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COVID Brokers: The Pandemic Experiences of Second-Generation Immigrant College Students

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Trinity College
Educational Studies Senior Thesis

**COVID Brokers: The Pandemic Experiences of Second-Generation Immigrant
College Students**

by

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Class of 2022

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Abstract

The Covid pandemic affected students at a disproportionate rate. Children of immigrants frequently help their parents navigate barriers such as linguistic and cultural barriers. Often the main stressors of children of immigrants who are attending college are related to navigating college resources and mediating multiple responsibilities making staying in school more challenging. This study was conducted at Trinity College, a predominately white institution, with the goal of investigating how the pandemic affected the academic, psychological, and financial well-being of children of immigrants attending PWIs. This research was based on nine semi-structured, qualitative interviews with second-generation immigrant students attending the following PWIs in Connecticut: Trinity College and Connecticut College. Interviews focused on the academic, psychological, and financial experiences of students during the pandemic as well as their sense of support with their institutions' resources and policies. The study suggests that second-gen college students were already taking many roles and responsibilities for their families prior to the pandemic. However, my sample points that new roles were added in terms of navigating the pandemic effects for their parents such as their job loss and allocating resources in addition to navigating being a student at the same time. This research suggests that academic and financial challenges both impacted students' psychological well-being, as well as new roles/responsibilities were acquired.

The Pandemic Experiences of Second-Generation Immigrant College Students

This study focuses on discussing the experiences of children of immigrants attending PWIs during the pandemic in order to find out how the pandemic affected the psychological, academic, and financial well-being of children of immigrants. Attending a PWI college is known to have its own set of challenges and impact on a student's own sense of belonging in various spaces. When colleges switched to online learning, students had to adjust to learning from home. Immigrant families had to navigate the pandemic after some lost their jobs and sustain their families with the limited resources available to them. Children of immigrants often take on different roles in their households and with the lockdown, students were learning from home and also were facing not only the psychological impact of the pandemic but also the financial impacts.

There are many studies on the experiences of students who are children of immigrants and ways they are navigating college. Accessing a higher education and finishing a degree often allows children of immigrants to attain better economic and social mobility for themselves and their families. But what happens when you try to attend college and also overcome the various challenges a pandemic can have on your community? Being a student of color and a child of immigrants at a PWI, has an impact on your sense of belonging in spaces that go beyond the classroom. When the pandemic hit, students adjusted to online learning and the challenges that come with learning from home. For example, some students had limited access to spaces to work and learn in and responsibilities at home beside academic work. The pandemic affected the immigrant community to a great extent and it's important to take that into consideration when looking to understand the psychological, academic, and financial well-being of children of immigrants at PWIs. Colleges also developed new academic policies and made resources available for students during the pandemic.

In order to address my question, I interviewed nine students who are children of immigrants and attend PWIs to learn more about individuals' experience of attending college during the pandemic. The reason I focused on students at different PWIs and not just Trinity is to analyze the types of resources different schools might have offered students during the pandemic. What policies might have been different at other schools regarding academics and financial help for students. How did those policies impact student's experiences? What responsibilities did students prioritize? What resources were available to them via their communities or colleges? Overall, highlight the different set of experiences children of immigrants are having while attending PWIs during the pandemic.

Significance

Often the main stressors of children of immigrants who are attending college are related to navigating the college resources and mediating multiple responsibilities making staying in school more challenging. Children of immigrants frequently help their parents navigate barriers such as linguistic and cultural barriers. If there's a family emergency or financial situation that interferes with being able to concentrate in class and finishing assignments. These are all known factors that often affect a student's academic and psychological well-being while in college. With the rise of new challenges that pandemic has brought many immigrant families, the stressors of children of immigrants who are attending college have also increased. Students have to navigate the world of Covid with their parents and what their academic and financial responsibility might look like during a pandemic. Overall, this research study is significant because it helps understand the effect of the pandemic on children of immigrants as well as what PWI policies ,and practices were implemented in aiding students through the online learning transition.

Literature Review

Currently, there have not been many studies conducted that examine second generation immigrant college student experiences during the pandemic and the impact it had on their academic and mental well-being. In order to understand how their position as children of immigrants might have impacted what stressors might have been enhanced; it's helpful to first understand this generation's experience with higher education prior to the pandemic. Much of the literature describes the various roles children of immigrants play in helping their parents navigate the United States. This study will focus on 2nd second generation immigrant college student experiences and how the pandemic affected their psychological, academic, and financial well-being and what stressors might have been emphasized or developed.

Table 1: Immigrant Generations

1st Generation Immigrant	Individuals who were born in one country and immigrated to another as adults
1.5 Generation Immigrant	Individuals who immigrated to a new country as young children
2nd Generation Immigrant	Children of 1st generation immigrants, born in a new country
3rd and Higher Generation	Individuals who have two native born parents

Defining 2nd Generation Immigrant Population

Second generation immigrants (SGI) refer to individuals who are children of 1st generation immigrants and were born in the new country their parents immigrated to (Census

2021). It is known that immigrants are the fastest growing communities in the United States contributing to U.S culture and the economy. A growing body of literature suggests that children of immigrants often help their parents navigate different barriers in the US. society such as language, culture, and resources. The term broker has been used by some scholars to describe ways children of immigrants help maneuver linguistic and cultural gaps between different institutions and their parents(Jones & Trickett 2007). Studies have noted the impact of brokering on children's well-being and relationships with their parents. While some literature suggest that it can be a demanding task for many second generation immigrants, other research argues that brokering can help children gain independence, giving them a sense of pride to be able to help their parents with various tasks from translating documents to allocating resources. (Delgado 2020)

Children of Immigrants and Higher Education

Many immigrant parents came to America chasing the “American Dream” in hopes their children's access to education would give them socio and economic mobility. For many immigrants, education is seen as the “great equalizer” that will grant their children a better future. Many children of immigrants are also first generation college students and have to learn to navigate the college process on their own. Studies have noted that immigrant parents instead of providing ‘traditional’ college parental involvement, they will often provide their moral and financial support to the continuation of their children's education. (Auerbach 2006). SGI students often are aware of their parent's sacrifices and are used to taking the lead in managing their own school decisions, since they are so accustomed to serving as cultural brokers for their parents (Silver et al 2020). Students seem to view it as another added responsibility because of their parents' limited knowledge on the American school system.

Many SGI college students feel pressured to succeed academically because of their parents' many sacrifices. Since many parents cannot be educational role models, they often use their experiences to warn their children to do better and promote a strong work ethic with the idea that if you work hard it will pay off (Auerbach 2006). In a study with SGI students discussing student family responsibilities, the following three themes emerged: students emphasized the importance of developing self-sufficiency to support the family, the voluntary nature of their financial contributions, and their role as a surrogate parent for their younger family members (Sy & Romero 2008). Participants noted the transition to college came with these added responsibilities and expectation to continue supporting their family, in addition to navigating their academics and the challenges that came with being first generation (Sy & Romero 2008). Moreover, students also mentioned the stress that came with these family expectations/responsibilities and their parent's lack of understanding of what it required to be successful in college (Sy & Romero 2008).

The Pandemic and College Students

The COVID pandemic introduced a complex worldwide stressor, affecting different communities and groups of individuals at a disproportionate rate. Researchers have noted the negative impacts of the pandemic on college students with the disruption it has caused in their daily lives. Recently, there's been growing literature of studies that have been done examining students distress during the pandemic and the challenges they have encountered as they adapt to online instruction. Krista Soria et al (2020) examined first generation students' experiences during the pandemic and found that FGCS were more likely than continuing-generations students to experience financial hardships. They argue that compared to their continuing-generation students, first generation students are more likely to encounter obstacles such as lack

of necessary technology, lack of adequate space to study, and not being able to meet during scheduled virtual class times (Soria et al 2020). The study used the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium census survey of 28,198 undergraduate students conducted May through July 2020 at nine universities, in which 26% students identified as first generation and 57 % identified as low-income. The results of the study suggest that first-gen students were more likely to report experiencing financial hardships, food and housing insecurity, mental health disorders, and obstacles to transition to online learning. The survey showed that 14.7% of first generation students were taking care of children and 18.6% were taking care of adults. (Soria et al 2020).

With online instruction being the new normal students seem to have had trouble engaging and staying focused at home. Some students did not have the adequate space to do their work and experienced an increase of stress related to academic performance. Xiaomei Wang et Al (2020) analyze the mental health of US college students through conducting a survey among undergraduate and graduate students recruited from Texas A&M University. Results showed the biggest contributor was stress related to academics, with the increased concerns of navigating online classes and graduating one time. The study noted that other stress contributes were the following: academic stress(39.12%), general uncertainty regarding the pandemic (34.78%), personal and family/friends health concerns (34.71%), financial instability/ unemployment (20.51%), living/work environment(20.29%), and impact on social life (18.53%) (Xiaomei Wang et al 2020). However, the study also found that there was a decrease in stress since students experienced the following: did not have to commute to school, some experienced reduced schoolwork, and relieved from the pressure of engaging in extracurricular/organizational activities which took a large part of their time in their on-campus life. Moreover, other studies

have found there was an increase in depression and anxiety among college students during the pandemic. Martha Zimmermann et al (2020) notes that there was an increase in psychological distress among students, particularly due to the high degree of uncertainty, disruption of daily life and economic stressor of the pandemic. The pandemic affected students disproportionately who had an unstable family income, housing insecurity, and depended on their on-campus jobs (Zimmermann et al 2020).

When it comes to analyzing factors like academic performance remote learning experiences, expectations about future employment, graduation decision, and study and social habits in order to give insights on how the COVID outbreak had an impact on higher education, Esteban Auceje et al (2020) conducts a quantitative study where he collects data from undergraduate students' outcome and expectations after the onset of the pandemic. The authors' findings noted that due to COVID 13% of students have delayed graduation, 40% have lost a job, internship, and job offer, and 29% expected to earn less at age 35 (Auceje et al 2020). Findings also showed how lower-income students are 55% more likely to have delayed graduation due to COVID than their higher-income counterparts (Auceje et al 2020).

COVID and Immigrant Communities

It is important to note how the pandemic had a large impact on the immigrant community. One of the many ways US immigrants contribute to the US economy is by paying federal, state, and local taxes using their Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). With the pandemic affecting many citizens and causing the closure of many businesses, unemployment affected many communities. Many COVID relief funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, helped many individuals who lost their jobs. However, ITIN holders did not qualify or "families with mixed immigration status who file jointly, such as

undocumented adults with children or spouses who are US citizens, were also excluded because all individuals included in a tax return must have valid Social Security numbers to be eligible” (Clark et al 2020). Therefore, many immigrants did not receive any COVID-19 related economic relief from the US government. Additionally, Immigrant communities were also at risk for COVID exposure because of their economic situation and legal status, they worked types of jobs like factory jobs that require face to face interactions and not much social distancing (Clark et al 2020).

Methodology

In this study, qualitative data was collected and analyzed to research the following question: How did the pandemic affect the psychological, academic, and financial well-being of children of immigrants attending PWIs and what stressors might have been emphasized or developed during Covid. The main source of data is nine one-one virtual interviews with students who are currently attending PWIs and identify as children of immigrants. The participants in this study attended either Trinity College and Connecticut college and were all asked a series of questions on their experience as students taking classes during the pandemic.

Data Collection

The sample of Trinity College and Connecticut College students was selected through personal networks. I first recruited and interviewed students I knew fit my research criteria. Afterwards, I used the snowball sampling method, asking participants to connect me with other students that met my sample criteria. The snowball sample method facilitated and furthered my search because many of participants had personal contact that fit my research criteria. I also used a flyer which I emailed to Connecticut College contacts and research departments to extend my outreach on that campus. It was also given to interview participants so they could send it to their

own contact to spread awareness of my study. IRB approval was required for these interviews and written consent forms were distributed to participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of all participants. The consent form is included as Appendix A and the flyer as Appendix B.

The interviews were 30 minutes to 1 hour long and the goal of my interview protocol was to have questions that guided students to talk about their experiences of taking classes online and the impact of that online shift. The interviews were conducted over Zoom and all participants were compensated with a \$10 Amazon e-gift card for their time and cooperation. Prior to the interview I emailed the consent form to all my participants to read and sign. At the start of every interview, I asked participants for permission to screen record and read the consent form again to make sure participants knew about my study's procedures, benefits, risks, and made sure to emphasize on voluntary participation. The interview guide first started with introductory questions about the participants and their college experience of attending a PWI. Then it moved on to questions regarding the student's psychological, financial, and academic experience during the pandemic. Qualitative interviews were the best approach for this study since it allowed students to express their experience of what it was to be a student taking classes from home as well as the stressor they faced as children of immigrants. The interviews helped in identifying main themes in the study's findings. The interview guide is included as Appendix C.

Sample

The sample size was nine college students attending either Trinity College or Connecticut College. The participants were all selected based on if they were children of immigrants and were attending a PWI college during the pandemic. Seven participants attended Trinity College and two participants attended Connecticut College. Six participants were seniors, one was a

junior and two were sophomores. All my participants in the student sample were students of color who identified as lower-income and first generation college students, a vast majority Latinx. My characteristics of students' as low-income was based on parents' income and how all participants receive financial aid at Trinity College through different scholarships. Furthermore, the occupation of participants' parents included factory workers, construction workers, and hotel workers.

Table 2: Description of Sample

Name	Year	Covid Semester Home/On-Campus	College
Javier	Sophomore	Home	Trinity College
Sofia	Senior	Home*	Trinity College
Eric	Senior	On Campus	Trinity College
Ida	Senior	On Campus-Home	Trinity College
Nadia	Sophomore	Home	Connecticut College
Stephanie	Senior	Home	Trinity College
Shyla	Senior	Home*	Connecticut College
Bria	Junior	Home	Trinity College
Charlie	Senior	Home	Trinity College

Key: *	Students who had to relocate to a family member's or friend's house for an academic semester.
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Data Analysis

The nine interviews were all transcribed after the interviews were conducted via Zoom. I printed and reread the transcripts multiple times before starting to analyze my data. The couple

first readings of each of my transcripts was to just do a close reading to get a sense of what it contained. Additionally I wrote some of the key ideas each interviewee seemed to focus on on a separate sheet of paper. In order to analyze the qualitative data, I applied a manual coding process.

Coding was the most effective method of analysis for this study since it allowed me to organize data by identifying themes across the interviews. As I coded each individual interview transcript, I looked for themes relating to academic stress, financial challenges, and any additional limitations students mentioned impacted their experiences as they navigated a Covid semester. I used different highlighter colors to separate each theme and noted commonalities in the margins. That way when I went back to each transcript, I could see what themes seemed to be shared experiences across my interviewees. I ended with 14 essential themes shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3:

Themes/Code Identified

Theme/Code	Description
LPS	Limited Physical Space
TWI	Technology/ Wifi Issues
FLI	Financial Limitations and Insecurity
FDR	Family Duty and Responsibilities
DNR	Difficulty Navigating Resources
NRP	New Roles in Pandemic
LES	Limited Emotional Space
LAM	Lack of Academic Motivation
EJL	Experienced Job Loss

EAR	Experience with Academic Resources
ACH	Anxiety surrounding Covid and Health
CPP	Covid College Policies and Practices
RAS	Relocation for Academic Success
MES	Mental and Emotional Stress

After manually coding all my transcripts, I worked with the 14 codes found and in order to truly explore my research question I divided themes under the following three categories: academic, psychological, and financial.

Limitations

In this research study, there are a few limitations worth mentioning. Since my interviews were on Zoom, there could have been a barrier of how comfortable each interviewee might have felt since the interviews were not in person. Zoom interviews were the best approach considering Covid anxiety on college campuses and also taking into account I also interviewed students from another campus. My interview guide allowed for the interview to be directed as a conversation. Since interviews were semi-structured and allowed the student to focus on what they found more interesting and relevant to their experience. This could have enabled the student to have left out information they might have regarded as important. These methodological choices could have resulted in limitations. Additionally, my sample size was very small consequently it may not be representative of all the types experiences of second generation immigrants college students experienced during the pandemic. It is also important to note that initially this study aimed to recruit more students from other PWI in Connecticut such as Connecticut college but my outreach and contacts were limited. Therefore, my sample was very small to make varied implications about other institutions and their policies.

My positionality as a researcher is also worth mentioning. Being a child of immigrants, a student of color attending Trinity College, there exists space for potential biases. My position might have affected student responses depending on what participants shared and chose not to share. However, it could also be argued it might have aided students' sense of comfortability and choice to open up about their experiences that they might have not shared.

Ethical Components

In order to conduct interviews with students, IRB approval was required for this study so it was applied for and accepted. After my study application was IRB approved, I distributed written consent forms to each of my participants, which they read, signed, and emailed back to be eligible to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all the participants. The recordings, data, or findings cannot be traced back to individual students. After the interviews were completed, recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed, the transcripts and interview recording were all destroyed.

Findings

Student Key

Trinity College	Connecticut College
Javier, Sofia, Eric, Ida, Stepahanie, Bria, Charlie	Nadia, Shyla

After doing some thematic coding of my interviews, I was able to identify some major themes that my participants identified. Some of these themes include the following: lack of physical/emotional space, financial instability, and dynamic family structures in terms of roles. I divided the themes I found into the three following sections: academic, psychological, and financial. Each section points out different challenges students had to navigate when the pandemic first started in the Spring of 2020.

Academic

Limited Physical and Emotional Space

Students experienced having limited physical space to do their work and participate in their classes. Eight out of nine participants noted in their interviews that both emotional and physical space was limited when working from home. Emotional space meaning, time to fully concentrate in their academics without being interrupted to help with other responsibilities. Participants were asked the following question(s): *Describe your experience of taking online classes from home? What do you think was the biggest challenge of this transition?* All students mentioned having some type of physical space limitations ranging from no adequate space to some space to do their work and attend zoom classes. One student, Sofia, mentioned how she had a big family and did not have the adapted space to attend class. She stated, “taking classes from home was extremely difficult because there was noise all the time. You can't go to a library, you can't go to a café....So I felt like sometimes I couldn't participate in classes because I was afraid of the background noise or like the talking behind me that I literally just couldn't avoid. So I spent some time with another family member during the spring semester of 2020, and that helped a bit. But like, it goes to show that I literally had to go somewhere else to do classes instead of just being in my home.” Since all participants were out of state college students, they noted that taking classes from home felt overwhelming. The main reason being how they were used to having access to different spaces to work in at their colleges but when they went home, space was limited or often not available. Sofia mentioned how she often had to take classes from her living room and the noise level constrained her class participation and she also had other family responsibilities that took away from her school work. She was also one of two students who were faced with the decision to relocate for the Spring semester of 2020 in order to finish

the semester and have a more appropriate academic environment. Another student Bria mentioned how as a first generation college student(FGCS) her parents did not understand her needs as a college student for emotional space and an adequate environment to do work. She stated “they don't understand, like how much time you have to put into work and they just expect it to be done at a certain time. I'm just saying it doesn't work that way. I wish it did.” All nine participants were FGCS, six out of nine students mentioned that same sentiment of their parents not understanding the academic demands of college. Attaining that emotional/physical space was challenging at times and it came with students feeling overwhelmed/guilty for asking for it.

Additionally, two students in this study had to make the hard choice of staying on campus, noting that their home environments were not suitable to continue their academic semester. Both Trinity College students, Ida and Eric stayed on campus for the semester of Spring 2020. Ida, the Trinity student that stayed on campus for the majority of the semester and then went home for half of the summer term, mentioned that it was helpful to stay on campus and the students that stayed to build their own supportive system to keep each other accountable academically. She noted, “We did make it work for ourselves. We had our little community and it was home, we had study groups and if we knew that we were all working on finals together, we'd actually meet up to just do work”. However, both Ida and Eric mentioned that it was difficult and isolating to experience the pandemic without their families. It's important to mention that students noted that in order to stay on campus they had to convince their institutions that their need was high and at times it was exhausting to have to advocate for themselves/retell their personal situations to stay.

Academic Motivation: Priority?

Students felt limited by online classes and the routine of looking at a screen for hours was exhausting. Nadia, a Connecticut College student, stated how she felt confined to her bedroom in an endless cycle of waking up, attending class, and doing homework. Nine out of nine students described that it was challenging to stay engaged in their online class with the constant distraction in the different environments they were in. Both Shyla, Charlie, Stephanie and Sophia stated that it was hard to place their academics as a priority when there were more pressing matters at home such as helping their parents and younger siblings. When students were asked: *Tell me about how you balanced a day in the life of a student learning from home?* Participants mentioned they either had a set routine while at home or a lack of routine which was mainly caused by complicated family dynamics and responsibilities. Sofia stated, "I just didn't have a balanced day. Routine, I think that's the biggest thing that affected me because when I had in-person classes, it was like a routine. I physically had to go to class and had just that time to be mentally present." She went on to further elaborate how her work life, student life, and home life were now all in one physical space which made it challenging to prioritize or establish boundaries. All students mentioned how online class, to some extent academically burnt them out from the amount of hours of being on their computers a day. Some emphasized that it was challenging to be the student they usually would be in in-person classes when their school and home life environment merged.

Academic Resources/College Policies

When students were asked, *Were there any academic policies implemented to help students during the pandemic semester at your college? If so, did you feel these changes supported students in feeling less stressed?* Eight out of nine students mentioned that their

institutions were helpful during the online transition in terms of providing resources and making academic policy revisions. Specifically, for Trinity College, two statements were sent one on March 26, 2020 on academic measures noting the following: students had the option to switch some or all of their courses to Pass/Fail only for the Spring 2020 and a “P” would fulfill general education requirement and minor/major requirement. The second policy was sent in August 2020 which stated the implementation of a 10 and 13 week course for the following semester, with the option for students to take at least 4 credits over the fall and J-terms combined semester.

Similarly, academic policy changes that allowed students to take courses for free during J-term and summer were made by Connecticut College. Six out of nine students stated that these changes were helpful in not falling behind in classes and major completion. Additionally both students Charlie and Sophia noted that it was helpful having the option to take two classes in the fall and then two in J-Term because then they could focus on helping their parents with unemployment forms and deal with other home responsibilities. Two out of nine students mentioned that they did not find the 10 week and 13 weeks course structure that helpful, stating that it felt rushed with breaks and too much content in a short amount of time which did not lessen their academic stress. In terms of academic resources, students expressed that resources such as the Writing Center were not the same online, so they ended up not using it. Seven out of nine students mentioned that their professors were understanding, offered helpful office hours, and gave reasonable extensions for assignments. Shyla and Bria mentioned that although office hours were held up they could not go as much as they wanted because of their own home environments. Two other students however stated that although there was a sense of understanding from the professor, they felt like some of their courses were not adjusted enough to fit the unique circumstances. Both Shyla and Sophia mentioned the work was demanding in

terms of working with other students and finding times that worked, with the added factors of students being in different time zones.

Wifi Issues/Technology

Three out of the seven students who took online classes from home experienced wifi and technology challenges. Connecticut College student, Shyla also had to relocate to her aunt's house and then her friend's house in order to have access to wifi to do her academic work. Shyla stated, "We didn't have Wi-Fi, so I had to basically couch surf from place to place, from my aunt's house to my friend's house. And then on the weekends, I would go see my family. I would do homework at my friend's house, at my dad's house. And honestly, it took up a lot of my time, a lot of energy, and I was mentally drained." Students mention having access to wifi was challenging to navigate, often they had to go to their relatives house to have access to an internet connection since many public cafes were closed because of the pandemic lockdown. Another student Bria stated how when she had to go back home when the pandemic first hit, her main concern with online instruction was her lack of access to wifi. She stated, "I was panicking because I didn't know how I was going to do my work. Online, because I didn't have Wi-Fi at home and I only had a hotspot and sometimes my hotspot where I lived didn't really work. Switching to online, fortunately, I found a way. I just ended up using a hotspot and dealt with it...Sometimes I would go to my cousin's house because they had Wi-Fi. Sometimes it would crash, so it was not that reliable. But yeah, wifi was my main concern." She mentioned how it was difficult to attend class with her phone hotspot as the main source of wifi since some of her classes did not cut down time, classes would still be 1:45-3 hours. Sofia also faced technology issues, after her computer stopped working. Fortunately she was able to apply to the emergency student fund Trinity College offered to get a new one. Moreover, she emphasized, "It wasn't easy

to get the laptop like I've been trying to get it for a while now and even throughout my summer class, I did not have a laptop. I was working from a really old desktop or my phone, and I would email them about it and I wouldn't really get a response sometimes. And so my advisers had to advocate for me, but it took them, much like it wasn't easy to get, and even then it did take a while." Sofia elaborated how it was not easy to get the laptop until the summer of 2020 after her Professor was aware of her lack of technology and how it was limiting her.

Psychological

New Family Roles/Responsibilities

Previous literature has noted that children of immigrants are culture and society brokers for their parents (Delgado 2020). Students were asked the following questions: *Did you find yourself taking new roles or family responsibilities during the pandemic ? (helping your parents translate, sibling care, etc)*. Students' responses suggested that in addition to the role they already had within their family structures, new roles were developed with the pandemic. Javier shared his experience of having to take on the parental role for his siblings as they too navigated e-learning. He mentioned how his parents were not technology inclined and were always working, so as the older sibling he took on the role of navigating school with them. Javier stated, "I also had to take on the role of a parent. Both my parents were working and then I was the oldest in the house so I felt I had to step up. I also remember I would wake up earlier than my siblings. I would have to go to the room to, like, wake them up and tell them to wake up, brush their teeth and get the laptop ready because school is going to start in 10 minutes. So I feel like I also took on a parental role during the pandemic." Six out of nine of the participants were the older sibling or were assigned the role of a caregiver at some point during the pandemic. Ida

mentioned that when she returned home, she lived with her sister and would often help care for her niece. She would often have to watch the baby even during her zoom classes.

Charlie shared his experience of helping his parents navigate unemployment insurance and applying for grants and loans for his family small business that was affected during the pandemic. He stated, “I was an advocate and helped apply for all of that[unemployment/ grant forms] for my parents and my family, my uncles and aunts and also for my brother. I was also a tutor, so I would help them out there. Occasionally, my little cousin would come by because he needed Wi-Fi in our house. And so we would so he would zoom in our house with the class. I would also help him with his English homework”. Additionally, Charlie mentioned that he had to figure out how to apply for loans, email insurances, and be the “main point person” for employers to call for job offers for his parents. He added that it was helpful that he was only taking two courses at the time, since he had to first figure out how to navigate resources for his parents and then shared the knowledge with his parents. New roles were found for many children of immigrants as the pandemic individually affected their families. From having to play the teacher/parents role for their siblings to learning how to navigate employment insurance, this study shows that SGI were in a way COVID brokers for their parents helping them navigate the new unknown. Trinity student Sofia concluded, “Before the pandemic, I always took the responsibility of translating things. Explaining things to my parents like forms and stuff, but I felt like during the pandemic it was heightened and definitely even at school, I would still get calls asking for help. And it's the same amount. And it's a different amount of responsibility, but it's still a lot of responsibility, especially if you're at school”.

Anxiety Surrounding Parent’s health

Students stated that they felt anxious surrounding the pandemic, especially with the risk their parents were taking within their jobs. three out of nine students stated that the job demand in their parents jobs actually increased or wasn't affected by the pandemic. Javier's mom worked at a Plexiglas factory so her job became essential with the increased demand for plastic wall covers in business because of the pandemic. Stephanie mentioned her dad worked in construction so he also was not affected as much with the amount of work. Although students noted there was more work they also emphasized that that meant their parents were more prone to be exposed to the virus. Students mentioned they felt anxious especially since many of them did not have health insurance due to their status.

Financial

Job Loss/Community Resources

Five out of nine students stated that the pandemic affected their family financially. Students were asked the question: *Did the pandemic have a financial impact on your family? If so, what type of resources were available to your family, if any?* Six participants out of nine in this study noted that the pandemic closed down business and job fields for their parents. For example, Sofia's mom was a hotel worker and she was unemployed for all the quarantine and had to apply for unemployment insurance while dealing with many health complications after contracting COVID. In Shyla's household her dad was the only provider and when his hours were cut they had to find solutions to bring in a stable income. Shyla explained, "his hours got cut short and so it was now up to my younger brother, who is now 19 and me to bring in that money that my dad was honestly not able to get. So, yeah, my little brother. He didn't finish high school, he decided not to finish high school, he decided to take that time to just work..we felt like it was our sense of responsibility as the older children and to in a way help out financially help

out.” Shyla mentioned she worked at Amazon and had a morning to night shift leaving little time to work and attend classes. She mentioned feeling mentally and physically exhausted, especially trying to provide for her family as well as do well in school. Both Eric and Stephanie shared that their on-campus job was the main way that they were able to support themselves. With the closure of campus, those jobs also were gone. Both students mentioned that it was also a way they send money to their families and now that money source was gone.

Participants' responses also included that they used the refund their colleges gave them as well as the CARES Act money to help their parents pay for rent or buy food. Three students stated that they went to church food pantries and food dispensaries for groceries since at the time their communities provided families with help. Many also relied on help from their extended family for financial help. As noted earlier in the paper, many immigrant communities did not qualify for government help that was given to all U.S. citizens, so community funds and resources were crucial for uplifting these specific communities.

Access to Resources

Participants were then asked questions like: *What types of resources did your college offer as financial aid during the pandemic? Emergency fund for students?* Participants mentioned that both institutions offered to pay for student flights and storage units since the campus closure was rushed and they were aware that many students could not afford it. Both Trinity and Connecticut College also offer students an Emergency Student Fund. Javier shared that at one point in the semester one of his engineering classes required a special software that he could not afford so he reached out to Trinity’ emergency fund. He described, “I needed some software from one of my classes to do homework on, and I couldn't really buy it, and I didn't want to ask my parents. My dad has the mentality that, ‘if you need it, we'll find a way to pay it’

and then figure it out after that. But I didn't really want to put that strain on them, so I asked the emergency funds if they could help me buy the software for my homework, and they ended up getting it for me.” All participants in the study identified themselves as FGSC and low-income, noting that funds like the emergency fund help them in not having to worry about academic expenses and so they were able to help their parents in that regard. In interviews, one quality that stood out from all my interviewees was how much they played the role of advocates for themselves and for their parents. When the pandemic first hit, SGI at least in my sample seemed to approach it like any past situation, looking for resources on their own and then advocating for their families.

It's also important to note that a couple students found navigating their colleges' emergency fund was a difficult, long process. Eric, one of the students who stayed on campus when the pandemic first hit described his experience of navigating the student emergency fund. Eric stated, “money is kind of just something that I have to work for and not something that I can get. Asking for those resources was kind of hard, even asking for the emergency fund to help me get home to see my mom who was hospitalized. I just went to [Trinity transition fellow] and I was like, Hey, this is happening, what should I do? And she was like, Oh, we could do this. And that's the only reason why I even got to go home. I was just like, I don't know how to react to this. I would like to go home, but I can't afford it. So please help me. And then that's how the emergency fund got involved.” Another student, Shopia, as expressed earlier in the paper, was having technology issues and applied to get a new laptop to be able to do her work. However, Sophia emphasized that it was a whole process of emailing, applying, and meetings to the point that she had to ask her professor to advocate for her. Eric mentioned that if it wasn't for the

transition fellow he would have not applied for the fund because of the long process and noted it would have been a long process for such an immediate emergency.

Conclusion

This research study explored the pandemic experiences of second generation immigrant (SGI) college students attending PWIs such as Trinity College and Connecticut College. Drawing from nine semi-structured interviews, the study identified some prominent themes that suggest the different academic, psychological, and financial impact of the pandemic on SGI college students and families. The commonalities found suggest that students of color in the lower income socio-economic status seem to have been impacted to a great extent financially. The research evidence suggests that families with mixed immigration statutes limited the amount of federal aid all U.S citizens were given throughout the pandemic and some families were considered not eligible for any federal aid. (Clark et al 2020). Federal financial aid was only given to individuals with valid social security numbers and in most cases that was not the case with students' parents. Participants mentioned feeling emotional stress over financial instability and anxiety with parents' job loss during the pandemic. Academically, students had to navigate school while also having to help their parents navigate the pandemic. This study also suggests that academic and financial challenges both impacted students' psychological well-being. As new roles and responsibilities were acquired, students noted that some academic policies their schools implemented helped lessen their academic load so they report feeling like they could concentrate on their family needs. Academics seem to be lowered as a priority for most students as their academic and home lives merged. Students noted that there was a lack of physical and emotional space when they were home to fully focus on school and grades. While research suggests responsibilities commonalities of SGI prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic,

SGI's unique position of being FGCS and in families with mixed states impacted the way they had to navigate the pandemic. Second generation immigrant students had to be COVID brokers for their parents, some teachers for the siblings, and students all at the same time.

Moving Forward

The findings section creates a pathway for future research as well as policy recommendations for institutions like Trinity College and Connecticut College to further look into revising. For example, future research can dig deeper into ways the pandemic affected second generation immigrant students' college retention rates and what policies did various PWI implement to aid students academically and financially. Some participants noted that they thought about taking a semester off or did take a semester off during a pandemic semester. This data was not included in the findings because a few students in my samples described this sentiment. However, it is worth noting since many students were navigating different barriers academically and financially which might have impacted their academic standing at their college. In the study, participants described the importance and effectiveness of some academic policies and student financial resources. For example, being able to take J-Term and summer class sections for free was one of the academic measures they found most helpful in not falling behind in their major and credit requirements. Students mentioned that prior to the pandemic this was not a viable option financially for them.

Additionally, many students emphasized the importance and helpfulness of the Student Emergency fund but noted that the process of applying was long and complicated. When looking through the Trinity Emergency Fund website, the process seems to involve submitting an application fund form of twenty-five questions where one is not asked about the emergency until

question twenty. On the website, it states that students might not be eligible for aid for the following reasons: have an outstanding amount of Trinity bill, if student can not articulate the financial emergency or how they will resolve the loan if given one, and an incomplete application. The website also states that “approved emergency and equity funding may be in the form of a loan, grant, or a combination of both” (“Student Emergency and Equity Fund”). Moving forward, it would be helpful if the Student Emergency and Equity Fund’s requirements were revisited and the form of applying was revised. Including defining loan terms on the website would also be helpful so students can weigh their options. In this study, students describe how they would rather meet with a dean or another personnel from the Equity fund to explain their emergency rather than having to write it out since sometimes emergencies were very personal and timely. Overall, these are a few recommendations that can improve how students navigate resource allocation. Also noting the importance of PWIs increasing their inclusion policies and revising academic/ financial policies to aid their different student population and their needs

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Appendix A: *Written Consent Form*

A study on the experiences of children of immigrants attending PWIs during the COVID-19 pandemic

The purpose of this research study is to find out how the pandemic affected the psychological, academic, and financial well-being of children of immigrants attending PWIs. Also to further research and understand what stressors might have been emphasized or developed during Covid-19 and the resources available to them. Participants will be asked to describe their individuals' experience of attending college during the pandemic. We estimate that this will require 45min-1 hour of your time.

The benefits of this study is that it will give insight to how the pandemic might have presented new obstacles for students and what types of resources were made available to them through their colleges.. The study involves only minimal risk, meaning that the probability of harm or discomfort is not greater than ordinarily encountered in daily life. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. All data will be stored on password-protected computers.

To compensate you for participating in this study, you will receive a 10\$ gift card.

I understand that my participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I am free to stop or withdraw my participation at any time, without any penalty.

I understand that all of my responses in this study are completely confidential, and will be used only for research purposes. If I have any questions about this study or want more information, I am free to contact:

Contact Information

Principal investigator: Brenda Ordonez

brenda.ordonez@trincoll.edu

Trinity College

Research Supervisor: Daniel Douglas

daniel.douglas@trincoll.edu

Trinity College

Or contact the Trinity College IRB administrator via email: irb@trincoll.edu

Print your name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

All signed forms will remain confidential. Participants may keep a blank form if desired.

Qualitative Study: Discussing the experiences of children of immigrants attending PWIs during the pandemic

Are you eligible to participant in this thesis study?

- **College student attending a PWI**
- **Child of Immigrants**

**If you are interested in being interviewed for this
study please contact:**

brenda.ordonez@trincoll.edu

Every participant will receive a 10\$ gift card



First I'd like to start with some general questions,

- Tell me about what year you are and what your major is?
- How would you describe your college to someone who doesn't attend your school? What has been your experience attending a PWI?

Interview Questions:

Section 1: academics

Tell me about how you felt when your college first switched to online learning during the pandemic?

Describe your experience of taking online classes from home? What do you think was the biggest challenge of this transition ?

Did you feel like your access to academic help and resources was present or impacted in any way? If so, can you elaborate on how your access was affected?

Were there any academic policies implemented to help students during the pandemic semester at your college? If so, did you feel these changes supported students in feeling less stressed?

Section 2: psychological

Tell me about how you balanced a day in the life of a student learning from home?

Did you find yourself taking new roles or family responsibilities during the pandemic ? (helping your parents translate, sibling care, etc)

Section 3: financial

Did the pandemic have a financial impact on your family? If so, what type of resources were available to your family, if any?

What types of resources did your college offer as financial aid during the pandemic? Emergency fund for students?