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Impact of Psychology Courses on First-Generation College Students of Color

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the personal impact of first-generation community college students of color have after taking a psychology course. This research study focused on studying groups of people who were excluded from past research and were missing during the literature gap. This qualitative study examined the general impact psychology has on students who took at least one psychology course in higher education. Some of the emergent themes included students applying the knowledge they learned from psychology to have a better understanding of people and their behaviors, being less biased against other people, knowing more about the behavior of children and parenting, and applying the knowledge of parenting to their own family, making better decisions as parents, having a more positive perspective in the world, forgiving their parents on the experiences from childhood, perception of teenagers being able to understand themselves with psychology, teenagers would be better prepared for college and adulthood, teenagers would be more empathetic towards people who are different.

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Introduction

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Some community college students who identify as first-generation and people of color may have low socioeconomic status, discrimination, additional hardships, and other disadvantages in life compared to other students with privileges, such as their white, middle-class, peers First-generation college students are made up of individuals attending college before their parents resulting in them being unprepared for college life, lack of financial resources, and social support where second-generation and higher students have preparation and support (Rice et al., 2017). This inspires the idea of looking further into the benefits and potential impact of Psychology courses. Psychology is the study of the human mind and behavior which is academia that is mostly offered in college.

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How would you feel if past research has excluded people based on the color of their skin which has a strong influence on modern-day education? research conducted on the impact that taking psychology has on students has been limited to those who had the privilege to be studied from the fundamentals of psychology playing a role in education. The topic of the impact of psychology courses on students is essential because psychology can play an incredible role in improving education and understanding of improving behavior in people. It is worthwhile to understand whether taking psychology for individuals who struggle to be a first-generation college student and a person of color provides positive impacts outside the classroom. This study focuses on the lens of voices and individuals who have been excluded and hardly mentioned from past research, that of students of color. from the late 1950s to now. Therefore, it is worthwhile to understand whether taking psychology for individuals who struggle to be a first-generation college student and a person of color provides positive impacts outside the classroom.

61 This study thrives on taking a social justice approach of identifying patterns that have been long
62 missing for approximately 70 years in psychological and educational research.

63 Research has shown that some community college students demonstrated and applied the
64 knowledge they learned from Psychology relating to advising for great relationships and
65 understanding other people with dyslexia to support them (Bartolomeo-Maida, 2016). In
66 addition, research has demonstrated that some community college students related the course
67 material on child development and applied it to make better decisions for a mother with their
68 own children (Bartolomeo-Maida, 2016).

69 Based on research examined from personal impacts of taking a psychology course in
70 community college, it is hypothesized that first-generation community college students of color
71 after taking psychology use the information, they learn to overcome disadvantages and socio-
72 economic hardships to make better decisions, have positive outlooks, and understand some
73 behaviors are normal.

74 **Literature Review**

75 There is a gap in the literature on the impact of psychology. However, the limited amount
76 of literature provided some useful information in understanding the general impact of
77 psychology on students who took and did not take psychology.

78 The literature review will entail the challenges that first-generation community college
79 students of color must endure. In addition, understanding important history in psychology can
80 play a role in decoding possible biases and representation issues from past research relating to
81 this study. Furthermore, the researchers who conducted original research on the impact of
82 psychology on students brought attention to serious issues that made this research study essential
83 for modern education.

84 **The Experiences of First-Generation Students of Color in Schools**

85 According to Walizer (2018), the large population of students
86 who attend two-year or vocational schools is low-income students of color who have the highest
87 chance of having their off campus living needs to be underestimated. Also, Walizer (2018)
88 argues that significant consequences affecting students who are Black or Latinx may avoid
89 attending postsecondary education or training because of the perception of “college being so
90 expensive” with their underestimated financial needs being unmet. Furthermore, Walizer
91 expresses that regardless of all ethnicities of students, students who are Black have the highest
92 likelihood of not meeting their financial needs despite any institution they attend. According to
93 Jabbar (2019), an essential growing population for community colleges is students from
94 marginalized communities who tend to have poor representation in higher education. Also,
95 Jabbar (2019) states approximately 42% of students in one community college are students of
96 color with 48.5% of Black or African American students and 56% of students being Hispanic or
97 Latinx American.

98 Furthermore, Jabbar (2019) argues many students of color in community college being
99 resilient and overcoming challenges postpone transferring to four-year universities due to poor
100 faculty support for first-generation college students of color being confused on the transfer
101 process. According to Campbell (2018), first-generation students of color often endure work that
102 has little meaning to their lives or unsupportive faculty. This includes writing long papers that
103 are inapplicable to their own experiences or poor support from faculty to visualize themselves to
104 be successful students. Campbell (2018) argues that traditional schooling that is historically
105 viewed to be “rigorous” actually hinders the success of first-generation students of color due to
106 the lack of support. While it is important to challenge students, there is a need to redefine what

107 rigor is in college in a way that supports everyone in the system. Taking account of all these
108 experiences, therefore it is essential to further study the impact of psychology on first-generation
109 students of color.

110 **The History of the Field of Psychology and Students of Color**

111 *Defining the Field*

112 Psychology is an academic discipline considered to be a scientific study of behavior and
113 mental processes that is not limited to people's actions but also the perceptions, emotions,
114 thoughts, memories, reasoning processes, and biological activities that preserve bodily
115 functioning (Galvin, 2020). Psychology is beginning to have a more diverse history in the United
116 States with an average of 300,000 Psychologists; the discipline is now outnumbered by women
117 with 75% having earned a doctorate degree (Galvin, 2020). However, a problematic statistic is
118 that approximately 6 percent of psychologists belong to a racial minority group due to the
119 community of psychologists being majority white which belittles the field of psychology due to
120 the ethnic minorities being underrepresented. (Galvin, 2020). One of the most current histories
121 consisted of a doll test done by Mamie Phipps Clark, a female psychologist who has done work
122 to pioneer how kids of color grow to acknowledge racial uniqueness (Galvin, 2020).

123 **The Impact of Psychology on Students**

124 In one foundational study (Patti, 1956), psychology was found to have a positive impact
125 on 8th-grade students having curiosity and being more open-minded about learning about human
126 behavior. According to Patti (1956), studying the impact of psychology during the critical years
127 of child development has shown a connection to the children's identity and provides them an
128 opportunity to understand why their peers behave the way they do. In that study (Patti, 1956) an
129 8th-grade educator teaching the elementary psychology class asked their students a simple

130 question “What does ‘psychology’ mean to you?” and the responses included 8th graders stating
131 “Why do people do the things they do”, “It’s about what’s going on in people’s minds”, “it also
132 helps you understand people better”, and “what makes us do certain things”. Furthermore, a
133 second question Patti (1956) asked their students was “What do you expect to accomplish in this
134 course?” and the students gave responses like “... to try to find out about myself and why I do
135 things I do, also why people are different from each other...”, “to find out why some people are
136 nice and why some are hotheads, why some are musically inclined and some can’t even read
137 music”.

138 In another study, psychology was demonstrated to have a significant impact on a
139 student's self-insight (Costin, 1959). Costin (1959), found that taking an introductory psychology
140 course had a positive effect on a student's self-insight. In addition, Costin (1959) argues that
141 communication and psychology students have established a significant increase in their self-
142 insight score by a mean change of 3.76 points while communication students showed no
143 meaningful change when initial scores were the same at the start of the semester.

144 In one study (Costin & Kerr, 1962), psychology has been shown to allow students to have
145 better and less judgmental attitudes towards individuals with mental disorders. According to
146 Costin and Kerr (1962), who studied the effect of an abnormal psychology course on the
147 attitudes of students toward mental illness. Costin and Kerr (1962) argue there is a desirable
148 route of effective change from the course on the student’s attitude toward people with mental
149 illness and mental illnesses in general despite low or high achievers. Also, Costin and Kerr
150 (1962), express the importance of measuring attitudinal outcomes of the expectation of
151 psychology instead of reducing changes from course grade by itself.

152 In one study (Bartolomeo-Maida, 2016), psychology helped students reflect on the
153 important roles the subject has in their lives when writing about what they read from the
154 textbook. According to Bartolomeo-Maida (2016), a professor who studied the usage of learning
155 journals to foster textbook reading in a community college psychology class. Bartolomeo-Maida
156 (2016) argues that learning journals demonstrate positive impacts and critical thinking on
157 psychological concepts in the student’s personal life and experiences. One prompt states “What
158 are two things that were most interesting to read about in this chapter and why?”. One of the
159 responses was “I found that learning disabilities section to be interesting because I could relate to
160 it having a sister with dyslexia and I could understand the topic better. It was also good to know
161 that 80 percent of children with learning disabilities have a problem with reading. This piece of
162 information helped me let my sister know that she is not alone and should not feel alone with her
163 disability”. A second prompt states “How does the knowledge in this chapter relate to you or
164 someone you know in your life? /or Why is this knowledge important?” One of the responses
165 was “I never realized how important taking initiative and completing tasks would be in the
166 development of a child. The child trying to do something can have profound effects. Using my
167 own child as a basis, I recall him making a mess of the toothpaste because he wanted to be a “big
168 boy” and do it. He has more toothpaste on the sink than on the brush. Taking into consideration
169 what is contained in this chapter, I did not blow up at him. Rather, I spoke with him and showed
170 him a trick to help himself. I really try to be an emotional coach with him, because most boys are
171 taught to withhold emotions, which could be detrimental later in life.” This assignment the
172 professor created demonstrates the potential and positive impact of psychology courses.

173 **Theoretical Framework: Applying an Ethnic Studies Lens to the Study of Psychology**

174 Using an ethnic studies framework in this study is essential in providing an understanding
175 of the impact of psychology courses on first-generation students of color who have to endure
176 oppression every day in society. According to Northern Arizona University, they define ethnic
177 studies is “the interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity, as understood through the
178 perspectives of major underrepresented racial groups in the United States. As a student, you will
179 draw upon many disciplines and areas of thought to comprehend the sociocultural, intellectual,
180 and historical experiences that inform the construction of racial, gender, and cultural identities.
181 You will question the origin and continuity of race and racism, and discover your own area of
182 research and action that can affect social justice for all” (Ethnic Studies).

183 Applying an ethnic studies lens to psychology provides different perspectives that general
184 psychology courses cannot provide such as the perspectives of how the theories apply differently
185 toward people of color to many factors such as trauma and experiences. Ethnic studies in
186 psychology provide a better understanding of the story of their communities and how oppression
187 in society has made an impact on their behavior. The proposed framework includes examining
188 African Americans, Asian or Southeast Asians, and Latinx through the lens of psychology.

189 Some attempts have already been made to...In African American psychology, there are
190 many essential components and cultural contexts. According to McInnis (2018), students learn
191 about issues that affect black communities on identity prior to enslavement, the harms of
192 colonization, and the modern-day impact of historical experiences such as the chattel slave trade
193 and the African holocaust. In addition, McInnis discusses how students learn about the course
194 and teach how African Americans use the concept of communal self-knowledge to be an
195 essential element for psychological, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

196 In Asian-American psychology, there are essential elements taught for students to learn
197 about. According to (Yip et al., 2013), students learn about concepts such as contact theory and
198 self-perceptions of Asian-Americans behave to avoid discrimination as an immigrant and ethnic
199 minority group. Also, (Yip et al, 2013) mention Intragroup contact is a practice where Asian-
200 American students who attend schools predominantly white increase the power of the affiliation
201 of their ethnic minority group to reduce the harmful impact of racism and discrimination.
202 Furthermore, (Yip et al., 2013) argue when Asian-Americans establish a presence with
203 individuals who are associated with their community and ethnic group is connected to
204 establishing better psychological well-being and improved self-perception.

205 In Chicano psychology, there are some critical elements students learn about their past
206 that have consequences on education. According to Gavin (2020), students learn about the
207 impact of the brown self-image obstructed throughout the years of development when being
208 compared to white Anglo children. In addition, Gavin (2020) presents the impact of
209 Americanization that teaches Chicana/os students a failure and drop-out syndrome which is part
210 of conditioning the Brown/Spanish legacy with inferiority and being part of the lower economic
211 class.

212 **The Literature Gap and This Study**

213 The connections made from the literature review and the survey questions establish to
214 measure the impact of psychology in this study focused on “Do you use the knowledge you
215 learned in Psychology to improve other people's lives?” which is what professor Bartolomeo-
216 Maida saw in her 2016 study with their community college class. Unfortunately, there is an
217 overall literature gap as to the impact of psychology on students. The major issue with the early
218 research in psychology completely fails to acknowledge participant identity which leaves future

219 researchers to be at a blank or make assumptions that people of color were purposely left out or
220 excluded from the essential studies of the impact of psychology. General psychology courses
221 tend to focus on a very Eurocentric focus which serves a significant role in this research to bring
222 social justice to people of color and to further research and study the impact of psychology on
223 that respected population. However, psychology courses that incorporate ethnic studies and the
224 focus group of the specific race do focus away and acknowledge the harmful effect of general
225 psychology from Eurocentric viewpoints as the only correct perspective.

226 Based on research examined from personal impacts of taking a psychology course in
227 community college, it is hypothesized that first-generation community college students of color
228 after taking psychology use the information, they learn to overcome disadvantages and socio-
229 economic hardships to make better decisions, have positive outlooks, and understand some
230 behaviors are normal.

231 **Methods**

232 The research question for this study was what is the personal impact of taking psychology
233 for first-generation students of color? The design and method of collecting data put this question
234 into consideration to be suitable to try to answer the question in the most effective way possible.

235 **Design**

236 This study took on a social justice approach for an explanatory research design. The
237 research advisor and researcher designed a questionnaire survey and interview protocol in a way
238 to better understand whether psychology has any impact on the participant's own life and other
239 individuals after taking psychology and their teenage years without taking the course.

240 **Data Collection**

241 The participants were given a link through social media, from a variety of psychology
242 courses at Pasadena City College, and by email from flyers. I contacted psychology professors
243 through email who teach courses that require taking introductory psychology. In addition, when
244 advertising the survey opportunity, it was offered as a social justice opportunity to be a voice
245 from a literature gap and a paid opportunity to conduct an interview. In the consent form prior to
246 the participants starting the questionnaire survey, all participants were notified no names or
247 personal information will be collected in the survey. In the interview, all participants were
248 notified no names will be in the actual study and that will respect their identity and privacy. All
249 names used during the findings are pseudo names and are not the true names of the actual
250 participants. This design was done to ensure participants could express themselves truthfully and
251 the effect of their names being published would not result in them responding in a way of hiding
252 their valid experiences.

253 **Data Analysis**

254 The questionnaire survey and interview transcriptions were used to perform analysis for
255 the findings of this study. The questionnaire surveys were used to understand the significance of
256 respondents with a “4” or “5” and to look at the open responses to understand what the common
257 theme(s) were from multiple participants. Due to the nature of interviews providing more detail
258 and experiences from the voices of our participants, the interviews were used to understand if
259 there is a more complex picture or concrete evidence to support the findings. My advisor and I
260 contributed some essential themes to understand what the data collected showed to be
261 represented in our findings.

262 **Instruments**

263 There was a total of two instruments that were used for the research study. The first
264 instrument was a questionnaire survey through Google Forms that consisted of participant
265 identity, nine questions that consisted of a combination of Likert scales, and open-ended
266 responses. The second instrument included an interview protocol through a zoom conference that
267 consisted of participant identity, ten open-ended questions, and personal feedback with screen
268 sharing their responses as they were being transcribed to ensure they were accurate. For the first
269 instrument, the participants must read and check the consent form and the four major
270 requirements which included a) you are a first-generation college student, b) you are a person of
271 color (with the explanation that being multi-racial with being white is acceptable), c) completed
272 an introductory psychology course with a c or better in community college, d) currently or had
273 identified as a community college student during the time they took their first psychology course.
274 The first question the participants were asked “Do you often use the knowledge you learn in a
275 Psychology course to improve your daily life?” and rate their response on a scale of 1 - 5 (1
276 rarely to 5 very often). The second question asked was an optional follow-up based on their scale
277 response states, “If you do so often, what knowledge do you apply in your life for yourself?” The
278 third question asked, “Do you use the knowledge you learned in Psychology to improve other
279 people's lives?” and rate their response on a scale of 1 - 5 (1 rarely to 5 very often). The fourth
280 question asked was an optional follow-up based on their scale response states, “If you do so
281 often, what knowledge do you apply to other people in your life?” The fifth question asked, “If
282 Psychology was offered at your high school, how likely would have you taken the course?” with
283 choices of (not very likely, very likely, I actually took the class in high school). The sixth
284 question asked a statement, “I believe that taking a Psychology course in high school would
285 affect some decisions I made during my teenage years.” and rate their responses on a scale of 1 -

286 5 (1 disagree to 5 agree). The seventh question asked a required follow-up based on their scale
287 response “Could you briefly explain your level of agreement?” The eighth question asked, “I
288 believe that taking Psychology in college, has improved my ability to make better decisions.”
289 and rate their responses on a scale of 1 - 5 (1 disagree to 5 agree). The ninth question asked a
290 required follow-up question based on their scale response “Could you briefly explain your level
291 of agreement?”. The questionnaire ended debrief on the purpose of the study and the opportunity
292 to email the researcher if they want to participate in the interview.

293 The second instrument was a 45 - 60-minute interview one on one with the researcher
294 and the participant. The researcher shared their screen of zoom using a “Transcript” tool to write
295 as the participant is speaking for transparency purposes. Prior to the interview, the participants
296 were asked to answer a participant identity questionnaire. The interview followed ten questions
297 shown one at a time with the opportunity to provide personal comments and feedback. The first
298 question asked, “Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what Psychology courses you
299 have taken (or are taking)?” The second question asked, “Think back to the first Psychology
300 class that you took.” Can you recall what your experience was like as you learned about human
301 behavior for the first time in a class?” The third question asked, “Of all the topics you’ve learned
302 in your Psych classes, what are one or two things that have stayed with you?” The fourth
303 question asked, “What did learning psychology teach you about the way people behave? What
304 did it teach you about yourself?” The fifth question is, “Have you used any information or
305 concepts from your Psych courses to make better decisions in your life?” The sixth question
306 asked, “Do you think learning about psychology and human development changed your
307 perspective on your family and how family members might behave?” The seventh question
308 asked, “Are there any topics that you wish your Psych teacher, or the course would explain or

309 talk about that they have not? Is there anything you wish was different?” The eighth question
 310 asked, “Psychology teaches us about how people behave differently and why they behave the
 311 way they do. Do you think that if you had learned this information earlier in high school, you
 312 would have changed the way you behave towards people who are different from you?” The ninth
 313 question asked, “What is your perspective on psychology becoming a required elective for
 314 graduation in high school? Can you elaborate?” The tenth question asked, “I am doing a study on
 315 the impact of Psychology courses on first-generation Students of Color. If you were doing this
 316 study, is there a question you would have asked that I did not?”

317 **Participants**

318 A total of 44 participants were surveyed through a questionnaire survey. To better
 319 understand the sample population, we asked participants to provide some identifying information
 320 such as gender, age, ethnicity, and psychology courses they have taken in community college. 36
 321 (81.8%) of the participants were women and 8 (18.2%) of the participants were men. The age
 322 group that was surveyed was between the ages of 18 and 58 years old. The following table
 323 (Table 1) demonstrates the various ages of the sample population.

Table 1: Demographics of Sample Population

Variable	<i>n</i>	Percentage of Participants
Gender		
Women	36	81.8
Men	8	18.2
Age		
18 - 20	17	38.6
21 - 26	18	40.8
27 - 58	9	20.6

Ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native Asian	1	2.3
Asian or Southeast Asian	13	29.5
Black or African American	2	4.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	4.5
White	3	6.8
Hispanic or Latino American	28	63.6
Peruvian	1	2.3
Arab American	1	2.3

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325 Furthermore, the sample population included 19 (43.2%) of participants who only completed
 326 introductory psychology, 2 (4.5%) of participants completed studies in Chicano behavior, 6
 327 (13.6%) of participants completed human sexuality, 10 (22.7%) of participants completed
 328 lifespan developmental psychology, 10 (22.7%) of participants completed social psychology, 2
 329 (4.5%) of participants completed developmental psychology: the adult, 10 (22.7%) of
 330 participants completed developmental psychology: the child, 7 (15.9%) of participants completed
 331 research methods in psychology, and 8 (18.2%) of participants completed elementary
 332 physiological psychology.

333 A total of 9 participants were interviewed through individual zoom conferences. To better
 334 understand our sample population, the participants were asked during the interview to provide
 335 some identifying information such as gender, age, ethnicity, and psychology courses they have
 336 taken in community college. 5 (55.6%) of the participants were women and 4 (44.4%) of the
 337 participants were men. The age group that was surveyed was between 19 and 58 years old. The
 338 sample population included 2 (22.2%) participants who were 19 years old, 1 (11.1%) of

339 participants who were 20 years old, 1 (11.1%) of participants were 21 years old, 1 (11.1%) of
340 participants were 23 years old, 2 (22.2%) of participants were 32 years old, 1 (11.1%) of
341 participants were 48 years old, and 1 (11.1%) of participants were 58 years old. In addition, the
342 sample population included 1 (11.1%) of participants were American Indian or Alaska Native
343 Asian, 3 (33.3%) participants were Asian or Southeast Asian, 1 (11.1%) of participants were
344 Black or African American, 1 (11.1%) of participants were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific
345 Islander, 5 (55.5%) of participants were Hispanic or Latino American, 1 (11.1%) of participants
346 were Peruvian.

347 **Findings**

348 There are five main concepts of this study that gave a clear answer to our research
349 question. In this section, we will explore the findings of how the participants applied psychology
350 knowledge to their own lives. Also, we will understand the findings of how the participants
351 applied psychology knowledge to other people's lives. In addition, we will look at what the
352 findings were when the participants provided their own perspectives on psychology being
353 offered in high school. Moreover, we will explore further how the findings showed the
354 participant's perception and ability to make better decisions after learning about psychology.
355 Furthermore, we will look over the findings on how the participant's perception of their family's
356 behavior after taking psychology.

357 **Applying Psychology to Their Lives**

358 The findings showed that a significant number of participants were using what they
359 learned in psychology in their daily lives. 69% of participants surveyed reported using the
360 knowledge they learned in Psychology courses to improve their daily lives. When asked what
361 type of knowledge participants felt improved their daily lives, several themes emerged in the

362 surveys. They mentioned applying Psychology knowledge to have a better understanding of
363 people and their behaviors, being less biased against others, and knowing more about the
364 behavior in children and parenting. The interviews showed a more complex picture. Several
365 interviews showed that some participants used the knowledge they learned in class in their
366 parenting to make sense of how they themselves were parented. For instance, Brianna, a 32-year-
367 old Latina woman, said,

368 In Child development psychology, what stayed with me is how sometimes when we
369 follow patterns from our parents and how we were raised. I learned sometimes we need to
370 break those patterns so that our kids do not grow up the way we did like traumatize or
371 paranoid because we are making them grow up the way we did which the professor
372 discussed that I learned. Learning how to create new patterns and we cannot
373 underestimate toddlers for the idea that they do not know much but learn a lot. This
374 became a reality being a mother of three soon-to-be four.

375 Brianna applied the knowledge she learned in child psychology to how her parents raised her and
376 understand the concept of what you can learn, you can unlearn. Brianna believed that learning
377 psychology helps students with different light to a point where we are not destined to be exactly
378 like our parents to do the same actions we strongly disliked. Furthermore, she believed that
379 psychology allows parents to be more empathetic with their children. How much brighter than
380 adults can understand permits better parenting.

381 In a separate interview, another woman Mona, a 58-year old and American Indian and
382 Latina woman and older community college student, discussed using the psychology knowledge
383 in a similar way, Mona said,

384 Two things that stood out to me were that I was able to change my character and
385 personality knowing that I came from my two parents, I did have to carry on what they
386 taught me. When people say that you have your mom's character and taking the course I
387 did not have to be like my mother. I can unlearn the traits I was given through my DNA
388 were impressive and made a huge impact on my life. Even though we have the
389 characteristics of our parents we can change despite it being hard.

390 Mona applied the personality theory from their introductory psychology course to herself
391 and her parents. She believed learning psychology taught her to change herself to be a better
392 person and parent than her parents raised her. Mona mentions an idea of how our behavior is not
393 truly set to stone but as individuals growing up can learn behaviors more suitable to ourselves
394 than what people want us to become. Other respondents shared that they used psychology to
395 improve themselves and learn from other people's imperfections.

396 **Applying Psychology to Other People's Lives**

397 The findings showed that a significant number of participants were using what they
398 learned in psychology to improve other people's lives. 61.4% of participants surveyed reported
399 using the knowledge they learned in Psychology courses to improve other people's lives. When
400 asked what type of knowledge participants felt improved their other people's lives, one theme
401 emerged in the surveys. They mentioned applying Psychology knowledge of parenting family
402 and friends who are parents. In the questionnaire, Helena, an 18-year-old Latina stated, "When I
403 see my uncle's baby, I would kind of explain to them what I'm learning and it's very interesting
404 because the knowledge is accurate". Helena believes the concepts she learned in psychology is
405 accurate enough to help her family become more effective parent. In addition, Theresa, a 26-
406 year-old Latina stated, "I usually use Child Psychology in my niece's life, since she's a child".

407 Theresa believes child psychology plays a huge role in applying to her niece's life and
408 understanding her behavior. Furthermore, Savanna, a 22-year-old Latina said,

409 I work with the Crisis Text Line, which is a volunteer position to help texters get from a
410 hot moment to a cool calm. I speak with more empathy and compassion for people. I
411 always ask myself, "what made them react this way?" or "what was their upbringing like,
412 and how does that relate to the person they are today?"

413 Savanna applied empathy during her volunteer work to make sure her assistance is effective and
414 compassionate. Savanna believes psychology has helped her question why people are behaving
415 the way they do and what transforms them to be this type of individual.

416 **Applying Psychology to Make Better Decisions**

417 The findings showed that a significant number of participants believed taking psychology
418 in high school would allow them to make better decisions during their teenage years. 63.7% of
419 participants surveyed reported they agreed that the belief that they took psychology in high
420 school may have an impact on the decisions they made when they were teenagers. Some themes
421 have emerged from making better decisions as parents and having a new perspective in life. In
422 the survey questionnaire, Erica, a 22-year-old Latina woman, said, "It really made me open-
423 minded and made me aware of what trauma can do to us. Coming from a traumatic childhood
424 really helped me get my mentality on a better level. There are not a lot of classes that have this
425 type of self-growth that changes you in a good way". Erica believes psychology helped make
426 better decisions when it comes to traumatic situations. She mentions being open-minded and
427 having self-growth improved her mentality when it comes to forming decisions now. In an
428 interview with Elaine, a 48-year-old African American woman said,

429 If I had children, I may want to go further because I believe in taking psychology to be a
430 better parent. As an adult, psychology always taught me the things that happen as
431 children and became who we are from the influence of adults but never personally apply
432 the thoughts or ideas in psychology. The biggest impact of psychology would be when
433 having a child and can have more control and would use psychology as personal usage.
434 Elaine believes psychology taught her that adults influence what kind of decisions their children
435 will learn to make later in life. She mentions that even not having children of her own, better
436 prepared for decisions a mother would make when having children. Also, Elaine believes
437 psychology has an impact on having better control as a parent when making decisions for our
438 children.

439 **Perception of Family After Taking Psychology**

440 The findings showed that a significant amount of interview participants changed their
441 perspective on their family's behavior after taking psychology. 88.88% of interview participants
442 had a better perspective and understanding of their family's behavior. A major theme that
443 emerged from the interview indicates a positive impact of forgiving their parents for any bad
444 parenting they experience as children. In an interview, Mona a Native American and Latina
445 woman said,

446 Yes, my perspective gave me a better understanding of what my family was lacking. My
447 family was lacking a better understanding and a position in life to understand what their
448 past life was all about and deal with it. I feel that people doubt their younger years and
449 what they went through. I felt they would develop and do things differently. If a family
450 knew how to change themselves before, they had a family they might have raised their
451 family differently.

452 Mona believes learning psychology taught her what her family was missing with the lack of
453 education in psychology. She mentioned the parenting of her parents and their behavior while
454 teenagers may have an impact on how they parent her. In addition, Mona believes psychology
455 plays an essential role for people to become better parents and change their behavior that could
456 result in bad parenting. In another interview, Isabella a 32-year-old Pacific Islander and Latina
457 woman said,

458 It definitely changed. My biological parents because I blamed myself like I never got
459 along with my mother. It helped me understand her behavior for acting the way she did.
460 When I was 9 - 11, I would judge and be angry with her. I learned and realized I needed
461 to stop judging and being angry with her because there were reasons why she acted like
462 she had a rough childhood, teenage years, and adulthood and not to be so hard on her.

463 This was the same with my father and his not being around made me understand because
464 his father left him as a child.

465 Isabella believes psychology gave her closure with her mother whom she constantly
466 never got along with due to her parenting style. She mentions that she needed to end her
467 judgmental perspective due to learning psychology and understanding how her mother was
468 raised. Isabella quickly learned that it was not completely her mother's fault she had a rough
469 childhood and understood her mother's struggle. In addition, she applied this with her father, and
470 his absence as a father was due to the fact his own father left his life as well.

471 **Perception of Mandatory High School Psychology**

472 The findings showed that a significant number of participants would take psychology in
473 high school and believe the course should be mandatory. 70.5% of participants surveyed reported
474 they were highly likely to take psychology if it was offered in high school. While 20.5% of

475 participants took the course in high school and in community college. Several themes emerged
476 from the interviews which consist of allowing teenagers to better understand themselves, better
477 preparation for adulthood and college, and better empathy towards people who are different. For
478 instance, Ron, a 20-year-old Asian male said,

479 My perspective is it should be mandatory. It should be mandatory because, at that age,
480 you learn what you like and don't like, learn about your friends, go through problems,
481 understand problems, and understand the consequences. It is very important to
482 understand why we go through problems, how each individual heals and learns from the
483 problems, and how each person cooperates with themselves during their problems. It is
484 very difficult to understand one another but having a background in psychology, you can
485 learn just a tad bit of the reasoning behind your actions and their actions. It should be
486 required, it is important.

487 Ron believes having knowledge of psychology in high school would play an important
488 role in how teenagers behave. He mentions high school students after taking psychology would
489 understand the consequences of their actions and why people go through different problems.
490 Furthermore, Ron believes psychology being required would remove the difficulty of
491 understanding people who are different than us. In another interview, Vincent, a 19-year-old
492 Asian male said,

493 I would say definitely recommend students taking psychology in their senior year in high
494 school because after high school because they are young adults going into life and
495 psychology becomes a very useful tool to help them with life even the hardest situation
496 and moving forward to college and knowing about psychology also helps them study

497 better and improving their academic abilities, communications, and decision-making
498 skills.

499 Vincent believes psychology being mandatory in high school for seniors right before going into
500 the world as adults would be beneficial during hate times. He mentions psychology being an
501 important stepping tool to better prepare students to be prepared for college academics.

502 Furthermore, Vincent believes teenagers having knowledge from high school have better
503 decision-making and communication. In another interview, Mona, a 58-year-old American
504 Indian and Latina woman said,

505 Yes, it should become a requirement because this can help many students who do not
506 have a solid direction for their future. I believe that many students are discouraged from
507 moving forward in life due to the lack of ignorance of their parent's actions and their
508 peers, teachers, and lack of community stimulation. If our parents raised us to think that
509 we are less than or we are brown and cannot do what other people do, this stays in our
510 minds and has a huge impact on the way we think about ourselves. I always blame the
511 parents for the lack of encouragement because of our color.

512 Mona believes having teenagers take psychology in high school will increase the
513 likelihood of a better life especially if their path seems highly uncertain. Mona mentions the
514 people in our personal social circle can lead to punishments and reflect negatively on our teenage
515 selves. In addition, Mona believes psychology in high school can increase negative conditioning
516 for teens to have a better self-image and path to adulthood.

517 **Summary of Findings**

518 The findings show that taking psychology does have a positive personal impact on first-
519 generation community college students of color. Also, students used the knowledge from

520 psychology to overcome personal disadvantages. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate students
521 took what they learned from psychology to make better decisions and understand their behaviors
522 and other people's behaviors.

523 **Discussion**

524 The participants shared that they gained more positive perspectives on themselves, their
525 behaviors, their families, and even their thoughts on education because of taking psychology
526 courses. Participants reported changing in mindset and feeling more empowered because of the
527 learning they did. For these students of color, psychology courses offered them the opportunity
528 to truly take a moment to understand where their parents were coming from and how they
529 behaved and parented them when they were younger. They were able to realize that some of their
530 parents' behaviors were a result of specific challenges such as generational trauma and violence.
531 In summary, they gained an understanding that the behavior of their parents is not their fault and
532 allowing them to forgive them and become better parents is something remarkable in the
533 findings. Also, participants shared that they would have liked to take psychology courses earlier
534 on in their lives.

535 These findings are remarkably essential to conducting further studies because these
536 voices have been oppressed and silenced over many decades. The findings demonstrate that
537 psychology offers strong empowerment and understanding for themselves and the people around
538 them despite how different everyone is. Psychology has provided a positive impact on many
539 individuals and offered them the privilege to become better human beings. This leads to the
540 question of why psychology courses are not provided earlier on in students' lives? Psychology
541 has proven infancy to adolescence are the most essential periods of human development and we
542 need to put these findings to our educators and decide on a curriculum to include this education

543 for future generations. If we expose our teenage populations to psychology and prepare them to
544 be more empathetic, and empowered, understand themselves, and understand people they may
545 believe to be impossible can create a better future and society

546 **Limitations**

547 The COVID-19 pandemic forced all original in-person interviews to become virtual
548 zoom conferences. During quarantine and many colleges abruptly went into remote learning
549 causing a lot of equity issues. Participants who wanted to participate never followed through due
550 to a lack of resources for the zoom interview. Also, screen-time exhaustion may have an impact
551 on the recruitment of participants for interviews. Due to having an almost fully open-ended data
552 collection, the results cannot provide any statistical testing to understand the true significance of
553 our sample population. The survey was intended to understand the impact of psychology from
554 my personal understanding of who belongs as a first-generation and a person of color.

555 Further research is needed to establish to understand and analyze the pattern of the
556 impact of psychology on those in our marginalized communities. In addition, it is essential for
557 this study to be conducted in a group of three or more researchers enthusiastic about social
558 justice and interest in ethnic studies. Future studies should consider using stratified sampling of
559 all of the ethnic minority groups to have equal representation where one group does not become
560 more dominant than the other. Furthermore, researchers should take advantage of creating
561 surveys with questions to ensure the usage of performing statistical tests to understand the
562 relationships between psychology and first-generation community college students of color. It is
563 essential to understand these patterns and conduct future research to imagine what a larger bigger
564 study could not truly identify. This is a call for all psychologists and educators of psychology to

565 work with others to consider the benefits of the courses and provide them in high schools (or
566 earlier) and with students of color.

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