David Conley stated, “college readiness can be defined operationally as the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed-without-remediation-in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program” (2007, p. 5). The student is fully prepared to understand the expectations of a college course. Conley expanded his definition beyond academics, stating, “In addition, the student is prepared to get the most out of the college experience by understanding the culture and structure of postsecondary education and the ways of knowing the intellectual norms of this academic and social environment” (2007, p. 6). Conley’s (2003) research also emphasized a student’s critical thinking skills, inquisitive nature, willingness to accept critical feedback, openness to possible failure, and ability to cope with frustrating and ambiguous learning tasks as factors that contribute to college readiness. Conley’s factors for college readiness emphasize the need for both academic and social/cultural preparation upon entering the first trimester of college.

   Based on data collected on college enrollment and completion, we see that there is still a tremendous gap in college graduation rates between high-income, non-minority students and low-income, minority students. High schools and different support programs across the country continue to try to close this gap, but progress is too slow. Jackson (2014) shared in his research on college preparatory programs that in 2011, the federal government spent over $650 million to promote college-preparation programs for low-income students such as Upward Bound and Gear UP. Additionally, several states have
pushed to expand advanced placement and international baccalaureate programs in high school (Lerner & Brand, 2008). Does all of this money invested in programming work? Who is at the table when decisions concerning closing the opportunity gap via policies and programming are made?

**The Purpose and Overview of the Present Study**

A healthy adjustment to college is important to persistence and retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). A student’s strong sense of belonging, strong self-efficacy, and strong academic self-concept during their college experience can lead to greater persistence and graduation rates. What can be done in high school to develop these variables and create more opportunities for an overall positive adjustment to college and therefore college completion?

College preparatory high schools are so focused on preparing their students to apply and be accepted to college that there is less focus during high school on both the cognitive and non-cognitive skills the students need in order to adjust and persist throughout their entire college career. College adjustment could vary from person to person or from one higher education institution to another. Perhaps, through the findings of this study, educators can improve their college preparatory programs in order to best support and prepare students for the adjustment to college, which leads not only to college acceptance, but to greater college graduation rates.

There is an extensive amount of research on the link between academic and social adjustment and college persistence. But there is a gap in the literature linking a student’s high school experience to their college-adjustment experience. Researchers also often take a deficit approach when speaking to the low-income student of color college-
adjustment experience, focusing mainly on the dropout statistics. This study provides a space for Cristo Rey graduates to tell their college adjustment story beyond the statistics and bring their voice and lived experiences to the forefront of the research. Hopefully this will lead to a deeper understanding of preparing and supporting students not just for college acceptance, but for college graduation.

My specific research questions included:

1. How are Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates adjusting to college?
2. What are important predictors in high school of a student’s academic and socioemotional adjustment to college?

Based on the previous discussions, I made the following main hypotheses. I first expected that combined high school academic scores would be positively associated with academic adjustment to college and a sense of belonging and self-efficacy, and negatively associated with feelings of loneliness in college. I also expected that a student’s lateness or absence in high school would be negatively associated with academic adjustment and sense of self-efficacy in college. In addition, I hypothesized that students perceived high school impact (PHSI) on college adjustment would be positively associated with academic adjustment, sense of belonging, and sense of self-efficacy and negatively associated with loneliness in college. Finally, although not a high school predictor, I expected that students’ loneliness in college would be negatively associated with academic adjustment, sense of belonging, and sense of self-efficacy.

My research is rooted in CRPHS graduates’ experiences adjusting to college as well as their previous experiences as CRPHS students. Extant research on college-adjustment examines who, how, and why a student adjusts to college. This study went beyond this
and investigated if there were any links between one’s college-adjustment experience and their life as a CRPHS student.

The convergent parallel mixed-methods approach to this study integrated both qualitative and quantitative research and data, all centered around the experiences of the students. I collected both types of data simultaneously. I then analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data separately, merged the two databases together through a side by side comparison and a joint display of data and moved towards some conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Qualitatively, this study took a phenomenological approach to explore the students’ individual lived experiences of the phenomenon I identify in this study as college adjustment. Moustakas (1994) stated, the goal of phenomenological research methods is to “obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (p. 13). Cristo Rey graduates’ voices, an important aspect of my study, were captured through a series of interviews. This qualitative approach added nuance and provided a deeper understanding of a student’s college-adjustment experience that strictly quantitative data could not capture. I then aligned and analyzed their responses with the quantitative data gathered from student surveys about their college-adjustment experience as well as descriptive data from their high school transcripts. Through this mixed-methods approach, with both predetermined and emerging methods, open- and closed-ended questions, and statistical and text analysis, I gained a comprehensive picture of Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduates’ college-adjustment experiences and linked this to their high school experience (Creswell, 2013).
Chapter Three:

Methods

Site and Participants

CRPHS is the 25th high school in the Cristo Rey Network, which now consists of 35 high schools across the country. We opened our doors in August 2012 to 124 founding freshmen, and currently 499 students are enrolled in 9th-12th grade. All Cristo Rey students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The majority of the Cristo Rey student population are students of color. 71% of Cristo Rey Philadelphia students identify as African American, 18% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 5% identify as multiracial, 4% identify as Asian, 1% identify as White, and 1% identify as other.

Eighty-one of the 124 founding freshmen students graduated from CRPHS in June 2016. All students were accepted to college; 76 of these students enrolled in college; 91% of these students persisted into their 2nd year of college. The graduating class of 2017 consisted of 80 students, of whom 77 enrolled in college, and in spring of 2018, 73 were still enrolled as second-semester freshmen. In the spring of 2019, 132 total students from the first two graduating classes of Cristo Rey are persisting in college. My research was conducted amongst all students who graduated from Cristo Rey High School and started college. All students from the 2016 and 2017 graduating classes were included in the study, by way of an emailed survey through Qualtrics, whether they were still enrolled in college or not. This study was approved by the institutional review board (IRB) of the University of Pennsylvania.
Selection Criteria

There are a variety of reasons why a student chooses to attend a certain college. It may depend on the college’s size, location, majors offered, financial aid package, diversity, religious affiliation, or even the school’s club sports. These various reasons may also affect how one adjusts to college life, which could be very different from his or her high school experience. Another point to consider is that a group of Cristo Rey students can attend the same university, but have very different experiences based on their individual circumstances pre-college and during college. In order to allow for the voices of a wide range of student experiences to be heard and analyzed, I selected students who diversified across the following criteria—gender, race, residential status, and whether or not the college is considered a local Cristo Rey college partner—to participate in individual semi-structured interviews. My selection criteria allowed for research visits to different college campuses and offered diverse views within the scope of the criteria. The diversity in student background as well as the type of higher education institution allowed for depth and complexity in their responses.

Due to the time constraints of this study as well as accessibility to students; I first sent the survey to all Cristo Rey graduates via email. 75 graduates completed the entire survey. From these responses, I selected 18 students to participate in interviews. Due to

2 College Partners: Through these partnerships, undergraduate and graduate students provide tutoring, counseling, and coaching support for Cristo Rey Philadelphia students. Cristo Rey students regularly visit college partner campuses for tours, programs, activities, and fun events. College Partners also host “prepare for college” programs such as SAT and ACT prep, participate in service programs with Cristo Rey students, provide work-study jobs, and offer scholarships/financial aid packages for qualifying Cristo Rey students.
distance and time, half of the interviews were conducted over the phone, while others took place either at CRPHS or the college of the study participant. The survey responses also determined whose high school data was used to investigate links between one’s high school experience and college-adjustment experience. Data collection started after receiving institutional review board (IRB) approval in April 2018 and continued through August 2018. Through the help of Cristo Rey’s graduate support director, I was able to connect to students through email and phone as well as gather descriptive data, based on my selection criteria, for each student selected for an interview. The use of purposeful sampling in my qualitative research helped me obtain the information needed to answer my research questions (Coyne, 1997; Patton, 2015).

All study participants were over the age of 18 and therefore did not require parental consent. All participants acknowledged their agreement to participate in the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) (Appendix C). Participants were informed that their names and the names of attending universities would be omitted from the final research report to maintain anonymity.

**Procedure**

Data-collection methods were selected based on the research situation (adjustment to college), theoretical lenses, and on what worked most effectively in the situation so I could gather the data I needed. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in my research design provided a more complete picture of the research questions than either quantitative or qualitative data alone (Creswell, 2013). Data-collection methods was initially sequenced in two phases: (a) collection of quantitative data through surveys and descriptive data of students’ high school experiences and (b) selection of
interviewees for 45–60-minute semi-structured interviews to collect perceptions of the students on their adjustment to college. By collecting data in two phases, I was able to generalize results to a population and choose the interviews, which in turn deepened the understanding of the initial quantitative data (Creswell, 2013). Although my goal was to close the surveys before the interview phase, I decided to keep the surveys open, while I started the interviews, in order to gather more participants. A mixed-methods approach provided answers to both research questions focusing on the overall adjustment to college experience for Cristo Rey graduates and any links between their high school experience and their college-adjustment experience as portrayed through their survey and interview responses.

Measures

Surveys. All surveys were created and administered through Qualtrics survey software. The survey was piloted with a critical friend to ensure that questions were interpreted as intended. Surveys allowed me to “gather information about individuals’ attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 172) about their college adjustment and experience. The surveys also provided a description of trends of a population (students of color from low-income backgrounds) by studying a sample of that population (Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduates). The first step of data collection was to invite (via email) the 2016 and 2017 Cristo Rey graduates who enrolled in college upon high school graduation to participate in a 15 to 20-minute survey focused on the following measures (see Appendix A):

Descriptive data of student. Students self-reported on gender, race, current level of education, current place of residence, current status as a student (part time vs. full
time), current college of attendance, and estimated date of college graduation. A self-report of descriptive data provided current information that could not be found on the students’ high school transcripts and provided insight as I analyzed the data through the lenses of critical race, self-determination theory, and social capital theories.

**Perceived importance of high school experience to their college adjustment.**

Students were provided a definition for college adjustment: “The adjustment to college life includes the need for students to navigate new and unfamiliar academic, social, emotional, and in some instances cultural systems all at the same time.” This definition was developed based on a review of definitions found in the literature on college adjustment. The research questions of this study assumed there is a link between one’s high school experience and their adjustment to college. I developed a six-item measure on the students’ perceptions of how their high school experience influenced their adjustment to college. Cronbach’s alpha for the 6-item PHSI inventory was .81. Students indicated on a five-point Likert scale (from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) how a variety of high school experiences, from class expectations to teacher–student relationships, influenced their adjustment to college. For example, a student responded to the following statement: “The classes offered at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School helped my adjustment to college.” This information provided insight into the student’s perceptions and was a predictor variable as I investigated any links between their high school experience and their adjustment to college.

**College adjustment.** The students’ college adjustment was measured through three variables: academic adjustment, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy. Academic adjustment was measured through responses to a series of statements adapted from the
academic adjustment section of the SACQ (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Students indicated on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) their responses to twenty-four statements that captured their academic self-concept. Cronbach’s alpha for the twenty-four item academic adjustment inventory was .862. Statements focused on their academic motivation, application, performance, and environment in college. The students’ sense of belonging was measured using an adapted version of Hagerty and Patusky’s (1992) sense of belonging inventory (SOBI) and Baker and Siryk’s (1984) social adjustment section to the SACQ. The SOBI consists of two subscales: the SOBI-P, which assesses the psychological experience of belonging, and the SOBI-A, which assesses the antecedents to sense of belonging. The social adjustment subscale of the SACQ contains items relevant to the interpersonal-societal demands of college. I adapted and combined the SOBI-P and SOBI-A subscales as well as the social adjustment subscale of the SACQ in order to gather a comprehensive picture of the participants’ sense of belonging on their college campus. Cronbach’s alpha for the eighteen item sense of belonging inventory was .877. Students indicated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The inventory included statements such as, “I feel that I fit in well as part of the college environment” and “People at school accept me.” Student responses indicated their level of sense of belonging on their college campus. The student’s self-efficacy during their college experience was measured by an adapted version of the college self-efficacy inventory (Solberg, O’Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993). Statements were adapted to best fit this study’s research questions and population. Students responded to 20 items concerning their confidence in various aspects of college. Cronbach’s alpha for the 20
item self-efficacy inventory was .90. Students indicated how confident they were as a student that they could successfully complete certain tasks, such as “make new friends,” “participate in class discussions,” and “talk to my professors outside of class.” If the student was extremely confident, they would mark at 10. If the student was not at all confident, they would mark a 1. If the student was more or less confident, they would find the number between 10 and 1 that best described their confidence level. Finally, the students’ feelings of loneliness during college was measured using the shortened eight-item UCLA loneliness scale (Hays & DiMatto, 1987). The shortened scale captured essential data on feelings of loneliness without adding a significant amount of time to complete the college-adjustment survey. Students responded to eight statements that described how people sometimes feel during college. Example statements include: “I lack companionship,” “I am an outgoing person,” and “People are around me but not with me.” For each statement, students indicated how often they felt the way described by choosing the appropriate number on a 1-4 scale (1= I never feel this way, 2= I rarely feel this way, 3= I sometimes feel this way, 4= I always feel this way. For example, if a student never felt like they “lacked companionship” they would choose a 1 (Never) as their response. Hays and DiMatteo (1987) reported a coefficient alpha of .84 for the scale’s internal consistency. Cronbach’s alpha for this study was .842.

Measuring students’ college-adjustment experiences through the three variables of academics, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy was intentional, as research demonstrates that high levels of these three variables lead to a positive adjustment and therefore a higher likelihood of persistence through college. Measuring loneliness allowed for a deeper understanding of a student’s college-adjustment experience. A
student could have a low sense of belonging on their college campus and, at the same time, not feel lonely. I was able to explore “feeling lonely on my college campus” as well as all other college-adjustment variables through my interview questions, which guided me to better understand the why behind a student’s adjustment experience. Since the first phase of data collection was surveys, the data gathered from the surveys helped guide the design of my semi-structured interview protocols (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

**High school data.** While collecting survey responses, I also gathered data on the students’ high school experiences. The following data was collected and organized in an excel spreadsheet for a detailed analysis: (a) course final grades (HSGPA), (b) attendance/lateness, (c) standardized test scores (ACT), and (d) behavior/discipline (suspensions). In this study, the participants’ final HSGPA and Final ACT score were combined to create one high school academic variable called “combined high school academic score.” This was done to reflect that an ACT score and GPA alone do not truly reflect a student’s academic achievement. The combination of the two scores created one high school academic variable to use during analysis. Lastly, through the assistance of Cristo Rey’s college counselor, I was also able to determine if the college of attendance was a Cristo Rey partnership school[^3] (either local or network) or a non-partnership

[^3]: **College Partners**: Through these partnerships, undergraduate and graduate students provide tutoring, counseling and coaching support for Cristo Rey Philadelphia students. Cristo Rey students regularly visit College Partner campuses for tours, programs, activities and fun events. College Partners also host “prepare for college” programs such as SAT and ACT prep, participate in service programs with Cristo Rey students, provide Work-Study jobs, and scholarships/financial aid packages for qualifying Cristo Rey students.
school. This data, along with the descriptive data about the students collected in the surveys, allowed for an in-depth description of the student’s high school experience.

**Semi-structured interviews.** The third method of data collection to investigate the research questions was semi-structured interviewing. I conducted 18 interviews for about 45-60 minutes each in order to capture the voices and perceptions of the students. Interviewees were selected based on the aforementioned selection criteria; proximity of location was not an issue since if the student did not attend a local university, I conducted the interview via phone conference. Interview questions were structured to enable the students to talk about their experiences and to build their own emic categories for their stories (Anderson et al., 2007). These questions allowed the students’ perceptions to be heard rather than be confined to structured survey questions, which were influenced by my own perceptions and positionality. Joseph Maxwell cited researcher and his personal friend, Carol Gilligan, who emphasized the value of asking interviewees real questions, ones they are genuinely interested in, rather than contrived questions designed to elicit particular sorts of data: “Doing this creates a more symmetrical and collaborative relationship in which participants are able to bring their knowledge to bear on the questions in ways that you might never have anticipated” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 101). Critical race theory focuses on student voice; this semi-structured interview protocol allowed for students to speak their truths and add to the literature on college adjustment, specific to students of color from low-income backgrounds. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Student responses in this study are represented authentically (without changes) in order to maintain fidelity to their experiences, words, and genuine articulation of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).
See Appendix B for the semi-structured interview protocol.

**Research Memos.**

Throughout the research study, I dedicated time to write research memos as well as several shorter “jottings” along the margins of transcripts/survey data in order to process my thoughts and guide steps in my research. A researcher identity memo was essential at the start of my research in order to clearly identify my prior personal connections to college adjustment as well as my understanding/bias of college preparation at Cristo Rey. This memo was strictly for my benefit, in order to authentically reflect on any assumptions, biases, and feelings I had/have towards my research—both the questions and the participants (Maxwell, 2013). Through writing down my reflections, I located any implications my positionality could have on the research.

Throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this study, I continually wrote notes in my “dissertation notebook.” This could be considered a fieldwork/data-collection memo, which allowed for a recording of questions I had about my research process and any changes I made in my research design for a variety of reasons, such as participant accessibility and availability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Through this notebook, I made sense of my research process, the data I gathered, and next steps I wanted to take in order to gain a deeper understanding of my research questions. It was also very useful, as it allowed me to raise and write down questions for future research as I analyzed the data.

Once I entered the analysis phase, I started to take notes on my coding process, which could be considered as an analysis memo. Coding is a major part of data analysis, and as a novice researcher, the coding process was time consuming, but my notes
provided a place for reflection on the iterative process of coding. Through reflecting on my analysis process, I was able to figure out a way to organize the descriptive insights of the students’ college experiences into themes and codes, which captured the students’ insights as well as connected to substantive and theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2013).

**Data Analysis.**

Through an analysis of all study data gathered from high school transcripts, surveys, and semi-structured interviews, I sought to understand participants’ interpretations of their college-adjustment experiences and investigate any links between one’s college-adjustment experience (academic, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and loneliness) and their experience as students at CRPHS.

**Quantitative analysis.** Upon collection of data gathered through the surveys, I merged the descriptive high school data and survey data in order to run descriptive and regression analyses through SPSS. I first ran descriptive analysis in order to better understand my survey population: the breakdown of gender, graduating class, name of college, type of college (partner or non-partner), and type of residence (on campus or commuter). I then ran analysis to gather the mean scores on all predictor and outcome variables. Finally, I analyzed relations between data gathered about the student’s high school experience both through their self-reports and transcript review and college-adjustment variables (academic, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and loneliness) through a series of correlation and regression analyses.

The analysis of the quantitative data gathered from surveys and high school transcripts combined with the analysis of qualitative data gathered through interviews provided a holistic interpretation of the students’ adjustment to college and allowed for
an in-depth investigation of any links between one’s CRPHS experience and their adjustment to college experience.

**Qualitative analysis.** As a researcher, it is my job to make sense of or interpret phenomena from the data gathered through interviews in terms of the meanings my former students bring to them (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My data analysis of the student interviews was an iterative three-pronged process of data organization and management, immersive engagement, and writing and representation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It was a challenge to both reduce and make sense of the large amounts and variety of data I gathered through the 18 interviews. I identified significant patterns, analyzed these patterns through my specific conceptual framework, and determined how the data informed the research questions. I continually asked myself, what story, what information does this data reveal? (Patton, 2015). Does this data align with their responses to the surveys? If yes, what detail can the interviews add to their responses? If no, why is there misalignment? What did the interviews reveal that the survey could not and vice versa?

I analyzed data gathered from the semi-structured interviews through an intentional process: audiotapes from the 18 individual interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded through a systematic and consistent approach using Dedoose software. Due to my focus on college adjustment, I first reduced the data by eliminating repetitive statements and data irrelevant to the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I then read through all transcripts once without any specific coding process. I was merely getting reacquainted with the interview and jotting down quick summaries while I listened and read. During my second read of the interview transcripts, I coded using four
deductive codes: academic adjustment (AA), sense of belonging (SOB), self-efficacy (SE) and loneliness (Lone), which came directly from literature focused on adjustment to and persistence through college. While reading the interview transcripts with these deductive codes in mind, I also entered into an inductive coding process. I looked for regularly occurring phrases, terms, and interactions among my students as a way to organize patterns found across the conversations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The first read through with codes led to a collection of the four deductive codes and 26 inductive codes. The 26 codes were then linked and narrowed into 15 major codes, with two of these codes having subcodes (Appendix D). With this revised code set, the 18 interviews were read for a third time and re-coded. Through this iterative process, I found that all inductive codes fit under the umbrella of the four deductive codes except for one, named: “Other College Academic Factors,” which included the minor codes of family, mentors, and networks, which did not fit into just one of the deductive codes, but rather cut across all four deductive codes.

Through this qualitative analysis process, I began to understand the participants’ perceptions of their college adjustment. I found commonalities expressed about their college-adjustment experience insights on how their high school experience impacted their adjustment to college. The students’ stories added nuance to the findings, as well as non-findings, between the college-adjustment variables and high school variables in the regression analyses. The interviews gave the students an opportunity to tell their story beyond what the statistical data told us, which is important in order to better our students’ college-adjustment experience and any potential links their high school experience has to their college-adjustment experience.
Validity. Like many aspects of life, qualitative research is an iterative process. Throughout my research, from developing data-collection instruments, constructing interview questions, coding data, and making connections, I discussed my process with “critical friends” as well as with my chair and committee, who guided me through my interpretations of the data. The continual review of my data helped me see if my interpretations aligned with their outside interpretations of the data. This iterative process allows me to reflect upon my analysis in order to ensure valid conclusions.

In my research, I used three different methods (survey, interviews, and document review) with different strengths and limitations to support my conclusions (Maxwell, 2013). Surveys measuring the three variables central to this study—academic adjustment, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy and loneliness—were adapted from previously used valid and reliable surveys in published research. Identity and data-collection memos guided me to avoid the biases and assumptions that emerged in the creation of my interview and self-made survey questions. The piloting protocol worked to avoid misinterpretation and allowed me to gather data directly aligned with the research questions. Through triangulation methods, participant validation, dialogical engagement, and a structured reflexivity process, I worked to provide a rich, detailed, and complex account of my data that maintained the fidelity of my participants’ ideas, perceptions, experiences, and how they communicated them to me (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This was of the utmost importance to me.

Positionality. As the participants’ former teacher and administrator and, now, as a researcher, I may have a biased understanding of how a Cristo Rey High School experience impacts a student’s adjustment to college. Creswell (2013) emphasized that
researchers, participants, and readers have differing realities, and a goal of qualitative research is to engage with, understand, and report these multiple realities. Through memos, critical dialogue, and reflection, I hope to keep my biases in check.

As a researcher and former teacher, I also recognize my perceived position of power in this study. I do not want this to interfere with the authenticity of my participants’ responses. Critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2000) challenges me to think that even when I think I am being an objective researcher, I most likely am not due to my positionality. I am a White female, who, in all honesty, sometimes falls into using deficit language when describing my students. For example, I know and speak of the hardships of my students’ home lives, rather than learning and speaking out about the richness in the culture of their neighborhood or close-knit family. In this study, I am analyzing my students’ words. I realize, especially while utilizing a critical race theory framework that interpreting someone’s words is an act of power. Therefore, my reflection memos and use of critical friends is essential for me to ensure that my own biases or assumptions are not influencing my students’ stories. I will continuously reflect on how my role and positionality could affect my interpretations of the data and results of this study.
Chapter 4

Results

Survey Respondent Demographics

A total of 75 graduates responded to the college-adjustment survey sent to them via email. Of these 75 students, 36 respondents were graduates of the class of 2016, and 39 graduated from the class of 2017. Since students were from both the class of 2016 and 2017, they responded to the survey in the spring of either their freshmen or sophomore year of college. Analyses were conducted in order to examine the effects gender,\(^4\) type of college residence, and type of college partnership had on college adjustment; therefore, it is important to note that 68% of the respondents identified as female, which is not surprising as the class of 2016 was 64% female and the class of 2017 was 66% female. 81% of the respondents live on campus in a residence hall, and 56% of the participants attend a Cristo Rey College Partnership school (Table 1). All respondents completed all adjustment surveys offering data to inform all hypotheses and research questions.

Table 1

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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Residi 0= lives on campus, Residi 1 = commuter, CPDI 0 = College partner with CRPHS, CPDI 1 = No College partnership with CRPHS

\(^4\) Students only responded with male or female when describing their gender in the survey. Results reflect their responses.
Descriptive Information

All 75 survey respondents completed the adjustment surveys, and the results are listed in Table 2. The mean scores of each adjustment survey and high school variables according to gender are displayed in Table 3. There was only one significant gender difference on sense of belonging: females had lower scores than males, as shown in the regression analyses below.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School Graduates, Class of 2016 and 2017 College Adjustment and High School Variables (N = 75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSACAD</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSI</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOB</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>9.95</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONE</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.664</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School Graduates, Class of 2016 and 2017 College Adjustment and High School Variables by Gender (N = 75, Male = 24, Female = 51)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSACAD</td>
<td>.1163</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSI</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOB</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONE</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison with Other Studies

The academic adjustment scale used in this study was an adapted version of Baker and Siryk’s academic adjustment section of the SACQ, which measures college students’ academic adjustment on a nine-point scale. This study used a five-point scale; therefore, a direct comparison of means is not possible. But it is worth mentioning that the results from a study that used Baker and Siryk’s academic adjustment scale to look at the transition experiences of students of color at predominantly White institutions (LaBoone, 2006) revealed that on the nine-point scale, the mean score was 5.76, which, similar to this study, is slightly higher than the median number on the SACQ academic adjustment scale. The sense of belonging scale used in this study was a combination of an adapted version of the social adjustment section of the SACQ and of Hagerty and Patusky’s (1995) sense of belonging inventory. Again, it is difficult to do a direct comparison of means from other studies, due to the adaptation of survey items and scale ranges; however, LaBoone’s (2006) study also used the social adjustment section of the SACQ and found a mean score of 6.14, which, like this study’s mean of 3.53, is also slightly above the median number of the scale. This study’s mean self-efficacy score (6.92) is comparable to a study by McCullagh (2016), which used the same CSEI scale to measure self-efficacy and found a mean score for study participants of 6.67, which is only .25 lower than Cristo Rey graduates’ average score. Finally, a study on loneliness, stress, and social support in young adulthood (Lee & Goldstein, 2015), which used a large and diverse sample of undergraduate students at a public university in the United States, indicated a mean score of 1.93 for their participants on the same shortened loneliness
scale used in this study, in which the participants have a higher mean score of 2.27, indicating a higher level of loneliness on their college campuses. Since I do not have a comparison group in my own study, I mention these studies in order to give a general understanding of how other groups are adjusting to college across the domains of academics, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and loneliness.

**High School Variables and College Adjustment**

The three high school variables used in analysis were (a) the graduates’ combined high school academic score, which is their combined standardized high school GPA and final ACT score; (b) the graduates’ PHSI score, which is a score developed from how students rated the importance of their high school experience on their adjustment to college; and (c) the students’ total high school absences and lateness. Out of school suspensions (OSS) and in school suspensions (ISS) were not taken into consideration during analysis due to the very low amount of OSS or ISS represented in the data. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted in order to examine the relationships between these high school variables and the students’ adjustment to college, which was measured by the study participants’ scores on the college academic adjustment scale, college sense of belonging scale, college self-efficacy scale, and finally the college loneliness scale. In the first step of regression analysis, gender was entered. Then in the second step, combined high school academic scores (HSCAD) and Perceived High School Impact (PHSI) were simultaneously entered.

**Findings Based on Quantitative Analyses**

The association between a CRPHS graduate’s combined high school academic score and academic adjustment to college. No significant associations were
found from the correlation and regression analyses of a student’s combined high school academic score and their academic adjustment to college. This finding is different from other studies, which found that ACT (or SAT) scores as well as high school grade point average were predictors of one’s academic adjustment in college (Coyle & Pillow, 2008; Hezlett, Kuncel, Vey, Ahart, Ons, Campbell, & Camara, 2001).

**The association between a CRPHS graduate’s combined high school academic score and their sense of belonging in college.** The Combined High School Academic Score (HSACAD) was found to be positively correlated with a student’s Sense of Belonging in college $r=.22, n=75, p=.029$, and a significant predictor of Sense of Belonging (SOB) $b = .182, t = 2.51, p = < .05$. Therefore, there is a positive association between a graduate’s high school academic performance and their sense of belonging on their college campuses and the combined high school academic score can predict sense of belonging in college.

**The association between a CRPHS graduate’s combined high school academic score and their self-efficacy in college.** No significant associations were found during correlation and regression analyses of Cristo Rey graduates’ Combined High School Academic Score and their Self-Efficacy in college. Although Combined High School Academic Score was not found to be a significant predictor of self-efficacy in college, when controlling for gender a negative statistically significant association between gender and self-efficacy was found, $b = -.842, t = -2.05, p < .05$. Meaning females will score .842 less on the self-efficacy scale when looking at the significance of the Combined Academic Score and College Self-Efficacy.
The association between a CRPHS graduate’s combined high school academic score and loneliness in college. No significant associations were found during correlation and regression analyses of Cristo Rey graduates’ combined high school academic score and loneliness in college.

The associations between a CRPHS graduate’s lateness and/or absences in high school and their academic adjustment and self-efficacy in college. No significant associations were found between a CRPHS graduate’s lateness and or absences in high school and their academic adjustment or self-efficacy in college.

The association between a CRPHS graduate’s perceived high school impact on college adjustment (PHSI) and their academic adjustment, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and loneliness in college. Analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between a student’s PHSI and Sense of Belonging, \( r = .313, n=75, p = .003 \) as well as PHSI and Academic Adjustment, \( r = .320, n=75, p = .003 \), but not sense of Self Efficacy. Regression analysis revealed that PHSI was a significant predictor of college Academic Adjustment, \( b = .256, t = 2.884, p < .01 \). Beta was positive which indicates that as the Academic Adjustment score increases, so does the student’s Perceived High School Impact (PHSI) score. PHSI is also a significant predictor of Sense of Belonging, \( b = .280, t = 2.933, p < .01 \). The results indicated that as Sense of Belonging increases, so does the student’s Perceived High School Impact (PHSI). Finally, a student’s perceived high school impact is not a significant predictor of their college self-efficacy or loneliness. Although there was no association between PHSI and Self-efficacy, analysis revealed, when controlling for gender, a negative statistically significant association between gender and self-efficacy was found, \( b = -.842, t = -2.05, p < .05 \).
females will score .842 less on the self-efficacy scale when looking at the significance of Perceived High School Impact and College Self-Efficacy.
Table 4.  
Correlations among Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates experience in high school and college adjustment variables (N=75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. HS Academic Score</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. HS Perceived Impact</td>
<td>-.217*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. College Loneliness</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-.184</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. College Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>.220*</td>
<td>.313**</td>
<td>-.698**</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. College Academic Adjustment</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.320**</td>
<td>-.326**</td>
<td>.404**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. College Self Efficacy</td>
<td>-.107</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.548**</td>
<td>.538**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. College Residence Status</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>-.234*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Type of College Partnership</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.145</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>.196*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Gender</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>-.233*</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>-.297**</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.244**</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. HS Total Lateness</td>
<td>-.280**</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>.348**</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. HS Total Absences</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>-.107</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.187</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.288**</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>-.198*</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. HS = High School

*p < .05   ** p < .01
Table 5.  
*Results of Regression Predicting College Adjustment Based on High School Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Adjustment Variable</th>
<th>Effect (b)</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Predictor</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSI</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>2.88**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSACAD</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.248</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>-1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSI</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>2.93**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSACAD</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>2.51*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self- Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.842</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>-2.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSI</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSACAD</td>
<td>-.216</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHSI</td>
<td>-.152</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>-1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSACAD</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>-.302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  
PHSI = Perceived High School Impact, HSACAD = High School Academic Scores. PHSI and HSACAD were entered simultaneously into the equation after gender.  
*p < .05    ** p < .01

**Further Analyses**
The association between a Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduate’s score on the college loneliness scale and their academic adjustment, sense of belonging and self-efficacy in college.

Analysis indicated significant negative correlation between the students’ sense of Loneliness and their College Academic Adjustment \( r = -.326, n = 75, p = .002 \), Sense of Belonging \( r = -.698, n = 75, p = .000 \), and Sense of Self-Efficacy \( r = -.548, n = 75, p = .000 \). Meaning the higher a student scored on the loneliness scale (indicated a higher feeling of loneliness), the lower their college academic adjustment, sense of belonging, and sense of self-efficacy. Regression analysis indicated that loneliness in college is a significant predictor of college academic adjustment, with \( b = -.267, t = -3.027, p = < .05 \). Beta was negative, indicating that as loneliness increases, one’s college academic adjustment decreases. Loneliness is also a significant predictor of college sense of belonging, with \( b = -.587, t = -7.838, p = < .001 \). Beta was negative, indicating that as loneliness increases, one’s sense of belonging decreases. When controlling for other variables—gender, college partnership, and college residence—while analyzing the relationship between loneliness and sense of belonging, findings show a statistically significant relationship between gender and sense of belonging, with \( b = -.242, t = -2.282, p = < .05 \). Thus, females scored .242 less on the sense of belonging scale when looking at the significance of loneliness on sense of belonging. College loneliness is also a significant predictor of college self-efficacy, with \( b = -1.266, t = -5.403, p = < .001 \). Since Beta is negative, it means that as a student’s loneliness increases, their sense of self-efficacy on their college campuses decreases. When controlling for other variables—gender, college partnership, and college residence—while analyzing the effect of
loneliness on college self-efficacy, a statistically significant relationship between type of college residence (residi) and self-efficacy was found, with $b = -.817$, $t = -2.049$, $p = < .05$. Thus, when looking at the significance of loneliness on college self-efficacy, students who commute scored .839 less on the self-efficacy scale.

**The association between High School Variables and College Adjustment Variables controlling for type of college residence, and college partnership.**

When looking at the significance of the Combined High School Academic Score and Perceived High School Impact, simultaneously, on Self-Efficacy, a negative statistically significant association between type of college residence and self-efficacy was found, $b = -1.105$, $t = -2.313$, $p = < .05$. Meaning students who commute will score 1.1 less on the self-efficacy scale. There also remained a negative statistically significant association between gender and self-efficacy, $b = -.987$, $t = -2.46$, $p < .05$. No other statistically significant associations were found for type of college residence or type of college partnership when analyzing the association between High School Variables (HSACAD and PHSI) and College Adjustment Variables (AA, SOB, SE, LONE).

**Summary of the Quantitative Results**

Analysis of the survey data revealed findings that both support this study’s hypotheses and findings that do not. All analyses of data provided insight into a Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduate’s college-adjustment experience as well as ways in which their high school experience influenced or could be predictors of their adjustment to college.

Findings indicated that females have a decrease in sense of belonging when looking at the significance of the combined high school score, the PHSI, and loneliness. Why is a female’s sense of belonging lower than a male’s while analyzing the effect of a
high school variable or loneliness on sense of belonging?

Tinajero, Martinez-Lopz, Rodriguez, Guisande, and Paramo (2013) discussed how female students experience more overall adjustment problems than male students during the transition to college life. Specifically, women show poorer emotional and social adaptation, although they are better adjusted academically (p. 28). This research aligns with most of this study’s findings, except males and females scored almost the same on the academic adjustment scale, with females scoring slightly below the males: male \( m = 3.49 \), female \( m = 3.46 \). It is important to also recognize that all study participants are students of color, which research reveals is another indicator, in addition to gender, of how one adjusts and persists through college, specifically at predominantly White institutions (Melendez, 2016).

Finally, this study revealed no relationship between high school variables: combined high school academic score (HSACAD) and PHSI and the college-adjustment variables—self-efficacy and loneliness—indicating that one’s high school experience, in the way it was measured in this study, is not associated with one’s self-efficacy or loneliness in college.

The self-efficacy range of scores was the largest amongst all college-adjustment domains, with the min = 1.75, max = 9.95, and the mean = 6.92. Some students had a strong sense of self-efficacy and others very low. Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to be more motivated, use more strategies, have higher achievement, and experience less stress and anxiety than do those with lower self-efficacy (Barry & Finney, 2009). A student’s sense of self-efficacy on their college campuses can vary for many reasons; future studies can consider why there was such variance in this population and
how students develop their sense of self-efficacy. Although there was no association between high school variables and loneliness in college, there is a negative association between loneliness and the three other college-adjustment variables: academic, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy. Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) emphasized that loneliness can have a severe impact on one’s adjustment to college, as well as one’s overall cognitive processes and mental and emotional health. The study participants’ mean score on the loneliness scale was $m=2.27$, with a min of 1.25 and a max of 3.88. It is important to take a deep look at the students who are scoring higher on the loneliness scale, since it is a negative predictor of adjustment to college and can affect persistence through college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Quan, Zhen, & Yao, 2014).
Chapter 5

Qualitative Findings

Chapter Overview

At the start of this research, I knew that I wanted to focus on the voices of CRPHS graduates. Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how CRPHS graduates are adjusting to college and the factors that influence their adjustment, I interviewed 18 graduates (Table 6) who completed the college-adjustment survey administered through Qualtrics. This chapter will describe the findings and the major themes that developed through an analysis of the relationships between the initial deductive codes, the inductive codes that emerged through several readings of the data set, and research literature on college adjustment.

Table 6

Demographic Overview Interview Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% (n=18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residi 0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residi 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPDI 0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPDI 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx/Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Residi 0 = lives on campus, Residi 1 = commuter, CPDI 0 = College partner with CRPHS, CPDI 1 = No College partnership with CRPHS.

Emergent Themes

The major themes of readiness, community, and culture emerged from my iterative three-pronged process of data organization and management, immersive
engagement, and writing and representation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 239). These themes do not stand alone in isolated buckets, nor are they linear, where one theme leads to another. Rather, the themes of preparation, community, and culture interact with one another to capture the students’ insights on their college-adjustment experience as well as their reflections on the way in which high school influenced their adjustment to both social and academic life in college. These themes captured the complex and layered experience of adjusting to college, particularly predominantly White institutions, for students of color from low-income backgrounds.

As a researcher who has known the participants of this study for over five years, I was fully aware of my assumptions going into the conversations and during the coding process. I knew these students’ struggles and achievements in high school. I knew many of their families. As I coded, I was aware of my own etic understanding of college readiness, college transitions, first-year college students, college students of color, low-income college students, and college life in general. The findings of this analysis represent the participating students’ perspectives, their voices, and their own understanding of their adjustment to college. Their stories add depth to the quantitative findings from this study, which allows for a better understanding of how the CRPHS experience impacts their adjustment to college.

**Description of Themes**

**Readiness.** A theme that appeared in all conversations was what I labeled as “readiness”: describing what it means to be ready for college. The major code, college academic preparation, included three sub-codes—college courses, professors, and time management—to provide the basic storyline to this theme. The students’ reflections of
their high school’s impact on their preparation for college provided a deeper understanding and richer narrative of how they were or were not ready for their college academic experience. One will see that readiness is not only defined by good grades but also by how one is prepared to handle obstacles or surprises that occur during the college-adjustment experience. This expanded definition fits better with what researchers call “college readiness,” which refers to the combination of core academic knowledge, skills, and habits that youth need to be successful in college without remedial coursework (Conley, 2007). Conley explained that there are four elements of college readiness: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness (Conley, 2012). The student interviews conveyed their reflections across all four elements. Therefore, the theme of readiness emerged while talking about college preparation with the study participants. The transition from a student’s high school senior year to the first year of college is crucial. “The likelihood that students will make a successful transition to the college environment is often a function of their readiness—the degree to which previous educational and personal experiences have equipped them for the expectations and demands they will encounter in college” (Conley, 2007, p. 5). The students’ authentic voices in these interviews provided insight into their college readiness, specifically in reference to college courses, college professors, and time management.

**College courses.** Across all interviews, issues of a lack of academic preparedness often boiled down to the course load. Study participants who entered college with a specific major in the fields of math and sciences expressed feeling behind in their
courses. Soledad, a Cristo Rey graduate who attends a small Catholic university in the Northeast expressed:

I started as a bio major. . . but, I dropped bio because it's hard to explain. I felt like I didn't ... I felt like I didn't level with all the other students in the class. I felt like they had a lot more knowledge than I did, and I feel like I underestimated my knowledge of the subject and how confident I felt in it. So I feel like that definitely was a big factor for me. I just felt like I wasn't gonna do well in the class. I felt stupid, in a way. So that's why I dropped it. (Soledad, personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Soledad further explained,

Chemistry class in college was totally different (than high school) . . . the labs were intense. Four hours, three hours, standing up. You had to, obviously, read ahead. I would do that. But I just felt anxious. I didn't feel comfortable. So then I was like, okay, a biology major and a chemistry is definitely not for me. (Soledad, personal communication, June 16, 2018)

Although completely separate interviews, Kayla, who attends a Catholic university outside of Philadelphia, expressed similar sentiments when reflecting on her high school experience:

We should have had more labs and had more lab tools, because especially in the chemistry classes, I felt very confused. It was like they gave us a lab instructor and all of that, and it seemed like everyone (other students in her college class) already took chemistry. They had those, I guess, core classes. I didn't have that. I felt like I was far behind the rest. (Kayla, personal communication, July 25, 2018)

Many other comments were made about lack of preparation (readiness) for college science and math classes. Bianca, who attends a smaller college outside of Philadelphia, provided insight on how she did not feel fully prepared for her science classes: “I don’t really think that I learned as much as I . . . not really should have, but I don’t really think we had all the opportunities that many other high schools had, being as how they’ve (other high schools) have been around longer” (personal communication, July 1, 2018).
Bianca was careful not to blame the rigor of her high school science classes, perhaps since I am a former teacher, but there is no denying a consistent theme of lack of preparation for science classes for science majors in college.

Cristo Rey graduates provided the following sentiments in being ill-prepared for college-level math classes. Kayla stated, “in my Calc class, I felt very discouraged, because a good majority of the people in my class, they either had Calc 1 or Calc 2. . . . I'm super confused, but then other people are kind of like, ‘What's so confusing about it? You can do this. You can do that’” (personal communication, July 1, 2018). Mike, a rising junior at a large university in Philadelphia, explained, “I just always felt that I had to work like a little harder to understand the (statistics) problems, and things of that nature” (personal communication June 25, 2018). Samantha, a rising sophomore at a large state university, shared, “I took a calculus class my first semester. . .I was doing 17 credits first trimester. No one told me that was a bad idea. And it didn’t work. . . I dropped that math class because I failed the first exam” (personal communication, June 25, 2018).

Struggle or doubt in math and science college courses was a theme that occurred throughout the majority of the interviews, which impacted the students’ adjustment to college. It is important to note that study participants displayed confidence in courses centered on reading and writing. Kayla explained, “Without him (high school English teacher) I would have been like a lot of my (current) classmates who are learning how to write well in college” (personal communication, July 1, 2018). Briana shared, “I also took a class (in college) called the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, and our final paper had to be between 8 to 12. And people (college classmates) are all freaking out, and I'm
like, ‘I got this.’ I did this before” (personal communication, July 1, 2018). It is important to highlight all of the ways in which the study participants expressed they were academically ready for college. This is needed in order to change the stereotypical view and deficit discourse (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006) that all underrepresented students fall into the remedial category in all academic courses.

Cristo Rey graduates’ insights both confirmed and disconfirmed research on academic preparation and college readiness for students of color from low-income backgrounds (Walpole, 2003, 2007; Baum et al., 2013). The findings of this study revealed that the participants (all students of color from low-income backgrounds) felt more academically prepared in the area of humanities as compared to the fields of math and science, where these students felt they were behind. Some students at first thought they lacked the ability to succeed in these classes but realized they were behind due to the fact they had not been exposed to advanced math and science classes in high school. Students who did well in their high school science and math classes found themselves lost in their college courses. This had a major impact on the students’ sense of belonging in these academic classes and led some students to drop the course or switch their major. The students’ stories must continue to be at the forefront of research so we can understand topics around college academic readiness, beyond the statistics.

**College professors.** An interesting finding across all interviews under the theme of readiness was utilizing professor office hours. Bianca shared, “I was with my professor probably every week, twice a week probably. . .” (personal communication, July 1, 2018). Briana, who attends a small college just outside of Philadelphia, shared, “Yes, I feel very comfortable talking to my professors, and the reason is because I'm paying all
this money to be successful, so why not take advantage of my resources?” (personal communication, July 1, 2018). Students who encountered professors who appeared not to care about the success of the students advocated for themselves. Jess explained:

There is only one Black professor I've had and he was organic chemistry. It was fun. He's a pretty cool guy. I went to him for help, because he was more involving and he took time for me ... He would sit me down and we would sit there for like three hours trying to figure out problems. The other one was... I went to him because he was actually my professor, the Black one was never my professor. He was just my lab professor. So for the class, I had to go to my White professor. He was alright, he just explained everything too fast and he seemed to get frustrated when I didn't understand. I asked a lot of questions, because I was like I need to know what the heck I'm doing for the test. The tests are hard. So, I was like I don't know what I'm doing. He seemed to get frustrated . . . so I just kept going to my Black professor. (personal communication, July 22, 2018)

The students were not passive, but understood they deserve to be taught and to be taught well, even if they had difficulty in the class. Study participants noted that Cristo Rey prepared them for going to office hours, seeking out tutors, and advocating for their learning. They learned this through the personal relationships they had with their Cristo Rey teachers. Mike explained: “When I was at Cristo Rey, I had a great relationship with all my teachers. And having those great relationships allowed me to ... I don't know. It just gave me the courage to talk to my teachers, to get to know them a little bit outside of the classroom” (personal communication, June 25, 2018).

Trusting relationships with high school teachers displayed to the students how they could work together to improve their learning. Another consistent theme with many study participants was their acknowledgment of the leniency of Cristo Rey teachers. Study participants shared that too often they were given second chances: a couple extra days on an assignment, a retake on a test (when they knew they didn’t study), etc. Although these were positive learning interactions in high school, when study
participants arrived to college, they had to quickly realize that there were not too many second chances; their professors were not going to remind them of every assignment—their professor might not even know their name. Dylan, attending a small Catholic University in Philadelphia explained, “Yeah, in college there's no second and third chance. If you fall behind, it's really, really hard. If you have a good relationship with your professors, you can talk to them, get help, and try to bring it up. But, that's not nearly the case as many times” (personal communication July 17, 2018). Soledad commented,

High school is hard in its own way, but college is. . . you have to be responsible for everything you do, going to class, everything's on you, talking to your professors. Whereas high school, obviously your teachers let you know what to do, when it's due, homework, they remind you. But in college, it's like here's your syllabus, write it on your calendar. If you forget, it's on you. (personal communication June 25, 2018)

Samantha shared,

I feel like at Cristo Rey is was there already, blaring signs and loud megaphones. "We're here to help you and we're going to make sure that you know that repeatedly." I feel like at college you really have to find it and kind of make it your own. They (college professors) do give you the general view of if you're struggling academically in classes, here's some tutoring sections. You're going through a bad family time or something, here are some counseling sessions. But, if you want to find someone who takes a genuine interest in you; you kind of have to find them either in your school or in one of your classes that you like. (personal communication, June 25, 2018).

Study participants recognized how they felt prepared in talking with professors due to their relationship with their high school teachers, but it took them a while to adjust to the sudden independence. If they missed an assignment or did poorly on a test, it was on them to figure out how to improve; a professor wasn’t always going to reach out to them. Students learned this quickly during their adjustment to college.
**Time management.** The final sub-theme of readiness, time management, emerged in all 18 interviews. The students felt prepared with the *amount* of work in their college-level courses, but they were not prepared with how to manage all of their free time, as seen in the following vignettes:

**Time management. Oh my goodness, I was terrible at it. I had to get something right because there was a point where I had a math class and I would wait until the last minute to do it. And I miss out. I felt like I was missing out on so much. Yeah. I learned to do it a day beforehand so I didn't have to worry about it. And I could just enjoy my weekend for me.** (Samantha, personal communication, June 25, 2018)

And just the amount of free time you have is also interesting and it's hard to get used to because obviously, you don't have your classes at the same time every day. You have gaps between them. So how you manage that time is very important. At first, I was really bad at it. I remember I called my mentor because she went to Fairfield and I told her "I have no time. I have no time to do anything." So she sat down on the phone with me and we made the schedule, and I was like "Wow, I have more free time than I thought I did." (Soledad, personal communication, June 25, 2018)

We don't have so much free time in college. It's kind of hard to gauge like, I really need to be focusing on this, I really need to focus on that. . . I think half of figuring out college is based on managing your time well and being on top of things. If you had five assignments due for three different classes, all due Friday night, and you have so many hours in between classes for studying, you have to dedicate a certain amount of time to know that work is complete. Rather than, you know, in high school we just went home every night and turned in the work the next day. (Mike, personal communication June 25, 2018)

Managing my own time (in high school) between courses was easy (because there was no free time) . . . you go to this class and then this class and then there's a lunch period, et cetera. But with my courses now (in college) . . . there's a lot of free time, but at the same time, there's less to do with it. Generally, I'd say the biggest adjustment was finding out what to do on my own. (Jaleel, personal communication, June 28, 2018)

During high school, the study participants were used to a bell schedule. Every minute of every day was scheduled. The students did not have any free periods, not even a study hall. Therefore, the skill of self-prioritizing work or creating their own
work/study schedule was never mastered. The study participants recognized this and offered some insight as to how Cristo Rey Philadelphia could better prepare them for the reality of the college schedule.

**Community.** Although all interviews were done individually and included students of different genders who attended different types of schools and who took different courses, common themes throughout all conversations were *community* and the *power of relationship*. Ostrove & Long (2007) explained that when one doesn’t feel part of the community, the feeling of not belonging could affect participation, willingness to seek help, and other critical behaviors that influence critical success (p. 381). The study participants’ responses to questions about their college adjustment revealed their desire to find or form a community: a place they felt they could be themselves, a place or a group of people similar to the way Cristo Rey Philadelphia made them feel—like they belonged, they were capable, and they were loved. Soledad explained:

> I would say Cristo Rey impacted the transition (to college) a lot, just because again, you go from being used to a certain structure to going to something new. But with all the teachers that are there for us (at CRPHS) and before the school year, they were like, reach out any time. That kind of thing is helpful. I know I tried to email the teachers as much as I could, just to let them know how I'm doing and they would be like, I'm here if you need anything. That kind of thing is helpful, especially when you're trying to get used to a new environment, new classes, that kind of thing. (personal communication June, 25, 2018)

Soledad felt and understood the power of relationship. Julie, a rising junior at a large university in the Northeast region of the United States, remarked, with humor, that at Cristo Rey, “We (students and teachers) all knew one another, we knew our teacher’s kids!” (personal communication, June 25, 2018). Bianca remarked, “I just knew there was a lot of people (CRPHS teachers), who you know being a high school student you
don't really think that these people care or that they are paying attention, but I knew that
when I wasn’t my best self, one of them would pull me to the side and ask me what was
up” (personal communication, July 1, 2018).

As students adjusted to college, their comfort in their normal routine in the Cristo Rey community was gone. Stepping outside of one’s comfort zone is difficult but essential for growth as a young adult in college. David Conley wrote, in the first chapter of, Barefoot’s (2008), *The First Year and Beyond: Rethinking the Challenge of Collegiate Transition*,

> College is the first place we expect young people to become adults, not large children. The pupil-teacher relationship changes dramatically, as do expectations for engagement, independent work, motivation and intellectual development. All of this occurs when for the first time young people are experiencing significant independence from family. . . it is no wonder that the transition from high school to college is one of the most difficult that many people experience in their lifetime. (p. 5)

Due to the positive relationships in high school, the study participants expressed a desire for a community, like Cristo Rey, that could be a support during their transition to college life, which at times could be overwhelming.

During some interviews, tears welled up in the participants’ eyes as they recalled feelings and stories about their adjustment to college. Common storylines of loneliness:

> It was kind of hard just getting used to everything, being away from home. I'm really on my own and I get to do what I want. It was an adjustment period. Yeah. I do think that I was lonely my first year of college. (Samantha, personal communication, June 25, 2018)

> “During the First year and a half, yeah. When I was going through my problems, I guess. I didn't feel included” (Jess, personal communication, July 22, 2018). Doubt, “It was kind
of like while I did want to talk to people, it was more comfortable to just stay in my room” (Joy, personal communication, June 24, 2018). Sadness,

When you walk around and you see everybody, they have somebody that they're sitting with, or they're walking with, or something. Then you're just always by yourself, and it's like I kind of like being by myself, but then again, it kind of makes me feel sad. Even last year, I felt so bad that even sometimes I did not want to go into the cafeteria. I was like, I'm always by myself. It's not a good feeling. (Marie, personal communication, August 22, 2018)

These emotions of loneliness, doubt, and sadness as study participants adjusted to college led them to realize they needed and thirsted for support. In order to overcome these emotions as they adjusted to college, graduates reached out to their Cristo Rey community and also searched for groups where they felt included, heard, and cared for on their college campuses.

All study participants were students of color from low-income backgrounds who attended predominantly White institutions. Through the interviews, it was clear that finding a group on campus where they felt they could be themselves, like they belonged, was essential for their well-being and their success in college. Kayla, who attends a predominantly White institutions (PWI) outside of Philadelphia, shared,

I found CASA and it's like the same thing (as Cristo Rey). It's all family. I know whenever I would cry, they would email me and be like, "Are you okay?" They were right there beside me. I didn't feel alone, but I know some students who aren't a part of CASA or who don't get the opportunity, they might not feel that way. They might not feel like this school is a community for them. (personal communication, August 18, 2018)

Julie, a junior at a PWI in the Northeast region of the United States, explained,

I'd gotten so used to it (being part of a community) in high school, and my first year when I didn't have that I was like "Okay, what now?". It's probably why I came home so often . . .I joined a group called Trios . . . It was just nice to know that I have people there who actually cared about whether I was doing good or not. It was really nice to have somebody there. (personal communication, June 25,
Malik, a rising sophomore at the same university as Julie, described the benefit of finding a community:

AAP (Academic Achievement Program) is like the large group that has a whole bunch of small groups within it . . . it is only for students of color and they have a mentorship, which I just . . . I joined it first semester but now I'm going to be a mentor. . . . I'm actually really excited about that cause I want to do a lot of student leadership positions. . . AAP hosts weekly events, they have rap sessions, discussions about hot topics, and play games. . . . Yeah, that’s the best part about AAP. It’s not really pressure to do anything. It’s just come, hang out. See that there's other people of color and have fun. (personal communication, June 25, 2018).

Faith, a sophomore who attends a PWI in Washington, DC, was asked if her experience would be any different if her school did not have the learning community she was involved in or the Black student union. Faith emphatically replied,

Definitely, Yes. If there isn't that LLC (Living, Learning Community) or other clubs to get to know other people of color, people aren't just going to reach out to you and be like, "Hey," . . . you know what I mean? It's still intimidating to get to know people. So, I was just really fortunate that the LLC was there, so that I was able to get to know people at the same time. (personal communication, August 17, 2018)

Finally, Samantha, a junior attending a large PWI in central Pennsylvania, shared similar sentiments:

I joined organizations that make me feel more at home . . . I joined the Black caucus group . . . They really try to emphasize the fact that, yeah, you're at a predominantly White campus. . . we still want this to feel like home for you. . . I also joined the first generation college group. It was nice to find someone to relate to. It was relaxing to find someone who's like, "Yeah, I didn't get it." I was like, "Yeah, I don't get it either. (personal communication, June 25, 2018)

The transition from a high school that one student expressed “felt like home” to a new campus can be a difficult one to navigate, especially when race, culture, and class are central to the transition process (Tinto, 1993).
Culture. Finally, this section will describe the theme of culture, specifically encountering a new culture, which was present in all study participants’ interview responses. The adjustment to college involved learning a new schedule, taking new classes, and meeting new people, just to name a few, but encompassing all of these changes was the fact that Cristo Rey graduates were encountering a new culture, navigating new spaces and people, and trying to figure out their place on predominantly White and wealthy campuses across Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions of the United States. This section will emphasize how culture, as defined by income and race, impacted Cristo Rey graduates’ college-adjustment experience.

Race

Discussions about adjustment to college eventually led to insights about race due to the fact that the CRPHS graduates interviewed all attended PWIs. Students shared that they knew they were attending a PWI ahead of time, but upon reflection did not know how it would feel. Knowing and experiencing it are drastically different. Cristo Rey graduates remembered thinking, the moment all students arrived on campus, “Where are all of the students of color?” (Jess, personal communication July 22, 2018). Malik, who attends a large university in the Northeast, shared, “I feel like I wasn't prepared for the culture shock I experienced. So in that aspect, college wasn't what I expected” (personal communication, June 25, 2018).

In their interviews, many students mentioned pre-orientation summer programs for students of color on their campuses. They found value in these programs but also shared that they grew accustomed to being surrounded by students similar to them in race, so when all of the other (mainly White) students arrived on campus, it was quite a
shock. Now, instead of constantly being surrounded by other students of color, they were only one of a few students of color in a large lecture hall. This experience had a major impact both on their academic adjustment and sense of belonging on their college campuses. Sierra, who attends a predominately White institution in western Pennsylvania, explained,

> What they (the college) do is pre-orientation. And they take all minority students and you kind of have the orientation before the actual orientation. . . So that's like ... I got to know all the minority students and then I kind of forgot, "Wait, the rest of the student body isn't here yet." And so once the rest of the student body came, I kind of like ... I wasn't like standoffish. Like, I'll get to know anybody. It doesn't matter what your race or ethnicity is. But people were asking us, "Oh, where you from?" And I was like, "Philly." And you know they kind of like turned their nose up and kind of be like, "Oh, yeah. I heard it's bad down there. (personal communication Jul 1, 2018)

Kayla mentioned the difference between her summer program and actual start to the school year:

> I attended the Advanced Academic Placement program for incoming freshmen. . . . going into that AP program during the summer for incoming freshmen, a lot of the upperclassmen, they would tell me, "It's going to be a cultural shock when you get here (for the regular school year). Don't be surprised. It's going to be a cultural shock." At the time, I'm like, "Okay, what does that even mean? I don't even know what a cultural shock is. Then I was also thinking to myself, Okay, big deal. It's a PWI. Who cares?' . . . When I got on campus, it was definitely a cultural shock, and I wasn't used to it. (personal communication, August 18, 2018)

Kayla’s thoughts were shared with, George, another CRPHS graduate from the class of 2016 who attends the same university: “when I arrived on campus (after the summer bridge program), it was like a blizzard hit campus” (personal communication, June, 2017). As students dealt with this initial shock, which they felt ill-prepared for, they had to quickly learn how to navigate what it felt like to be “the only student of color in my program,” “one of a few students of color in my biology class,” or “the only student of
color on my dorm floor” (personal communications, July, 2018). These experiences impacted the students’ sense of belonging and academic performance on their college campuses. Jess explained, “At first, (when I looked around my classroom) I didn't feel like I belonged... I was the only colored person in all of my classes” (personal communication, July 22, 2018). Kayla shared, “It (being one of a few students of color in class) was kind of true for the majority of my classes. . . I wondered if I belonged and I felt like because I was a person of color, they're (other students) not going to care what I have to say” (personal communication, August 18, 2018). Malik shared a similar sentiment: “Most of the classes I go to, I'm mostly one of the few people of color. I'm lucky to have other people of color because I'm in a large lecture. I'm bound to have one other person, hopefully” (personal communication, June 25, 2018).

Malik continued to share that joining the AAP at his university had a significant impact on navigating these new spaces, which are so different from his high school experience at CRPHS:

It really, my confidence at school really grows every time I hang around the AAP community, which is students of color. I'm like, ‘Okay, there's a lot of people of color here. There's a lot more people of color here than I think even though statistically it says predominantly White.’ I feel like I can find enough people of color here within the community, I feel at home. (personal communication, Jun 25, 2018)

Malik’s experience of encountering spaces where he was one of a few students of color and then finding resources or groups to help process this experience was consistent throughout all interviews. The theme of culture is strongly connected to the need for community. Soledad, Jess, and Sierra all shared experiences of finally finding a person or a group they felt comfortable with. For some students it took a few months, for others
it took all year. Kayla found the CASA program at her university where she felt safe and a strong sense of community. Bianca joined the Black student union at her university because she saw people that looked like her in leadership positions. Sierra also joined and felt empowered through the Black student union on her campus while figuring out how to navigate micro aggressions in her dorm and other social spaces. Studies have shown that racial micro aggressions exist in both academic and social spaces in the collegiate environment. They also show how racial microaggressions have a negative impact on the campus racial climate (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 60). Sierra took it upon herself to stand up and break people’s stereotypes of her. In general, it is not easy to adjust to a new space; it certainly becomes more difficult when one feels judged based on their identity. Sierra commented, “So it took me a while to kind of just get acclimated . . . . There's only a select few Black people here. . . how am I supposed to not let that affect me?” (personal communication, July 1, 2018). The adjustment experience of students of color on predominantly White campuses is layered and not easy. Cristo Rey graduates are adjusting to a new school, new classes, new teachers and schedule, but they are also adjusting to a whole new culture from their high school experience.

**Income.** In addition to adjusting to predominantly White campuses, Cristo Rey graduates also expressed experiences of adjusting to a new culture where students come from all different economic backgrounds. Samantha shared,

> It's kind of hard to relate to some of my peers because they just live vastly different lives than I did. I used to be in this knitting club. And this one girl said, ‘Oh, you know, I like to go to my summer home’. Or, ‘Oh, I like to go to wine gardens and all these other places’ I'm like, I can't relate. *I can't relate!* (personal communication, June 25, 2018)
Even when you are on full scholarship . . . it's hard. The town around my school is really expensive . . . Not my friends specifically, but I do know a bunch of people who do a lot of stuff that cost a lot of money and they're just like, "Well, we just want to do it just to do it," and I'm like, "Wow." (personal communication, August 18, 2018)

Students from across the country can be accepted to the same college, but income gaps or wealth gaps create a different college experience for students, one that can add a layer of stress on top of all of the other stressors in adjusting to college. One of these stressors is buying books. Kayla and Soledad both expressed frustration and embarrassment over the cost of books. Soledad shared how she bought all her books for a course, but “we only full read one, then the other two, we read two stories from it and that was it! I was so mad! . . . They were used books . . . but it’s still money” (personal communication, June 25, 2018). Briana explained her experience of financial stress when she received emails from the school stating, "Oh, they locked your student account and you won't be able to register for classes for the next semester (until you pay). Or, "Your account is on hold so you can't really do much" (personal communication, July 2018). Two of the students interviewed had to take a semester off due to financial reasons.

A plan. Adjusting to college is not easy. Experiences of doubt, isolation, and frustration due to one’s race or income certainly do not make it easier. As a final thought, of the Cristo Rey graduates interviewed, the majority had a plan, a purpose, a reason for being in college. Their motivation to fulfill their plans outlasted any setbacks. Students displayed a sense of urgency in doing well in their classes, picking the “right” major, and getting involved on campus. Students who did not articulate a plan or purpose for their college degree during their interviews were also the students who did not readily seek out
resources or clubs to join, often expressed feelings of loneliness, and received pressure from family to help out at home. For the students who did express a plan, in the face of hardship, students displayed a strong sense of self-efficacy and continued down the road to their end goals. CRPHS graduates’ stories reveal that they reached out to trusted mentors to solve financial issues, they found solidarity in affinity groups, and they took on leadership roles in student groups to work against stereotypes. They did not give up and made an unfamiliar and at times uninviting space a home—one where they could continue with their academic endeavors.

**Conclusion**

The theme of readiness is dynamic. But as the study participants and literature inform us, there are many layers to being prepared for one’s college academic experience that do not just rely on one’s high school GPA or ACT score. These insights beg us to consider: what really is a college prep curriculum? Through the sub-themes under the theme of readiness - college courses, college professors, and time management - study participants pointed out ways Cristo Rey could have better prepared/readied them for their college academic life. We also encountered the power of relationships, which students learned through their experiences at Cristo Rey. Students recognized that building relationships with teachers and others on campus is important in order to help with their overall adjustment to college life.

Literature and the voices of Cristo Rey students also highlight that a sense of belonging is of utmost importance in adjustment to college. Finding a community encouraged the study participants to overcome any obstacles in college including tough classes, feelings of being misunderstood, and feeling not included due to their race or
income level. The interview data revealed the transformational power of relationships while adjusting to college, as well as the fact that it took a student’s self-efficacy to reach out and find the needed supports. The qualitative findings of this study, although from a small sample, reveal a big gap in ways higher education institutions work towards creating more welcoming and diverse college campuses, where students do not feel isolated or like they don’t belong, but instead feel embraced and ready to take on the next phase of their academic life.

Finally, culture shock is a reality for students. Faith mentioned she thought that the Cristo Rey college counselors were exaggerating when this topic was discussed, but in her first year of college she felt “the reality” hit. The study participants spoke of culture, under the categories of race and income, both which have an impact on their adjustment to college. The communities the students found on their college campuses played a big part through the adjustment experiences. Through these communities the students found their culture, their social capital, (Bourdieu, 1977) valued, which assisted with their adjustment. Without communities like the Black Student Unions, Academic Achievement Program, CASA and many others the students mentioned; Cristo Rey graduates may have felt the need to assimilate to the norms of the culture at their predominantly White institutions, which assumes that the dominant group’s social and cultural capital is better than other groups (Bourdieu, 1977). Mitchell (2015) emphasizes that the strengths that Students of Color gain from their racial and cultural heritage and bring to their college campuses should not be ignored. “Unfortunately, such a definition has resulted in a lengthy history of educational literature that theorizes Communities of Color as having an inherent social and cultural capital deficit, resulting in school
environments that ‘subtract’ or dismiss the heritage of Students of Color” (Straubhaar, 2013, p. 95). Students in this study did not directly say they felt their “heritages being dismissed”, but many of their stories of adjustment hinted at often feeling like an outsider or less than on their college campuses due to their skin color.

Eighteen interviews of Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduates from the class of 2016 and the class of 2017 provided an in-depth narrative of their college-adjustment experience, insight on how their Cristo Rey High School experience impacted their adjustment, as well as insight into ways the students persevered as they adjusted to life on their college campuses. The themes of readiness, community, and culture were found throughout all interviews. These themes interact with one another during a student’s college experience and have a tremendous impact on their academic adjustment and sense of belonging to their college campuses. The study participants’ stories emphasized their self-efficacy as they learned how to navigate new academic and social spaces in a different culture from their own: predominately White institutions.

Self-determination theory is a useful framework for understanding how and why students remained motivated during the college adjustment experience and what fostered or suppressed their motivation, specifically on predominately white campuses. Utilizing the self-determination framework to analyze student interviews we observed that when student needs of autonomy (students choose to become engaged in learning because it is closely aligned with interests and values), competence (student can and desires to challenge their abilities), and relatedness (students have established close and strong relationships) were met, either on campus or by outside sources like mentors, high schools teachers, and family; they remained motivated to keep trying, to reach out for
help, to pursue their goals, even amidst obstacles and struggles both inside and outside of their college experience (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wal, & Abel, 2013). On the other hand, there were a few students who shared that when they did not feel competent in their classes or feel close to others (professors or friends) on campus or off campus then their motivation to go to class, to continue to put in the effort decreased. A reason why some of these students persisted was the extrinsic motivation to obtain a college degree and/or make their family proud. Finally, I found that even when some students were at one point extrinsically motivated, if they persisted through obstacles, their needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness were eventually met (due to their persistence), and students became more intrinsically motivated to pursue their goals.

Both secondary schools and higher education institutions can analyze how the characteristics and conditions of their school encourages the development of process that increase intrinsic motivation. How can campuses better foster the need of relatedness, which often is posited to be a distinct need in itself, since relationships often (but not always) provide the context in which the other two needs (competence and autonomy) can be satisfied (Guiffrida et al., 2013).
Chapter 6
Integrated Findings

CRPHS graduates often come back to visit their high school to check in with their former teachers, counselors, and administrators. They enter with a smile and in the short conversations share that college is “great,” some classes are tough, but they are happy where they are. It is difficult in these short conversations to truly understand the graduates’ adjustment experience. In fact, during Soledad’s interview, she mentioned, “I just say things are great and I really like school because in this short visit, I don’t want my former teachers to be disappointed . . . but, once I sit down with some of the teachers I was close with, I tell them how I really feel” (personal communication, June 2, 2018).

The purpose of this study was to get beyond the surface-level conversations to truly understand how Cristo Rey graduates are adjusting to college and the influence their high school experience had on their adjustment. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings of this study, although only with a sample of 75 survey respondents and 18 interviews, provides another layer of insight, which can unveil the “real” adjustment experience of Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduates.

This chapter first displays a summary of the connections between the quantitative and qualitative data. Second, an explanation of the integration of the significant quantitative findings and major themes of the qualitative data explaining any alignment or misalignment will be provided. Third, I will discuss, based on the qualitative data, reasoning for some non-significant findings in the quantitative analysis. Finally, I will provide major takeaways (conclusions) based on the analysis and integration of the quantitative and qualitative data.
Integration of Quantitative Data and Qualitative Themes

A display (Table 7) of the themes found through 18 interviews and the scores of the variables analyzed in this study to measure adjustment to college and the influence Cristo Rey had on this adjustment summarizes the connections between the quantitative and qualitative findings. Listed are the mean, minimum and maximum scores of each adjustment survey as well as the high school variables measured in this study. Following the overall mean scores are four statements taken from each survey, which represent the two highest scores and the two lowest scores in the particular adjustment survey. This representation creates a visual to better understand the adjustment surveys, high school variables, and the range of students’ responses. Finally, upon organizing the quantitative data, the qualitative themes with select interview quotes were merged together in order to represent the student’s voice and display connections between the two data sets.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Adjustment (AA)</strong></td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>Readiness and Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider a college degree important.</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I want to make a change. I don’t want to just complain about the problem. I want to find the solution.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have well-defined academic goals.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Yeah. I mapped it all out. I’ve been planning probably from the first week of May what I want to do next semester.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have trouble concentrating when studying.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I just felt like I wasn’t gonna do well in the class. I felt stupid, in a way. So that’s why I dropped it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find academic work difficult.</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Combined High School Academic Score (HSACAD) | HSACAD | -1.97 | 1.821 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>20.16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"I wouldn't say I wasn't fully prepared but I don't think I was all the way prepared with my sciences."

"And I say this because Cristo Rey was college prep, and that's what we got. We got quality work."

"And I just didn't feel smart enough. Coming from Cristo Rey, where I did very well, and I felt good, I felt smart, but then going to college, it was just like, I was like "Okay, well, was it a lie? Was I just pretending to be smart and it just happened to work?"

Sense of Belonging | 3.53 | 2.00 | 4.78 |

At college, it is important to me that my thoughts and opinions are valued. 4.11
In the past, I have felt valued and important to others. 3.99
In college I do not feel like getting involved with people. 3.08
I would like to make a difference to people or things around me, but I don’t feel that what I have to offer is valued at my college. 3.23

"It was just nice to know that I have people there who actually cared about whether I was doing good or not. It was really nice to have somebody there."

"I think Cristo Rey, in a slight way, spoiled me a little with the community aspect, how we're all family."

"It was kind of like while I did want to talk to people, it was more comfortable to just stay in my room."

Self-Efficacy (SE) | 6.92 | 1.75 | 9.95 |

Talk to and befriend a peer of a different race. 8.08
Take good class notes. 7.61
Ask a person, who I did not already know, to hang out. 4.47

"And then the professor just starts talking and she's very fast, quick paced. I can hardly keep up writing the notes."

"When you walk around and you see everybody, they have somebody"
Plan an event/activity with others on campus. 5.69  
that they're sitting with, or they're walking with, or something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loneliness (Lone)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Community and Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an outgoing person.</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can find companionship when I want it.</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack companionship.</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no one I can turn to.</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“During my second semester I got out there a little bit more.”

“So, now I guess I'm happier because I know people and am included.”

“AAP… that's also really helped me with socialize.”

| Perceived High School Impact (PHSI) | My overall Cristo Rey High School experience helped me adjust to college. 3.93 1.17 5.00 | Readiness and Community |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
|                                    | The classes offered at CRPHS helped my adjustment to college. 4.16 |                                                                         |
|                                    | The relationships I formed with high school teachers and staff helped with my adjustment to college. 4.15 |                                                                         |
|                                    | College 101 and College Counseling Classes helped with my adjustment to college. 3.98 |                                                                         |

“But, with all the teachers that are there for us and before the school year, they were like, reach out any time. That kind of thing is helpful”.

“I’d gotten so used to it (being part of a community) in high school, and my first year when I didn't have that I was like "Okay, what now?". It's probably why I came home so often”.

“I'm like, "I got this." I did this before”.

“We should have had more labs and had more lab tools”.

---

After analyzing how Cristo Rey graduates adjusted to college through both the quantitative and qualitative data, I took the significant results of the quantitative analyses
and integrated the major themes that emerged through the qualitative data to fully
develop the narrative of the link between Cristo Rey graduates’ high school experiences
and their adjustment to college.

**Combined High School Academic Score has a Positive Association with Sense of Belonging**

The students’ interviews revealed that they did not feel prepared for some of their college courses; often students wondered why their peers in their college classes (specifically science and math) seemed to understand material they did not, which aligns with the regression analysis which revealed no relationship between the combined high school academic score college academic adjustment.

On the other hand, students commented: “I would tell myself, I belong here. . .even when many other students did not look like me” (Malik, personal communication, June 25, 2018). They told themselves they belonged on their campus for the fact that their high school merits allowed for their acceptance to that specific college or university. They earned a spot at the university just like every other student. The top two average scores in the sense of belonging survey were (a) At college, it is important to me that my thoughts and opinions are valued and (b) In the past, I have felt valued and important to others. Perhaps a combined high school GPA and ACT score is less telling of how one will perform in college classes but more so how students feel they belong amongst the many other students who were also accepted. Through analyzing interview findings through a social capital framework, I found that once the students found a community of support, a place where they “felt valued” a place where their social and cultural capital was seen as an asset and strength as opposed to just different (Harker, 1984); they then
had the resources and confidence to positively adjust to their academic classes, schedule, college professors, and overall experience on their college campus.

**Perceived High School Impact is a Positive Significant Predictor of Sense of Belonging and Academic Adjustment**

A student’s PHSI on their adjustment to college is a positive significant predictor of their sense of belonging and academic adjustment. The major themes of readiness and community, found through student interviews, in addition to the top three mean scores on the Perceived High School Impact Survey: (a) My overall Cristo Rey High School experience helped me adjust to college. (b) The classes offered at CRPHS helped my adjustment to college. (c) The relationships I formed with high school teachers and staff helped with my adjustment to college, provide insight as to why PHSI is a positive significant predictor of academic adjustment and sense of belonging.

Students revealed, through their interviews, that although they did not feel totally prepared for some of their college classes; they did feel prepared for the liberal arts classes and the general workload of their college classes, which explains the PHSI result of on average, the students agreed that their Cristo Rey classes helped with their academic adjustment to college. Through the interviews, students continuously referred to Cristo Rey as a “community” or a “home.” This was due to the relationships developed with the teachers and staff over the course of four years. Students shared that their relationships with the teachers encouraged them to seek out those same relationships with mentors or teachers on their college campuses. Student emphasized that the community of Cristo Rey was something they valued, and therefore they wanted to find a group or organization and feel a part of a community on their college campuses. This perception of
their high school experience impacted both their academic adjustment and sense of belonging on their college campuses. Through the lens of social capital theory, perhaps the experience of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School “enabled students to gain access to human, cultural, and other forms of capital, as well as to institutional resources and support” (Wells, 2008, p.104) and therefore, despite entering onto a campus where the social and cultural capital that is in the majority and is different from theirs; they understood their value. Which positively influenced their academic adjustment and sense of belonging.

**Loneliness is a Negative Significant Predictor of Academic Adjustment, Sense of Belonging, and Self-Efficacy**

Although, not a high school variable, it is valuable to understand that as a student’s loneliness increases, their academic adjustment to college, sense of belonging in college, and their sense of self-efficacy in college decreases. The student interviews revealed similar findings and indicated a cyclical effect amongst loneliness and the college-adjustment variables.

A student first feels lonely because they do not feel like they belong to their college campus or, in other words, they have not found their community yet. A student may also feel lonely because they are struggling in a class or are one of a few students of color in their class. Lee and Goldstein (2015) explained that loneliness is considered a subjective, unpleasant, and emotionally distressing experience. It makes sense that students experience loneliness in their adjustment to college as they are trying to meet new people during this young adult phase of life. The cycle of loneliness continues until a student taps into their self-efficacy and, as Bandura (1997) explains, begins “to believe in
one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments.” This could include reaching out to a tutor for help, joining a club, or finding an organization on campus for support. This could also include saying “yes” to a professor or mentor who reaches out and offers help. Positive teacher relationships, according to self-determination theory, often allows for students to “cope more positively with academic failures, to be more autonomous in regulating their school behaviors, were more engaged in learning and to feel better about themselves” (Deci, Ryan, & Williams. 1996, p. 178). Findings from the student interviews revealed that once a student found their community, their group on campus, they began to feel more comfortable. They no longer felt alone or isolated because they found people who they could relate to. They realized they were not the only ones who were struggling in a class. The majority of the interviewees found their sense of belonging through a group that supported and empowered them as students of color on a predominantly White college campus. A commonality amongst the few students who continued to express deep feelings of loneliness beyond the first semester of college is that, when not in class, they usually stayed in their dorm room and had not found a group or organization where they felt welcomed and supported.

**What Does Gender Have to Do Adjustment?**

The majority of females interviewed mentioned that they had 1 or 2 roommate changes due to not feeling comfortable around their original roommate. The majority of females interviewed also mentioned the struggle to find a friend group or an organization where they felt they could be themselves. Male responses did not point to a struggle to find a group, activity or organization where they belong. When looking at the
significance of the Combined High School Academic Score, Perceived High School Impact, or Loneliness on Sense of Belonging; regression analysis revealed that females score less than males in their sense of belonging on their college campuses. This finding is something Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School must pay attention to as 64% of our student body is female and a major indicator of college persistence is the extent to which one feels like they belong on their college campus.

**Themes found through the Non-Significant Quantitative Findings**

A quantitative finding that surprised me indicated that the student’s combined academic score has no relationship with their academic adjustment. The stories students shared provided some insight. Students explained they had 3.3 or above GPAs in high school and high school classes were never too difficult for them, but in college they at times felt lost in some of their classes, specifically in their math and sciences courses. Cristo Rey graduates were high academic achievers in high school and were not accustomed to struggling with their coursework in college. This study revealed that the students’ academic adjustment to college had less to do with how well they performed in high school as it did with if they had clear goals and a purpose for college (plan) as well as the desire to build relationships with their professors, teaching assistants, and tutors (community) in order to better understand course material and feel successful in class. Again, aligned with self-determination theory, if a student’s needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were met, then students were more inclined to be self-motivated and persist through their adjustment to college. According to this study their high school academic score was not a significant predictor of their college adjustment.
The self-efficacy college-adjustment variable was not found to have any relationship with the high school predictor variables measured in this study. Why did the high school variables not have any relationship with self-efficacy? Does one’s self-efficacy depend on their life experiences as opposed to just their high school experience?

The students’ reflections on their college-adjustment experience revealed that self-efficacy, as described, impacts their adjustment, both academically and socially. Students never directly mentioned “self-efficacy,” but through their stories of adjustment, I found both (a) students describing their effort to persist despite obstacles and (b) a few students giving up because of one setback, failure, or denial. Self-efficacy appears to be the catalyst for finding a community or reaching out to professors or tutors for help, which in turn leads to a more positive adjustment to college. What determines one’s level of self-efficacy? How are self-efficacy and the tenants of self-determination theory (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) connected? Questions important to investigate in a future study order to understand why some students have a positive adjustment to college and others do not.
Chapter 7
Discussion

The students’ reflections of their adjustment to college required vulnerability and revealed courage, of which I was not surprised. Their stories were inspiring and hilarious as well as disheartening and frustrating. As their former director of admissions and teacher, I realize my biases. I had to continuously work to keep my assumptions in check. The surveys supplied objective data, which I used to investigate the research questions and hypotheses of this study. I was then able to separately analyze the interview data, compile through an iterative coding process that used both deductive codes taken from the quantitative data as well as inductive codes found in the voices of the students. Finally, I added a third layer of analysis through an integrative data analysis process, where I merged the quantitative and qualitative data together to analyze what aligned and what did not align, which developed an in-depth understanding of the students’ adjustment to college and ways their high school did or did not influence their adjustment experience.

Upon completion of all three data analyses stages, I developed three takeaways, based on an analyses of the integrative findings through the lenses of the frameworks that informed this study: critical race theory, self-determination theory, and social capital theory. These takeaways inform the research questions and provide points of reflection and action for CRPHS and higher education institutions, specifically predominately White institutions.
One explanation of low college persistence rates for historically underrepresented students, or in other words, students of color from low-income backgrounds (Strayhorn, 2014), is that it is due to lack of academic preparedness (Adelman, 2006). Cristo Rey must improve its science and math programs in order to realistically say, “Yes, graduate, you are prepared for the rigor of your college math classes and science labs.” Cristo Rey graduates were not prepared for the college-level math and science classes; some began to doubt their intellect. This only perpetuates the stereotypical view and deficit discourse (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006) that all “underrepresented students” fall into the remedial category in college academic courses. It is the duty of primary and secondary educational systems to provide high-quality education so all students have equal opportunity. Focusing on the opportunity gap will close the achievement gap. “The opportunity gap, shifts our attention from outcomes to inputs- to the deficiencies in the foundational components of societies, schools, and communities that produce significant differences in educational and ultimately socioeconomic-outcomes” (Carter & Welner, 2013, p. 3). Students were not behind in classes due to a lack of ability, rather it was due to a lack of opportunity, and the students realized that. We must continue to listen to the voices of our students in order to better understand topics around college readiness. We must turn away from relying on deficit-laden reinforcements of low –income students of color underachievement from the education and social science literature. Instead, an anti-deficit inquiry, which this study intended to be, recognizes students of color as experts on their experiential realities and empowers them to offer counter narratives concerning their success in college (Harper, 2009; Solórzano and Yosso, 2000; Yosso, 2005).
Another aspect of academic adjustment is managing time in order to effectively prepare for classes and study for exams. In college, students are given a syllabus and expected to figure out how and when to meet the expectations of the class syllabus. Through self-determination theory, we look at the characteristics and conditions of their high school experience that may have nurtured and encouraged the development of processes that increase self-motivation and personality integration during their college experience. Cristo Rey graduates valued their teacher relationships but also mentioned that due to a “little too much hand holding” and a tight academic schedule with “no free time,” once they arrived on their college campuses, they did not know how to prioritize the amount of free time and independently manage their responsibilities. Students, in turn, felt overwhelmed and lost confidence in their abilities. Ryan and Deci (2000) identified three needs—competence, relatedness, and autonomy—to be essential for growth and integration as well as for positive social development and personal well-being. During their high school experiences, students expressed they were not given the autonomy to learn the skills necessary to figure out how to manage their time and schedule. The self-determination theory framework allows Cristo Rey to take a critical look at how they are providing the conditions for integration and growth on their college campuses.

A lot of emphasis is placed on academic performance when students apply to college, but it is important to remember that non-cognitive variables relating to adjustment, motivation, and student perceptions, rather than the traditional verbal and quantitative (often called cognitive) areas, typically measured by standardized tests, are
crucial to college persistence (Sedlacek, 1998b, 2004a). This is critical to consider, especially for CRPHS, as Sedlacek emphasizes that,

while non-cognitive variables are useful for all students, they provide viable alternatives in fairly assessing the abilities of people of color, women, international students, older students, students with disabilities, or others with experiences that are different than those of young, White, heterosexual, able-bodied, Eurocentric males in the United States (traditional students). (Sedlacek, 2011, p. 5)

CRPHS, where 99% of the students are students of color, can work on building up these non-cognitive skills to ensure students are college ready and feel confident as they are introduced to new classes, schedules, and cultures on their college campuses

**Belonging**

Cristo Rey graduates felt a strong sense of community during their high school experience; they felt like they belonged. Students shared they felt seen, heard, and valued during their high school experience. When they arrived on their college campuses, mainly PWIs, it was a whole new world, and students wondered, “Where do I fit in?” Graduates of Cristo Rey know what it feels like to be valued member of the community and therefore searched for ways to build this community at their new home: their college campus. The majority of students interviewed expressed eventually finding their “group”—their “people”—on their college campuses, but it took a while, and some, mainly those who attend small, local liberal arts, are still searching. Once students found their group, their social capital bolstered within that group. Coleman (1988) explained, “social capital consists of a variety of entities, embedded in social structures, which make possible the achievement of certain goals not plausible in the absence of such social structures” (Palmer and Gasman, 2008, p. 55). Students were able to achieve their goals
because they felt valued within the group and could rely on the group for resources and support.

Many students expressed feelings of loneliness. If it wasn’t said, it could be heard in the tone of their voices and seen in the tears in their eyes when describing their first couple months on their college campuses. Loneliness is a negative significant predictor of sense of belonging, academic adjustment, and sense of self-efficacy on the college campus. Cristo Rey needs to discuss this feeling of loneliness with students before they leave for college, so it is not such a shock. Alumni can come back to explain the feeling, but also what they did to reduce the feelings of loneliness on their college campuses and therefore have a more positive adjustment experience in college than they would have otherwise.

Too often the discussion of college readiness for students of color is focused on how the students are not prepared and students need to learn about and become accustomed to the “norms” of the college/university. Deficit language surrounding low income, student of color populations automatically places the students as “other”. The students are expected to adapt to the culture of the university in order to succeed. This is a large ask, as the students are also trying to adapt to their academic and social life, just like every other student. Adapting to the culture, which often is not representative of their own culture, should not be the responsibility or focus for the student. Analyzing student interviews through the lens of social capital theory we find that more emphasis needs be placed on the gifts and talents that students bring to campus by being their authentic selves, not by how well they assimilate to a dominate culture.

Predominantly white institutions need to reflect and act on the fact that students of
color on their campuses do not feel like they belong. Higher Educational Institutions must reflect and act on whose social capital they value. Palmer and Gasman (2008) explain that according to Bourdieu (1986) social capital is the ways in which some individuals are privileged because of their membership in a social network. Bourdieu also expressed that social capital is a mechanism of control that those in the ruling classes use to maintain their dominant position over the general population (Lin, 2001). How are Higher Education institutions perpetuating the “ruling class” social capital? Are there ways in which Higher Education Institutions that are predominantly white can counter the norm of knowingly or unknowingly promoting only the social capital of the dominate group – wealthy and white students? Universities need to go beyond the “summer bridge” program, where all student of color are “oriented” to the college. Instead, action steps are needed to increase the social and cultural capital of students of color from low-income backgrounds, who continue to persist and utilize their self-efficacy as they navigate a whole new college culture.

**Student Mindset**

Student data on their academic adjustment, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and loneliness all inform us on how a student is adjusting to their college life. We also learned about some high school predictors of these adjustment variables. A final takeaway from this study is focused on the student’s mindset. At one point in every interview, a student expressed their plan, their goals, and how despite being misunderstood or stereotyped, they knew their true selves and would not let setbacks or obstacles be in their way. Although self-efficacy was not found to have a relationship with any high school variable, through the interviews I found that the majority of the
students across race, gender, type of residence, and type of college partnership utilized their self-efficacy to achieve their goals. I found that students who expressed clear goals for their college academic journey had a greater sense of urgency and motivation to get there. While reflecting on this finding, I analyzed through the lens of self-determination theory and asked, what were the specific factors that nurtured the students’ tendencies to advocate for themselves and stay focused on their end goals, even when others were telling them it was not possible? The will, the desire, the urgency to fulfill their plan was palpable in their interviews. How and why did they maintain this motivation?

While speaking with students, I found that conversations with mentors, family, and teachers mattered to the students, for these conversations re-affirmed the student’s values. When an area of college adjustment was tough, be it finances, schedule, friends, or coursework, reaching out to a mentor for an honest and supportive conversation made all the difference for the student to not give up. Fischer (2007) found, “through interactions in the social and academic realms (of college), students either reaffirm or reevaluate their initial goals and commitments. Students who lack sufficient interaction with others on campus or have negative experiences may decide to depart the university as a result of this reevaluation” (p. 154). Higher Educational Institutions and Secondary schools (when recommending colleges) need to examine if “negative experiences” on college campuses persuade students they are not good enough or valued. Interviews revealed that Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School students were convinced of their own value, their social capital, during high school. The value students add to their campus should be acknowledge and promoted, but if too many “negative experiences” add up without any positive interaction to counter it; students may be convinced that they are not
valued; their intrinsic motivation may decrease and therefore decide college is not for them. It did appear that if a student’s intrinsic motivation was not nurtured, students often continued to work through academic and social struggles in their first year or two years of college due to the mindset and extrinsic motivation of graduating in four years, graduating with a certain major, and/or graduating to give back to family.

Implications for Future Research and Practice at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School

**College fit.** Findings from this study and existent literature both emphasize the importance of belonging on one’s college campus. These findings call for more research to understand which colleges focus on welcoming students and creating an environment where all students feel like they belong. Cristo Rey Philadelphia is focused on guiding a student to find the best college fit, as opposed to chasing after a college name. Since the goal of all college applicants is to graduate from college, understanding which colleges instill a greater sense of belonging for students of color is important because belonging has been found to be a factor for persistence through college.

**Coursework.** A theme throughout the majority of student interviews was that they felt ill-prepared for their college math and sciences classes. Cristo Rey prepares students for college in many different domains, cognitive and non-cognitive, but we need work on academic preparedness, specifically in the fields of math and science and the skill of time management. Secondary schools must reflect on their college prep curriculum to determine if they are truly readying their students for a positive adjustment to college.

**Gender.** Findings from this study provided insight on the relationship between gender and sense of belonging. Females tended to have a less positive adjustment
experience. The student body of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School is 64% female. As educators we must ask and research why females, particularly females of color, experience a lower sense of belonging on their college campuses. “Female students have been found to experience more overall adjustment problems than male students on starting university. Specifically, women show poorer emotional and social adaptation, although they are better adjusted academically” (Tinajero, et al., 2014, p. 228). Cristo Rey can take the lead on having discussions with students about the adjustment experience and also providing space for students to gather in affinity groups to discuss their worries, questions, struggles, hopes, etc. This support group could be an excellent resource for they can find comfort in one another as companions on the college adjustment journey. An additional thought is perhaps females scored lower on adjustment scales or discussed the difficulty of adjustment to college more so than the male participants due to the males not wanting to or not knowing how to express their emotions. I would like to look into this both currently at CRPHS and also for future studies.

**Self-Efficacy.** This study calls for research on understanding how a high school student develops self-efficacy. No high school variable was associated with self-efficacy. Why not? It is an important skill to utilize for a positive adjustment to college, so how can Cristo Rey guide students in developing their self-efficacy skills?

**Implications for Future Research and Practice at Higher Education Institutions**

**Beyond summer bridge.** Colleges often provide “bridge,” “summer achievement,” and “orientation” programs for students of color. Students expressed how these groups were good to be a part of in the summer, but it was not a realistic picture of
their college experience. Therefore, once all students arrived on campus, it was a
complete culture shock and shook their adjustment experience. Higher Ed institutions,
specifically PWIs, need to research and implement policies and programs that are not just
a band-aid for their lack of diversity across, specific to this study, race and income. A
summer bridge program is a start, but how does the university address racial micro
aggressions, the wealth gap, and the overall lack of diversity present on campus? Museus,
Yi, & Saelua (2017) focus on the need for not just academic and social integration, but
also the need for cultural integration on college campuses, referring to ways in which
educators “can integrate academic, social and cultural elements into singular spaces,
curricula, programs, practices, and activities to empower students and create the
conditions for them to thrive (Museus, et al., 2017, p. 190). We need to continue to listen
to the voices of students of color as they experience their adjustment to college to truly
understand actions colleges need to take in order to ensure all students, no matter their
race or income, know and feel like they belong. This in turn can improve student
outcomes.

**Feeling alone.** Loneliness is a negative significant predictor of academic
adjustment, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy. This calls for research on why college
students are lonely and a discussion and action plan on what practices and policies the
university can put into place to reach out to those who may be experiencing loneliness
and creating spaces for students to gather and discuss feelings of loneliness that arise as
they adjust to a whole to life academically and socially. Peer group mentoring in college
is a possible way to lower the loneliness impact on adjustment to college. Older peers
from the same Higher Ed. Institution or one similar to it could be trained to mentor
groups of younger peers. This idea is already occurring in organizations, this study revealed the power or relationships and mentorship, and therefore gives reason for Higher Ed. Institutions to take a look at its affects and how it could impact their community.

**Limitations**

This study took place over the course of six months and therefore was limited in scope and size. First, the survey sample size for quantitative analysis was 75 students. Analysis was able to occur, but with a larger sample size, a more accurate picture of Cristo Rey Philadelphia graduates’ adjustment experience could have developed. Additionally, I sent the survey to all graduates from the classes of 2016 and 2017 who had enrolled in college. I had hoped that some of the students who did not persist after their first semester or first year would have responded to the survey. Survey respondents were all students who either remained enrolled at college or, as I later learned, were still enrolled in their current college but planned to transfer the following year. A diverse group of enrolled (persisting), enrolled (transferring), and not enrolled respondents could have provided a broader sense of what adjustment looks like for different students. For example, if the higher achieving Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates only responded to the survey, they could have taken more challenging college courses and therefore influenced the results of the regression analysis between high school academic score and college academic adjustment. It is important to emphasize that in this study the sample size is representative of Cristo Rey graduates across gender and race, but it is not representative across the other high school predictors: high school academic score and attendance, which could have had an effect on the results of the quantitative analysis. I also want to mention that due to time and access to data, this study uses limited amount
of high school variables. If this was a longitudinal study we could also measure leadership roles in high school, teacher ratings on study participants, work study data, and high school self-efficacy, just to name a few. A final limitation is my lack of expertise in directing a research study. As this is my dissertation, this is one of my first forays into an extended mixed-methods research study. I learned a lot, but I also think a lot more could have been learned from the data had this not been my first time.

Conclusions

This study is a starting point of understanding a Cristo Rey student’s adjustment experience, which therefore informs the work high schools and higher education institutions can do to better prepare students, especially students of color from low-income backgrounds, for the realities of the current state of higher education in our society. This study also offers an opportunity for higher educational institutions to learn from the students’ perceptions and experiences in order to better welcome, provide supports in the transition to college, and even think about their purpose as an educational institution. Yes, there is a large gap between high-income and low-income students attending college as well as a gap between students of color and White students who attend college, but not all students fit the statistics repeatedly shown in research that group all students of color from low-income backgrounds as “at-risk” or “disadvantaged” or in need of remedial work. Harper (2010), insists that instead of further examining how racist stereotypes have a negative effect on low-income student of color performance in academic courses, “an anti-deficit inquiry pursues insights into strategies these students employ to resist the internalization of discouraging misconceptions about members of
their racial groups and how they manage to respond productively to stereotypes they encounter on campus” (p. 69).

This study reveals the need to continue to focus on empowering student voice; much can be learned about the educational landscape in our city, in our country if we make a commitment to do so. As a country we have a lot of work to do to improve our education system. We often look to those in positions of power for the answers, but this study shows that answers and insights lie in the voices of the students. In order to work towards a more just and equitable society we need to shed light on and allow for those voices, who are most affected by unjust policies, to be heard and part of conversations working to improve the current state of education in our society.

As researchers working to understand our questions, we complete our research with some insight, but also with even more questions for further research. As stated at the start of this study, college education not only leads to increased income and fulltime employment, but also and perhaps more importantly leads to healthier lifestyles, reducing health care costs as well as increased active citizenship (volunteering, voting, etc.). All of these aspects have a large impact on the individual and also on society. It is not just some people, those with wealth and privilege, that should obtain easy access to higher education levels, but it should be for all. It is of utmost importance to listen to the voices of the students in this study, their peers, their families, and their communities as we work to improve our educational systems. Positive change occurs when it is a community effort, when there is authentic dialogue and true understanding. Positive, empowering change does not occur when programs and policies are created out of a conversation amongst a small group of privileged people in positions of power. We learn when we
encounter something new and seek to understand it through listening, reflection and
dialogue. Through the responses given by the participants of this study, we saw that they
practice this mode of ‘learning’ every day. Our educational institutions must work to do
the same in order to create just and equitable systems of education.
Appendix A

Data Surveys

The following surveys should take Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates 15-20 minutes to complete. All surveys will be designed and completed through Qualtrics. By completing the surveys, the students give consent to participating in the study. Students will be given an incentive to fill out the survey: 5 students will be chosen at random to receive a $30 gift certificate of their choice from: Starbucks, Target, or Amazon.

Descriptive Data Survey: (4 min)

1. Name:________________
2. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Transgender Male
   d. Transgender Female
   e. Other: _________
3. Choose the ethnicity you most identify with:
   a. Native Indian or Alaska Native
   b. Asian Pacific Islander
   c. Middle Eastern
   d. African American/Black
   e. Latinx/Hispanic
   f. Caucasian/White
   g. Mixed
   h. Other
4. Current Year at University/College
   a. First
   b. Second
   c. Third
   d. Fourth
   e. Fifth
5. Current College or University (Space to name University)
6. Graduation year from Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School
   a. 2016
   b. 2017
7. Parent/Guardian educational level (Less than Middle School, Middle School/Jr. High, High School Diploma, Some College or Two-year degree, Undergraduate degree, Graduate/professional degree, do not know)
8. In the current academic term, where do you live most of the time?
   a. On campus (Residence hall or dorm/apt.)
   b. Off-campus apartment (Housing)
   c. Fraternity or sorority housing
   d. Special-interest housing (e.g. intentional-learning community)
e. Other campus housing
f. At home with family
g. Other

9. What is your estimated date of graduation from college?
a. 2019
b. 2020
c. 2021
d. 2022
e. 2023 or beyond

10. Where did you begin college?
a. I started at my current college
b. I started at a different 2-year college
c. I started at a different 4-year college

11. Are you currently a full-time or part-time student?
a. Full-time
b. Part-time
c. Not enrolled

II. Perceived importance of High School Experience to College Adjustment:

Definition: “Adjustment to college”: The adjustment to college life includes the need for students to navigate new and unfamiliar academic, social, emotional, and in some instances cultural systems all at the same time.

Participants will respond on a 5 point Likert scale: (5 min)
Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. The classes offered at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School had a positive influence on my adjustment to college.
2. The relationships I formed with high school teachers and staff helped with my adjustment to college.
3. The relationships I formed with my high school classmates helped with my adjustment to college.
4. College 101 and College counseling classes helped with my adjustment to college.
5. Involvement in high school extra-curricular activities (i.e., clubs, sports) helped with my adjustment to college.
6. My overall high school experiences helped me adjust to college life.
7. Rank in order how the following experiences in high school could have enhanced the adjustment experience to college?
a. More AP classes
b. Classes/discussions about the cultural adjustment to college
c. Classes/discussions about the social adjustment to college
d. Higher expectations of student work
e. More elective classes
f. Other (fill in)

IV. College Adjustment Survey
I. Academic Adjustment: Two Parts (A & B)

A. Self-Report of current performance
   Performance: Current GPA: ___________

B. Academic Adjustment Survey: Adapted from The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Respond with: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Motivation:
I have well-defined academic goals
I consider a college degree important
I doubt the value of a college degree
I enjoy academic work
Most of my interests are not related to course work

Application:
I keep up-to-date with academic work
I do not work as hard as I should
I am motivated to study
I attend classes regularly

Performance:
I find academic work difficult
I do not function well during exams
I am satisfied with my academic performance
I do not feel smart enough for course work
I do not use study time efficiently
I enjoy doing course work
I have trouble concentrating when studying
I do not do well academically, even when I try hard
I have trouble getting started on homework/classwork
I feel just as prepared for course work as others in my classes
I feel just as smart and capable to do well in course work as others in my classes

Academic Environment:
I am satisfied with the variety of courses at my college
I am satisfied with the quality of courses at my college
I am satisfied with professors at my college
I am satisfied with the overall academic program at my college
C. **Sense of Belonging**: Adapted from Hagerty and Patusky (1995) Sense of Belonging Inventory (SOBI) and Baker and Siryk (1989) Social Adjustment section of the Student Adaptation College Questionnaire (SACQ). The SOBI consists of two subscales, the SOBI-P, which assesses the psychological experience of belonging and the SOBI-A, which assesses the antecedents to sense of belonging. The social adjustment subscale of the SACQ contains items relevant to the interpersonal-societal demands of college.

**Respond with:** Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

It is important to me that I am valued or accepted by others on my college campus.
In the past, I have felt valued and important to others.
It is important to me that I fit in at college.
At college, I want to be a part of things going on around me
At college, it is important to me that my thoughts and opinions are valued.
Generally, in college, other people recognize my strengths and good points.
I make myself fit in at college
In college, I do not feel like getting involved with people
What I offer is valued by others at my college (students and faculty).
I am just not sure if I fit in with peers at college
At my college, I would describe myself as a misfit in most situations
I generally feel that people accept me at my college
At college, I feel like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle that doesn’t fit into the puzzle.
I would like to make a difference to people or things around me, but I don’t feel that
what I have to offer is valued at my college.
In college, I feel like an outsider in most situations
I am uncomfortable that my background and experiences are so different from
those who are usually around me at my college.
I feel left out of things at my college
I am not valued by or important my college

**Respond with:** Not at all, Somewhat, A Great Deal
Overall, to what extent do you feel like you belong at your college?

D. **Self-Efficacy**: Adapted from College Self-Efficacy Inventory (Solberg, V. S., O'Brien, K., Villareal, P., Kennel, R., & Davis, B, 1993).

All statements concern your confidence in various aspects of college. Statements were adapted to best fit research questions, theoretical frameworks, and population of the study.
The following 20 items concern your confidence in various aspects of college. Using the scale below, please indicate how confident you are as a student that you could successfully complete the following tasks. If you are extremely confident, mark at 10. If you are not at all confident, mark a 1. If you are more or less confident, find the number between 10 and 1 that best describes you. Item responses are aggregated across all student respondents in order to better understand how confident the “average” student feels. Levels of confidence vary from person to person, and there are no right or wrong answers; just answer honestly (Barry & Finny, 2009).

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<td>Not at all confident</td>
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<td>2. Talk to university staff (faculty and administration)</td>
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<td>3. Manage time effectively</td>
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<td>4. Ask a question in class</td>
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<td>5. Participate in class discussions</td>
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<td>6. Research a term paper</td>
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<td>7. Work on a group project for class</td>
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<td>8. Join a student organization/club</td>
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<td>9. Talk to my professors outside of class</td>
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<td>10. Take good class notes</td>
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<td>11. Ask a professor a question in class</td>
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<td>12. Seek our resources (tutor, writing center) for support</td>
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<td>13. Socialize with others on campus</td>
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<td>14. Keep up to date with schoolwork</td>
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<td>15. Talk to and befriend a peer of a different race</td>
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<td>16. Plan an event/activity with others on campus</td>
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<td>17. Ask a person, who I did not already know, to hang out.</td>
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<td>18. Understand my course readings</td>
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<td>19. Overcome challenges I am confronted with as a result of racism in a positive and effective way</td>
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<td>20. Graduate from College in 4 year</td>
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Shortened UCLA Loneliness scale: 8 items (Hays & DiMatteo, 1987)

I will analyze how these responses align with the other variables of adjustment measured in this study.

Instructions: The following statements describe how people sometimes feel. For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way described by writing a number in the space provided. Here is an example: I lack companionship
If you never lack companionship, you would respond “never”, if you always lack companionship, you would respond, “always”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

1. I lack companionship
2. There is no one I can turn to
3. I am an outgoing person
4. I feel left out
5. I feel isolated from others
6. I can find companionship when I want it
7. I am unhappy being so withdrawn
8. People are around me but not with me.
Appendix B
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol: Focused on gaining a more nuanced understanding of the student’s academic adjustment, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and perception of high school influence on college adjustment. Depending on how students answer I may not ask every question. I will prioritize the questions based on survey responses.

1. Overall:
   a. How is college for you?
   b. Is college what you expected?
   c. Can you share some highs and lows of your experience thus far?
      1. Why did you pick those examples?
   d. What stands out to you as the biggest adjustment you have made from your high school to college experience?

2. Academic Adjustment
   a. What does success in college/university mean to you?
   b. How are you academically performing in your college classes?
   c. How did CRPHS prepare you for your classes in college?
   d. What helped prepare you for these classes?
   e. What could have helped you be more prepared?
   f. Do you feel others are more prepared than you are? Why or why not?
   g. What do you find easy/difficult to academically? Why?

3. Sense of Belonging
   a. How is your social life at school?
   b. Do you feel comfortable, are you able to be yourself on campus?
   c. What is the social scene life on your campus? Does it match with your values/your identity?
      1. I can probe about questions on race/income
   d. How is your social life in college similar or different than your high school experience?

4. Self-Efficacy:
   a. Are you involved in extra-curricular activities on campus? (i.e., activities, clubs, meetings) Why did get involved or not get involved?
   b. Have you had to overcome any obstacles during your time in college thus far? Describe this experience.
   c. How do you feel about your capabilities as a student on this campus: this could be socially, academically, etc. Why do you feel this way?
   d. How did you feel about your capabilities as a student during high school? Why?

5. Overall, was adjustment to college easy or difficult or was it something you even thought about before I brought it up?

6. Anything else you would like to share about your college experience thus far?
Appendix C
Consent Forms

CONSENT TO SURVEY PARTICIPATION
College Adjustment: Dissertation Study
Flannery O’Connor and Penn GSE
foconnor@crphs.org

Research Study:
You are invited to participate in this study because you are a Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduate who is currently in their first or second year of college.

Purpose of the study:
As part of my dissertation for University of Pennsylvania doctoral program in educational leadership, I am conducting research into Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates’ (Class of 2016 and 2017) experiences in their first year in college. I want to hear their perspective on their adjustment to college, specifically in the areas of academic performance and self-concept, sense of belonging and self-efficacy. I then will investigate whether there are any links to a student’s high school experience and their adjustment to college.

What will you be asked to do?
Your participation in this research would be completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without fear of consequences. As a participant, your involvement would consist of completing a survey about your college adjustment experience. The survey will also ask for responses to the following categories: demographic information, high school experiences, and college adjustment. Starting and submitting the survey exhibits your consent to participate in this research.

Confidentiality
Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study to keep student names confidential. Only the researcher will read the survey responses. Neither your name nor other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. All information collected during the course of this study will be kept in secure places and remain confidential. The research material may be kept for further use in future follow-up studies. There are no known risks to participate in this study. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants like you. The IRB has access to study information. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact IRB Office at (215) 573-2540, or email at: irb@upenn.edu.

Who will benefit from the study?
Students who participate in the survey will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win one of five $30 gift certificates to Starbucks, Target, and/or Amazon. Other than this, students will have no direct benefit from participating in this study, however, your participation will help Cristo Rey Philadelphia and potentially many other schools gain a better understanding of a student’s college adjustment experience and any links this adjustment has to their high school experience.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I had, and I have received answers to my satisfaction. By starting and submitting my survey responses, I consent to participate in the study.
Research Study:
You are invited to participate in this study because you are a Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduate who is currently in their first or second year of college.

Purpose of the study:
As part of my class work in a University of Pennsylvania doctoral program in educational leadership, I am conducting research into Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School graduates’ (Class of 2016 and 2017) experiences in their first year in college. I want to hear their perspective on their adjustment to college, specifically in the areas of academic performance and self-concept, sense of belonging and self-efficacy. I then will investigate whether there are any links to a student’s high school experience and their adjustment to college.

What will you be asked to do?
Your participation in this research would be completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without fear of consequences. As a participant, your involvement would consist of participating in a 45-minute interview. The interview would be audio taped by the researcher, Flannery O’Connor, and then transcribed by a transcription service. Interviews will be conducted at your college/university or by videoconference.

Confidentiality
Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study to keep student names confidential. Your name will not be associated with the audio recording or transcript. Only the researcher will be able to listen to the recording. The tapes will be used to provide data for the research study. Transcripts of the interviews may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from the study. Neither your name nor other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. All information collected during the course of this study will be kept in secure places and remain confidential. The research material may be kept for further use in future follow-up studies. There are no known risks to participate in this study. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants like you. The IRB has access to study information. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact IRB Office at (215) 573-2540, or email at: irb@upenn.edu.
Who will benefit from the study?
You will have no direct benefit from participating in this study, however, your participation will help Cristo Rey Philadelphia and potentially many other schools gain a better understanding of a student’s college adjustment experience and any links this adjustment has to their high school experience.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I had, and I have received answers to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I have received a copy of the consent form.

Signature of Participant: ___________________________ Date: ___________

Name of Participant (please print):
________________________________________________

Signature of Researcher: ___________________________ Date: ___________
## Appendix D

### Final Code Set for Interviews

<table>
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<th>Deductive Codes</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Definitions</th>
<th>Inductive Codes</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Definition: descriptions of:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academics in College</strong></td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Descriptions of academic performance (grades) and academic self-concept (attitudes towards course work, engagement with material, and adequacy of studying and academic efforts).</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>CAPrep</td>
<td>How students felt prepared (positive and negative) for college academics</td>
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<td>CACS</td>
<td>student Adjustment to class content, rigor, format</td>
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<td>CAGPA</td>
<td>student's GPA in reference to academic adjustment to college</td>
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<td>CAPro</td>
<td>Adjustment to professor teaching/communication style</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>CATM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>student Adjustment to a new class schedule as compared to high school. Focusing on Time Management.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High School Academic Impact</strong></td>
<td>HSAP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HS academic classes impact on adjustment to college experience (positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School Academic Impact</strong></td>
<td>HSAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HS academic classes impact on adjustment to college experience (negative)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Belonging in College</strong></td>
<td>SOB</td>
<td>Description of the psychological sense that one is an accepted member of one's community; distinct from one's level of involvement with the community.</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>CSOBR</td>
<td>Sense of belonging in college in reference to race (positive or negative)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CSOBI</td>
<td>Sense of belonging in college in reference to SES</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CSOBO</td>
<td>Influence of SOB due to organizations students joined</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Life</td>
<td>CSOBSL</td>
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<td>Sense of belonging in college in a social sense.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community HSCO</td>
<td>HS community impact on adjustment to college experience</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSTR</td>
<td>HS teacher relationships impact on adjustment to college experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSCC</td>
<td>HS College counseling impact on adjustment to college experience (Classes, ACT prep, people)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HWSJ/R</td>
<td>HS work study job/relationships impact on college adjustment experience</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Efficacy in College</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Descriptions of the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments. The effort one will expend on a task or how long they will persist despite obstacles or tough experiences.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSEOC</td>
<td>students actively joining clubs/organizations</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loneliness in College</th>
<th>Lone</th>
<th>Descriptions of feeling of social isolation due to lack of quality relationships.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>feelings of loneliness on college campus due to lack of friend group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLH</td>
<td>feelings of loneliness on college campus due to homesickness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The code below links with all four deductive codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other College Adjustment Factors</th>
<th>Family CAFFA</th>
<th>Family impact on adjustment to college</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Other College Adjustment Factors could be positive or negative. Either way this code displays something that...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>impacted the students' college adjustment</th>
<th>Mentors</th>
<th>CAFM</th>
<th>mentors impact on adjustment to college</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing: commute/residential</td>
<td>CAFHC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Status impacting adjustment to college (commuter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAFHR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Status impacting adjustment to college (on campus)</td>
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</table>
References


late in college: A comprehensive meta-analysis. In annual meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, Seattle, WA.


American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.


Tinto, V. (2001). Rethinking the first year of college. *Higher Education Monograph Series, Syracuse University*.


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