

**When Serving Isn't Enough: Racial Capital and Latino Outcomes in CUNY's
Hispanic-Serving Institutions**

Michelle Sosa

Macaulay Honors College

Springboard

Professors Lisa Brundage & Logan McBride

May 22, 2026

Abstract

As the largest urban public university system in the nation, the City University of New York (CUNY) aims to be a beacon for social mobility. The placement of its 26 colleges across the five boroughs of New York City allows the state's 4.0 million Latinos close access to higher education. The additional categorical designation of 16 CUNY's as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) deepens the university's appeal to prospective Latino students. HSIs are institutions that have at least 25% of Latino students enrolled and aim to alleviate the education disparities within the Latino student population. However, HSIs in CUNY continue to show education disparities amongst its Latino undergraduate students. This study goes beyond existing studies focused on educational outcomes to assess the role of CUNY's HSIs in mitigating Latino education disparities and examines the influence of their categorical designation on the Latino identity. I used a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative institutional and personal survey data with my qualitative interview data of students from The City College of New York. Findings reveal consistently lower graduation rates for Latino undergraduates compared to white undergraduates across six of CUNY's four-year HSIs. At the same time, the larger Latino student population at these HSIs allows for a sense of community among students as they're able to connect through similar experiences. These networks create a community of students who share information about academic and career-oriented resources with one another while reinforcing boundaries of the Latino identity. These findings suggest that while HSI designations foster a community for Latino undergraduates, the designation alone does not eliminate the structural inequalities seen in their educational outcomes.

Author's Note

As a Mexican living in the U.S., I have never grappled with or contested the term *Latino* for it was the only answer I have ever been given to describe who I was. I understood that I would never be perceived as white or black so, through the process of elimination of all U.S.-centric racial and ethnic terms, I knew there was only one term that described my identity. In fact, as I sat to write the first few pages of this paper, I did not question whether the population I would write about, and be entwined with, were Latinos. Of course we're Latinos!

This crumbled quite quickly in the following hours.

The term began to feel like I'd been given a placard to hold with a name engraved that was not mine. It feels as though I am being clumped with a plethora of different people simply because it was easy to do so. Until the drafting of this paper, the term would only ever cross my mind in the sporadic moments I'd have to fill out an application or census in the U.S. or perhaps in the moments we're the center of news segments. Depending on who is defining the term, *Latino* can encompass people from anywhere between 20 to 33 different countries, each holding a history, stemming from colonization, that follows their relationship to race. Over centuries, we have been forced to remold ourselves to fit the racist ideals of the Western country as our ancestors were driven to abandon the reality of their ancestry in order to purchase the social and economic privileges that arose with those on the light end of the racial spectrum. Today, Latinos are conditioned to intuitively agree that *Latino* is a term that describes our role in the U.S. despite its function that cements the differences between us from black and white Americans. It is this generalization that caused our racial identities to be overlooked.

Outside of *Latino*, many of us often identify with our country of origin when asked who we are. It is rare for us to answer with the term Latino unless we're keen to be asked follow-up

questions. Why is it, then, that we are forced to check off the Latino/Hispanic box when asked at a systemic scale? The answer is unfortunate: It's easy. Why could the U.S. possibly let thirty-three nations deconstruct their notion of race when they could simply encompass us within an easy six-letter word? I understand that, as tensions only seem to continue rising in the U.S. against our community, there is an opportunity to redefine and reclaim all that is synonymous with Latino. After all, there is strength in numbers. For that reason, this paper uses the term *Latino* to describe the population of individuals in the United States of America whose origins lie in Latin America. However, as much as I can reconstruct the definitions and remold the boundaries, I cannot be defined by this six-letter word. I am proud of my origins and the complexities of my identity. In partaking in the reclamation of our identity, I hope the use of the term Latino in the following text will shine light on the complexities of what it means to be a Latino in a world that has submerged us into a constant state of limbo. It is for these reasons that I am not using the term Latino as a permanent categorization of our population but rather as a term of familiarity that emphasizes community.

Introduction

*I don't know what else to do with this language except murder it.
 Dig out its eyes.
 Every vowel.
 Till it suffocates.*
 - Jessica Care Moore

Townsend Harris established the Free Academy of the City of New York at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 23rd Street in 1847, laying the foundation for the university system that now encompasses 26 colleges across the five boroughs of New York City. Through the changing of its name to The City College of New York (CCNY)¹, the institution continued to provide access to education for poor immigrants as the first tuition-free public higher education institution in the nation (*History – the City University of New York*, 2020). Even when CUNY withdrew this notable aspect by ending free tuition in 1976, there is no doubt about how transformative its presence would be in a century when education was accessible almost exclusively to wealthy white boys (*Creation of the Modern University – the City University of New York*, 2020). However, it fortunately would not stop there. As The City University of New York (CUNY) expanded to add more senior colleges and community colleges in the following century, the city's racial demographic shifted. Those who began to find home in the boroughs of NYC throughout the 1960s, namely people of color, noticed that the CUNY colleges that expanded across the city did not mirror the communities they resided in. For instance, the student population at CCNY was 97% white despite being situated in Harlem. Students of color in NYC began to fight to be included in the university's tuition-free higher education system to broaden the range of its students to mirror those that made up NYC. Following the 1969 fight for open

¹ The original building at Lexington Avenue and 23rd street was called The Free Academy but was integrated into the College of the City of New York. However, the College of the City of New York was renamed The City College of New York and was reestablished at 160 Convent Ave in Harlem. The building on Lexington Avenue became the City College School of Business and Civic Administration and later renamed the Bernard M. Baruch College.

admissions, CUNY's senior colleges saw the number of nonwhite students enrolled increase (*CUNY Digital History Archive*, n.d.). In other words, this change was championed by our own communities to increase the presence of students of color in our local higher education institutions.

Latinos continue to make up the large majority of minority populations within New York State and CUNY's title as the university system with the most Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) becomes crucial (Beshay, 2025). From a time when people of color were not allowed accessible education to the introduction of niche institutions whose aim is not to segregate but to stand by a mission to mitigate the disparities within the Latino community, HSIs emphasize Latino excellence.

Historically, Latinos consistently relied on higher education as a means of upward social and economic mobility. Accessible institutions, like CUNY, are clear and obvious paths that could allow for a seamless transition for the community. An acceptance into the university system is a financially responsible stepping stone for Latinos to reach careers that have never held space for us. The additional categorical designation of many CUNY's as an HSI² provides another layer of consideration for the academic disparities present in the Latino community. HSIs

² Of the 26 colleges that make up CUNY, 16 of them are designated as an HSI.

Bernard M Baruch College
 Borough of Manhattan Community College
 Bronx Community College
 City College
 College of Staten Island
 Graduate School and University Center
 Hostos Community College
 Hunter College
 John Jay College of Criminal Justice
 Kingsborough Community College
 LaGuardia Community College
 Lehman College
 New York City College of Technology
 Queens College
 Queensborough Community College
 Stella and Charles Guttman Community College

are required to admit enough Hispanic/Latino individuals so that they compose at least 25% of the undergraduate student population (*Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): 2022-23*, 2022). In doing so, these institutions are ensuring the federal funding they can apply for through their HSI designation is flowing towards alleviating the socioeconomic disparities within Latinos. There is no doubt that increased funding provided to an academic institution will equate to better opportunities for students. Therefore, it can be assumed that a 25% quota of Latino students admitted to an HSI would ensure funds directed towards measurable Latino populations.

HSIs provide Latinos access to higher education institutions that have better opportunities to receive funding towards their success. However, aside from providing students access to courses that fulfill their degree requirements, these colleges construct a social environment on campus amongst students who gained their admission under similar academic conditions. For the HSIs designated within CUNY, the admission of students onto campus is not restricted to quantitative measures of academic proficiency but Latino identifications are taken into account to ensure the quota is being fulfilled. However, if at least 25% of the student population is designated for Latinos, who is chosen to fill the remaining 75% students on campus?

Nicholas Vargas, a UC Berkeley researcher with scholarship in the use of race data to identify societal, systemic, and structural racism, researched how racial demographics of HSI student populations affected their ability to receive funding. He found that HSIs with whiter student populations receive more competitive funding than those with higher black populations (2016; Vargas, 2018). While Vargas highlighted the perhaps unintended but real consequences of the allocation of competitive funding being influenced by who constitutes the remaining 75% in HSIs, the weight of an institution's admissions on the formation of the Latino identity within the campuses is not assessed. I noted a gap in the research on the intersection between HSIs

commitment to Latinos, the designations' influence on campus demographics, and HSIs role in the formation of the Latino identity.

CUNY is the largest urban public university system in the nation. Its placement within New York City only amplifies its existence as the city is the home for roughly 4.0 million Latinos (Beshay, 2025). The HSIs within CUNY are crucial steps in narrowing the educational gap in graduation and completion rates through culturally-relevant support and, as the Latino population in the U.S. continues to grow, it is needed more than ever. And yet, these niche institutions continue to show educational disparities within their Latino undergraduate population. Once the monetary ties to an HSI allow it to stray away from its purpose, reassessment is needed. In fact, the Department of Latin American and Latina/o Studies at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice presented a position paper in the fall of 2017 assessing the significance of the college's role as an HSI. Issues between a lack of initiative from senior administrators and a lack of representation of Latinos amongst full-time faculty contributed to John Jay not upholding their commitment to Latino undergraduate students as declared by Goal #5 of the college's 2020 Strategic Plan³ (Pérez, et al., 2017). While the Department of Latin American and Latina/o Studies at John Jay highlights disparities between the racial makeup of their administration and the institution's failure at thoroughly supporting its Latino students it receives funding for, little research has contributed or advanced toward the assessment of HSIs after its publication in the past decade. In fact, CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice continues to be designated as an HSI despite its shortcomings.

³ The 2015 Strategic Plan Report Card for John Jay stated “the college will build its identity as a Hispanic-Serving Institution through its comprehensive support of access and success for Latino students and thereby strengthen its commitment to diversity for the benefit of all students.” In a Strategic Planning Subcommittee Meeting held 5 years later, the committee declared there to be 5 goals. The 5th goal emphasized to “enhance John Jay's identity as a hispanic-serving institution.”

If notable HSIs, such as those within CUNY, are not showing improvements in graduation or completion rates amongst their Latino students, can it be inferred that they are capitalizing on this demographic? In other words, how does the racial capital of Latinos within CUNY's HSIs relate to the disproportionate educational outcomes of Latino undergraduate students when compared to white undergraduate students? The construct of race is monopolized by CUNY's HSIs to use race as a commodity that creates institutional incentives that shape racial demographics on campus. This, in turn, transforms the Latino identity into a form of institutional capital for the HSI designation while Latino students continue to experience educational disadvantages.

The purpose of this study is to assess the role of CUNY's HSIs as aids meant to mitigate the educational disparities amongst Latinos. It will also examine the role of the categorical designation of an HSI within CUNY on the formation of the Latino identity. These questions will be assessed through a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures. Due to the lack of records regarding the racial backgrounds of Latino students admitted into CUNY's HSIs, despite the fact they are asked a race-based question during the completion of their undergraduate applications, this data will be gathered alongside a survey designed to understand students' perceptions of their race within U.S. restrictive racial model. To assess personal experiences amongst Latino students attending HSIs and their beliefs regarding the formation of their own racial identity, I conducted interviews with a portion of participants from the survey.

As the categorical designation of an HSI, both in and outside of CUNY, is crucial as the country should aim to mitigate racial disparities of its minority populations, this paper does not question whether HSIs should remain incorporated within the U.S. higher education system. However, implementing HSIs in higher education should not be understood as a completion of

the effort needed to ensure our Latino students are thoroughly supported for academic success. HSIs within CUNY proudly showcase their higher percentage of Latino student populations. This is understandable, as a notable portion of the population residing around and within the five boroughs of New York City are Latinos. In other words, the colleges within the CUNY system are appealing to this demographic and the HSI designation supports this. However, if CUNY aims to continue to support its Latino population as an HSI and mitigate the disparities the institution has been displaying for the past decade, the colleges need to shift focus and energy towards transparency in their compliance in the exploitation of Latinos while also acknowledging their shortcoming in their commitment to Latino excellence.

A Historical Overview of the Exploitation of the Latino Identity in Latin America

While the definition and consequent expression of the Latino identity is consistently contested between various ethnicities throughout generations of immigrants living in the United States, its driving force did not materialize within our own community. There's an assumption that the boundaries of ethnicity and race originate amongst those to whom they apply. For instance, it is easily assumed that a country's preference for lighter skin in women is due to a culture of normalized racism amongst its people. While this may not be entirely wrong, this line of thought fails to delve deeper to account for the atrocities that are the racial hierarchies and colorism⁴ brought forth by colonization. Divisions between physical features, ideologies, culture, and language were historically remolded to form tightly structured boundaries of a racial hierarchy. More often than not, these boundaries allow its participants to claim, or be stripped of, certain privileges. In other words, the sole purpose of these racial hierarchies is to ensure that the

⁴ While the system of racial hierarchies and the ideology of colorism can be interwoven within the same culture, there is a distinction. The implementation of a racial hierarchy can be seen throughout the history of the U.S. as it was common practice for white Americans to be given greater legal privileges in life as opposed to Black Americans. On the other hand, colorist ideas do not always need to be tied through a racial hierarchy. For instance, within many countries in Latin America, a lighter complexion is preferred to a dark complexion regardless of racial standing.

white Anglo-Americans preserve their right to define the boundaries of their own freedom and, in turn, restrain all other non-white Anglo-Americans to a limited and defined life. While these ideologies stem from the bigotry of colonization, their beliefs are so often repeated in family gatherings, our music, and expressed through our physical presentation as we have been molded and influenced by the indoctrination from our colonizers. For instance, salons are often the heart of how our own communities uphold these regulations once set centuries ago. Chemicals that straighten and bleach our naturally dark curly hair presents an opportunity for us to distance ourselves from our Afro-descendant ancestry, a community that is battered to its permanent position at the bottom of the U.S. racial hierarchy. While instances like this allow for the quick assumption that it is our own communities forming racial boundaries as we are the ones continuing to uphold and practice them through straightened and bleached hair, one must then question who provided us with the chemicals. Our manner of categorizing ourselves and others as we attempt to situate ourselves in the world is reconfigured to follow and favor white supremacy. The introduction of white supremacist practices within Latin American countries involves the immediate categorization of its citizens by constantly reshaping and shifting the boundaries of our racial classifications through generations.

Between the 1910s and the 1920s, Puerto Rico experienced the largest shift in their racial demographic. A surplus of ~100,000 white young adults and children increased the percentage of total white Puerto Ricans by 7.5 points through the second decade of the 1900s (Loveman & Muniz, 2007). From where did this mass of white people emerge? This was not the result of the procreation of white babies from interracial marriages in the country but due to a shift in racial boundaries of whiteness (Loveman & Muniz, 2007)⁵. The U.S. Census Bureau tasked local

⁵ In the first empirical account explaining the greatest shift in Puerto Rico's white population, Loveman and Muniz suggest that the increase was due to the shift in racial boundaries. However, the paper also notes additional factors that would have contributed to the change. The most notable additional factor is a crossing of racial boundaries.

Puerto Rican enumerators to gather information on the population. In the 1910s, Puerto Rican enumerators⁶ had three racial categories into which to classify the population: blanco (white), negro (black), and mulatto. Here, mulattos are “not pure” due to their partly Black racial makeup. A decade later, the enumerators of the 1920 U.S. Census were provided with a different set of racial categories to classify Puerto Ricans. These categories expanded to include Chinese, Japanese, and other individuals; however, the most notable shift was a change in who is defined as a mulatto. In the 1920s, a mulatto was classified as a “not pure” individual due to their partly white racial makeup (Loveman & Muniz, 2007). While both definitions of mulatto encompass the same group of people, those who are not purely Black, the difference in emphasis on a white racial background speaks to a racial promotion towards U.S. white supremacist ideologies. Throughout the rest of the 20th century, Puerto Rico continued to become “whiter” with each census. Once Puerto Rico became part of U.S. territory, American presence in the country is beneficial as businesses and tourists contribute to U.S. capital gain. However, if the newly-colonized Puerto Rico produced census results that displayed a high population of non-white individuals, the U.S. would not be able to market the territory as an ideal place for the white Americans’ business and vacations. In other words, racist ideologies would equate the lack of white individuals to an unsafe country. Enumerators were likely to stretch the boundaries of whiteness in such a way that a more relaxed definition would benefit the U.S. economy. For

Here, boundary crossing is an independent movement an individual makes to situate oneself from one boundary to another. There is no change in the social definition of that boundary. For instance, a Latino in the U.S. who becomes a doctoral recipient enters a situational area that is dominated by white people. They have the possibility of appearing whiter due to their achievement and the people they are subsequently surrounded by as a result. In other words, they have gained membership into the white category by changing their personal profile instead of changing the definition and boundaries of whiteness. It’s possible that Puerto Rico was experiencing a shift in their white population as more Puerto Ricans began to classify themselves (or be perceived as) white as a result of a higher income or change in career. However, it is likely this accounts for only a small share of the surplus in white Puerto Ricans from 1910 to 1920.

⁶ While the current common practice for gathering the racial demographic of a population in the U.S. Census Bureau is through self-identification, the early 20th century census for Puerto Rico was dictated by assignment. Enumerators declared the race of Puerto Ricans.

instance, Puerto Ricans who were situated in a higher income level, held a higher degree of education, or were married into a lighter-skinned family would be squeezed into a white racial category (Loveman & Muniz, 2007). The boundary of what it meant to be white was not isolated to simply a lighter-skinned color but had stretched to include more Puerto Ricans that matched the social makeup of a white American. While enumerators projected this ideology onto the territory, the controlling American presence would continue to shift the mental categorization of the boundaries of whiteness within Puerto Ricans themselves.

Roughly 2,000 miles away and several decades earlier, Mexicans experienced independence from Spain in 1821. However, the freedom from their colonizers was quickly reigned in by a new ideology that re-centered control of racial classes to the new elite. The ideology of *mestizaje* emphasized the idea that Mexico is a homogeneous country whose citizens are united by a singular race, culture and language. The unification of all Mexicans, regardless of previous social standings from the *sistema de castas*⁷ imposed by the Spanish, nationalists argued, meant Mexico will be a civilized country that does not confine its citizens to discriminatory and unequal racial boundaries (Telles, 2014). The practice of *mestizaje* forms a single race of *mestizos* that would be the fusion of all races present in Mexico at the time of their independence. This, however, meant the country's leaders would have to imply that the individual contributions of Indigenous, Black, and Spanish into a mestizo Mexican would be a result of the conglomeration of the best qualities of each race (Telles, 2014).

As leaders used *mestizaje* to modernize Mexico through its racial unification, they were keen to immediately remove previous Spanish-imposed regulations. Under Spain's *sistema de castas*, Indigenous populations were sectioned into separate territory to prevent further

⁷ The *sistema de castas* was the caste system forced onto colonial-Mexico. In this system, the Spaniards held the highest power followed by the Creoles (Spaniards born in Mexico), Indigenous Mexican, and Black people.

miscegenation with Mexico's Black population.⁸ However, as Independent-Mexico removed regulations set by Spain, this separate land of the Indigenous was removed and redistributed amongst Mexicans. The resulting anger from the Indigenous community further solidified their identity as a barbarous and backward civilization in the eyes of elite Mexicans. Here, they could argue that Indigenous blood was not a beneficial contribution to the progressive mestizaje ideology (Telles, 2014). In order for a successful shift to mestizaje, it was believed that the Mexican blood needed to be cleaned and diluted with that of white Europeans. This would become the foundation of the mestizaje ideology, or whitening project, and was expressed through the country's educational policies, land dispossession, and overall favoring of the white wealthy elite (Telles, 2014).

By the beginning of the 20th century, the institutionalization of white supremacy by way of the mestizaje project resulted in poverty for a majority of Mexico's people. Such conditions of mass poverty catalyzed the Mexican Revolution and allowed for the reconstruction of racial categories in the formation of a new ideology of mestizaje. No longer assembled on the foundation of white nationalist ideals, this new mestizaje of the Revolution highlighted a national identity that integrated its Indigenous ancestry. And yet, not indigenous themselves, the cultural leaders of the Revolution drew upon nostalgic visions of the Indigeno. Holding Indigenous culture as a relic of history was simultaneously impeding the passage of their customs to future generations of Mexicans. The solidification of Indigenous practices into the country's history had allowed a pathway into the erasure of the historical presence of Afrodescendants. This form of mestizaje, which constituted the majority of the 1900s, would continue well into the 2000s. The

⁸ Despite the fact that the white colonists from Spain held a dominating power over Mexicans and the African slaves in Mexico, their lack of numbers in comparison had always fueled a fear of rebellion and overturn of power. In the colonial-ruled Mexico, this fear was targeted towards the oppressed Black and Indigenous population. The fear of a potential Black-Indigenous revolt had resulted in the Crown brutally enacting this legislation.

racial category “Afrodescendant” would be officially incorporated in the country's census in 2020. Yet, after centuries of remodeling the boundaries of race in Mexico, a staggering majority of Mexican citizens continue to identify as mestizos.

The 1910s to the 1920s racial boundary shift in Puerto Rico, which resulted in the whitening of the region, only worked to benefit the capital gain of the colonizers at the expense of the identity of Puerto Ricans. In a similar sense, Mexico’s emphasis on white purity in the initial ideas of mestizaje to the shift of the ideology towards an erasure of Afrodescendant in its later revisions showcases the maneuvering of racial classifications so that the top may reap the benefits of oppression through white supremacist principles at the expense of the fear of Mexico's Black and Indigenous populations. The construct of race has consistently been remodeled to exploit Latinos.

The Formation of the Latino in the United States

In the last 25 years, the Latino population has become the largest racial minority in the United States, accounting for 68 million individuals (Beshay, 2025). This term that encompasses the vast presence of our people is widely accepted and is used to describe those in the U.S. with ancestry linking them to Latin America. It is often coupled with the term Hispanic, which broadens the definition to all Spanish-speaking countries. Yet, as discussions continue to revolve around our large presence in the U.S., the term Latino has become increasingly popular within mainstream and traditional media. Many may assert that the source of our increasing presence varies from immigration to births, the true consistent driving force is the manipulation of the boundaries of who constitutes a Latino.

The geographical and political relationship between Mexico and the U.S. lays the foundation for the formation of the Latino identity. The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe

(1848), commencing the end of the Mexican-American War, resulted in the transfer of roughly 50% of Mexico's land and solidified the Rio Grande River as the border for \$15 million. The signing of the treaty claimed to be the establishment of peace and friendship between the neighboring nations, yet it had only left a group in the U.S. stuck in limbo (National Archives, 2021). The success of the country's westward expansion had not only meant the surplus of land but the addition of Mexican Pueblos and their people. The treaty granted American citizenship to those residing in the conquered land, a right exclusively given to white Anglo-Americans. In essence, Mexicans became white by treaty.

Despite the gain of American citizenship, and thus a forced counterfeit white identity, the lack of integration of these new Americans proved to raise more issues. The surplus of Mexicans residing in the newly conquered U.S. brought acres of land in which these individuals resided. The land had been within communities for centuries, more than enough time for the administrations of all sectors of life to be well established. Upon inspection of these settlements by order of federal judges, there had been questions regarding the legality of those living on the land in relation to their race. For instance, if Mexicans living in the Pueblos shared physical characteristics with the Native Americans while also operating their communities in a similar fashion, could the boundaries of the Pueblos not receive the same treatment given to the Native Americans? The land of Native Americans had been given federal protection under the belief that their supposedly backward nature could not uphold the meaning of an American citizenship (Klein, 2008). On the other hand, assumptions of Mexicans living in their Pueblos were beginning as Anglo-Americans attempted to make sense of their identity. The U.S. legal system, founded on colorism and racism, would have to question the benefits, and drawbacks, of assimilating the Mexican identity with the Native Americans. The decision was not a simple one

and, for half a century, Mexicans living in the United States fell in the limbo of the rights privileged to a white man's to the perceptions forced upon Native Americans. For instance, the construction of the office of the Surveyor General was established with the aim of assessing these lands and their relation to Spain and Mexico for the application of land grants. However, while this sector was deemed necessary to account for the Pueblos gained through the treaty, surveyors did not work towards the goals of providing Mexicans with legal ownership of their land (Gonzales, 2003). The Mexicans residing within their Pueblos had been granted American citizenship for several years prior to the land grant applications, a supposed privilege that was exclusive to the white population. Unfortunately, it is no shock that they were not treated in the same manner as their white American counterparts.

Despite the passing of two centuries since Mexicans were forced into limbo as Americans, the disparities between legal status and social belonging of Latinos continue to impact our relationship with citizenship today. It was the expansion of the United States geographical boundaries that set off the cascade of the manipulation of the modern-day Latino. In fact, this introduction of Latinos in the U.S. provides the foundation to assess how our identity is utilized within HSIs.

Methodolgy

This study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative analysis of institutional and survey data with qualitative interview data. The goal was to examine the disparities in education outcomes between white and Latino undergraduate students. I also aimed to explore how Latino students attending an HSI at CUNY understand and perceive their racial identity within their student population. The data used to assess educational outcomes were gathered from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This system

contains information from every educational institution participating in federal student financial aid programs and is collected annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. The selection of higher education institutions was restricted to HSIs within CUNY. *Excelencia* in Education was used to identify the 16 HSIs designated within CUNY. This non-profit organization aims to accelerate Latino student success by conducting annual analysis of the nation's HSIs.

Amongst the 16 HSIs in CUNY, I focused on the 7 four-year institutions, including The College of Staten Island, Bernard M. Baruch College, The City College of New York, Hunter College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Lehman College and Queens College.⁹ I used IPEDS to extract information on full-time undergraduate students between 2017 and 2023 from each of the seven HSIs. This includes the graduation rates and fall enrollment rates of the white and Hispanic/Latino student population of degree/certificate-seeking students.

While IPEDS gathers a plethora of information on a multitude of institutions to describe and identify educational and student demographic trends, it fails to record the racial demographics of Latino students.¹⁰ In place, I designed a survey to gather information on how Latino students classify their racial identity (1) when given a set of strict racial categories that are standard to the U.S. racial model and (2) when given the opportunity to self-identify their race outside of the U.S. racial boundaries. The full survey is provided in Appendix B. To assess the role of the categorical designation of an HSI within CUNY on the formation of the Latino identity, I conducted interviews with a portion of the survey respondents. These participants of

⁹ A map showcasing the locations of these HSIs is provided in Appendix A.

¹⁰ While each prospective student of a CUNY is provided the same application and asked to select their race given five options (Black/African American, White, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native), the automatic checking of the Hispanic/Latino box results in the erasure of their selected race. Reporting reminders publicized on IPEDS data sets state to "report Hispanic/Latino individuals of any race as Hispanic/Latino" and to "report race for non-Hispanic/Latino individuals only."

the survey were recruited from one of the seven HSIs and all of the interviews were conducted with students from CCNY. The interviews lasted 30 minutes and explored students' college experiences through questions focused on how the student population at CUNY's HSIs influences Latinos perceptions of their racial identification on campus. The list of questions guiding the interviews is provided in Appendix C.

Discussion

I aim to understand the role of CUNY's HSIs as aids meant to mitigate the educational disparities among their Latino undergraduate student population. The federal creation and the funding opportunities the designation allows are major stepping stones to the equity for Latino as it provides them access to a tailored academic experience. In fact, many Latino undergraduate students are being educated at one of CUNY's four-year HSIs. However, this cannot be the sole metric of the institution's success as HSIs are failing to commit themselves to the success of Latino undergraduates. The presence of Latino undergraduate students within CUNY's HSIs must be assessed to understand the implications of their role in their institutions.

An HSI designation requires Latinos to make up at least 25% of admitted undergraduate students, but almost all (six out of seven) of CUNY's four-year HSIs consistently enrolled a larger percent of Latino undergraduate students compared to white undergraduate students (Figures 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7a). These colleges include Bernard M. Baruch College, the City College of New York, Hunter College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Leman College, and Queens College. Considering 82% of incoming first year classes at CUNY are NYC public high school graduates, and the city is the home for millions of Latinos, it is no surprise that a large portion of CUNY undergraduates are Latinos (*The City University of New York*, 2019).

However, one of the seven four-year HSIs I assessed did not match this expectation. The College of Staten Island saw higher enrollments for white undergraduate students between 2019 and 2022. Here, an average of 3,108.2 white undergraduates were annually enrolled over the course of the five years compared to an average of 2,285.2 Latino undergraduates (Fig 1a). While the College of Staten Island is located within the 5 boroughs of NYC, its location on Staten Island makes the trek over the Verezanno Bridge form a disconnect from CUNY's not located on the island. As the College of Staten Island enrolled a larger number of white undergraduate students compared to their Latino undergraduate students, the subsequent higher graduation rate for white undergraduate students was expected. However, the higher enrollment was seen only between 2019 and 2022 (Fig. 1b). In 2023, there was a decrease in white undergraduate enrollments and, for the first time within those five years, Latino undergraduate enrollment was higher (Fig. 1b). Despite this, the graduation rate for Latino undergraduates continued to lag behind.

Each of the other six four-year HSIs assessed had higher graduation rates for white undergraduate students despite their higher enrollment of Latino undergraduates. At Bernard M. Baruch College, 2,266.6 white undergraduates were enrolled annually over the five years compared to 3,174 Latino undergraduates (Fig 2a). In other words, Baruch College enrolled nearly 1,000 more Latino undergraduates annually throughout the five years. Despite this, the graduation rates of Latino students consistently lagged at an average of 14 percentage points (Fig 2b). The largest gap was seen in 2023 when white undergraduates had a 64% graduation rate while Latino undergraduates held a rate of 46% (Fig. 2b). Similarly, Queens College displayed a difference of 729.8 annual undergraduate enrollment between Latino and white students (Fig. 7a). Here, Latino graduation rates trailed behind by 14 to 25 percentage points (Fig 7b). Both

HSIs admitted nearly 1,000 more Latino undergraduates annually from 2019 to 2023 yet each displayed the largest difference in graduation rates between white and Latino students.

As we move 26 miles from Queens College, CCNY resides in the heart of Harlem. They enrolled an annual average of 990.2 white undergraduates between 2019 and 2023 while enrolling an annual average of 3,104 Latino undergraduate students (Fig. 3a). However, within those five years, Latino graduation rates lagged behind those of white peers from 5 to 16 percentage points (Fig. 3b). In fact, the graduation rates for Latinos at CCNY declined from 2019 to 2023. For instance, 2019 saw a 10% difference in graduation rates between white and Latino undergraduate students while 2023 saw the peak difference at 16 percentage points (Fig 3b). In other words, white undergraduates at CCNY experienced a 10% increase in their graduation rate over the course of five years while Latino undergraduates only saw a 4% increase (Fig 3b).

Hunter College, residing on the Upper East side of Manhattan, annually enrolled a Latino undergraduate population that was nearly double the enrollment of its white undergraduate student population. On average, 2,578.4 white undergraduates were enrolled annually between 2019 and 2023 while an average of 4,108.6 Latino undergraduates were enrolled (Fig 3a). Despite this drastic difference in enrollments between the two groups, the graduation rates of Latino undergraduate students continued to lag behind in a difference that fluctuated between 8% to 16% (Fig. 3b). Unlike CCNY and Bernard M. Baruch College, who saw their largest gap in 2023, Hunter College saw its largest gap in graduation rates in 2022 with 16%. While this value dropped to a 9% difference in graduation rates between Latino and white undergraduates in 2023, the difference continues to show Latino students trailing behind despite their large presence in the undergraduate student body.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan's midtown-West, and Lehman College in the Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood of the Bronx, showcased the lowest difference in graduation rates between Latino and white undergraduates from 2019 to 2023 (Fig. 5b; Fig 6b). However, these two HSIs also enrolled the largest number of Latino students. Over the course of the five years, 1,482.8 white undergraduate students and 5,343.8 Latino undergraduates were annually enrolled at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Lehman College enrolled an annual average of 3,594.3 Latino and 283.2 white undergraduate students. In other words, a course at John Jay will have 3 Latino students per white student while Lehman College will have 13 Latino students per white student. Still, Latinos trailed behind 3% to 9% in graduation rates over the course of the five years. While this is better than their counterparts at other CUNY HSIs, it is still disproportionately low.

If an institution is admitting a large portion of a certain group, it is expected that the group will have a higher graduation rate as seen in the College of Staten Island. For this reason, a similar trend should appear in John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Lehman College. In other words, since Latinos make up a large portion of admitted undergraduates, we should see high Latino graduation rates. Yet the trend seen in the College of Staten Island would not mirror the HSIs that enrolled a large population of Latino undergraduate students. In fact, regardless of whether the Latino undergraduate enrollment differs from a small 1,000 more Latinos than the white undergraduate enrollment or nearly double, the graduation rates of Latino students are consistently lagging behind.

These figures demonstrate the failure of CUNY's four-year HSIs in mitigating the education disparities of their Latino undergraduate students despite consistently high enrollment rates. How is it that these institutions can continue to maintain their HSI designation despite their

lack of evidence for the improvement of Latinos? The answer lies in the 25% enrollment quota. Each of CUNY's HSIs fulfill the 25% enrollment of Latino undergraduates and are, thus, maintaining their designation as they closely track the ethnicity of Latinos. Through my Google Form, it was evident that Latinos span across several U.S.-based racial categories yet this is not formally recorded since the HSI designation relies on our generalization as Latinos. It is the Latino identity that begins to function as a form of institutional capital. To assess how HSIs, an institution that values the numerical presence of Latinos, influences the Latino identity, I spoke with a few Latino students at CCNY.

CUNY schools, such as CCNY, proudly showcase the high percentage of students that graduate with \$0 debt and the institution's affordability is a major driving factor that draws in many Latino students. For instance, Katherine, a transfer student at CCNY, spoke with me about her decision to enroll at CCNY after attending a private university in Queens:

"I honestly chose it [CCNY] because it was a little bit closer to me. I used to go to a different school in Queens and it was, like, a lot to just go to that school. It was a lot of money and there was a lot of commuting time. It took me like an hour and 30 minutes and sometimes I used to have really early classes. Like, I would go to school really, really early and then come back really, really late and it's like, I had no sleep time. It was like, it was not a good way to live [...] So, yeah, I kind of just chose it because I, I honestly knew about, um, City College."

For a New York resident, the cost to attend CCNY is \$6,930 per year, yet many students often receive financial aid. This decreases their cost to attend the four-year higher education institution to near \$0. For Katherine, the alleviation of tuition costs at CCNY opened a path towards a financially-feasible education. Another student, Queen Carrasco, is a senior who has attended

CCNY since her freshman year and had a similar mentality when applying for colleges in her senior year of high school.

“Honestly, it was about affordability, and then at the time, [...] when I was choosing colleges, I was 17. So, I would need, um, you know, parental consent to take out loans and stuff to go to private institutions. My mom completely said no. Um, so it was, like, choosing the affordable 4-year [college].”

Higher education is the core for social mobility amongst Latinos and it is no doubt that CUNY colleges are appealing towards the working-class Latino New Yorker. This trend became even more evident as I spoke with two Macaulay Honors students attending CCNY. Nicole, a junior who has attended CCNY since her freshman year, walked me through her decisions to apply to CUNY.

“My high school guidance counselor, Ms. Day, talked with me in my freshmen year about what I had planned for the future. When I told her that I wanted to go into college and pursue a career in the medical field, she immediately shared various resources and colleges that she thought I would like. [...] While I was applying for colleges in my senior year, three major factors were if the college had pre-med/pre-PA programs or resources, the proximity to home, and financial-aid. [...] I saw that CCNY checked all the boxes. In the end, I applied to under 10 colleges with CCNY being one of my top two choices.”

With affordability at the forefront of many Latino students' minds, it was evident that the HSI designation was not a driving factor, or even a known factor, by these students. The proximity mentioned by Katherine and Nicole is taken into consideration alongside the institution's sticker price. In staying home, students are alleviated of the finances that arise with renting an apartment in NYC. In other words, Latino students are rightfully drawn towards the opportunity to receive a higher education at little to no cost. This aspect of CUNY's colleges is beneficial to both students and the HSIs as students limit their debt in higher education and the institutions have a

plethora of prospective Latino students (and customers) looking for an affordable education. Yet, Latino students are being drawn towards these institutions that capitalize on their presence to allow them to easily maintain an HSI designation, while not providing these students with promising four-year graduation rates. How are these consequences of the HSI designation interacting with how Latino students are understanding their race? How are CCNY Latino students categorizing their identity within the HSI's large population of Latino students? Katherine spoke to me about her experience between the community at CCNY and her previous private institution.

“[...] to be completely honest, I like City College way more because [...] that's like where my people are, if that makes sense. [...] I'm more identified with [CCNY] than the school that I was at. And I also felt like [at the first college] there was no community. [...] I don't know if I just grew. [...] I'm like, obviously doing way better. It's because of the community [...] like I was immediately welcomed when I transferred to City College.”

The undergraduate population of the Queens private university Katherine attended was 44.2% white. The gap in social class, which is often tied to race and ethnicity, left her feeling excluded in nearly all of her interactions. However, her transition to the community at CCNY, composed of working-class New Yorkers, laid a foundation that made her presence symbolize acceptance. It is in these cases that the presence of HSIs is crucial for Latinos to believe they belong in the *success* of higher education. With this in mind, I asked Katherine if she'd been made more aware of her racial background during her two years at CCNY.

“Yeah, for sure. Yes. Yes, in a good way, because [...] we were in class [...] and we were able to talk about Bad Bunny. [...] Then I'm able to talk to people about what I like. [...] I feel connected. [...] People aren't really afraid. [...] They're authentically themselves. I also feel like I connect more, and I could talk more, and I see people that are like me. [...]

Even my professors, I was able to connect with them because they're [...] Dominican, you know?"

While Katherine's experience as a Black Latina at CCNY had been positive, she was one of few respondents who did not struggle to identify herself with other Latinos. She was easily able to connect with other Latino students through shared music and language, which is something she was uncomfortable doing at her previous institution. However, other Latinos I spoke with, who did not fall neatly into the Latino box, informed me of their struggle with how their racial identity was perceived at CCNY. Queen is a Black Latina and is on the E-board of the Black Student Union (BSU). As she recalled her experience filling out my survey on racial identity, she shared with me the reality of not being perceived as a Latina at CCNY.

[...] My mom is [Guyanese] British and my dad is Panamanian. [...] I grew up in Flatbush, which is predominantly, like, West Indian and Latino. [...] When I introduce both of those identities to people, I feel like they're more comfortable picking, like, my [Guyanese] side. [...] They feel like that attributes more to, like, blackness versus my Panamanian side, if that makes sense. So, it's [...] sort of invalidating in a way.."

Queen is in a constant state of reaffirming her Latino identity amongst other Latinos. In fact, it is these clarifications that became a common experience within CCNY students. Jane is a Asian-Latino first-year student who spoke to me about how students erase her Latino identity in favor of recognizing her Asian identity.

"Whenever I mention that I'm from Argentina [and that] I know Spanish, a lot of people start asking me about it. Like: 'Oh, I thought you were [...] Asian, [...] Chinese or Korean. [...] I'm like: 'Yeah, no.'"

When I asked them how their identity is perceived by others, Queen informed me of the shock her identity is met with.

“Because I am visibly Black [...] I think people forget that, like, African Latinos exist. [...] When I tell people I’m Panamanian, they don’t believe me. They’re like: ‘You’re Panamanian? No way, I’ve never heard you speak Spanish. I’ve never heard this. I’ve never heard that.’ Then they say, like: ‘You don’t *look* Latina.’ [...] It’s very interesting to hear, like, what people think ‘looking Latino’ means.”

The invalidation of her Latino identity and expectation of proof for her *Latinidad* was not an uncommon trend. Jane shared a similar experience when she vocalizes her Latino identity.

“[...] They ask about, like, when I came here, or: ‘Oh, do your parents, like, know [how to speak] Spanish,’ or something like that.”

For students who are not traditionally perceived as Latino at CCNY, it became evident that language and physical appearances were indicators of membership and reinforces strict boundaries of who is Latino. Latinos like Katherine are able to be encompassed with a sense of community through their time at CUNY’s HSI. It is within this community where students have the space to connect through similar experience, share networks and opportunities while other Latinos, like Queen and Jane, are proof of the complex reality of the Latino identity and the struggles that can arise in large Latino populations. Latino undergraduates at CCNY, which consistently neared 4,000 students annually between 2019 and 2023, allows for the assumption that there will be a wide spectrum of Latinos on campus (Fig 3a). While this is true, the boundaries of who constitutes a *Latino* is still cemented as institutional categories formally generalize students under the label while social, campus-level expectations and beliefs determine who is recognized as Latino. The Latino identity is not the fixed identification that HSIs need us to be for their designation. In order for CUNY’s HSIs to understand this complexity that is our lived reality, there must be transparency in denoting Latino students as a singular demographic. Without this, CUNY continues to foster an environment that allows Latinos to become pliant to

this generalization while we even form boundaries around who should be perceived as such. CUNY will fail to show effort in Latino excellence if it continues to flatten our presence to solely numerical values.

Conclusion

The implementation of HSIs within CUNY is a remarkable first step in the work to alleviate the educational disparities among Latino undergraduate students. A niche institution spread across the heart of NYC widens access to affordable higher education for those it was previously denied to. However, while we may gratefully acknowledge how the move to establish these institutions dedicated to Latinos sets a precedent for the worth in the investment of our educational success, my study shows CUNY's HSIs continue to display educational disparities in its Latino undergraduate population. Despite their overwhelming presence in CUNY's overall student population, Latinos are consistently graduating at lower rates compared to white undergraduate students. At the same time, while Latino students are able to experience connections formed on a foundation of common identity and cultural experiences, they're struggling to navigate through their Hispanic-serving higher education system.

The categorical designation as an HSI can bring along a purposeful amount of federal funding. It is crucial that this funding is concentrated within an area that is most likely to attract prospective Latino undergraduate students for the investment to be targeted towards the appropriate demographic. In a state that is within the top five¹¹ contributors to the Latino population in the U.S., NYC is a necessary location for HSIs. However, as Latinos attending CUNY's HSIs struggle to graduate at the same rates as their fall enrollments, the HSI designation

¹¹ As of October 22, 2025, the states with the largest Hispanic population are California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois.

begins to act as an institutional leverage that uses the Latino identity as its form of capital. As they do so, HSIs are perpetuating the cycle of the exploitation of Latinos.

Without a greater level of accountability for our HSIs, these institutions only function as indicators of the racial demographic of their student population. HSIs should emphasize true measures of their Latino excellence rather than the composition of their student body. The quality of education provided to Latino undergraduate students must be improved to alleviate their educational disparities. Our community's reliance on these institutions is not going to dwindle as our presence in the U.S. continues to grow and, until corrections are made, HSIs risk losing the importance of their design.

References

- Beshay. (2025, October 22). *Key facts about U.S. Latinos*. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/10/22/key-facts-about-us-latinos/>
- Cosse, J. I. (2016). *Deconstructing Latinx racial paradigms : cross-cultural constructions of race and their impact on Dominican-American racial identity*. Smith ScholarWorks.
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/1710>
- Creation of the Modern University – The City University of New York*. (2020). The City University of New York.
<https://www.cuny.edu/about/history/creation-of-the-modern-university/>
- CUNY Digital History Archive*. (n.d.). Cdha.cuny.edu.
<https://cdha.cuny.edu/coverage/coverage/show/id/33>
- Gross, A. J. (2006). 'The Caucasian Cloak': Mexican Americans and the Politics of Whiteness in the 20th-Century Southwest. *Georgetown Law Journal*, 95, 06-20.
- Gonzales, M. G. (2019). *MEXICANOS : a history of mexicans in the united states*. Indiana University Press.
- Gonzales, P. B. (2003). Struggle for Survival: The Hispanic Land Grants of New Mexico, 1848-2001. *Agricultural History*, 77(2), 293–324. JSTOR.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3744837>
- Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): 2022-23 | Excelencia in Education*. (2022). Excelencia Education.
<https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/publications/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis>
- History – The City University of New York*. (2020). The City University of New York.
<https://www.cuny.edu/about/history/>

- Klein, C. A. (2008). *Treaties of Conquest*.
- Korrol, V. S. (1996). The Origins and Evolution of Latino History. *OAH Magazine of History*, 10(2), 5–12. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25163064>
- Loveman, M., & Muniz, J. O. (2007). How Puerto Rico Became White: Boundary Dynamics and Intercensus Racial Reclassification. *American Sociological Review*, 72(6), 915–939. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200604>
- National Archives. (2021, June 25). *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)*. National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo>
- Nicholes, K. E. (2017). “*El Negro Sin La Oreja*”: A Dialectical Approach to the Blackness in Dominican Identity. <https://doi.org/10.25777/7924-3x33>
- Nicholas Vargas | Department of Ethnic Studies. (2016). Berkeley.edu. <https://ethnicstudies.berkeley.edu/people/nicholas-vargas>
- Rosario, N. (2017). *On Becoming*. 151–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405177603.ch13>
- Roth, W. (2012). *Race Migrations*. Stanford University Press.
- Telles, E. E. (2014). *Pigmentocracies : ethnicity, race, and color in Latin America*. Univ. Of North Carolina Press.
- Vargas, N. (2018). Racial Expropriation in Higher Education: Are Whiter Hispanic Serving Institutions More Likely to Receive Minority Serving Institution Funds? *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 4, 237802311879407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023118794077>

Appendix A

This appendix displays the results of enrollment and graduation rates between 2019 and 2023 of the seven CUNY four-year HSIs. The results of my Google Form survey showcasing the racial breakdown of Latinos undergraduate students when confined to the U.S. racial model and their personal identification.

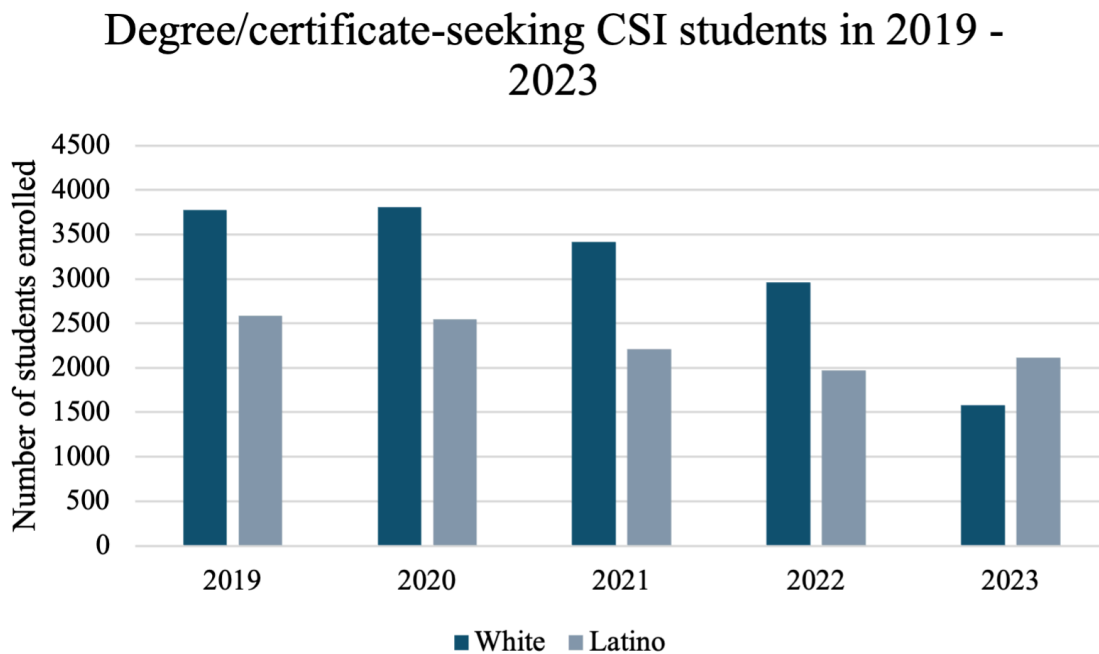


Figure 1a. The number of students enrolled into the College of Staten Island from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

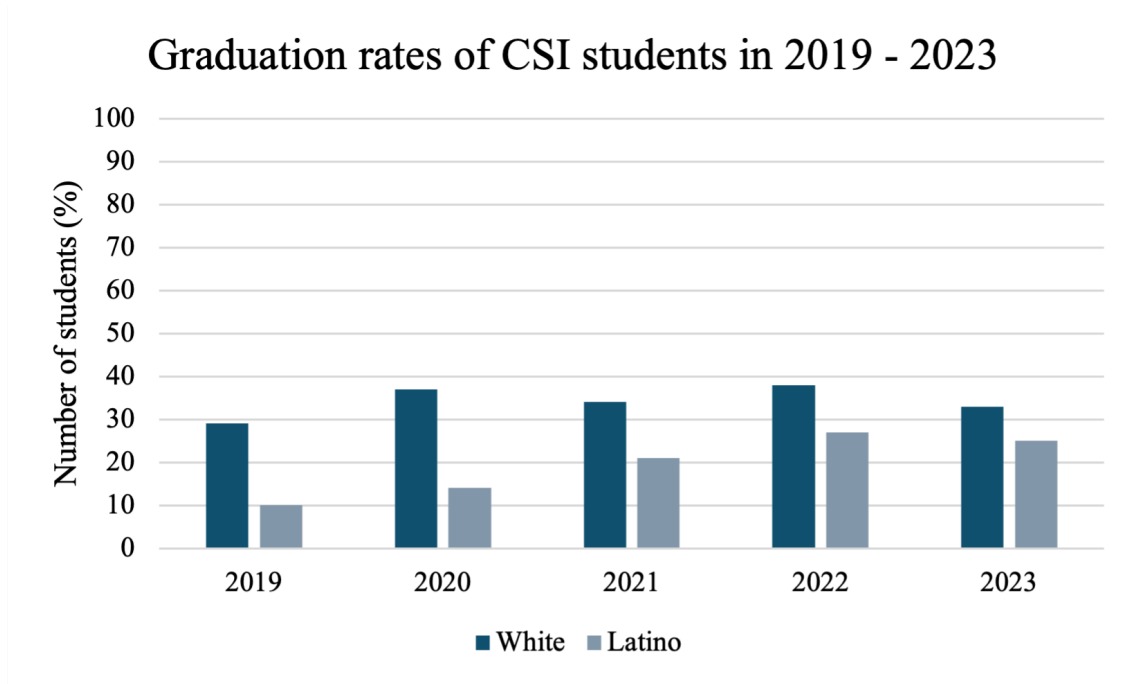


Figure 1b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at CSI from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

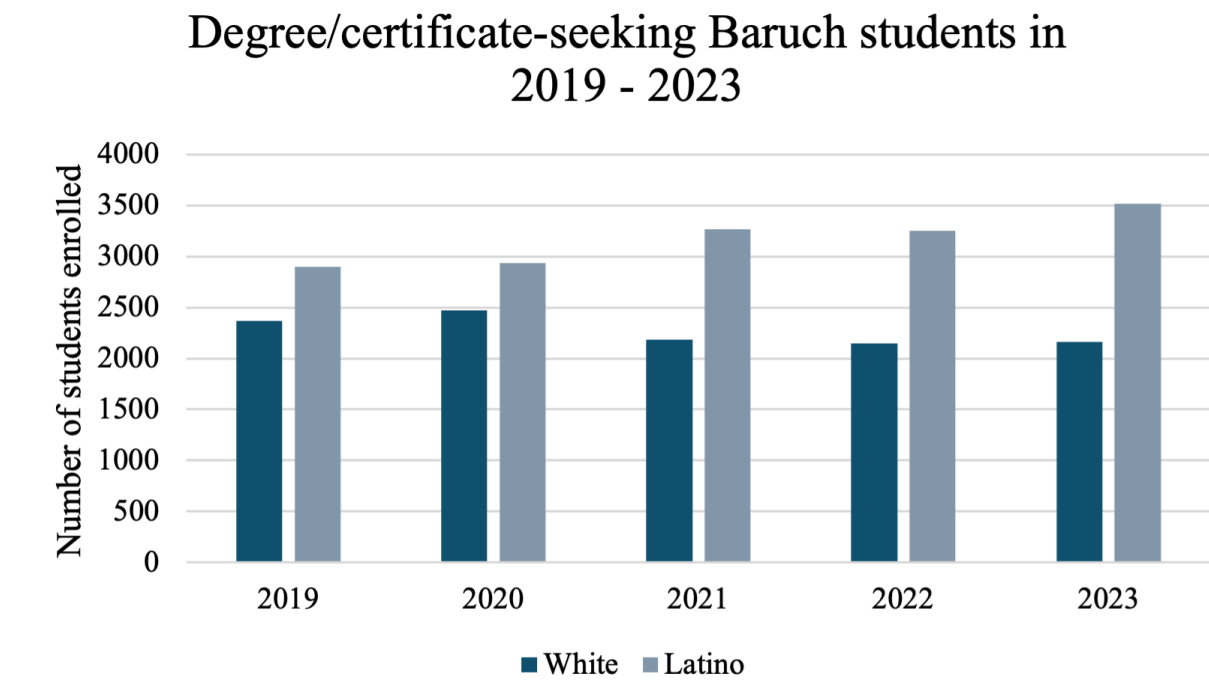


Figure 2a. The number of students enrolled into Bernard M. Baruch College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

Graduation rates of Baruch students in 2019 - 2023

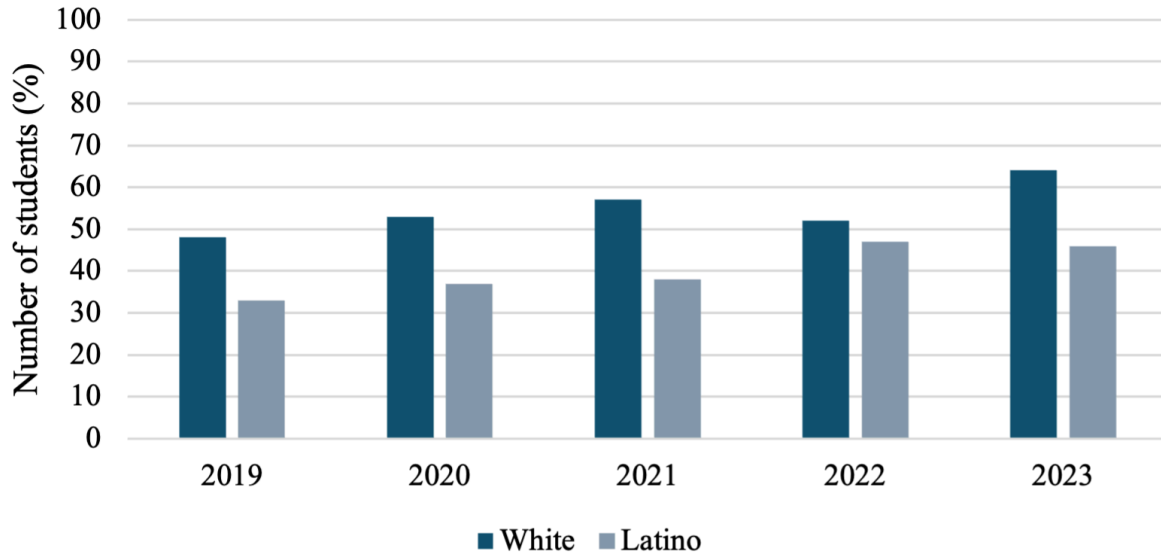


Figure 2b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at Bernard M. Baruch College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

Degree/certificate-seeking CCNY students in 2019 - 2023

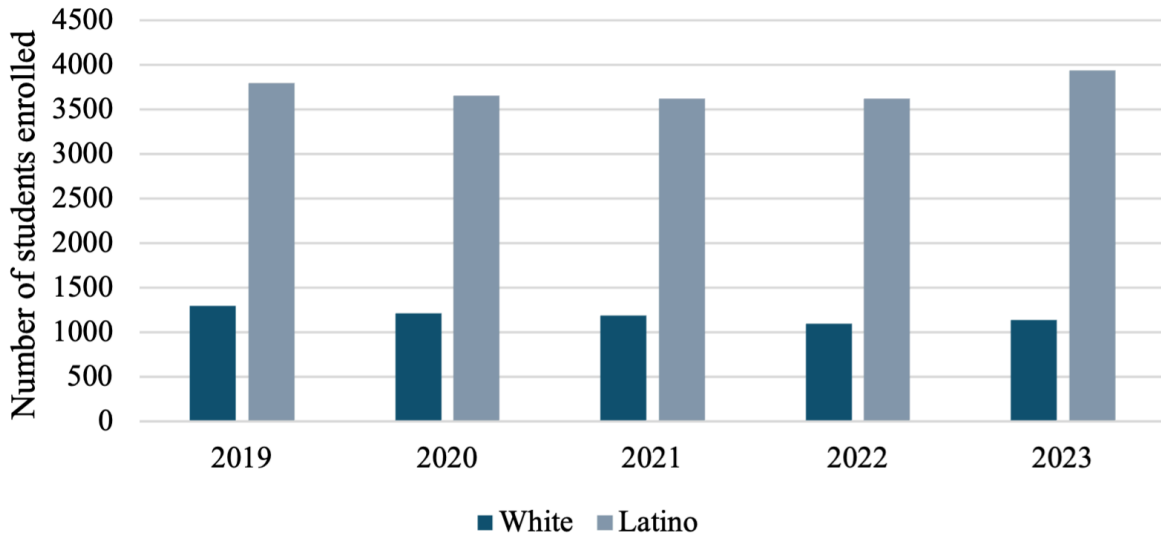


Figure 3a. The number enrolled into the City College of New York from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

Graduation rates of CCNY students in 2019 - 2023

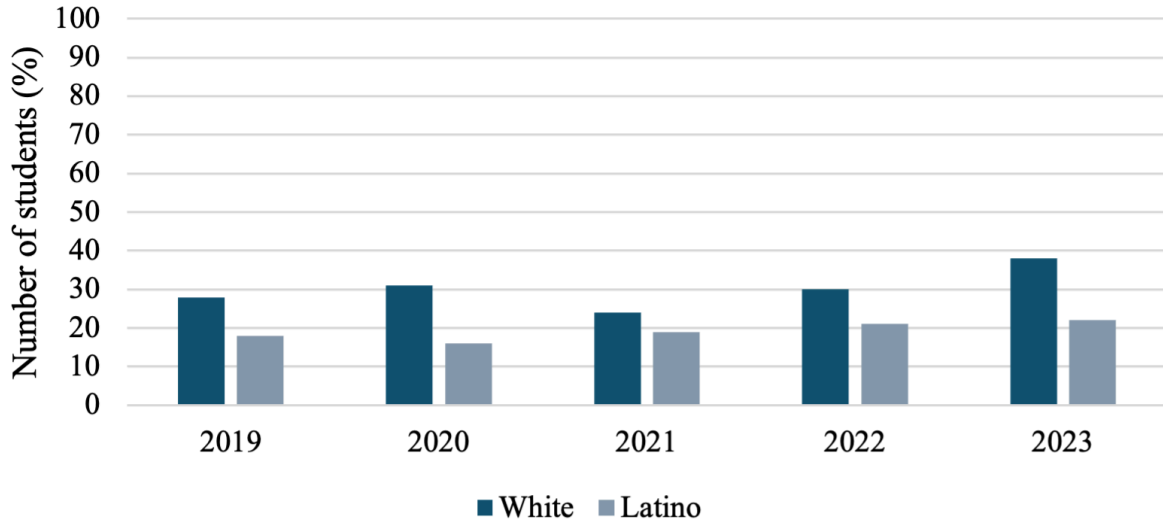


Figure 3b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at the City College of New York from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

Degree/certificate-seeking Hunter students in 2019 - 2023

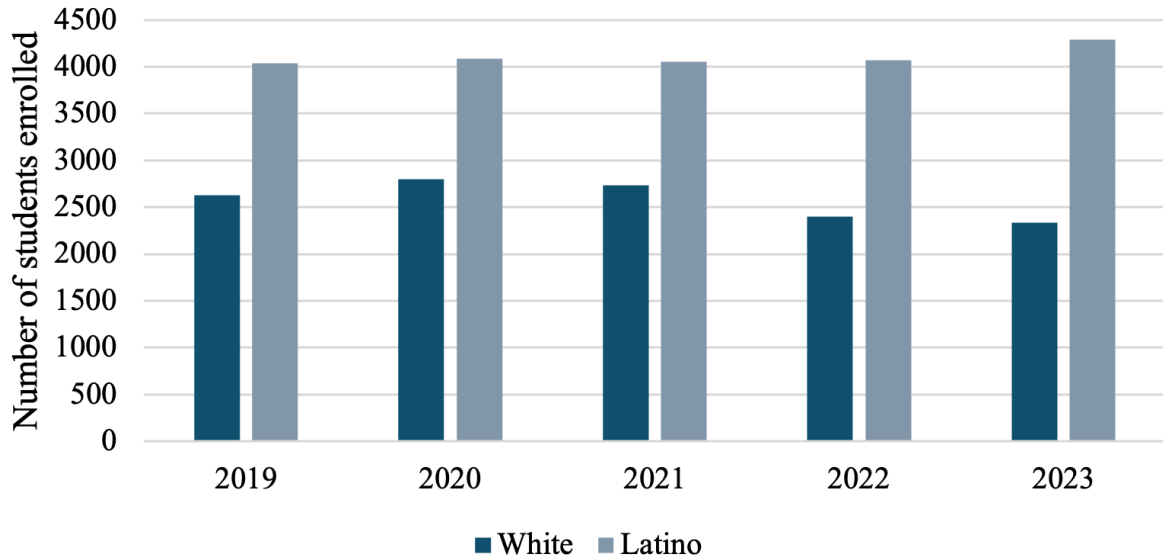


Figure 4a. The number of students enrolled into Hunter College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

Graduation rates of Hunter students in 2019 - 2023

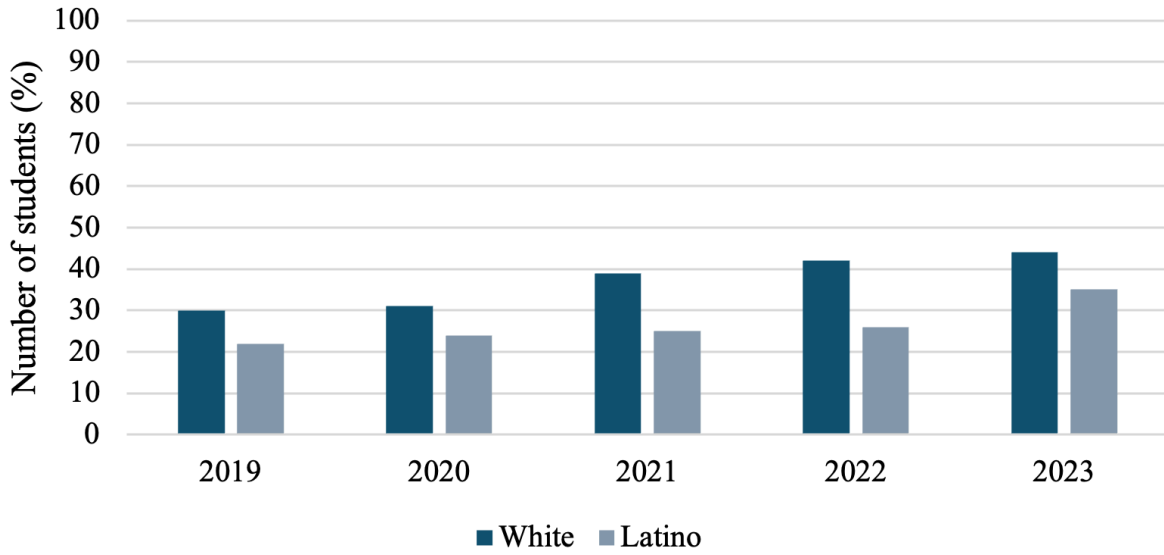


Figure 4b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at Hunter College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

Degree/certificate-seeking John Jay students in 2019 - 2023

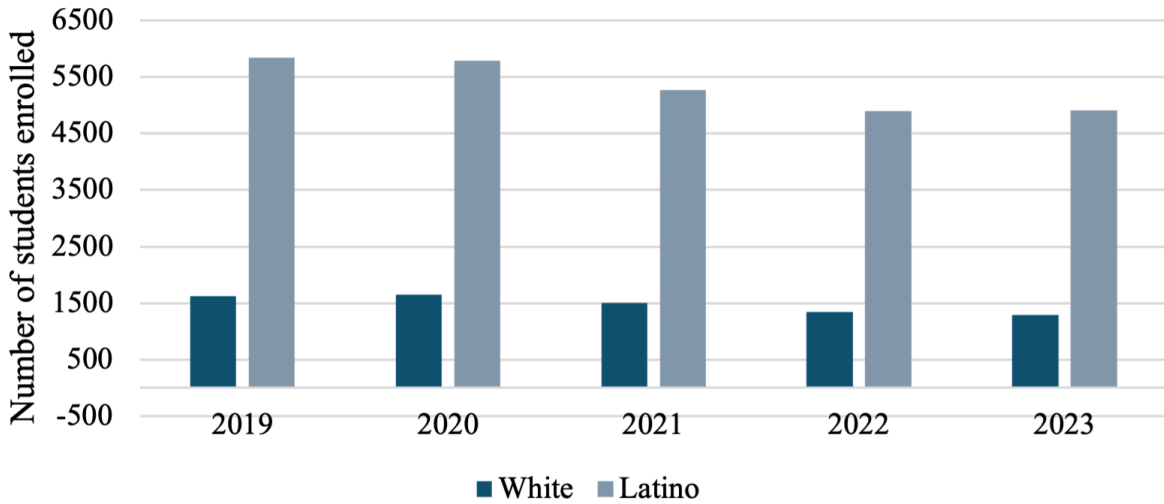


Figure 5a. The number of students enrolled into John Jay College of Criminal Justice from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

Graduation rates of John Jay students in 2019 - 2023

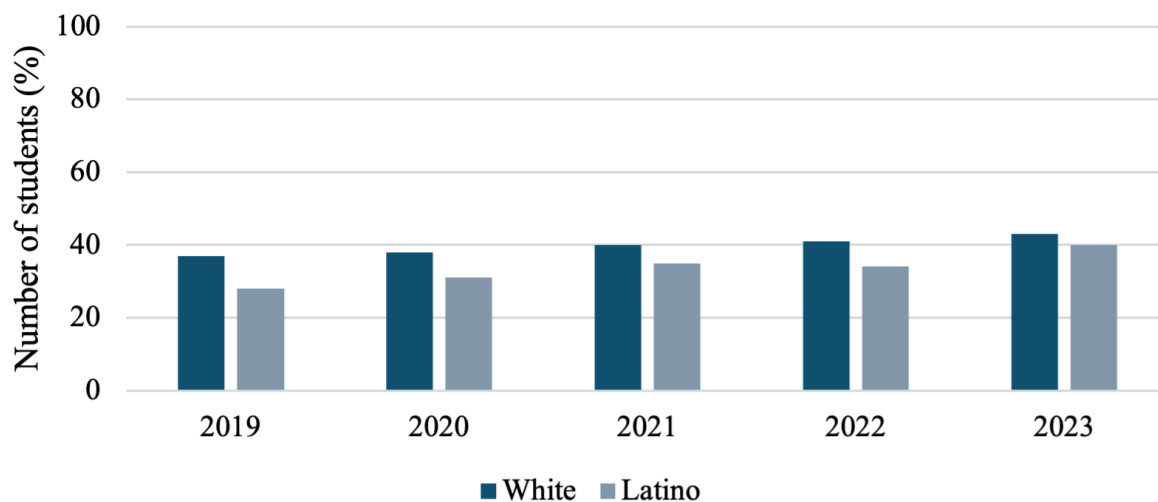


Figure 5b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

Degree/certificate-seeking Lehman students in 2019 - 2023

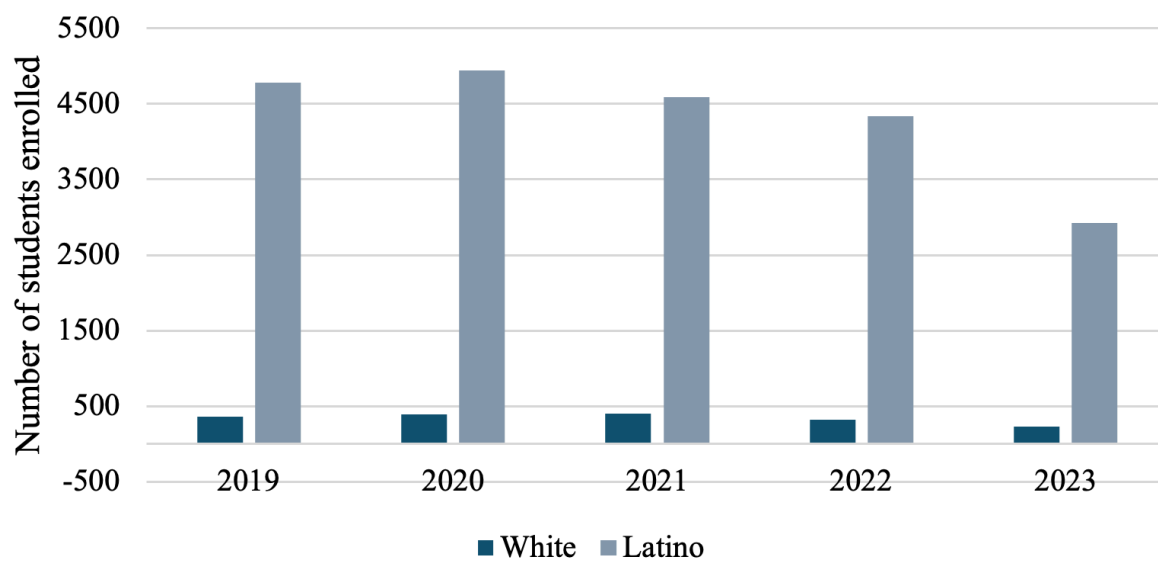


Figure 6a. The number of students enrolled into Lehman College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

Graduation rates of Lehman students in 2019 - 2023

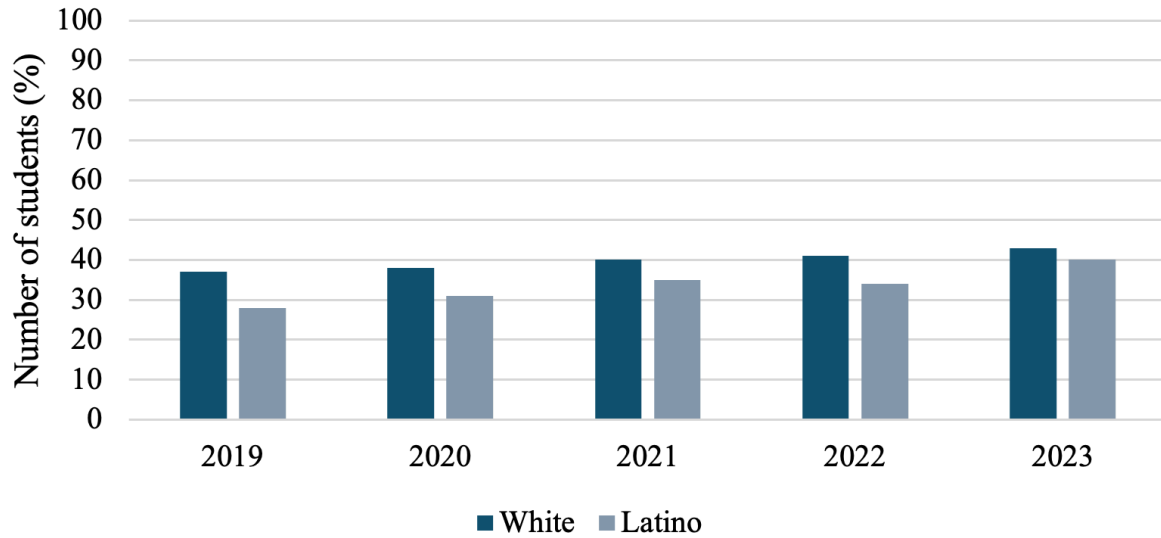


Figure 6b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at Lehman College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

Degree/certificate-seeking QC students in 2019 - 2023

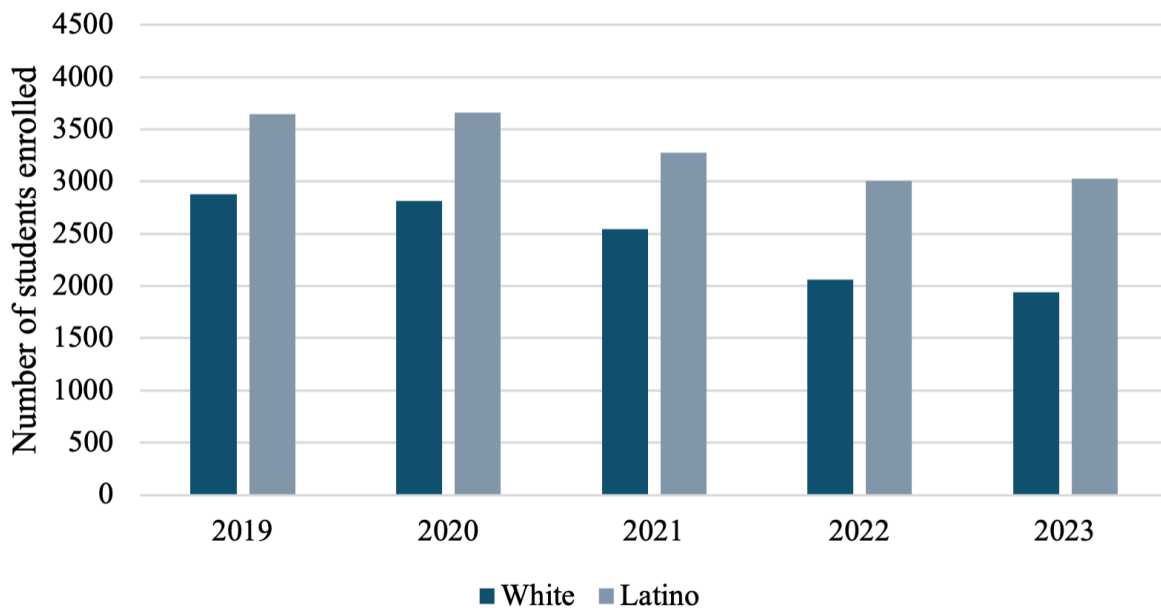


Figure 7a. The number of students enrolled into Queens College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed. This includes first-time, transfer, continuing, and returning students.

Graduation rates of QC students in 2019 - 2023

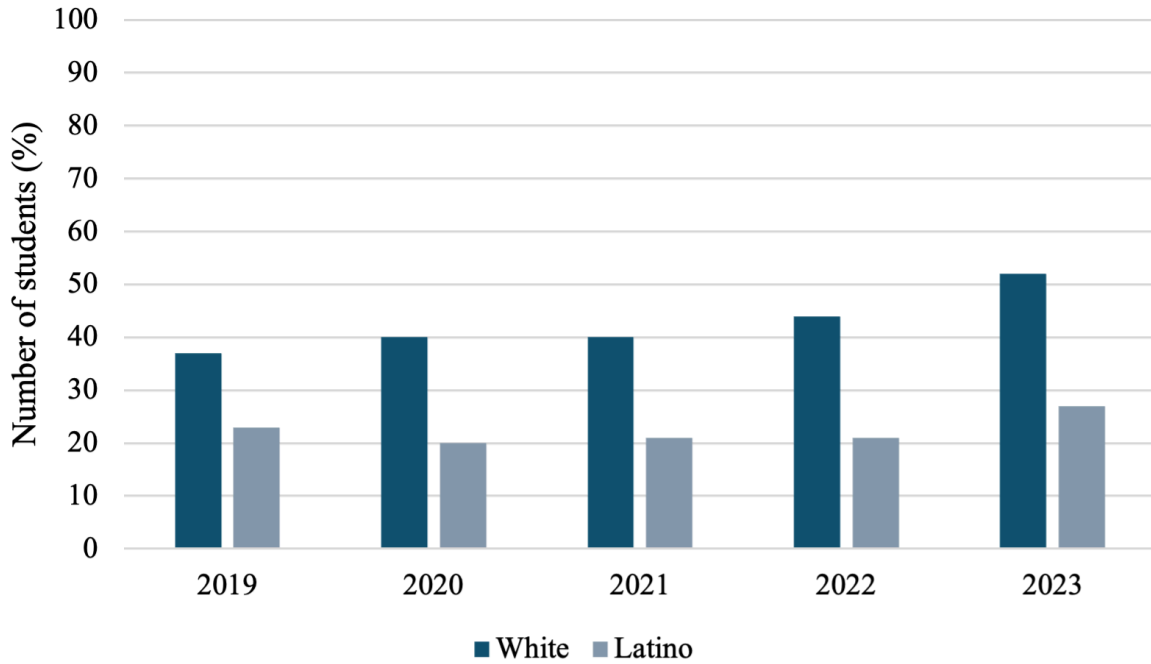


Figure 7b. The graduation rates of students enrolled at Queens College from 2019 to 2023 is displayed.

The Race of Latinos within the U.S. Racial Model

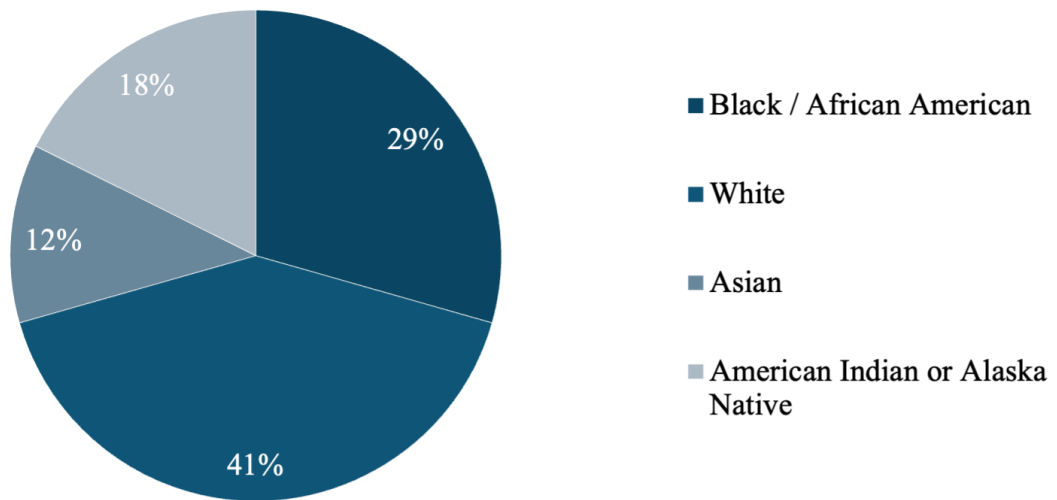


Figure 8. The race of Latinos at CUNY’s HSIs when provided a set of strict racial categories that are standard to the U.S. racial model.

The Race of Latinos

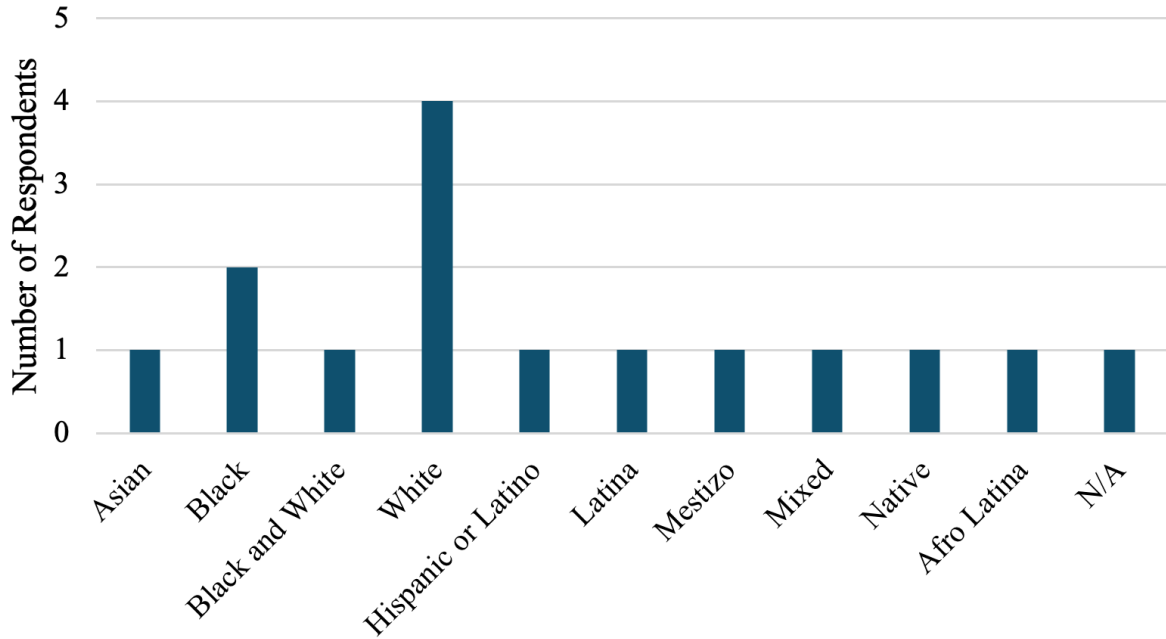


Figure 9. The race of Latinos at CUNY’s HSIs when provided the opportunity to self-identify their race outside of the U.S. racial boundaries.

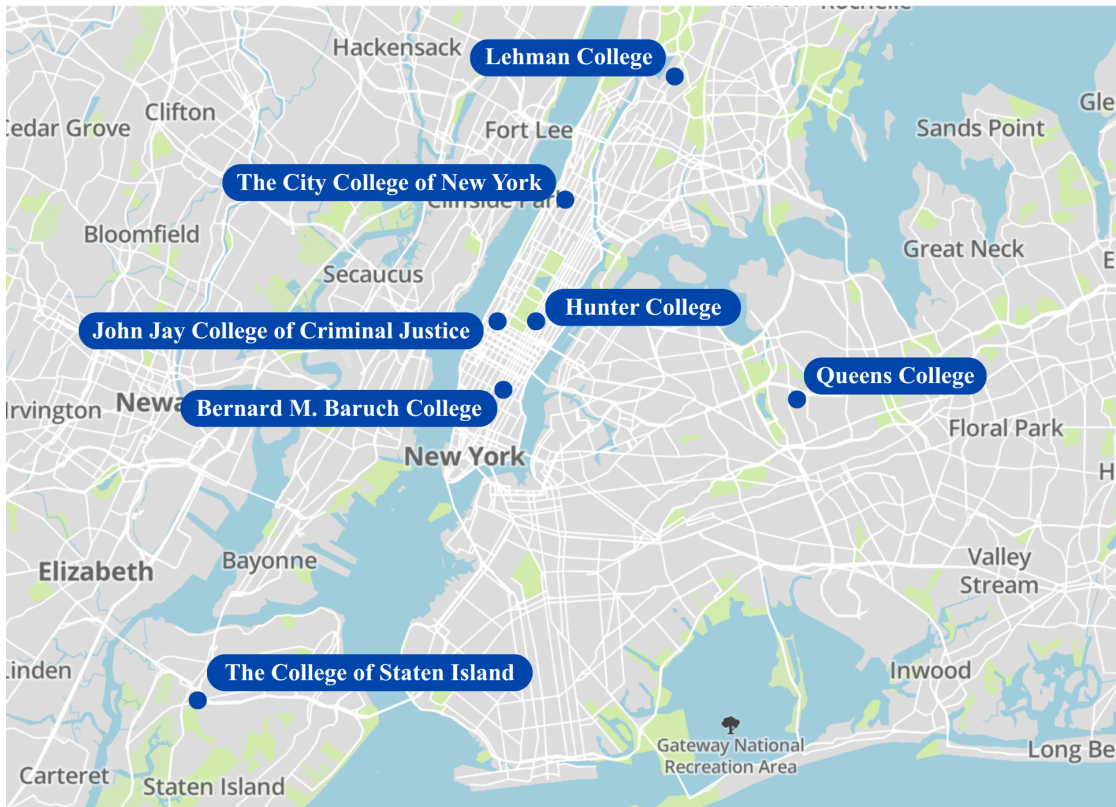


Figure 10. A map showcasing the locations of the seven CUNY four-year HSIs across New York City.

Appendix B

Survey: The Latino Identity and Experiences at CUNY

This appendix displays the current responses from Latino undergraduate students and was distributed as a Google Form to seven CUNY HSIs. It was used to assess racial demographic of Latinos attending these niche institutions.

Question 1: Are you currently enrolled as an undergraduate student at CUNY?

Yes

No

Question 2: What is your current year?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Question 3: Select the campus you are currently enrolled in.

College of Staten Island

Baruch College

The City College of New York

Hunter College

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Lehman College

Queens College

Question 4: Are you Latino?

Yes

No

Question 5: Indicate your race.

Question 6: Indicate your ancestral origin.

Question 7: Choose one of the following options that best describes your race.

Black / African American

White

Asian

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

American Indian or Alaska Native

Question 8: Are you interested in participating in a 30-minute interview?

Yes

No

Question 9: If selected “Yes” to the previous question, please provide an email or phone number.

Appendix C

Interview

This appendix displays the collection of questions that were selected from during interviews with a portion of the survey respondents. The interviewees were Latino undergraduate students from The City College of New York. These questions were used to understand the influences of Latinos perceptions of their racial identification and experience at The City College of New York. The questions are not placed in a particular order.

Question: When did you start attending classes at CCNY?

Question: What parts of your identity are most important to you?

Question: Are there ways you usually describe yourself that feel accurate? Are there ways you describe yourself that don't feel accurate?

Question: When you were filling out the form, how do you usually go about questions that ask about your background? Do you pause on those questions? Have your answers ever changed?

Question: How well do the options usually fit how you see yourself?

Question: If someone were to ask "what are you?" how would you respond?

Question: Thinking back to the form you completed, what was that experience like for you?

Were there any parts that stood out? Did you move through it quickly? Did you need to take pauses to think about a question?

Question: So when you got to question about race, how did you navigate that? What were you thinking about as you answered? Was there more than one option considered? How did you decide on an option?

Question: What has your experience at CCNY been like?

Question: Is there anything you wish you could have experienced during your time at CCNY?