NARRATIVES OF SUCCESSFUL NAVIGATION: A SOCIOCULTURAL STUDY OF

SELF-IDENTIFIED LATIN@ UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Narratives of Successful Navigation: A Sociocultural Study of Self-identified Latin@ Undergraduate Students

Narratives of successful navigation are the personal stories of 13 Latin@ undergraduate students who navigated the public school system and completed high school in the United States. Their words recount their individual journeys resulting in their enrollment at a 4-year research university in the Pacific Northwest as opposed to a 2-year community college. More than half of the study respondents begun their postsecondary studies at a community college. The navigation of these particular individuals were experienced differently than those respondents whose trajectory led them straight into the university. Three categories corresponding to the study's three research questions were analyzed. First, common challenges produced two themes, low social economics status (SES) and ethnic identity. Second, the category on persistence characteristics formulated only one construct, academic self-efficacy. Third, three interlocking themes of supportive factors fostering academic success were identified, the support of parents/ family members/peers, non-familial agents in the form of teachers, and lastly college readiness including AP or honors coursework. The thematic analysis of the respondents' stories was influenced by the literature that documents challenges historically impeding Latin@ academic achievement and by the research on both

persistence and supportive factors. The analyses of the individual navigational experience of the study participants found similarities within their experiences, but it also revealed the complexity of their own singular stories. The study centered more on the aspirations of Latin@ students rather than the damaging effects of their schooling experiences. While some of the respondents' stories contain examples of challenges, the premise was in representing examples of successful navigation of the Chican@/Latin@ education pipeline (Solórzano, 1998).

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I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, for his unrelenting support and belief in my scholastic capabilities, even when I lost faith and conviction.

and

To the students in this study who without the gift of their stories this project would not have existed.

"Years of misguided teaching have resulted in the destruction of the best in our society, in our cultures and in the environment."—Cesar E. Chavez

C/S

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study was based on the storied-lives (Clandinin, 2006) of 13 Latin@[1]

undergraduates at a research (R1) university located in the Pacific Northwest. The stories

of navigational success represented in this work were of the diverse routes undertaken by

the study participants. "Navigational success" within this study is defined as the varying

pathways these 13 individuals navigated in order to be enrolled at the university as

opposed to a 2-year community college. More than half of the study respondents begun

their postsecondary studies at a community college. The navigation of these particular

individuals were experienced differently than those respondents whose trajectory led

them straight into the university. Delayed enrollment at 4-year institutions is often the

reality for many working class Latin@ students (Cerna, Perez, & Saenz, 2009). For the

purposes of this study, college enrollment is defined as any enrollment in the university,

no matter the years that elapsed after graduating from high school.

One gap in the literature are empirical studies centering on Latin@ students who

have successfully navigated the public school system, and attended or are attending a

four-year university (Gándara, 2005; Hernández, 2000). Often the education research on

the underachievement of Latin@ students outweighs the literature on persistence-based

research (Morales, 2008). Empirical studies documenting factors that contribute to

Latin@ school failure overshadow studies of students who successfully navigate various

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[1] Within this study I opted to utilize the term Latin@ rather than "Latino" or "Latina/o" in order
to reflect that Latin@ identity is not a singular one (Falconer, & López, 2011), and as a way of
deemphasizing the masculine-centrism and the disjointed expression of this term thus reflecting
more inclusiveness that considers the rich and diverse unification of gender found within our
mutual communities (Cantú, & Fránquiz, 2010).

pathways, enroll in 4-year universities and earn degrees (Hernandez, 2000; Padilla, 2010). While the study's sociological/sociocultural framework draws from various socially and historically situated theories I am cognizant that the literature centering on Latin@ students is often framed through a deficit lens. The framing of issues affecting Latin@ students exclusively through this lens contributes to damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009) and/or deficit-based narratives (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Damaged-centered research documents the painful struggles and malfunctions often associated with disenfranchised communities (Tucks, 2009). While I draw from many other studies centering on this particular subject matter, it is not the main focus of this study. Nevertheless, it is important to lay the foundation on the historical roadblocks which many Latin@ students have and continue to encounter. This is significant in order to appreciate the research on factors that promote Latin@ student positive educational outcomes.

The stories within this study are the individual accounts of student navigational success. As Latin@s each singular story of educational attainment commemorates one more student who according to the literature, attained "academic success despite what most would consider odds" (Gonzales, 2012, p. 125). While I am conscious of the politics behind what MacLeod (1987, 2009) refers to as the "achievement ideology" the terms "educational success, or educational attainment" used in this study are defined by factors that are in reality the institutional constraints highlighted by practitioners in the field of critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 94). One example of structural or institutional constraints referred to by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) are funding inequalities and an "educational disinvestment in places where people of color

reside" (p. 133). Other structural issues include under-qualified teachers (Akom, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Valencia, 2010) as well as teacher shortages (Anyon, 1997; Howard; 2003).

Operationalizing Navigation

Yosso's (2005) work on the six forms of community cultural wealth informs this study. These six different forms of what she defines as capital, *aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital,* and *resistant capital* are important to help understand the manner in which Latin@ students navigate the Chican@/Latin@ educational pipeline (Solórzano, 1998). The term "navigation" used within this study draws from Yosso's (2005) six tenets of community cultural wealth in order to understand the multiplicity of experiences occurring within the respondents' narratives. The form *navigational capital* as suggested by Yosso is defined as having:

> The skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind. For example, strategies to navigate through racially-hostile university campuses draw on the concept of academic invulnerability, or students' ability to sustain high level of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and ultimately, dropping out of school… Navigational capital thus acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools (p. 80).

The navigational capital Yosso refers to were found within some of the accounts of the study respondent therefore, the analysis of their stories required a framework in which to

capture and interpret their words. The theoretical and epistemological framework used in the analyses of these narratives utilized the triad of Chicana Feminist Epistemology in educational research (Bernal-Delgado, 1998), Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995) and Latin@ Critical Theory (LatCrit) in education (Solórzano, 1998). These frameworks provided an understanding as to how community cultural wealth operated in the lives and pathways of the study respondents. As the researcher my ultimate aim was to "document and analyze the educational access, persistence, and graduation of underrepresented students" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). However, in order to provide an analyses that respects and understands the storied lives of the Latin@ study participants, I first and foremost plaited my cultural intuition and worldview with my transdisciplinary scholastic education (Villenas, 1996). I acknowledge that this study was a project influenced by my academic experience coupled with my lived experience as a barrio-raised, high school dropout, first-generation college student, and the only one of my siblings, and close relatives to have earned a Ph.D.

The centrality of this study were the stories of 13 undergraduates who shared similarities such as identifying as Latin@, earning a high school diploma, and the pathways navigated that resulted in their current enrollment at the university. Yet each story represented a uniqueness of the way in which they achieved this goal which were worthy of documentation. Most importantly stories of Latin@ student achievement such as the ones provided by the study respondents contribute to scholarship that challenges commonly held perceptions that suggest that Latin@ students, especially those in urban high schools are more likely to fail out of school (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). The individual stories of navigational success of the study participants provided an

insider-first-person view at the public school level that are often told through the narratives of teachers (Cortazzi, 2002). Stories coming directly from the perspective of students are about respecting the agency of the individual student who are often invisible and silenced on what students need or the best practices to utilize toward their success (Howard, 2001). Nieto (1994) supports the demand for more student perspectives especially on their learning needs by stating that "student voices sometimes reveal the great challenges and even the deep pain young people feel when schools are unresponsive, cold places." Furthermore, she states that "those who spend the most time in schools and classrooms are often given the least opportunity to talk . . . students have important lessons to teach educators and we need to begin to listen to them more carefully" (p. 420). This study of Latin@ undergraduate students' stories seized the opportunity to represent the perspectives that are often overlooked.

Statement of the Problem

The rise in Latin@ student high school graduations and increased enrollment in post-secondary institutions as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics underscore changes in the academic attainment of this population. The national average of high school completion rate for Latin@ students between1972 to 2005 was roughly 56% (Chapman, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, reported for 2013-2014 that Latin@ high school completion rose from 71% to 76% (2015).

Although high school graduation rates for Latin@s across the nation as an average reflects an increase, this rate can vary from state-to-state and on students' individual characteristics. For instance, the graduation rate for Latin@ students in the

state of Oregon is 65%, however if the student has limited English skills this rate is 51%, thus lower than their peers (Oregon Department of Education, 2013).

Latin@ Postsecondary Enrollment

Presently, Latin@s are the largest (54 million) minority group in the United States, yet next to Native-Americans, continue to be the least educated (Gándara, 1995; 2004; Martinez & Klopott, 2003). Latin@s comprise 18% of the entire US population however less than 15% have a degree beyond an associates. Furthermore, their presence at 4-year universities is disproportionately lower and underrepresented in both graduate programs and as faculty in comparisons to other groups (Hernandez, 2000; Brown, Santiago, & Lopez, 2003). While the college enrollment of Latin@ students has increased, this increase does not equal the amount of degrees earned by Latin@ undergraduates (Harvey, 2003).

Increase enrollment in community colleges

The numbers reflecting the increase of college enrollment while impressive do not accurately represent the reality of most Latin@ students. A large percent of Latin@/Chican@ high school graduates are enrolling and attending 2-year not 4-year institutions (Padilla, 2007; Santiago & Brown, 2004). Saenz (2002) as well as Solórzano, Rivas, and Velez (2005) suggest that historically Latin@s are less likely to transfer to 4-year universities. Other studies, such as Gonzalez (2012) and Hernandez and Lopez (2004) found that Latin@ students choose to enroll in community colleges more often than in 4-year institutions. In their Pew Hispanic Report Fry and Lopez (2012) found that 25% of the student population enrolled in community colleges were Latin@. In Padilla's

(2007) study of barriers affecting Latin@ students' pathways to college, he outlines what he found to be the typical route for Latin@ student through the educational pipeline:

- 100 Latin@ enroll in kindergarten, 52 will graduate from high school.

- Of those 52 high school graduates, 31 will enroll in a post-secondary institution.

- 20 of these 31 individuals will enroll at a 2-year college while 11 register at 4-universities.

- Out of the 20 community-college attendees, 2 will successfully transfer to a 4-year university.

- Of all 31students attending a tertiary institution, 10 of these individuals will complete their studies and earn a higher degree.

- Of these 10 individuals, only 4 will earn a degree beyond a bachelor's, and less than 1 will earn a doctorate.

Whereas Latin@ students may be enrolling and attending college at a greater rate than in the past, less than 15% of Latin@ students actually earn a bachelor's degree (Fry, 2002, Padilla, 2007). An additional area of concern for some scholars are the low number of Latin@ students focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math programs (STEM). Latin@s are especially underrepresented within the STEM disciplines (Aguilar-Valdez, 2013). For example, Gonzalez's, (2013) study of Latin@ student transfer pathways from community colleges to 4-year public universities in the STEM disciplines found that Latin@ transfer rates are disproportionately lower than the transfer rates of other students.

On the topic of transferring to 4-year universities, Lopez and Hernandez (2004) indicate that the community-college "enrollment figure is even higher in states with

larger Latino populations" (p. 38). Typically, Latin@/ Chican@s students who attend a 4-year university begin their trajectory at a 2-year community college (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). The percentage of the study respondents who started off at a community college mirrors the literature and is representative of the Latin@ student population in the state where this study takes place. For example, in 2013, of all Latin@ students who graduated from Oregon high schools, 2726 enrolled in postsecondary institutions. 880 of these students enrolled at 4-year universities, while 1,835 enrolled in 2-year colleges (National Student Clearinghouse database, 2013).

Similar to other students of color, Latin@ college student enrollment is overrepresented in community colleges. The following table represents the data from the integrated postsecondary education data system on the racial and ethnic diversity of students enrolled in Oregon's postsecondary institutions during the specified dates.

Table 1.1. 2011-2013 Oregon Postsecondary Fall Enrollments by Race/Ethnicity

Fall Enrollment by race/ethnic	All student total			First-time undergraduate degree seeking			
	OAICU	OUS	CC	OAICU	OUS	CC	Total
2011	**27,952**	**84,316**	**88,248**	**3,901**	**10,119**	**14,045**	**228,581**
Asian	1,945	5,700	3,952	244	753	378	**12,594**
Black	995	2,057	3,272	100	246	483	**7153**
Latin@	1,969	6,575	10,461	366	1,060	1,747	**22,178**
Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders	670	1,939	2,518	87	216	484	**5914**
White	22,091	68,045	75,737	3,104	7,844	10,953	**187,774**
2012	**27,809**	**84,142**	**94,965**	**3,701**	**9,896**	**13,455**	**229,414**
Asian	2,038	5,722	3,914	308	745	410	**13,137**
Black	1,080	2,102	3,406	70	280	564	**7502**

Latin@	2,194	7,137	11,288	447	1,091	1,848	**24,005**
Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders	563	1,814	2,433	49	204	395	**5458**
White	21,934	67,367	73,924	2,827	7,576	10,238	**183,875**
2013	**28,828**	**83,880**	**89,067**	**3,725**	**9,899**	**12,212**	**223,886**
Asian	2,176	5,749	3,715	335	798	373	**13,146**
Black	1,441	2,164	3,098	83	293	455	**7534**
Latin@	2,502	7,902	11,777	467	1,208	1,960	**25,816**
Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders	622	1,693	2,148	86	195	333	**5077**
White	22,087	66,372	68,329	2,754	7,405	9,091	**176,038**

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/DataFiles.aspx). *Note: OAICU = Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities, OUS = Oregon University System, and CC = community colleges.*

As indicated by the numbers, the enrollment of first-time degree seeking students of color steadily increased between the years 2011 to 2013. However, the number of Latin@ first-time degree seekers is still higher in community colleges as opposed to either private of public 4-year institutions enrollment. The increasing number of Latin@ enrolling in postsecondary institutions even if that enrollment is largely occurring at community colleges can be viewed as positive. While the literature indicates that most Latin@s begin their college career at 2-year institutions the increasing numbers are still encouraging as a sign of possibilities. Latin@ students given the right opportunities are capable of rising to the occasion by successfully transferring into 4-year universities (Solórzano, Rivas, &

Velez, 2005). More reason to consider the voices of community college transfer students such as the case of the respondents in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to place at the forefront the success of these students as opposed to framing their experience through a damage-centered perspective (Tuck, 2009). The focus of this work was more on the aspirations of Latin@ students and less on the damaging effects of their schooling experiences. While some of the stories contained examples of hardship and institutional constraints, the premise of the study was in representing examples of successful navigation of the Chican@/Latin@ education pipeline (Solórzano, 1998). Most importantly this work sought to represent the stories of navigation that challenge deficit narratives by posing two particular questions: How do we talk about Latin@ student success without considering the complexity of barriers outlined by most research studies? If the topic of Latin@ education is often framed through a deficit lens or using deficit terminology do studies that fetishize damages contribute to damage-centered research (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008)? According to Tuck (2009),

> In damaged-centered research, one of the major activities is to document pain or loss in an individual, community, or tribe. Though connected to deficit models—frameworks that emphasize what a particular student, family, or community is lacking to explain underachievement or failure—damage-centered research is distinct in being more socially and historically situated. It looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy. Common sense tells us this is a

good thing, but the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a

pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community

(p. 413).

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) as well suggest that research focusing exclusively

on the oppressive nature of inequality can also produce a sense of futility. They further

add that,

> [A]n exclusive emphasis on an exposé of suffering can lead to hopelessness as
>
> this type of work rarely presents much in terms of practice-based solutions and
>
> often paints the picture that collective agency under such conditions is impossible
>
> (p. 133).

Refocusing on aspiration rather than damages is not to deny the historical or

contemporary challenges faced by low-income racialized Latin@ students. The

framework of desire-based research reframes loss and hopelessness by providing

examples of persistence. Desire as opposed to damage is concerned with the possibilities

informed by past experiences to envisioning a better tomorrow (hooks, 2014). Desire-

based research projects do not cancel out important critiques of an unequal system,

rather, "it is an argument for desire as an epistemological shift" (Tuck, 2009, p. 419).

Theoretical frameworks of desire, yearning, or aspiration are based more on positive

endeavors as opposed to something lacking (Deleuze & Holland,1999; Smith, 2007).

Tuck (2009) maintains that a desire-based perspective "by contrast, can yield analyses

that upend commonly held assumptions of responsibility, cohesiveness, ignorance, and

paralysis within dispossessed and disenfranchised communities" (p. 417). Tuck (2010)

furthers the notion of desire by stipulating that,

Desire is about longing, about a present that is enriched by both the past and the future; it is integral to our humanness. It is not only the painful elements of social and psychic realities, but also the textured acumen and hope. (p. 644)

Educational research that focuses on minority student persistence such as this study, encounters a paradox when engaging in work that highlights aspirations as opposed to struggles. In order to make a case as to why these stories of navigational success are worthy of a study, I needed to historically and socially situate the students' experiences within the literature of Latin@ education. That meant that a discussion about the systemic damages historically experienced by Latin@ students was required. Without the damage-centered perspectives, the students' narratives of successful navigation would be ineffective, because dialectically, desire can only be measured through the understanding of damages.

The pathways undertaken by the study participants reflects their education persistence when viewed through a framework that considers community cultural wealth, especially aspirational and navigational capital (Yosso, 2002). As a desired-based focused study the objective was to move beyond the damages that have occurred in our communities by providing a project celebrating survival and success (Grande, 2004; Smith, 1998). Individual examples of Latin@ students who have successfully navigated the public school system and attended or are attending a four-year university are excellent examples of desire-based studies (Gándara, 1995, 2004).

As previously mentioned, Latin@ students seen as possessing positive assets as opposed to deficit ones are limited in the research. These assets are often overshadowed by the literature centering on education inequalities and school failure (Cammarota, 2004;

Gándara, 2004, Valencia, 2010). The insights acquired thorough the study's analyses of the respondents' narratives of successful navigation contribute to:

A. Stories of Latin@ student success challenge research studies commonly depicting Latino@ students as at-risk and in need of intervention.

B. Understanding the patterns of success through the students' perspectives of school experiences. In other words, what worked and what did not work in navigating the educational pipeline. Especially important to facilitating critical navigational strategies.

C. Promoting stories of educational success may encourage positive academic outcomes of future Latin@ students by providing positive examples of Latin@ students as capable of achieving academically especially in the sense of college bound.

Research Questions

This study centered on the storied-lives of 13 undergraduate Latin@ students enrolled at a R1 university in the Pacific Northwest. The overarching research question was: "What is the navigational experience of the Latin@ students that ultimately led to their university enrollment?" Since the objective of the study was in gaining a deeper understanding of the characteristics of Latin@ students who earned a high school diploma or equivalent and the story of their successful navigation into the university, three subquestions were utilized in conjunction with the central research question:

1. What were the common challenges identified in the students' stories?

2. What were the individual's persistence factors that ultimately resulted in their enrollment at a university?

3.   What identifiable supportive factors fostered their academic achievement?

Through thematic analyses of the participants' navigational stories, the researcher identified seven specific factors under the three categories. First, two common challenges, lower social economics status (SES) and ethnic identity were identified. Second, persistence characteristics formulated only one construct, academic self-efficacy or the overwhelming belief in one's capabilities. Third, three factors fostering academic success were distinguished; the support of parents/family members/peers, non-familial agents, mainly teachers, and college readiness including AP or honors coursework. These themes were examined in relation to the changing social and historical context covered in the literature influencing this study. This context includes demographic changes such as an increase in population numbers and the shifting perspectives of Latin@s as an at-risk student population in constant need of interventional rescuing to a more positive view of Latin@ students as capable of achieving academically beyond a high school diploma.

Scope of Study

Few studies examine the navigational or pathway accomplishments of Chican@/Latin@ students on their way to a 4-year university (Hernandez, 2000). This study took place at a research university in the Pacific Northwest where historically the enrollment of Latin@ students has been low. Therefore, the growing attendance of Latin@ students at this mostly White institution is a rather recent phenomenon. Enrollment records show that between 1994 to 2015 this university experienced a marked increase of Latin@ students. For example, in 1994 the enrollment of students identifying as Latin@ or Hispanic numbered at 452. Within 15 years later this number doubled (Garcia-Caro, Davis, & Olivos, 2009). The enrollment of students who identified as

Latin@ during the time of the study numbered 2,043. The increase in numbers of Latin@ students at this university was larger than any other student of color population.

The scope of this work and my scholastic pursuits were influenced by the historical ideology couched in the belief that Latin@s, especially those of Mexican origin are slated to be America's workforce (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Through my lived experience, and reinforced by Chican@/Latin@ studies, Chican@s are virtually absent in the professional world, and disproportionately underrepresented at most universities. One key feature of this study was that the focus moved beyond the literature centering on the experiences of Latin@ students at community colleges. While some of the stories of the study participants revolved around their transfer to the university, the important feature within these stories was that they did not remain there. Rather than simply acquiring a certificate or associate degree, they transferred successfully into a 4-year university. This is not to say that Latin@ students who choose to enroll at 2-year community colleges earn their degree and enter the work-force are not successful in their own right. This study opted to center on the stories of Chican@/Latin@ undergraduate students that went beyond community-college and are currently earning, or in some cases have earned their Bachelor's degree.

Historically Latin@s attending high school were funneled into vocational training (Solórzano, 1997; Oaks, 1985). The practice of not expecting Latin@ students to be academically capable continues today but at the post-secondary level instead. The tradition of funneling Latin@ students into community-college reinforces and conditions Latin@ students into accepting the role as workers, in danger of never realizing their full potential (Solórzano, 1997, 2005). The stories of these participants and the respective

literature recognizes that a college-bound culture has not been the reality of most Latin@s. This factor has in fact influenced the post-secondary outcomes of this population (Hernandez, 2000).

Summary

The rise in Latin@ student high school graduations and increased enrollment in post-secondary institutions as reported by the NCES numbers while impressive do not accurately represent the reality of most Latin@ students. The literature suggests that a considerable amount of Latin@/Chican@ high school graduates are enrolling and attending 2-year community colleges as opposed to 4-year universities. This study while containing the accounts of respondents that began their post-secondary education at a community college focused mainly on their successful navigation and transitioning to the university. With this in mind the aim was to place at the forefront the success of these students as opposed to framing their experience through a damage-centered perspective (Tuck, 2009), through a deficit lens, or by the use of deficit terminology (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). In other words, the study centered more on the aspirations of Latin@ students rather than the damaging effects of their schooling experiences.

While some of the stories contained examples of personal hardship and institutional constraints, the premise was more on representing examples of successful navigation of the Chican@/Latin@ education pipeline (Solórzano, 1998, 2012). Overwhelmingly, as indicated by the research most Latin@s start their college trajectory by enrolling in community-college. Other Latin@ students may have delayed their enrollment and entered the work force prior to attending the university. Thus, enrolling at the age of 20 as opposed to 18 is common (Cerna, Perez, & Saenz, 2009). The narratives

of successful navigation in this study are examples of the different pathways Latin@ students experience on their way into the university system. The routes undertaken are different for most Latin@ student, thus the stories encapsulated in this study are simply the stories of Latin@ students attending this particular research university.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While the postsecondary enrollment of Latin@ students in the last two decades increased, it is not necessarily a sign of the achievement gap narrowing. Rather, these changes in the number of registrations may have more to do with population growth than educational equity (Passel & Cohen, 2008). As in seen in framework in figure 2.1 issues influencing enrollment and completion rates of Latin@ students at 4-year universities can branch into multiple directions. Hence, the significance of structural, cultural, and individual characteristics that impact the enrollment outcomes of Latin@ students at 4-year universities guides the review of the literature.

Whereas this study centers on the successful navigation of the participants that ultimately lead to their enrollment at a 4-year institution, a review of the literature on factors hindering Latin@ enrollment is important. For the research situates the historical and social marginalization of Latin@ students as they contemplate, enroll, and persist in and at the university level. The review of the literature examines three major themes: a) common challenges and Latin@ low academic achievement; b) persistence factors for Latin@ students in counteracting challenges, and c) contributory factors that foster academic attainment for Latin@ students.

The literature review begins with various social reproduction theories that highlight the realities of many Latin@ families, which affect post-secondary access and opportunities. Although the aim of this study was in focusing more on Latin@ student success and less on the issues that prevent this from occurring, the review of this

particular literature helps to set the stage for understanding the underrepresentation of Latin@ students in higher education albeit their numbers and their time in the US.

Common Challenges and Latin@ Low Academic Achievement

A substantial amount of research determined that institutional obstacles and sociocultural issues collectively and independently play a role in the perseverance and education attainment of Latin@ students (Nora, 2004). Specific institutional barriers such as school practices including curriculum that tracks Latin@ students away from honors or AP opportunities have also played a crucial role in this underachievement (Ballón, 2015). For example, at the high school level curriculum that tracks Latin@ students is established on the perceptions held by teachers and administrators concerning the academic capabilities of these students (Valencia, 2011). This perception includes actively discouraging Latina/o students from pursuing higher education (A. G. Cavazos, 2009; Gándara, 1995). As follows, leading theories of cultural and social reproduction and the schooling experiences of Latin@ students can also be seen as contributing to issues of higher education access and opportunities.

Social reproduction: Cultural capital

Several leading theoretical influences provide frameworks for explaining the low academic achievement of Latin@ students. Many of these center on Bourdieu's (1977, 1986) social reproduction theory. Bourdieu theorized that social class position and socialization can determine educational outcomes (Lareau, 1988, 2011). Four distinct forms of capital correlate with social reproduction, a) economic, b) cultural, c) human, and d) social. These four forms of capital strongly influence the academic outcomes of lower SES students. While social capital refers to the influential and beneficial

relationships or networks that provide access to opportunity that can lead to rewarding outcomes (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), cultural capital, on the other hand, refers to the language and cultural competencies of the ruling class. Cultural capital, further described by McDonough and Antonio (1996), are

> Widely shared attitudes, preferences, and credentials used for social and cultural exclusion and is a property that middle and upper-class families transmit to their offspring which substitutes for or supplements the transition of economic capital as a means of maintaining class status and privilege across generations (p. 3).

 Other "cultural brokers" such as siblings, peers, and "institutional agents," in the form of teachers, guidance counselors (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) also contribute to the construct of cultural capital. While all four forms of capital impact the college-going decisions and persistence of Latin@ students, some theorize that cultural capital as the most influential (Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Warburton, Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001).

Familiarity with the norms of the dominant culture transmitted through formal institutions of learning also operates as cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) argued that the ways in which cultural capital works in education is the through internalization and socialization occurring in schools, especially in three distinct ways. That is, the embodiment, the objectification, and finally the institutionalization. For example, the objectification of capital occurs via the production of art, literature, or the means to produce knowledge. The institutionalization then follows this through accreditation or formal recognition of particular types of knowledge produced (Bourdieu, 1986). The embodiment Bourdieu would say is the habitus, that is the deeply ingrained habits, or dispositions and attitudes acquired through life experiences. Habitus as the

personification of cultural capital is the way individuals are socialized especially within the family (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (2002) posited that habitus is the "structured structure" of how we speak or the type of language we talk, our taste in food or music. The mannerism and the way one carry themselves in the world has class connotations and therefore shapes reality and determines access.

Egerton and Roberts (2104) maintain that cultural capital is far more ambiguous and less tangible than economic capital because it has more to do with the way one carries themselves through a particular society, which is subjective. Theories of cultural capital presume that individuals born to families of lower economic status lack the cultural capital to access the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in society. Having access to cultural capital provides the children of the middle and upper-class the socialization to understand the embedded code required for success within the dominant society (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Other scholars would argue that poorer communities do possess various forms of cultural capital. However, the cultural capital found in these communities is often not recognized or valued by mainstream society (Gonzalez, 2012; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994; Yosso, 2005) and not necessarily congruent with the universal symbolism and social expectations of the learning institution (Cuardraz, 1997).

Cultural capital greatly influences the pursuit and earning of a college degree more so than the race or the inherent abilities of an individual (Wells, 2008). In other words, what determines success or failure of a person has more to do with socialization and less to do with inborn qualities. Upper and middle-class students are not succeeding in their education endeavors because they are born intelligent (Lareau, 2011). Rather, students coming from middle-to-upper class households have more privileged access to

various resources that in return increase the chances of succeeding academically. Lareau (2011) underscores this aspect by suggesting that,

> Individuals in privileged social locations are advantaged in ways that are not a result of the intrinsic merit of their cultural experiences. Rather, cultural training in the home is awarded unequal value in dominant institutions, because of the close compatibility between the standards of child rearing in privileged homes and the (arbitrary) standards proposed by the institutions (p. 362)

The socialization referred to by Lareau perpetuates and maintains this process because it mirrors what is taking place inside the homes of middle-and-upper-class families (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Sullivan (2001), and Egerton and Roberts (2014) further state that the way in which cultural capital influences academic achievement operates in three ways. First, the cultural capital of children comes from their parents. Secondly, the type of cultural capital inherited by the child is transformed into qualifications, and finally the qualifications become credentials earned, which are essential for social mobility. Cultural capital and the resources families have to put toward their child's education account for the disparities of higher degrees earned by Latin@ students (Ortiz, Valerio & Lopez, 2012). For example, pertinent information such as meeting admission deadlines and searching for funding i.e. scholarships is a form of cultural capital that is taken for granted (Zalaquett, 2005).

Cultural capital, embedded and woven into the fabric of formal educational settings reinscribes and reproduces inequalities, which are educationally and economically detrimental for Latin@ students (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). For example, many Latino@ students are the first in their family to attend college, and while

academically capable of attending 4-year universities often opt to attend 2-year colleges instead (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Gonzalez's (2012) study of the college-level choices of Latin@ high school students found that being unfamiliar with admission process was a leading factor influencing college choice. The importance of instilling a college-going culture and having the commitment of all essential stakeholders is vital to the postsecondary choices made by Latin@ students she writes,

> College choice is more than just a decision made in adolescence; it is a development transition built on a foundation of early experiences within schools, families, and communities. College choice has a powerful impact on future identity, career development, social and economic opportunity, and fulfillment of aspirations (p. 144).

The decision of where and if they attend college underscore not only the process as an intergenerational college-going experience readily passed down in middle-to-upper class families, but it also reflects the responsibility of schools and communities toward instilling a college-going mentality.

Earning a college degree has been theorized by many as the pathway toward social mobility. As mentioned cultural capital in education operates in the transmission of knowledge, especially knowledge that can be converted to credentials leading to higher earnings. Darder (2012) argues that social elites control the mechanisms for social advancement and that institutions such as public schools serve to reproduce the existing social structure. In other words, while education is an attempt to level the playing field by giving lower SES individuals the opportunity to move up, yet at the same time access to better schools and better teachers are not applied equally. Similarly, Bowles and Gintis'

(1976, 2011) contend that institutions, such as the public school system maintain class-based inequalities because their curricula creates workers of certain students to in order to satisfy the need for lower echelon employment. Anyon's (1980), empirical study of five elementary schools found that students from different economic backgrounds are conditioned for future occupations. She observed that the children attending working-class schools were tracked into vocational type of training while those attending middle-class and affluent schools were being prepared to occupy more professional careers. Anyon clarifies this process further by stating that,

> The "hidden curriculum" of schoolwork is tacit preparation for relating to the process of production in a particular way. Differing curricular, pedagogical, and pupil evaluation practices emphasize different cognitive and behavioral skills in each social setting and thus contribute to the development in the children of certain potential relationships to physical and symbolic capital, to authority, and to the process of work (p. 89-90).

Along the same lines, Herrera (2003) cautions that Latin@ students who are tracked into vocational type of classes such as the one suggested by Anyon (1980), internalize a schooling experience that will likely influence their decision beyond high school. In other words, low expectations combined with little to no college-preparation impacts Latin@ students' choices to either join the workforce, settle for 2-year or vocational colleges, or military services.

Although Bourdieu's cultural capital theory permeates most of the scholarship on issues affecting lower SES students, especially Latin@ students, some scholars find his critiques limiting and in need of further clarification (Lareau & Weininger, 2003;

Yosso, 2005). Others such as Gonzales (2012) feel that Bourdieu's cultural capital "concept has been co-opted by deficit theorists to explain why some groups in society are more equipped with cultural capital to succeed academically and why other groups should attempt to mimic, adopt, or gain such capital" (p. 126). Furthermore, this particular position has influenced deficit-based theorists who blame students and their families for low achievement while discounting structural issues of inequality embedded within the system as the culprit (Anyon, 1997; Leonardo, 2013). Deficit-based theories that affect the college-going decisions and plans of Latin@ students will be further covered in the following section.

Deficit-based perspectives and college-going decisions

Besides issues of social reproduction, deficit-based perspectives also influence the navigation of Latin@ students into 4-year universities. Deficit-based perspectives occurring in education have negatively impacted the college-going opportunities for Latin@ students (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006). Similar to the notion of blaming low income students for not having the cultural capital to succeed, deficit-based theories blame families for low achievement while denying the embedded inequalities of the public school system (Gorski, 2011). Thus, Deficit-based perspectives in education assumes that students who do not do well in school is due to their inherent deficiencies and not because of poorly trained teachers working in poorly funded schools (Valencia, 1997, 2002, 2010).

At the high school level deficit-based perspectives of teachers and school administrators operate via curriculum tracking. Curriculum tracking has been found to actively discourage Latin@ students from pursuing pre-college opportunities and funnels

them into vocational type of courses (Cavazos, 2009; Gandara, 1995; Tyack, 1974; Valencia, 2002). In her study Gandara (1995) distinguishes between college track versus non-college track and found that 30% of the high-achieving low-income Chican@s had been tracked away from opportunities that could lead to postsecondary enrollment. Advanced Placement (AP) or pre-college coursework are examples of curriculum tracking. Some educational research shows that AP or pre-college coursework encourages and helps individual students gain the necessary study skills needed to attend college (Gándara & Bial, 2001; Haro, 2004). Often students enrolled in these courses are overwhelmingly Asian or White, even in schools where the student population is predominately Black and/or Latin@ (Howard, 2003). When lower SES minority students do find themselves in AP courses, frequently they are the only members of their ethnic group enrolled. Discouraging students from taking these courses on the other hand is based on deficit perspectives that deny the authentic academic capabilities of lower SES minority students (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The propensity to disbelief or question the academic abilities of low-income students of color is a deficit-based perspective that attributes race and poverty as inherent virtues (Howard, 2003). Teachers who have no faith in the learning capabilities of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are detrimental to the student's future college-going perception of themselves. Howard (2010) suggests that many middle-class teachers have internalized "that poverty makes some students incapable of high academic achievement" (p. 47). Often, this occurs when the background of teachers and students are socioeconomically different. Valenzuela (1999) and Gay (2000) strongly advice teachers to stop assuming they know a student because of the student's home life. Instead,

they recommend that teachers gain more confidence in their students' ability to learn regardless of the student's race or socioeconomic background (Valencia, 2010).

Decisions to attend community college as opposed to 4-year university are impacted by the way Latin@ student experience high school (Davis-Kean, Mendoza, & Susperreguy, 2012). Choosing to attend community college is often linked with not being academically prepared or the low expectations of teachers (Gonzalez, 2012). Although other factors influence Latin@ student enrollment in 2-year colleges, having a predisposition to attend a 4-year university must begin early (Kurlaender, 2006). For example, McDonough and Calderone (2006) argue that institutional agents and other significant individuals such as parents and family members influence the expectation and aspiration of going to a university. Institutional agents such as guidance counselors have also been known to discourage the college-going dreams of Black and Latin@ students on the grounds that these students and their families are too poor and therefore have no interest in pursuing higher education (McDonough &Calderone, 2006, p. 1712).

While the number Latin@ students enrolling in higher education has increased in the past 20 years, this increase however, has occurred mainly at 2-year community colleges (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Fry & Lopez, 2012). National education reports demonstrate that Latin@ students enroll in 2-year colleges more often than other ethnic or racial groups (AACC, 2016). Even when Latin@ students complete their degree program many do not transfer to a 4-year university (Krogstad, 2015; Solórzano, Rivas, & Velez, 2005). Suarez (2003) indicated that over 70% of Latin@ students enrolled in associate degree programs expressed an interest in transferring to a 4-year university. Nevertheless, the average transfer rate of Latin@ students from 2-year to 4-year

institutions is between 9% to 13% (Baily, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005). The low transfer rate to 4-year universities at the community college level is controlled by advisors or counselors that either provide or not provide information to Latin@ students (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). Ornelas and Solórzano (2004) argue that this "uneven commitment among counselors suggested an inconsistent approach to the transfer process that impacted students negatively. Linked with this unevenness was the fact that the transfer information counselors had also varied" (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004p. 239).

Yet, other studies claim that even "when one controls for socioeconomic status (SES), degree intention, prior academic achievement, and location in proximity to community college, Latinos still make the decision to attend 2-year colleges more frequently than do other college-going students" (Gonzalez, 2012 p. 145). Notwithstanding, even when Latin@ students choose to forgo attending a 4-year university in place of a 2-year institution the issues affecting their choices outweigh this fact (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Fry, 2002; Gonzalez, Stone, & Jovel, 2003; Gonzalez, 2013) The influences of social reproduction at the public school level, deficit-based perspectives in education, and societal interactions all operating together or separately have been found to ultimately impact the academic pursuits of Latin@ students. In the next section societal interactions and the manner in which it influences the educational attainment of Latin@ students is the topic of discussion.

Societal Curriculum and Contextual Interaction Model

Deficit-based perspectives as discussed in the prior section has been found to negatively impact the college-going opportunities of Latin@ students. Carlos Cortés' (1989) poses the question: why do students who share similar cultural/ethnic and

economic backgrounds achieve academically while other students from similar

backgrounds fail? The contextual interaction model examines the question of Latin@

academic achievement beyond single-cause explanations such as deficit-based

perspectives. While deficit-based perspectives are pervasive in our public school system,

Cortés theorizes that social interactions play a crucial role in the schooling outcome of

minority students, especially language monitories. The contextual interaction model

evaluates issues that influence of education by considering nine specific variables within

the societal context or societal curriculum. These societal factors he argues, "create the

societal context in which educational institutions function" (Cortés,1989 p. 19) they are:

1) *Family*, including the customs, language, and culture.

2) *Community* both in general as well as the sense of cultural/ethnic
   community, e.g. Chican@ community.

3) *Non-educational related institutions*, for example, churches, government,
   and non-government organizations, fraternity groups.

4) All forms of *mass media* including television, internet/social media,
   magazines.

5) *Ethnic or ancestry affiliation* that includes ways individuals have
   internalized their membership, e.g. voluntary minority versus involuntary
   minority (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

6) *Political orientation*, both on a local and national level.

7) *Self-perception*, on an individual level, as well as in relation to
   membership in a group and societal views of this aspect, including issues
   of double-consciousness.

8) The *socioeconomic (SES) background*, including familial, community.

9) The *educational attainment* of family, relatives, friends, community.

The nine contextual factors listed while experienced by everyone within a society, the manner in which they are experienced depend on the social positon of an individual. The contextual factors are similar to the arguments made by some educational researchers about cultural capital and socialization that occurs in the family (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This socialization occurring within the family mirrors the practices of the dominant culture and becomes the societal curriculum informing what is normal within our society. Similar to Anyon's (1980) theory of the hidden curriculum, Cortés (1989) argues that

> Through the societal curriculum (the massive, on-going educational and
> socializing process carried on by society at large, as contrasted with the
> educational and socializing process conducted within schools), these societal
> factors directly affect the school's context and process (p. 19).

The societal curriculum influences three specific areas of education:

1. Educational involvement of all school staff, including school board members. Factors play a role in their qualifications, their personal views, and student expectations. Part of this impact includes "fiscal resources, educational policies, and the educational theories and assumptions that undergird and inform the school educational process" (p. 19).

2. Social factors as defined by their economic, cultural or ethnic background impacts the potential of students in multiple ways. The way in which school personnel view and interact with culturally diverse students can affect academic outcomes.

3. Instructional features including teaching materials, textbooks, subject matter, and

    learning strategies. Other non-tangible components include emotionally necessary

    resources such as teachers and counselors invested in students' learning and

    parental involvement in schools.

The three major components of the educational system impacted the by the societal

curriculum affects educational outcomes of minority and lower SES students in negative

ways. One key factor is media, especially television, has had a significant impact on the

process of schooling, Cortés (1989) points out that,

> Among those influenced by film and television are persons involved in the
>
> educational process, including teachers, administrators, counselors, curriculum
>
> developers, textbook writers, school board members, and students. It affects their
>
> perceptions of themselves and their perceptions and expectations of others,
>
> thereby influencing curricular content and pedagogical decisions (p. 21).

Film and television programs construct reality for individuals by influencing not only

how they view themselves but their perception of how others see them as well. For

Latin@ students the media representation of Latin@s impacts them in multiple ways. For

example, Yosso (2002) argued that

> [A] content analysis of Hollywood films from 1955-1997, portraying Chicanas/os,
>
> Latinas/os in schools, demonstrates overwhelmingly support for cultural deficit
>
> explanations of why the social and educational outcomes of Chicana/o, Latina/o
>
> students are unequal to those of whites…instead of addressing these blatant
>
> inequalities, mainstream social science, and entertainment media choose to blame
>
> Chicanas/os for not "succeeding in the this "meritocracy" (p. 5).

Similarly, school personnel exposed to the same media representations, also interpret the message that Latin@s are incapable of achieving academically, thus feeding into the lower expectations exhibited by teachers. Educators who have little experience working with minority students, may be much more susceptible to the factor of media. This may occur because most pre-service teachers are female, white, and middle-class and may not have received training specifically on issues affecting Latin@ students, therefore, their only exposure to Latin@s is via media representation (Téllez, 2002, 2004).

A perpetual synergy, the contextual model continually influences educational policies, thus greatly impacting schooling outcomes of minority students. These school outcomes in return influences social learning, which finally impacts the societal environment in general. All these factors ultimately influence the educational outcome of Latin@ students especially the college-going decisions and choices of the type of institution to attend, i.e. 2-year college versus 4-year university.

Three specific areas of concern affecting Latin@ students were covered in this portion of the lit review. However, the challenges experienced by Latin@ students are multifaceted and complicated by varying factors. Next up the literature on Latin@ student persistence and overcoming the challenges that impede college-going and academic achievement are covered.

Persistence and Latin@ Educational Attainment

While a good portion of the literature focuses either on the structural or cultural aspects that can either hinder or facilitate Latin@ academic achievement, other scholars have centered their findings on the attributes of individuals. Some of the literature on persistence credits the individual assets of Latin@ college students themselves as the

primary resource for their success (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). In the following sections, I will highlight some of the most prominent theories that acknowledges the factors of student resistance, resilienc*y,* and academic self-efficacy as important features in the academic success of Latin@ students. I'll first discuss theories of resistance and how these theories credit students' aspirational goals as the leading cause in their achievement. The discussion on student resistance then ties into resiliency and Latin@ academic persistence, concluding with the literature on academic self-efficacy and its relationship to student success especially at the college-level.

<p style="text-align:center">*Latin@ Student Resistance*</p>

According to the literature there are a variety of reasons for Latin@ college-going persistence. One key feature in many Chican@/Latin@ educational research used to explain student success is student resistance (Cammarota, 2004; Fernández, 2002; Heaton, 2013; Pruyn, 1999; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Student resistance theories draw from poststructuralists' critiques of power and subjugation that center primarily on the actions of individuals (Pruyn, 1999). In this case theories of resistance differ from social reproduction theories in that individuals are active agents who struggle and navigate the very system that oppresses them (Giroux,1983; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). In other words, these theories move away from "more deterministic reproduction models of schooling by acknowledging human agency" within the act of schooling (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 315). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) further agree that students actively and passively resist learning as a response to an oppressive school system.

Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) argue that various frameworks formulated

to explain student resistance do not fully define the type of student resistance that Chican@/Latin@ students are actively expressing. They provide an alternative way of considering student resistance in their student oppositional model. The four distinct types of student resistance in their model: a) reactionary, b) self-defeating, c) conformist, and d) transformational are based and influenced by Henry Giroux's (1983, 2001) two intersecting dimensions: (a) critique of social oppression, and (b) motivated by social justice (p. 316). Furthermore, the authors suggest that the literature on student resistance tends to center more on students' self-defeating behavior and less on how that behavior seeks to create changes. They further stressed that even the work of scholars who focus on power and resistance, such as Fine (1991), Foley (1990), MacLeod (1995), McLaren (1993, 1994), and Willis (1981) framed their arguments on self-defeating resistance more than on transformational type of student resistance.

Reactionary and self-defeating, two features from Solórzano and Delgado Bernal's (2001) student resistance model, follow more traditional and progressive research. The authors argue that reactionary behavior is not a form of resistance because the two intersectional components are missing entirely. In other words, this behavior is not necessarily due to an awareness of inequality nor is it socially justice driven. The student is simply acting out or engaging in disruptive behavior. Self-defeating on the other hand while a form of resistance because the individual may be somewhat aware of social oppression, their actions are not motivated by positive changes. Often the literature on student resistance tend to prolifically focus on "self-defeating" resistance as a reaction to unfair school conditions. For instance, self-defeating resistance in the form of dropping out of high school while a compelling critique of the schooling system, in reality is "self-

defeating and ultimately does not help transform her/his oppressive status" (Delgado Bernal (2001, p. 625). While marginalized students do engage in various resistance types of behavior, McLaren's (1993) suggest that dropping out or acquiring a "street-corner behavior often implicates students even further in their own oppression" (p. 319).

According to Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) Latin@ students who persist and achieve academically are often engaging in either conformist or transformational types of resistance. Conformist, the other form of resistance while not reactionary nor self-defeating is not based on a desire for transformation either. As defined by the authors, conformist resistance is characterized as a recognition of oppressive conditions but not an actual understanding of the roots of oppression. The authors suggest that,

> These students are motivated by a desire to struggle for social justice yet engage in activities and behavior within a more liberal tradition. They want life chances to get better for themselves and others but are likely to blame themselves, their families, or their culture for the negative personal and social conditions. They offer "Band-Aids" to take care of symptoms of the problem rather than deal with the structural causes of the problem (p. 318).

Conformist resistance, like the feature of self-defeating do meet one of Giroux's intersectional criteria but not both. In this case, the conformist's actions are socially justice based but devoid of a deeper awareness of sociohistorical and socioeconomic conditions. This type of resistance while devoid of a critical awareness still has the potential of making a difference in comparisons to self-defeating resistance who has given up any chance of working toward positive change.

The remaining type of student resistance, that is transformational, refers to behavior grounded in a critical understanding of oppression (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This form of resistance occurs in response to social injustices and fuels the desire to work toward positive change. In other words, transformational resistance is an oppositional stance toward structural oppression (Cammarota & Romero, 2006). For example, Cannella (2006) suggest that promoting youth civic engagement is one way that transformational resistance can be expressed. The work of other scholars also show that Latin@ students often attribute issues of social struggles and a desire to change things as motivating factors for wanting to attend college (Ceja, 2004; Saunders & Serna, 2004). Besides commitment to their families, Latin@ students overwhelmingly strive in succeeding academically not only for themselves but in order to improve conditions in their communities (Canella, 2009; Delgado Bernal, 2002).

One form of transformational resistance is the notion of achieving academically to "prove others wrong." Yosso (2000) maintains that by doing well in school, Latin@ students challenge negative stereotypes of what it is to be Latin@. She further adds that debunking the stereotypes operates in ways that "(a) confront the negative portrayals and ideas about Chicanas/os, (b) are motivated by these negative images and ideas, and (c) are driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves and other Chicanas/os" (p. 109). In other words, as they navigate a hostile educational environment not only are they driven to advocate for the rights of Latin@ students, but for all students of color. Furthermore, Chican@ students who go on to achieve academically are engaging in resistance driven by the need to formulate changes leading to "more equitable learning environments" (p. 309).

Yosso's (2000) understanding of transformational resistance is expanded to incorporate *resilient resistance.* In her study of Chican@ college students who resist negative media representations, her use of the terms resilient and resistance define surviving and succeeding academically albeit the multiple challenges encountered. Yosso further stipulates that Latin@ students who leave school and who do not achieve academically fuel the misconceptions that Latin@ students are incapable of or are unwilling to learn. Latin@ students on the other hand who graduate from high school, enroll in postsecondary and earn higher degrees are true forms of resistance, they are resilient resistors (Noguera, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2006). In other words, by succeeding academically, the students are actively resisting an ideology that reduces culturally diverse students to nothing more than educational failures (Fernández, 2002; Miron & Lauria, 1998).

Resiliency Theory

While Yosso (2000) combines resilience and resistance together, it is important to distinguish between the two for they are not synonymous. Resilience is a dynamic process in which individuals positively adapt although they have experienced significant difficulties. The stresses faced may be emotional, physical, or social or a combination. These stressors, also identified as at-risk factors, are often linked with student's inability to develop into healthy, well-adjusted individuals. Furthermore, these factors have been found to impede the ability of individuals to be productive and contributing citizens (Luthar, 2003; Masten, 1994). Conner and Davidson (2003) defined resilience as a quality that develops because of particular experiences. Similarly, Hassinger and Plourde (2005) refer to resiliency as "the ability to cope with adversity and overcome the most

challenging circumstances" (p. 319). Masten (2001) however says that, "resilience does not come from rare special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities" (p. 9). The increasing resilience research show that harsh environmental risk factors do not necessarily determine the quality and capabilities of students.

Other theorists have attempted to move away from deficit-based and at-risk models that pathologizes students to more strengths-based approaches (Benard 2004; Brown, D'Emidio-Caston, & Benard, 2001; Henderson & Millstein, 2003). Lopez and Louis (2009) argue that "a foundational assumption of strengths-based education is that potential exists in all students and that educators do well to discover and implement the kinds of learning experiences that can help their students realize this potential" (P. 3). Individual researchers have opted to utilize a resilience framework that identifies aspects contributing to persistence than those that contribute to failure (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Benard, 2004; Gordon, 1996). For example, Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) express this sentiment by stating,

> Resilience offers a new perspective from which to view academic achievement; rather than focusing on the shortcomings of students who are at risk of failure, the resilience construct attempts to identify the factors that account for success" (p. 315).

Stanton-Salazar (2000) as well suggest that the challenges faced by minority students "under the proper conditions, resiliency becomes associated with a certain kind of consciousness that goes beyond buffering the individual from ecological forces" (p. 229).

While being resilient may be part of Latin@ student who are resistors especially those bouncing back from the institutional constraints, it is tempting to conflate these terms.

Further educational researchers underscore how the at-risk model has come under scrutiny because it perpetuates a generalization that is dangerous for marginalized students. For example, school and teacher expectations for an entire group who are considered to be at-risk may be lowered. Also some students are at risk of being grouped and labeled as disadvantaged because the standardized test scores are reported and separated by socioeconomic, race, ethnicity, or language ability and they may fit in one or the other of these categories (Calabrese, Hummel, & San Martin, 2007; Catterall, 1998). In addition, students may not react the same in given situations. For example, while one student may find something be a challenge, for another student this may be an opportunity to rise to the challenge (Liddle, 1994).

Resilience theory differs from resistance theory, but they can richly complement one another as ways to explain and understand the persistence behavior of Latin@ students. The concept of "resilient resistance" provides a bridge between resistance theory and resilience theory and utilizes the analytical tools of both theoretical frameworks. The intersection of these two train of thoughts combined by Yosso (2000) provides an avenue to view resilient resistance in the lives academically successful Latin@ students (Alva, 1991; Arrellano & Padilla, 1996).

Furthermore, Yosso (2000) suggested that the majority of the students experiencing resilient resistance would be either engaging in conformist and transformative resistance as posited in the model of Solórzano and Bernal (2001). Students who are resilient, are also signifying resistance by using strategies or "process

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by which students strategically challenge inequality, even though they often cannot or do not fully articulate the structural nature of inequality" (p. 182). Resilience theory enhances resistance theory by providing profound explanations of students who exhibit both conformist resistance and transformational resistance.

Academic Self-Efficacy Theory

Confidence is often at the forefront of individual success. While success is relevant to the situation and to the individual, a belief in one's capabilities is important in achieving academically. Besides the resilient resistance of Latin@ students as discussed previously, having academic self-efficacy is a factor found in the narratives Latin@ college students (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Torres, & Solberg, 2001).

Bandura (1997) theorized that academic achievement is influenced more by the individual's belief in their ability to successfully accomplish a given task than in possessing the actual skills. According to Bandura (1995) an individual's motivation and their performance are often based more on what they believe themselves capable of achieving rather than the reality of the matter. In other words, a strong sense of efficacy promotes the willingness to learn what it takes to achieve. In return this influences a healthy view of themselves. Self-efficacy is part of social cognitive theory that considers the development of self-efficacy through the individual's interpretation of effort from four different sources: a) personal mastery, b) social modeling or vicarious learning, c) social persuasion, and d) physiological response.

Academic self-efficacy, is a particular type of self-efficacy centering on the belief in one's ability in accomplishing activities that are required in a formal educational setting (Bandura, 1997). Lent, Brown, and Gore (1997) proposed that this particular type

of self-efficacy is about the level of the student's confidence concerning their ability to perform and reach their academic goals. Academic self-efficacy differs from other general types of self-efficacy (i.e. social, emotional, etc.) and is specifically couched in a formal learning environment, having more to do with being "school smart" as opposed to "streets smart" (Bong and Skaalvik, 2008).

Academic self-efficacy also differs from academic self-concept. Academic self-efficacy according to Pajares (1996) refers to having the conviction that formal learning assignments can be accomplished. Academic self-concept on the other hand has to do with the student's self-perception of their academic ability formulated through their individual experiences and interactions with the learning environment (O'Mara et al., 2006; Valentine et al., 2004). In other words, while individuals may be familiar with learning spaces and what it takes to succeed in this environment does not mean the student is convinced they have the ability to undertake the academic assignments. While an overlap of these two concepts may exist in educational research, Bong and Skaalvik (2003) suggest that the construct of academic self-efficacy is distinct from the construct of the academic self-concept. Academic self-efficacy, for example is typically measured at task-specific level while academic self-concept is usually measured on a more general level. Nonetheless, past educational research examining academic self-efficacy beliefs may not have differentiated between the two constructs (Ferla, Valcke, & Cai, 2009).

Some educational theorist grappled with identifying the exact conceptual, operational and empirical differences between both self-perceived abilities. Moreover, Pajares (1996) have suggested when these two constructs are studied within the same area (e.g. academic performance), academic self-efficacy and academic self-concept may

be compatible since both basically are measuring the same cognitive construct (e.g., self-perceived competence). Other researchers proposed that academic-self-concept and academic self-efficacy are clearly different and affect student motivation, emotion and study habits with differently (Marsh, Walker & Dubus, 1990).

Latin@ students who exhibit academic self-efficacy have developed good study habits. In their study Usher and Pajeras (2008) reported that Latin@ students who are academically confident perform better and are more apt to "monitor their work time more effectively, are more efficient problem solvers, and show more persistence than their equally able peers with low self-efficacy" (p. 751). For Latin@ student's academic self-efficacy is shaped by factors that are both personal and environmental.

Various studies on academic self-efficacy and first-generation college students have indicated that first-generation college students often face barriers that their peers may not encounter (Bui, 2002; Pascarella, & Terenzini, 2004; Riehl, 1994). Strong academic self-efficacy for first-generation Latin@ students according to Rodriguez (1996) is especially vital to their academic achievement. For it reflects a belief in their abilities and not necessarily the messages of failure as suggested by the literature (Meza Discua, 2011).

Supportive Factors Fostering Latin@ Academic Achievement

Even in the face of common barriers experienced by Latin@ students, there are some that go on and enroll in 4-year universities. The literature that offers a sociological perspective on the factors that impede the academic outcome of Latin@ students is substantial and often overshadows studies of persistence and retention (Hernandez 2000; Padilla et al., 1997). However, it is also essential to recognize the various contributory

factors that influenced the academic persistence and eventual academic attainment of Latin@ students (Gándara, 1995). Scholarship that focuses on Latin@ academic achievement stresses that educational success is often achieved by having access to various supportive factors. For example, Latino@ students that have a strong sense of their community cultural capital are more apt to persist in their educational endeavors (Moll, 1992; Yosso, 2005, 2006). Other studies of positive educational outcomes of Latin@ students ascribe educational success to strong family connections, especially having the encouragement of supportive parents (Garza, 1998; Ojeda, Navarro, & Morales, 2010). Further studies indicate that non-familial institutional agents can be sources of authentic empowerment that can encourage the academic achievement of Latin@ students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, 2010).

In the following section I will discuss some of the supportive factors found in the literature. I will focus on the following: community cultural wealth, parents and familial influences, non-familial adult agents, college-readiness, and empowerment and detail how the literature of these three major areas influence the pursuit and completion of college.

Community Cultural Wealth Model

Often the literature on academic persistence draws from theoretical models that define cultural capital through the work of Bourdieu (1986). Scholars beyond the traditional Bourdieuean cultural capital theory challenge this notion by proposing that working-class communities of color possess community cultural wealth that may not necessarily align with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Gonzalez, 2012; Luna & Martinez, 2013; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994; Yosso, 2005). Different theoretical

frameworks centering on Latin@ college students depart from his idea by highlighting that students' culturally-based survival strategies are drawn from their community (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Hurtado, 2003; Yosso, 2006). One such framework is the community cultural wealth model.

Yosso (2005, 2006) argued that by framing cultural capital in Bourdieu's limited definition, is to frame its meaning exclusively through a White middle-class lens. According to the literature, cultural capital is mainly symbolic (Sullivan, 2001; Wells, 2008). However, "with Students of Color, *culture* is frequently represented symbolically through language and can encompass identities around immigration status, gender, phenotype, sexuality, and region, as well as race and ethnicity" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). These elements of the cultural capital of students of color are mainly unrecognized as the type of capital needed to succeed within our educational system.

According to Yosso (2005), there is an assumption that the only cultural capital that has any worth in society is the capital held by those of the middle to upper classes. Furthermore, she argues that Latin@ students, on the other hand, draw from their community cultural capital to persist in a hostile environment and that these different forms of capital are no less viable sources of support. She states that,

> People of color lack the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. As a result, schools most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help 'disadvantaged' students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities, and cultural capital (p. 70).

She contends that, even in the face of adverse inequalities, stemming from issues of race and social class, individuals within these communities do in fact draw from a variety of

expertise that strengthens them. This strength, guided and influentially motivated by

aspirations is based on their lived experiences (Liou, Martinez, & Rotheram-Fuller,

2016).

Yosso (2005) defines community cultural wealth (CCW) as "an array of

knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of color

to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). However, the six

different forms of CCW are not set in stone nor are they unchangeable. Rather these six

variables "are dynamic processes that build on one another" and "overlaps with each of

the other forms of capital" (p.78). Below, are the six tenets of CCW and examples from

various studies on the ways in which Latin@ students utilize some or all of the cultural

capital to persist through higher education.

1) *Aspirational capital* can be understood as "people's ability to have high hopes for

   the future in spite of social, economic, and institutional barriers one may

   consistently face" (Liou, Antrop-Gonzalez, & Cooper, 2009, p. 538). For

   example, Latin@s have had the lowest attainment of postsecondary degrees (Fry

   & Taylor, 2013). However, parents have the fortitude to nurture the achievement

   of their children and "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even

   in the face of barriers" (Yosso, 2006, p. 41).

2) *Linguistic capital* "involves the intellectual, social, and communicative skills

   resulting from experiences with more than one language or language style" (Zell,

   p. 10). Orellanna (2003) explained that linguistic capital not only promotes the

   acquisition and maintenance of a language other than English, but these skills can

   also impart cross-cultural awareness, fosters critical-thinking that enhances

literacy and math skills (Faulstich Orellana, 2009). Linguistic capital reinforces the notion that Latin@ students come to school with social awareness and bicultural skills that should be viewed as favorable assets rather than as a shortcoming (Galindo & Fuller, 2010). Another way in which linguistic capital operates is through the use of language brokering (Morales & Hanson, 2005). Language brokers, characterized as the children of immigrants, serve as interpreters or translators. The skills acquired through this activity adds to the individual's skill set (cultural capital). These skills include "fluency in two languages, negotiation of power differentials between children and adults, and navigation of cultural mores—among other skills" (Weisskirch et al., 2011, p. 43).

3) *Familial capital* is the nurturing sense of family that expands beyond blood relatives to include a more comprehensive understanding of kinship systems. These relationships, built upon mutual caring, coping, and moral support provides meaning to this form of capital. For instance, extended family can assist a student by the commitment to well-being and a mutual bond usually reserved for actual family members (Delgado Bernal, 2001). This capital also signifies "cultural knowledges… that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" that "engages a commitment to community well-being" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Delgado Bernal (2002) furthers this concept of familial capital by expanding it to "pedagogies of the home" which offers "culturally specific ways of teaching and learning and embrace[s] ways of knowing that extend beyond the public realm of formal schooling" (p.110). In Bejarano and Valverde's (2012) study of undergraduate students from farmworker backgrounds provides an

example of the ways in which familial capital operates. For instance, "the concept of familia serves as a retention tool, one typically eschewed by mainstream interpretations of university success and belonging. [the students'] culturally entrenched ways of celebrating culture and their pride in their farmworker families and backgrounds that make them more determined to graduate" (p. 24-27).

4) *Social capital,* defined as skills to create or to draw from family relationships and community networks imparting assistance and support in specific social situations (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). These social networks can include peers, relationships established through religious avenues, and other social contacts from their respective communities that can aid the individuals' various needs (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). The findings of Pérez and McDonough (2008) stipulate that personal networks can influence Latin@ student enrollment decisions as they transfer into different postsecondary institutions. For example, Rios-Aguilar and Deil-Amen's (2012) study on the social networks and relevant social capital among Latin@ university students noticed that "once in college, students experienced continuity in family relationships, and for some, in their peer relationship" (p. 190).

5) *Navigational capital* denotes the particular skills needed to move through various social situations and institutions especially in areas that historically have been devoid of Latin@s or people of color. For example, Yosso (2005) proposes that the "strategies to navigate through racially-hostile university campuses draw on the concept of academic invulnerability, or students' ability to 'sustain high levels

of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and, ultimately, dropping out of school" (p. 81). The experiences of students of color "are both shaped by the policies, norms, and interactions with institutional agents, such as teachers, as well as the ways in which they learn to adjust and respond to these policies and norms to achieve their goals within the institution" (Liou et al, 2016, p. 110). Navigational capital promotes and heightens resiliency by acknowledging the agency of individuals as they maneuver through constrictive institutional channels. Simultaneously, navigational capital "builds on a set of inner resources, social competencies and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning" (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000, p. 229).

6) *Resistant capital,* similar to navigational "refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso, 2005 p. 80). Understood as the acquisition of awareness and abilities to combat inequality within their respective communities. Furthermore, she asserts that transmitting all the interlinking of the different features of community cultural wealth to transform structural inequalities is also part of resistant capital. For example, resistant capital utilized as a source of support in the sense of remaining in an institution that is alienating draws from both aspirational and navigational. Zell's (2014) Study of Latin@ graduate students in health programs reflected for example, that for participants, resistant capital "included convincing themselves that they had the ability and the right to go to college…was demonstrated through

challenging inequality and discrimination through raising one's voice and speaking up in favor of oneself or on behalf of others." (p.16).

Community cultural capital as explained in this model can operate in multiple ways and moves beyond a material and traditional explanation of capital. For example, extended kin and community members can provide positive non-monetary support for Latin@ student positive education outcomes, thus drawing from both social and familial capital. Stanton-Salazar (2010) furthers this idea by stating,

> Working-class nonparental adults and extended kin may contribute in the form of helping to inculcate particular aspirations, values, norms, and mores, or to engender a positive ethnic identity; but…may not have the "capital" to exert authority over a school administrator, or to introduce the adolescent into a peer group that itself is embedded in community of adults poised to ensure that talents are cultivated and where college-going becomes part of everyone's identity (p. 1071).

Another example of a resource drawn from community cultural capital is the role played by paraeducators. Paraeducator, as defined by Monzo and Rueda (2001), are individuals directly hired from the community to support students in the classroom. The incorporation of community members is an example of the relationship between schools and community recruited for a specific function, "Latino paraeducators seemed particularly attuned to the needs of students. All identified Spanish as their primary language. Most indicated that they had grown up in working-class communities similar to that of their students" (p. 13). One of the leading recommendations within this literature calls for the formulation of reciprocal relationships between teachers and the parents of

the student that could lead to positive educational outcomes (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

<center>Parents and familial influences</center>

One major factor that encourages Latin@ student academic achievement and persistence is the role played by parents and family. Zalaquett's (2005) study revealed that academically successful Latin@ students attribute the support provided by family as vital in their achievement. The multiple sociocultural factors such as income, immigration status, and the level of parental education determine the types of support students receive (Ceballo, 2004; Zalaquett, 1999,).

Before discussing the relationship parents and family play in the academic achievement of Latin@ students, it is important to differentiate between family "involvement" and "engagement." Ferlazzo and Hammond (2009) suggest that involvement and engagement do not mean the same thing and one is a matter of "doing to" while the other is "doing with." The authors assertions beg the question: are schools meaningfully engaging the parents or strictly involving them in a superficial manner? Involvement, for example, dictates the role parents can play in the education of their children such as making sure their children complete assignments. Engagement, on the other hand, is more about developing a relationship that encourages a partnership between schools and family. Research on parent-school relationships demonstrates that the involvement of parents while needed for achieving academically, parent engagement has been shown to have better results (Lopez & Vazquez, 2004). Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, and Ochoa (2011) highlight a crucial problem in the involvement of parents with the schools. They argue that the treatment of all parents or families do not occur

with the same respect or consideration. Often schools operate from or are based on White-middle-class values. They argue that,

> These (parental involvement) models not only tend to ignore the diverse
> demographic reality of today's U.S. school system and the fact that many public
> school districts, particularly those in urban areas, now serve a bicultural parent
> and student majority, but also work to reinforce implanted beliefs that bicultural
> families must be changed to conform to existing school practices (p. 4).

Henderson and Map (2002) extensive review of the literature examined key research studies and literature reviews verifying that a positive relationship between family and school officials can promote student academic achievement. Within this body of work, the findings show that parents are concerned about their children's educational success despite socioeconomic status, parental education, or racial/ethnic background.

Often the way in which Latin@ parents engage with schools is not recognized as legitimate forms of support. For example, in a study of Latin@ parental involvement and the function of home-based knowledge, Lopez and Vazquez (2006) argued that the contribution made by parents frequently occurs in the home. Often more traditional activities recognized by mainstream school personnel such as monetary donations or volunteering at school functions, are seen as legitimate involvement. Forms of unrecognizable contributions includes supportively encouraging their children with their homework. Similarly, Lopez (2001) found that the way in which parent involvement is conceptualized through the school system conjures up a very narrow view of what it means to be invested in your child's education. The personal and familial, non-institutional type of support, for example, encouraging and instilling in their children a

good work ethic and the value of hard work are supportive tools not recognized by the traditional understanding of parent involvement and academic attainment (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994).

Parental and family support on issues around postsecondary are different than what is covered in the general literature on parental involvement. For example, Zalaquett (1999) revealed that parents who did not attend college were often unable to provide their children with the guidance and mentoring needed in the college admissions process. While this may be true, their involvement or another type of guidance and mentoring during this particular process looks different (Espinoza-Herold, 2004). Delgado-Gaitan (1994) proposed that the literature on "parent involvement" has a limited understanding of what being involved means in the context of Latin@ parents. For example, *consejos* which she defines as nurturing advice, "implies a cultural dimension of communication sparked with emotional empathy and compassion, as well as familial expectation and inspiration" (p. 300). Expanding upon Delgado-Gaitan's notion of meaningful learning that occurs in the home Delgado-Bernal's (2001) reiterates this further by stating,

> Chicana college students develop tools and strategies for daily survival within an educational system that often excludes and silences them. The communication, practices, and learning that occur in the home and community, what I call pedagogies of the home, often serve as a cultural knowledge base that helps Chicana college students negotiate the daily experiences of sexist, racist, and classist microaggressions (p. 624).

As covered in the literature, the support of family has been paramount in the success of many Latin@ college students. The following section will cover the scholarship on the

importance of building and maintaining relationships with individuals who are not family but play key roles in the success of Latin@ students.

Non-familial adult agents, college-readiness, and youth empowerment

In addition, to the supportive network of family and community the literature suggests that cultivating supportive relationships/networks within schools contributes to positive educational outcomes. Institutional agents, according to Stanton-Salazar (1997) are significant in relation to minority and low-income students because they transmit the knowledge and resources of navigating and obtaining the social networks and social ties that are afforded to the middle and upper classes (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). He argues that in order for minority students to succeed, they must learn to connect with members from mainstream including institutional agents and while coping and navigating multiple worlds. These non-familial institutional agents can be sources of authentic empowerment that can encourage the academic achievement of Latin@ students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, 2010).

Stanton-Salazar's (2010) framework on institutional and nonfamily adult agents examines the role of key individuals especially in the realm of public schools. He defines institutional agents "as an individual who occupies one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high-status, either within a society or in an institution or an organization" (p. 1075). Nonfamily adult agents differ in their orientation than institutional agents, which are often characterized as teachers or other school officials. Nonfamily agents on the other hand can be located in a variety of institutions, such as community centers, and religious institutions. Any individual not related through blood and designated by the student as being influential in their success fits under this category (Stanton-Salazar,

2001, 2010). These particular individuals may or may not possess the capital to affect the social mobility of an individual student. However, their relationship to the student is necessary. Other studies focusing on high school students reported that most students mentioned having a non-parental adult who played a crucial part in helping them reach their academic goals (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). Woolley and Bowen's (2007) noticed in their study of middle school students that of all the varying avenues of support described, supportive adults appeared to have the most impact on keeping students engaged.

Additionally, the support provided by non-familial adults as put forth by the literature, cultivating supportive relationships/networks within schools contributes to positive education outcomes. Stanton-Salazar (1997) maintains that for minority youth to succeed academically they must learn to connect and build relationship with mainstream institutional agents such as teachers. These educators can be sources of authentic empowerment encouraging the academic achievement of Latin@ students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, 2010).

Relationships with teachers are often key in institutional support, especially those interactions with teachers who are actively and authentically engaged with students. McWhirter, Luginbuhl, and Brown (2014) found that school-based support can foster positive education outcomes in the postsecondary plans of Latin@ students. The authors define school-based support as "affective, emotional supports (encouragement, caring, warmth), and tangible academic supports (assistance, expectations)" furthermore "academic support from teachers was the strongest predictor of academic satisfaction" (p. 5). Active engagement of teachers such as holding students accountable and checking in

with them as well as advocating or speaking on behalf of a student are examples of this. The school-based support underscored has been found to be typical and common themes of Latin@ students (McWhirter, Valdez, & Caban, 2013). Students with little to no capital, establishing social relationships with teachers and other school staff can be very beneficial, Valenzuela (1999) maintains that,

> Positive social relations at school are highly productive because they allow for the accumulation of social capital that can then be converted into socially valued resources or opportunities (e.g., good grades, a high school diploma, access to privileged information, etc.). (p. 28)

Another crucial institutional agent is the high school guidance counselor and the role they play in the post-high school plans of Latin@ student. Immerwahr (2003) and Zalaquett's (2005) study of high school guidance counselors revealed that Latin@ students were provided with minimal college information. Other studies found that while guidance counselors are in a position to encourage and support the college-attending plans of high school students, often that opportunity is not afforded to Latin@ students (Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Amees, 2007).

Additional studies show that guidance counselors who genuinely engage with students and guide them through the process can encourage the academic success of Latin@ students (Anthrop-Gonzalez, Velez, & Garrett, 2005). For example, Eckenrod-Green and Culbreth's (2008) study on the perception of Latin@ high school students' and supportive characteristics of secondary level counselors discovered that among the prominent traits students defined as helpful, was the ability to relate to students. The use

of the student's home language by the counselor was especially a signal of a genuine interest in the educational success of the student.

Guidance counselors as mentioned are agents of encouragement in the postsecondary plans of high school students. Often these individuals coordinate college readiness programs. In the last three decades, an array of college readiness programs intent on increasing the chances of college attendance by lower socioeconomic students has been formed. Several programs have been created to meet the academic needs of historically underrepresented and underserved communities to counteract the low enrollment numbers of minority students. These programs created at the federal, state and local levels help prepare students to enter the collegiate world by providing college readiness support and resources to students (Gándara & Bial, 2001; NACAC, 2004). Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal (2001) maintain that while the funding to accomplish this particular goal has been substantial, the college-going rates for low-income students continues to remain considerably lower than individuals from middle-and-upper-income families (Cabrera, La Nasa, & Burkum, 2001; Perna, 2002;).

Other studies, however, believe college-preparation programs to be beneficial. For example, Haro (2004) suggests that having access to college-preparation or college-bound programs is a valuable resource for helping underrepresented students gain access to higher education. Mendiola, Watt, and Huerta (2010) found that the college preparatory programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) to be "an effective support system for students 'in the middle' with regard to entering college and persisting toward a college degree" (p. 218). College-readiness programs such as AVID tend to be effective in helping low-achieving students coming from historically

underrepresented communities to gain the skills needed to transition into college (Martinez & Klopott, 2003).

Student empowerment is another component found to be influential in the positive educational outcome of students of color. This type of empowerment can be defined as an active and involved participation in the acquisition of needed resources, aptitudes, and other "key forms of power necessary for gaining control over one's life and accomplishing important life goals" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1090). The notion of empowerment can while socio-politically constructed, it is essential in the pursuit of a more social justice outcome (Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999). Stanton-Salazar (2011) recommends that the empowerment of low-income minorities must move beyond institutional support provided by institutional agents, i.e. guidance counselors, teachers, paraeducators, to become an empowerment agent that

> Enable low-status individuals to see a closer correspondence between their goal and a sense of how to achieve them, to develop an awareness of what resources are necessary and how to acquire them in order to gain greater mastery over their lives and destinies (p. 1091).

Nonfamilial institutional agents that move beyond institutional support to become empowerment agents are important in the navigational experience of Latin@ students. By supporting students in gaining the skills needed to succeed these empowerment agents genuinely encourage the student's capabilities of persisting. This vital support guides Latin@ students in the process of decoding the system by demonstrating that the right opportunities aid these students in achieving their goals.

Connecting the study with the literature

In the last two decades, while more studies have been published examining the academic success of Latin@ students, the literature on factors that impede Latin@ student achievement continue to over shadow the topic (Hernandez, 2000). While some of the study participants indicated challenges encountered mirroring those of the issues identified in the literature on barriers, they acknowledged supportive measures more often. This study drew from the literature that focuses on common barriers faced by Latin@ students. However, the purpose was to produce a study that contributes to the literature on positive academic outcomes.

Lent, Brown, and Hacket (2000) found that a significant amount of attention has been devoted to the construct of barriers even though meta-analysis reflect that the results of support outweigh the effects of obstacles on educational and career pursuits and outcomes. The support the authors are referring to, according to McWhirter, Luginbuhl, and Brown (2013) affects "self-efficacy and outcome expectations, aspirations, goals, and academic performance" of Latin@ students (p. 4). The continual focus on the constructs of barriers while important in addressing special programs for students requiring assistance, maintain a certain ideology. What this ideology implies is that these students because of the barriers associated with culturally diverse students are doomed (Howard, 2010). Acknowledging the various hindrances that students overcome by centering on the right supportive measures and the strength-based assets of the student helps to counter this assertion (Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004).

The moving away from the damaged-centered educational research that renders Latin@ students as perpetual victims of the school system is the impetus that drives this

study (Arellano &Padilla,1996). To acknowledge this idea is not to say that issues of

racism, xenophobia, or sexism are not occurring within the larger apparatus of education.

What I am suggesting is that overly focusing on the disparities and not putting forth

examples of success maintains discriminatory school practices. Because concentrating

exclusively on factors that promote failure influences non-Latin@ educators to accept,

that Latin@ students are incapable of learning and not university material.

Studies that shift their effort beyond critiques of inequality are those that utilize

first-person accounts of students who have successfully navigated the Latin@ education

pipeline (Solórzano, 1995). For instance, the use of *testimonios* (Cervantes-Soon, 2012;

Delgado Bernal, Burciaga & Carmona, 2012; Pérez, 2009) provided by Latin@ students

are examples of studies underscoring academic attainment. Testimonios: defined as

"stories of our lives, to reveal our own complex identities" represent the "crucial means

of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise

succumb to the alchemy of erasure" (Acevedo 2001, p. 1-2). Testimonios as it relates to

student stories provides "the voice that speaks to the reader through the text in the form

of an 'I' . . . that demands to be recognized" (Beverley, 2000, p. 548).

Narratives that come directly from students themselves operate as counterstories

(Knight et al., 2004; Yosso, 2006) that interrupt deficit-based perspectives.

Counterstories are defined "as a method of telling the stories of those people whose

experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is

also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial

privilege" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

These perspectives exposed and defined by the authors often reduce Latin@ students to an at-risk population in need of intervention (Valencia, 2011). For example, both Cammarota (2006) and Valenzuela (1999) suggest that the discourse of Latin@ students and education often center on what these students lack and less in the abilities they possess. Moving away from damaged-centered education research to the type of research underscoring persistence and attainment is possible. Suggesting a move toward studies of success is not to say we should stop addressing issues of inequality in education. Rather, it is as Morales (2008) states, that "The focus on positive and successful Hispanic students should be continued. By exploring those who have been successful, a deeper understanding of achievement processes can be attained" (p. 25). The goal and focus of the work of scholars that are moving in this direction ultimately center on continuing to build on resources that Latin@ students can access toward their academic attainment.
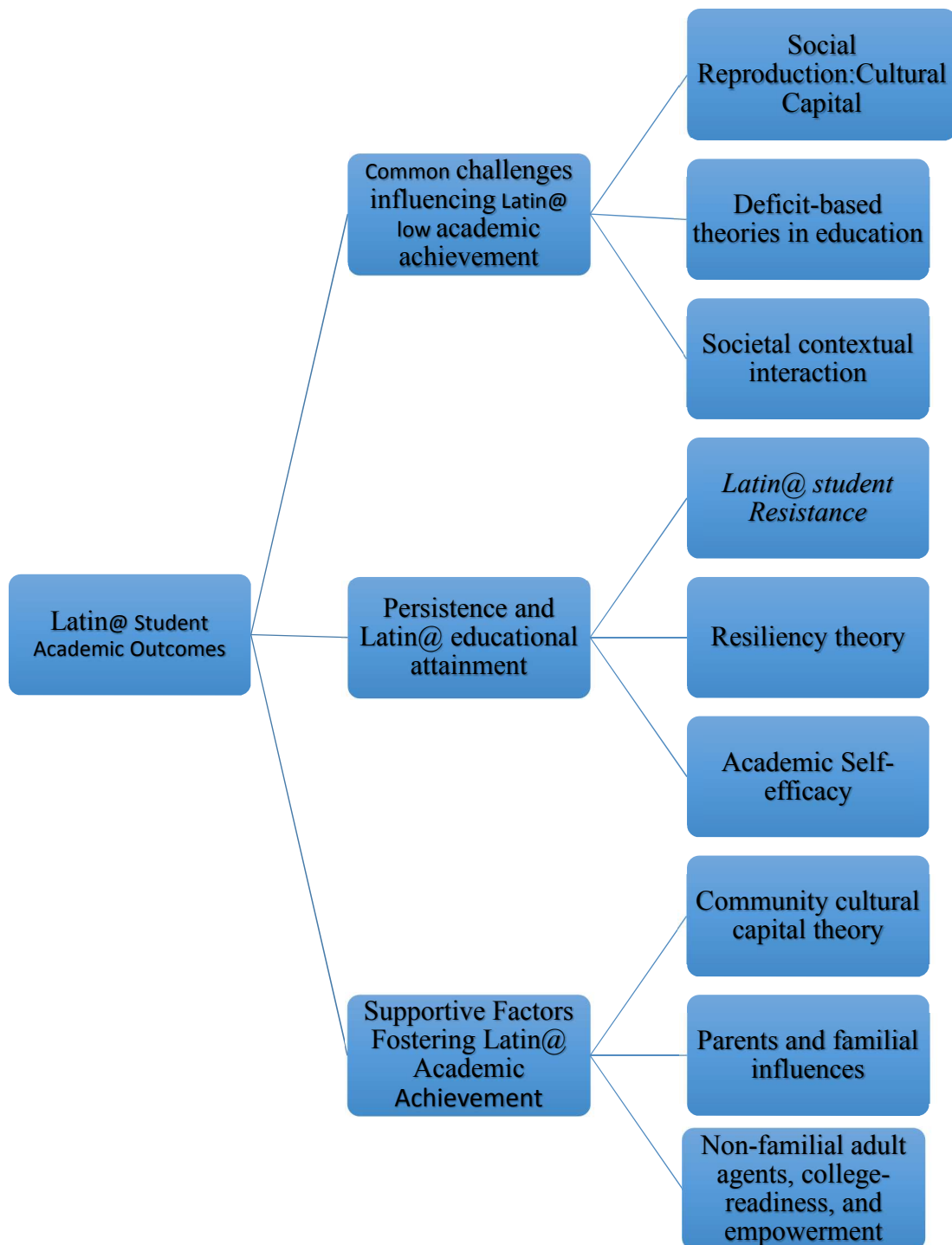
Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework for analyzing Latin@ student navigational success

Summary

Within this chapter three specific areas or major themes were outlined: a) challenges Latin@ students commonly face, b) persistence factors of Latin@ students in counteracting these obstacles, and c) supportive factors that foster academic attainment. The various theories that hinder the academic attainment especially as it relates to achieving a higher degree beyond a 2-year certificate are significant to the issues mentioned. The relationship of capital, particularly cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) appears largely focused on, but it is mainly because the theories of social reproduction permeate all other challenges mentioned.

The literature review chapter provided a foundation of the multiple factors Latin@ students have endured and continue to encounter. Two sections specifically highlighted and amplified the type of resources Latin@ students draw from as they contemplate, enroll, and persist in and at the university system. The theoretical literature within the review provided a backdrop for the challenges faced by Latin@ students. The triumphing over the adverse conditions created by or caused by limited capital reinforce the importance of the narratives that resulted from the study. To focus on these strength-based epistemologies directly from historically marginalized Chican@/Latin@ communities is refreshing as well as liberating. Especially after years of reading and absorbing the damaged-centered research on the barriers faced by Latin@ students. The growing array of studies focusing on academic attainment examined to explain how a population not meant to survive in academia is, in fact, persisting makes the trauma of reading all the damaged-centered literature worthwhile.

CHAPTER III:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research methods to explore and document the individual stories of Latin@ students enrolled at a 4-year university. Guided by the use of a single-question to induce a narrative, the study's objective was to investigate the personal educational experiences of undergraduate Latin@ students. The methodology utilized in this study drew from Wengraf's (2001) "biographic-narrative-interpretive method" (BNIM). The use of this particular method allowed the stories of the respondents to develop organically without the prompt of specific interview questions, which are often used to elicit a definitive response. For example, this study was interested in the educational barriers Latin@ students encountered. However, I did not want to suggest or guide the respondent toward a particular answer by asking direct questions.

While Wengraf's (2001) interviewing methods worked for the data collection portion of the study methodology, his framework does not consider the sociopolitical climate in which interviews are being conducted. In other words, this particular method does not account how race, socioeconomic status, or gender are themselves issues that require analysis. Therefore, the methodology used was an amalgamation of BNIM, Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) in educational research, as well as the dual lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latin@ Critical Theory (LatCrit) in education. The triad of CFE, CRT, and LatCrit should be seen more as principles guiding the entire research process. The protocols developed via these frameworks included data collection, handling of the participants' stories, and data analysis.

The objective of this chapter is to provide a description and discussion of the methodology utilized to conduct this study. First, a discussion of the epistemological and

ontological assumptions that focuses on three interlinking frameworks: Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) in educational research, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latin@ Critical Theory (LatCrit) in education. Next, a figure illustrating the braiding of the three frameworks with BNIM is presented. The research design containing the study limitations is outlined followed by the participants' demographics. Thereafter the data collection and management consisting of location of where the study occurred, recruitment of study participants, and data collection techniques is included. The chapter concludes with the steps taken in the analyses of the data, the role of the researcher, and a brief discussion on both the assumptions and limitations of the entire study.

Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions

Using conceptual and epistemological frameworks that take into account the sociocultural, sociohistorical, and socioeconomic context of the respondents' stories was essential to the analysis of the study. The coalesced framework of Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) in educational research, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latin@ Critical Theory (LatCrit) in education guided the entire research process, from the formulation of the study questions to the methodology and the data analysis. Factors central to ethnic identity, class, and gender issues significantly operated in the lives and multiple experiences of these respondents thus requiring these frameworks. For example, ethnic identity was a significant factor in the stories of the respondents. However, the understanding of this identity must move beyond a singular explanation such as race (CRT) and include a look at both socioeconomic status (LatCrit) and ways gender operates (CFE) as well. The analyses of the stories of the respondents required an approach that considered the intersectionality of gender and class with ethnic identity.

The section begins with an overview of CFE in educational research and its relationship to Latin@ education, followed by an overview of CRT and LatCrit in education. The last portion links the combination of these epistemological and ontological frameworks with this particular work by braiding the entire process. Plaiting these frameworks with the method for data collection demonstrates the use of multifaceted lenses important in the examination and understanding of the complexity of the respondents' stories.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Education Research

As a Chicana researcher, my cultural background shaped my academic pursuits. My personal experience includes family, community, and socioeconomic status that reflects not only the lenses in which I analyzed the data, but also the reasons for undertaking such a research project. Chicana feminist epistemology (CFE) makes central my voice as the researcher within the entire research process. While this study is not about me, I found that each story told by the study participants mirrored my own journey through the Chican@ educational pipeline (Solórzano, 1995). This study was greatly influenced by the body of work coming out of Chicana feminism because this provided a bridge between educational scholarship and the lived realities of Chican@/Latin@ students. CFE also reminded me during the development of this work that epistemologically I learned and internalized my positionality as one of "disempowerment." To put it another way, as Chicana, I am acutely aware of the way power, race, and gender has operated in my life as a member of a historically marginalized group. I have internalized the negative schooling experience, which influenced and formulated my identity more as oppositional than transformative (Ogbu,

1998). However, the study respondents did not necessarily view their identities in the same manner. It was important that any assumptions made about their understanding of their ethnic identity was not confused with my own ideas.

Dolores Delgado-Bernal (1998) unequivocally contends that a "relationship between methodology and a researcher's epistemological orientation is not always explicit, but it is inevitably closely connected" (p. 558). Epistemology according to Sandra Harding (1987) is not only concerned with the production of knowledge but the nature and status of that knowledge. Furthering this, Delgado Bernal (1998) stipulates "a Chicana epistemology must be concerned with knowledge about Chicanas—about who generates an understanding of their experiences, and how this knowledge is legitimized or not" (p. 560). For example, some scholars criticize the use Tinto's (1987, 1993) student departure theory in examining Latin@ student persistence or success in higher education (Castillo et al., 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008). Educational researchers argue that frameworks such as Tinto's assimilation/acculturation model continues a deficit perspective that this study wishes to avoid (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Gonzales, 2012). For instance, Tinto (1993) argues that in order for students of color to succeed academically, they must sever cultural and/or ethnic community ties and adopt the values and norms of the mainstream (Tierney, 1992, 1997). In contrast, the use of CFE not only validates the experiences of the Latin@ students, but provides a lens to examine how various factors such as ethnic identity, socioeconomic status and gender operate in the context of culture and not through frameworks developed outside of this experience. An important component of this study was the framing of the respondents' stories through a lens of aspiration rather than on issues of inequality. CFE is an

empowerment framework that rather than fetishizes the damages or struggles of marginalized populations, it celebrates their persistence (Grande, 2004; Tuck, 2009; Vizenor & Lee, 1999).

Delgado Bernal (1998) suggests that the lens in which Chicana researchers approach the education research questions as well as the analyses of their projects must occur through a critical lens. What she means by this in the context of Chicana feminism is that too the work of liberal feminists, mainstream scholars, as well as Chicano scholars are more apt to be considered experts in issues of inequality. However, often these scholars fail to address the intersectionality of classism, racism, and sexism, specifically from a Chicana perspective (p. 559). Furthermore, traditional education research does not provide an accurate view of the issues occurring in education as experienced by Latin@/Chican@ communities (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas 2006). Therefore, CFE as a "body of scholarship provides us with theories that emerge from particular subjectivities, geographies, and histories of struggle" (Calderon et al., 2012, p. 535). The unique borderland history of Chican@s' as referred to by Calderon must be considered when addressing the educational experiences of Latin@/Chican@ students.

Methods influenced by CFE draw from Straus and Corbin's (1998) *theoretical sensitivity.* Four sources make up what Straus and Corbin call theoretical sensitivity; a) *personal experience*; b) *existing literature*; c) *professional experience*, and finally d) the *research method*. They propose that the degree of sensitivity a researcher has toward their research project varies and that the sensitivity can be driven by the literature, and their experience with the topic at hand. Additionally, they state that

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give

meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the

pertinent from that which isn't. All this is done in conceptual rather than concrete

terms. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is

grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated-and to do this more quickly

than if this sensitivity were lacking (p. 42).

CFE extends and enriches these four sources by adding an extra layer for consideration: *cultural intuition*. Chicana education scholars argue that cultural intuition comes from multiple avenues within the Chicana researcher's personal experience (Calderon, Delgado Bernal, Velez, Perez, & Malagon, 2012; Delgado Bernal,1998). Furthermore,

A Chicana feminist epistemology arises out of a unique social and cultural

history, and demonstrates that our experiences as Mexican women are legitimate,

appropriate, and effective in designing and conducting, and analyzing educational

research (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 563).

 Additionally, this cultural intuition acquired through the combination of sociocultural, sociohistorical, and lived experiences should critically guide the entire research process. This includes all interactions and a respectful understanding of the respondents' diverse backgrounds (Calderon et al, 2012; Delgado Bernal,1998; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002).

At the same time, rather than using an epistemological framework based on the diverse histories of other women of color or from the scholarship of liberal feminists, CFE draws from the distinctive life experiences of Chicanas. For example, the experiences of which Chicana students in school, including their skin color, gender, class, and English-language proficiency are dimensionally different than that of their peers,

including Latinos. As a Chicana education researcher the way I incorporated cultural intuition, was by drawing on my personal experience in public school and within the academy while analyzing the stories of the respondents. This cultural intuition coupled with the literature on the multiple ways Latin@s experience education provided a sensitivity and understanding of the participants' educational experiences.

Another key reason for utilizing a CFE framework centers on issues of ethnic identity. Delgado Bernal (1998) suggest that "we must also recognize that, as an indigenous/mestiza-based cultural group, our experiences are different from those of African Americans and Native Americans in the United States" (p. 561). The cultural label of Chican@ refers to an individual of Indigenous-American, European, and African heritages. However, within CFE this identity takes on a different understanding. This alternate meaning has more to do with a "consciousness that straddles cultures, races, languages, nations, sexualities, and spiritualties" than a determining biological and categorical label (Bernal Delgado, 1998, p. 561). The study respondents' view of Latin@ identity within their personal experiences were examples of this. The students' stories in this study reflects the complexity of Latin@ identity beyond a one-dimensional understanding of an ethnic or racial identity.

While CFE is grounded in concepts such as cultural intuition, it is not essentialist in nature. Rather, cultural intuition is a recognition of the social constructs i.e. shared history and shared culture that are legitimate and uniquely Chican@ (Calderon et al., 2012). Similarly, Dillard (2000) underscores the importance of the theoretical standpoints of Black women's cultural intuition. She suggested that when engaging in educational

research this is not about something inherent but something acquired through lived experiences, stating,

> While I will argue vehemently that Black women as a cultural group "theorize" and embody extensive life experiences which, while diverse, shape a coherent body (of work). What I am attempting to advance here is the notion that in educational research, such theoretical and conceptual standpoints are *cultural*; they are not inherent in one's biology (p. 677).

As indicated by Dillard and Chicana feminist educational researchers when research is grounded in the cultural intuition of the particular community in question, it is based more on the standpoints of these communities and less on the theories of outsiders that have little connection to these communities.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education

An important component to communities of color and education is the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The origin of CRT can be traced to legal scholars such as Derrick Bell (1973, 1992) and Richard Delgado (1989, 1996, 2003). CRT was developed to address racial disparities in the US legal system and as defined by Matsuda (1991), who writes "jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination" (p. 1331). CRT is therefore grounded in the belief that the history of race in the US makes racism pervasive and permanent within society.

The work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) provided the relevancy of CRT to education by applying similar tenets used by critical legal scholars when analyzing legal issues and people of color. These parallel between CRT in legal scholarship and CRT

perspectives in education they found prompted three propositions: a) race determines inequity, b) US society has its bases in private property, and c) race and property intersects as an analytical tool (p. 48). Other educational scholars such as Solórzano (1995), Delgado Bernal (1998) and Yosso (2000) further developed the notion by extending a CRT framework to issues of Latin@ education. Solórzano (2002) maintains that,

> Critical race theory in education is a framework or set of basic insights
> perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and
> transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain
> subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (p. 25).

Underlying assumptions of difference and the value assigned to that difference as argued by various educational theorists permeates the educational system. This reason alone calls for the type of analytical lens in which to discern and accentuate the way issues of race operate within institutions such as education. The importance of making race central to the analysis of the experience of Latin@ students is because "CRT explicitly challenges hegemonic epistemologies and ideologies such as notions of meritocracy, objectivity, and neutrality and seeks to expose the ways in which racialized power relationships shape the experiences of people of color" (Irizarry, 2012 p.292).

The stories of the study respondents' navigational success when analyzed through the lens of the five tenets of CRT provided ways to understand the phenomena of race as it relates to Latin@ education (Solórzano 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

1. *The intercentricity of race and racism:* The premise of CRT in education acknowledges race and racism at the core. While race and racism are predominant features in CRT, there is also an understanding of how issues of race and racism intersect with other forms of oppressions such as socioeconomic, gender or sexual orientation. For example, when reviewing the stories of the study participants, most of these undergraduate students highlighted issues of racial/ethnic identity. The students' accounts underscored issues of race and ways this factor played out in their schooling experiences.

2. *Challenges dominant ideology:* The belief of meritocracy is the foundation of the educational system, especially PK-12. CRT challenges and reveals the hidden conventional assumptions that claim education is colorblind, objective, and neutral (Solórzano, 1992). Moreover, CRT education scholars challenge assumptions of equal access to instructional opportunities while exposing deficit-laden educational research. This particular tenet validates some of the study participants' narratives that pinpoint the notion of learning spaces not intended for students that resemble them. More often than not, when discussing advanced placement (AP) courses, these students spoke about how their presence in these classes challenged the dominant ideology behind Latin@ school failure.

3. *Social justice committed:* Because CRT has a commitment to issues couched in social justice, it has transformative possibilities for issues of race, class, and gender subjugation (Matsuda, 1991). This idea is grounded in the belief that documenting multiple issues of oppression is crucial. However, CRT scholars most be committed to assuring that "the multiple layers of oppression and

discrimination are met with multiple forms of resistance" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). The pursuit of a certain degree, i.e. political science, came up in some of the stories, especially in the stories of participants whose personal struggle influenced their future career plans. Some of the participants talked about their reasons for wanting to become a lawyer for example, because they experienced some form of legal issue, i.e. immigration. The issues they experienced prompted them to seek careers that could address changes needed.

4. *The significance of firsthand experience:* The centrality of individual stories and the importance attributed to the lived experiences of historically marginalized groups is a significant aspect of CRT. Scholars utilizing CRT as a framework value and acknowledge the lived-experiences of people of color as a legitimate and essential form of data. Stories coming directly from students of color challenge racist depictions of minorities and operate as counterstorytelling (Atwood & López, 2014). Delgado-Bernal (2002) suggests that counterstories of individuals who are not from the dominant group are powerful in challenging the myths of failure often associated with Latin@ students. Furthermore, counterstories exposes research grounded in deficit-based perspectives that misrepresent and underplay the capabilities of Latin@ students.

5. *Interdisciplinary approach*: The perspective of this principle is the crux of CRT analyzes in education. For one, the focus moves beyond a singular subject matter, i.e. education studies. Secondly, the topic of education is viewed through multiple fields such as legal, ethnic, and women studies, sociology, philosophy, and history. The interdisciplinary approach provides analysis that goes beyond a one-

dimensional ahistorical perspective (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). To put it another way, the accounts of the study respondents contained multiple components requiring an analysis of intersectionality that occurred within their narratives. Thus, having an interdisciplinary background provided the researcher an opportunity to analyze the student's stories through various perspectives.

CRT for many educational scholars is an important lens in the analysis of educational research centering minority students. There are, however, a handful of social scientists and educational theorists such as Darder and Torres (2004) who object to the use of CRT in educational research. They make this objection on the grounds that CRT's exclusivity of race becomes the "central category of analysis" (p. 97). This aspect they argue dismisses "a substantive critique of capitalism" (p. 99). Other CRT scholars in education counter the issues underscored by Darder and Torres by revealing that one feature of CRT is the attention and importance it places on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2011). Ledesma and Calderón (2015) further this assertion by acknowledging that,

> oppression and racism are not unidirectional, but rather that oppression and
> racism can be experienced within and across divergent intersectional planes such
> as classism, sexism, ableism, and so on (p. 207).

The debates and criticisms of CRT are contested and to some degree scholars that caution the use of CRT have merit. These particular scholars remind those who employee CRT in education that one must be aware how race could supplant other forms of oppression that are often exacerbated by race but not necessarily about race (Darder & Torres, 2004).

The possibility of a prevailing race-centric approach to minority schooling opened

the door and ushered other frameworks beyond the black and white paradigm. Figure 3.1

shows the genesis of CRT from its multidiscipline influence to the emergence of other

CRT-based frameworks in which to analyze inequality in education but made relevant to

their respective communities.
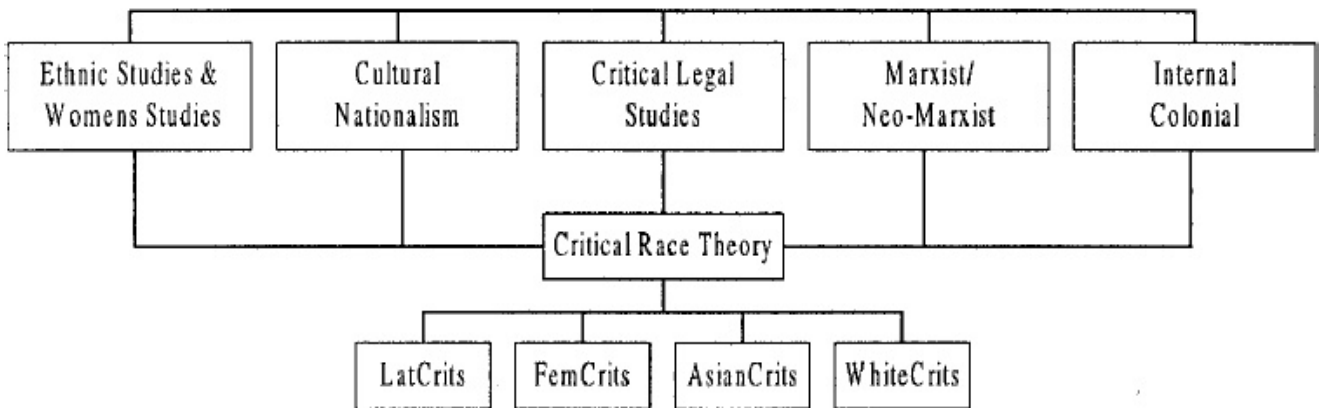
Figure 3.1: Chart on the evolution of Critical Race Theory (CRT).
Source: Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2000.

The scholarship of numerous Chican@/Latin@ scholars, including this

researcher, have been influenced by CRT (Espinoza, & Harris, 2002; Fernández, 2002;

Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001). Latin@ critical theory as

demonstrated by figure 3.1.is an extension of CRT. LatCrit scholars uniquely adapted the

process to include issues affecting members from Latin@ communities. In the next

section the discussion of LatCrit in education and the relevance to this study will be

covered.

Latino@ Critical Theory (LatCrit) in Education

All the respondents for the study identified as Latin@s, consequently a LatCrit framework was pertinent in the analysis. LatCrit as an amalgamation of CRT, while grounded in the five principles, moves the analysis of race beyond a black and white paradigm. LatCrit centers on issues of dominance and oppression that affect Latin@s, i.e. immigration status, language acquisition, etc. (Espinoza & Harris, 2002). Valdez (2002) suggests that LatcCrit acknowledges Latin@ culture(s) by interrupting and expanding the binary Black-White debate. LatCrit unveils and reveals factors that are politically detrimental specifically to Latin@s as "a racialized group subject to different types of racial discrimination" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 264). While Black students are racialized and continue to face issues of discrimination in education their citizenship is rarely in question. In this sense, LatCrit operates by uncovering the pervasive nativism perpetuated toward US Latin@s. For instance, the politics of belonging often depict immigrants, especially Mexican as undocumented. Yet, the descendants of white settlers, and to some degree the descendants of African slaves are frequently represented as "Americans," or what Hubber (2009) refers to as the actual natives. The presence of Latin@s are reduced to perpetual foreigners (Oboler, 1997) while the nativist perspective fails to acknowledge that *all* Europeans are immigrants and that Black Americans while involuntary immigrants (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) are not Indigenous to the Americas (Segal, 1995).

Because of stories of belonging must be uncovered in order to be included an important component of both CRT and LatCrit to this study was the legitimizing of narratives or storytelling as data. LatCrit authenticates the standpoint of Latin@s because "epistemologically, CRT and LatCrit privilege the experiential knowledge of people of

color as critical ways of knowing and naming" (Fernández, 2002). Another area of concern is the validity of storytelling and *testimonios*. Critics of CRT/LatCrit-based methods cite that this type of data may not be truthful or objective (Farber & Sherry, 1995). The particular objectivity vs. subjectivity dichotomy found in research debates is pointedly contested by Fernández (2002), she argues

> Who is to say what is objective? How exactly is data "objective"? What type of methods will ensure objectivity? Most qualitative researchers agree that such questions are irrelevant and counterproductive and recognize instead that all research is subjective and that the researcher's subjectivity enters any research endeavor (p. 49).

Another relevant feature of LatCrit in educational research is in being mindful of not reducing Latin@s to a uniform and homogenized group, but rather heterogeneously strong. LatCrit offers a lens in which to consider the experiences of Latin@ students within the critique of race while also allowing for the nuances and alignment of other intersectional issues. The interlinking of LatCrit and CFE operate in conjunction with one another, while making sure that issues of gender affecting Chicana/Latinas are not overshadowed by other issues central to LatCrit.

The three different frameworks discussed are good analytical tools individually, however they are quite powerful when combined. BNIM, as part of the braid of the framework provided a more coalesced and complete operation of this study. The protocol developed via the guidance of these frameworks allowed for the stories of the study participants to take place in a well-informed and culturally sensitive process of data collection that included the interactions between researcher and participants. In figure 3.2

the relationship of the frameworks within the research design and analyzes are intertwined. This plaiting reflects the way in which the trio influenced and guided BNIM.
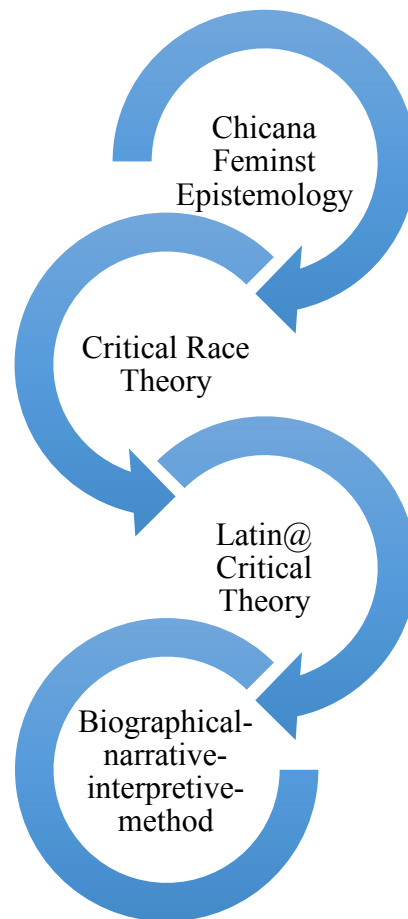
Figure 3.2. Research Methodology of Stories of Navigational Success

In the next few pages the qualitative-based research design of this study is outlined. The primary data were the participants' stories gathered and documented through ways that will be discussed under the data collection techniques. The following section begins with an overlay of the research approach, next a description of the data collection and management will ensue, and will conclude with an introduction to the study participants.

Research Design

The collection of data was conducted using Wengraf's (2001) "biographical narrative interpretive method" (BNIM). BNIM, a qualitative psychosocial methodology draws from the German tradition of in-depth hermeneutics (Breckner & Rupp, 2002). The BNIM interviewing technique utilizes lightly structured depth interviews (LSDI). Specifically, this method employed a carefully crafted single question to induce narrative (SQUIN). The SQUIN asked one question rather than a series of interview questions fashioned to produce precise answers. Often sequenced interview questions can come off sounding like an interrogation (Wengraf, 2001). One of the distinctive aspect of the SQUIN is that it "uncovers what participants want to say, not what the researcher wants them to say, as is often the case in semistructured and structured interviews" (Corbally & O'Neill, 2014, p. 36). When structured interviews are employed individuals inadvertently provide answers based on what they think the researcher wants to hear and not necessarily what they feel or know.

All respondents were asked: "Tell me the story of how you navigated the US public school system, especially high school, well enough to get into the university?" Within this design the central research question: "What is the navigational experience of the Latin@ students that ultimately led to their university enrollment" remains at the forefront. Moreover, the aim of the SQUIN was to document the navigational experience of these student respondents conveyed through their stories. The BNIM method while useful can also have limitations. The specific limitations that can occur will be briefly discussed in the following section.

Limitations within the research design

One of the limitations of using SQUIN is that the single question may not encourage or induce a lengthy response, one that produces substantial data for analysis. As a past sexual assault response advocate, and peer-counselor and support group facilitator this experience prepared me to handle interviews or conversations where asking specific questions was discouraged. This issue did not occur, mainly because the rapport established with many of the study participants drove the conversation without the need to ask questions or prompt them for more story. For example, when a respondent did answer the SQUIN with a short phrase, such as "I went to school, graduated and am now in college." I asked for more story simply by phrasing it more as a prompt such as "so, tell me where did you go to school and what was that like?" This way I did not ask direct questions to elicit a response, rather I asked for more story.

Another challenge that can occur when utilizing this type of interviewing process is the temporal shift. The interaction between respondent and researcher is taking place in the present. However, the process of interviewing for life-history narratives operates simultaneously in the past, present, and future (Wengraf, 2001, draws from Breckner, 1998). Generally, when an interview is conducted it is occurring in the present, the storyteller (respondent) is reliving the past and what they relay in their particular story is constructing their identity in the future (Bamberg, De Fina, & Schiffrin, 2010). For instance, the central research question (CRQ) was concerned with their navigation into the university or the route undertaken to their college enrollment. As the participant are telling their story they could switch between the past and the present. For example, while they talking about an experience that took place in high school a conversation about their

current college experience is sparked. With the SQUIN method that does not employ interview questions therefore it can be challenging to control the direction of the conversation without interrupting the flow of the story.

The information gathered from the participants' story even if it centered on their present college experiences were equally important as their stories of how they navigated the public school system. In the following section the demographics of the study participants is illustrated in Table 3.2 coupled with a description of these students.

Introduction of Participants

The participants for this study were as diverse in their navigational experiences as they are as individuals. Encapsulated within the study are the stories of 13 self-identified Latin@ undergraduates, four men, and nine women. The age of these students ranged from 18 to 35. Two participants were born outside the U.S. Of these two, one was born in southern Mexico and the other in Honduras. Both young women were brought to the U.S. as children and for a time were undocumented. Five individuals are the children of Mexican immigrants; two have parents who are undocumented. Four of the participants were neither immigrants or the children of immigrants but multigenerational Mexican-Americans or Chican@s. Two of the students have a parent that identifies as White and the other born in Mexico and/or Chile

Three of the female respondents were seniors at the time the study occurred. All three of these young women have earned their bachelor's degree. Five of the interviewees were juniors, three sophomores, and the remaining student was a freshman. The majors of these students range from Political Science to Cinema Studies. Three of the respondents majored or double majored in Political Science and Spanish. Two students were business

majors with a Spanish minor. One of the female majored in General Social Science in Applied Economics while another young woman was a General Science major. Three majored in psychology, with one student minoring in computer and information science. One female respondent focusing on Psychology graduated with honors with a minor in Anthropology. Two participants majored in the field of family human services. Of the remaining respondents, one double majored in Ethnic Studies and economics, and the other in Cinema Studies.

Geographically, over half of the respondents listed their state of residency as Oregon. Two of the women grew up in other parts of the nation and completed high in Oregon. The remaining six respondents all came from California. I'm wondering if all this is important or necessary to include since you have a table already.

The socioeconomic status of these thirteen students was self-reported and not included in the table above. Six of the study participants spoke frankly about coming from poor working-class backgrounds. Six identified with what I refer to as 1st generation middle-class. What I mean by 1st generation as opposed to intergenerational middle-class is that the socioeconomic background of their parents is different than that of the study participant. Their parents' came from lower SES and have not accumulated the generational capital in comparisons to individuals who come from families who have intergenerational middle-class status (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). The remaining individual reported coming from an intergenerational middle-class background.

Seven of these students started their post-secondary pursuits at a community college. Six entered the university right out of high school. Only three of the thirteen participants were from a household where at least one parent was a college graduate. The

remaining participants were the first in their family to attend a 4-year university. The profiles of the students described are summarized in table 3.1 found on the following page. The stories of the thirteen students will be furthered explored in the following chapter.

Table 3.1: Summary of demographics of study respondents.

Name	Sex	Grade	Transfer	Ethnic Identity	Country of Origin	State Resident	Major	1st-Generation college student
Corina	F	Sophomore	Yes	Mex/White	USA	Oregon	Cinema Studies	No
Dolores	F	Senior	No	Chicana	USA	Oregon	Political Science & Spanish	Yes
Edgar	M	Junior	Yes	Mexican	USA	Oregon	Psychology & CIT	Yes
Edwin	M	Junior	No	Chicano	USA	Oregon	Business & Spanish	Yes
Irmina	F	Senior	Yes	Mexican	Mexico	Oregon	Political Science & Spanish	Yes
Jessica	F	Junior	No	Latina (Mex)	USA	Oregon	General Science	Yes
Kyle	M	Junior	Yes	Latino/White	USA	California	Psychology	No
Marty	F	Freshmen	No	Chicana	USA	California	Political Science & Spanish	Yes
Paula	F	Junior	No	Latina (Mex)	USA	California	Business	Yes
Raquel	F	Sophomore	No	Central American	USA	Oregon	Family Human Services	Yes
Raul	M	Junior	Yes	Chicano	USA	California	Ethnic Studies & Economics	Yes
Selena	F	Sophomore	Yes	Central-American	Honduras	Oregon	General-Social Science	Yes
Vanessa	F	Senior	Yes	Chicana	USA	California	Psychology/Anthropology	Yes

The following sections outline the various steps undertaken in the collection and management of the data. This part of the chapter provides a snap shot of where the study took place. Also included below is the manner in which study participants were recruited and the data collecting techniques utilized.

Data Collection and Management

The data collection and management section will cover four different parts. First, I briefly discuss the location where the study occurred, followed by recruitment and participant selection and finally with the techniques utilized to gather data.

Location of study

This study occurred at a research (R1) university in the Pacific Northwest where historically minority student enrollment has been low. During the time this study was occurring, the student population numbered at 24,000, with 3,500 graduate students. 23.8% of the student population identifies as students of color, the largest group identified as Latin@.

The growing attendance of Latin@ students at this predominantly White institution was a rather recent phenomenon. In 1994 the enrollment of students identifying as Latin@ or Hispanic was 452. In 2009, approximately 15 years later Garcia-Caro, Davis, and Olivos' study *Being Latino@ at the University* reported that there were 855 Latin@ students. At the time of this study the enrollment of Latin@ students was 2,270, thus reflecting a substantial increase of this student population. Most of the Latin@ students identify as Mexican or Chican@, which is understandable since this school is on the west coast. The Latin@ students enrolled, similar to my study participants come mainly from Oregon and California.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

The criteria for participation consisted of two major qualifiers: 1) self-identified Latin@/Hispanic, and 2) enrolled as an undergraduate. Originally the criteria for participation was predicated on being 1st and 2nd year self-identified Latin@/Hispanic students who graduated from a US public high school and enrolled directly at this 4-year university. The lack of responses of this particular criteria, coupled with the number of transfer students who responded to the invitation to participate led to changes in the parameter of the study.

Participants were purposefully selected because they self-identified as Latin@ (Hispanic) and were enrolled as undergraduates. Purposeful sampling influenced the recruitment process. Purposeful or selective sampling begins with the research study purpose and selects those individuals that fit the researcher's criteria (Patton,1990, 2002). Choosing the unit of analysis through purposeful sampling is left to the discretion of the researcher. For instance, Hoyle, Harris, and Judd (2002) stipulate that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to "handpick the cases" that are specific to the research agenda (p. 187).

The objective for purposeful sampling according to Patton (1990) is to capture and describe significant themes or principal results "that cut across a great deal of participant variation" (Patton, 1990, p. 172). He suggests that when selecting a small sample of great diversity, the data collection and analysis will produce two kinds of findings: (a) rich, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and (b) important shared patterns that cut across the different cases. Researchers that utilize a purposeful sampling approach are not attempting to generalize

their findings of all people within the group. Rather, the researcher would be looking for evidence that clarifies the variation and the significant common patterns within that variation (Patton, 1990; 2002).

The recruitment of study participants was accomplished through various avenues in order to obtain the most diverse Latin@ undergraduate sample. First, the Office of Multicultural Academic Excellence (MAE) sent out my initial questionnaire to all undergraduates who identified as Latin@. Second, as an invited guest speaker in numerous Spanish classes, and third, through presentations at local community organizations. And finally, snowball recruitment via postings on Facebook.

Data Gathering Techniques

The required permission needed to conduct this study was obtained from the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), and Institutional Review Board (IRB). The principal method utilized in collecting the data for this study were the storied-sessions. The collection of data was accomplished in two phases. Phase one used a questionnaire (Appendix A) in order to find qualifying Latin@ respondents. Once the individual completed the questionnaire they emailed it back to the researcher indicating their interest in participating.

Upon receiving the responses, the researcher arranged to meet with potential participants. During the preliminary meeting the individual was provided with the background of the study and the requirements for their potential participation. I followed up with all parties by sending them an abstract of the study and a request for dates and times of their availability. The storied-sessions were scheduled during the summer 2015 and planned around the study participant's schedule. Following the first initial meeting,

four of the study participants informed me that while they were interested in participating in the study, they would not be physically present during the times that the storied-sessions were scheduled. The participants and researcher agreed that they would write out their answer to the SQUIN in a form of an essay and return it to the researcher by the deadline indicated (Appendix B). These participants agreed to be contacted with follow-up questions. The remaining storied-sessions were accomplished within one to two digitally recorded sessions.

The BNIM interview process for partial biographical narratives called for two different sessions: the SQUIN and the TQUIN. The first session, the SQUIN, elicited the preliminary telling of the stories around students' navigational experiences. Following this initial session, the researcher looked over the initial stories and developed further questions to conduct the follow-up TQUIN. The SQUIN protocol suggests that the participant's answers to the SQUIN be used to develop topic questions to induce further narratives (TQUINs). In other words, the formulation of the TQUINS evolved from topics or themes that came up during the storied-sessions and were based on the respondents' experiences. When possible face-to-face follow ups were scheduled, when this was not possible the TQUINs were sent via email.

As mentioned the data of four of the respondents was obtained through the form of a written response to the SQUIN. Table 3.2 on the following page contains the different manner, i.e. recorded storied session vs. written essay of each study participant coupled with the type of follow-up, i.e. in-person vs. email. What the researcher discovered in the use of essays as opposed to recorded storied-sessions, was that the essays contained an almost complete portrait or answer to the SQUIN in its totality. In

other words, the TQUIN sessions appeared to occur more frequently with the individuals whom I recorded, than with those who wrote their answer to the SQUIN.

Table 3.2: Summary of data collection of stories.

Name	Recorded Storied-session or Essay	TQUIN or Follow-up sessions
Corrina	Storied-session	Two times in person
Dolores	Storied-session	Three times in person
Edgar	Written Essay	One time in person
Edwin	Storied-session	Two times in person
Irmina	Storied-session	Two times in person, once via email.
Jessica	Storied-session	Two times in person, once via email.
Kyle	Storied-session	Two times in person
Marty	Storied-session	Two times in person
Paula	Written Essay	One time in person
Raquel	Written Essay	Two times in person
Raul	Storied-session	Three times in person
Selena	Storied-session	Three times in person
Vanessa	Written Essay	One time in person, once via email.

Figure 3.3 below illustrates the process undertaken in the data collection. These steps include the instruments that were utilized through each procedure. As mentioned the individuals who wrote out the SQUIN in the form of an essay required less follow up then those who engaged in recorded sessions.
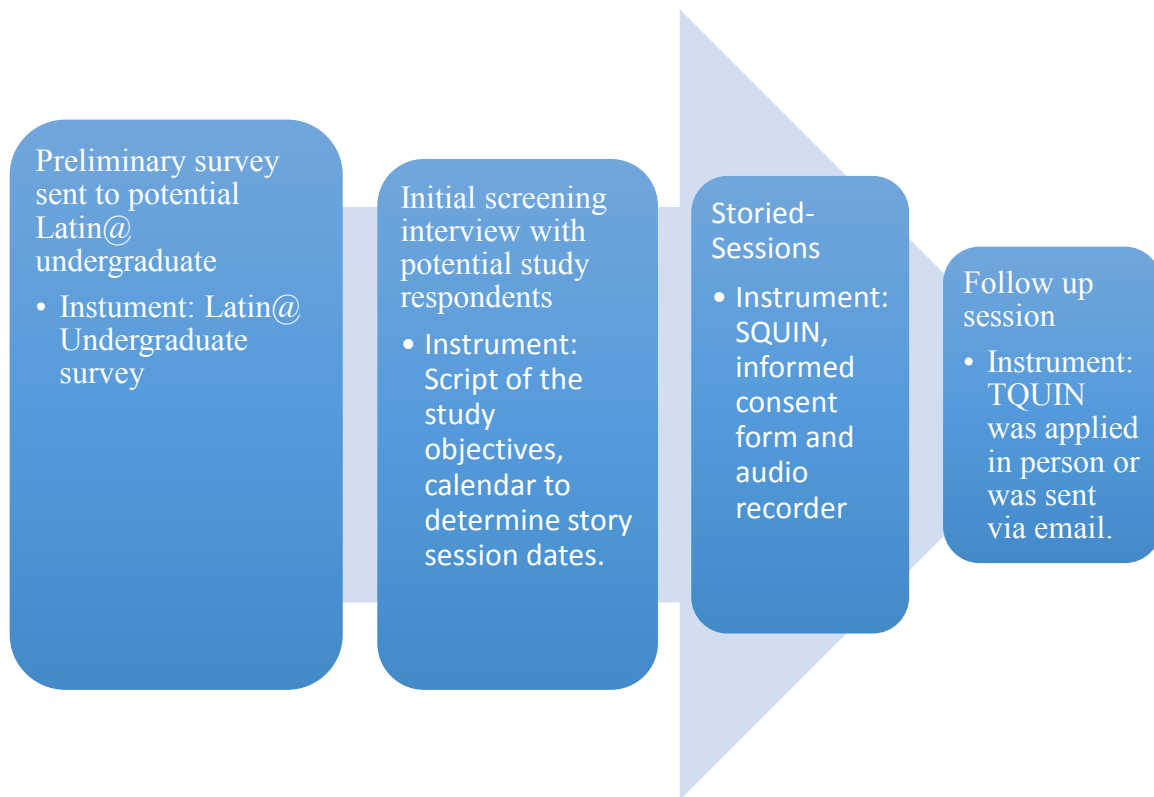
Figure 3.3. data collection process

Data Analysis

The data analysis overview begins with the process of transcribing of the students' stories, followed by the coding procedures, which included the development of the codes. Next, a discussion of how the stories were analyzed. The illustration figure 3.4 on the following page provides a visual of the steps undertaken in the analysis of the students' stories.

Set up spreadsheet with pseudonyms of study participants

- •Preliminary reading of all stories.
- •Transcribing of audio-recorded stories.
- •Three major-categories relating to the research questions were determined.

All stories, were loaded into Dedoose program for coding

- • Under three major cattegories 33 Sub-codes relating to the research questions were developed

Analysis of students' stories:

- • a) Frequency of coded excerpts
- • b)Linked identified factors to literature

Final Results

Figure 3.4. Steps undertaken in the analyses of the study.

Transcribing

All study participants were assigned a pseudonym for purposes of confidentiality. Stories digitally recorded were transcribed exclusively by the researcher. While errors can occur or be influenced by other personal factors such as researcher bias, transcribing the audio files by the researcher helped in making sure that the respondents words were accurately transcribed word-per-word. Steps were taken to assure this by listening to the audio recording multiple times and following up with the respondents to determine the accuracy of statements made.
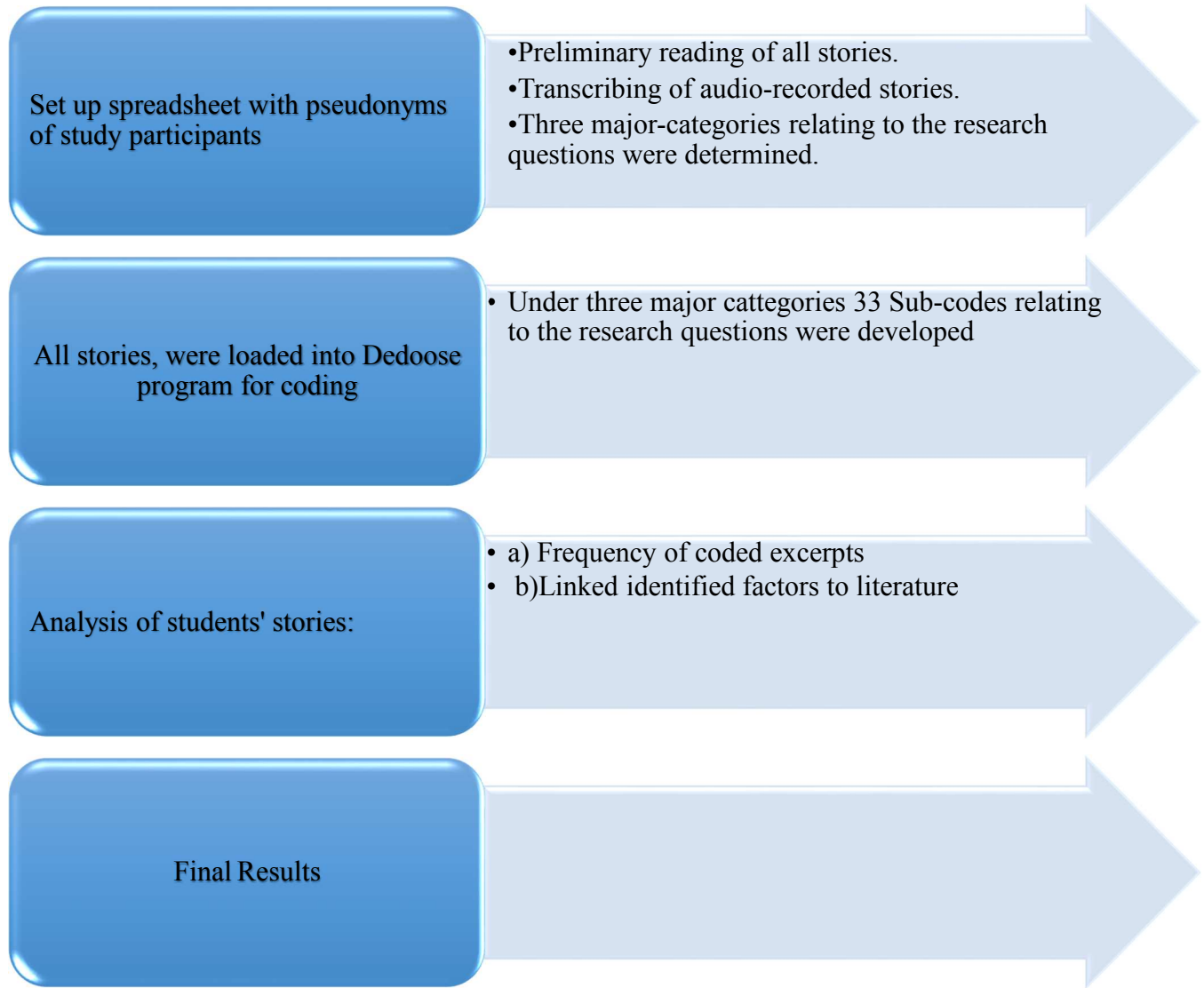
Coding

The objective of the thematic analysis was to document the various factors found in the participants' stories that corresponded to the three research questions. Since stories often generate a large amount of data that needs to be categorized and coded properly (Merriam, 2002), Dedoose, a CAQDAS tool for qualitative data analysis was employed. This computer-based program assisted with the coding and analysis of the data. The application of this program also helped me choose, simplify, and extract various themes and patterns as they emerged throughout the stories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Prior to uploading the stories to Dedoose, a preliminary reading of all stories was done before applying any codes. Secondly, the three primary categories that corresponded to the three research questions were determined. Next, after a second reading the excerpts were manually coded of as either a common challenge, a factor of persistence, or a factor that fosters success. During the initial analysis a realization that some of the excerpts coded could be coded under more than one of the three major categories. When this occurs it is referred to as simultaneous coding, in which two or

more different codes are applied to the same excerpt (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). For example, if the student mentioned not having money to pay for AP course fees I coded the excerpt first under the meta code common challenges. However, because the student mentioned AP course, this was also coded under the meta code of factors that foster success. AP course was coded in this fashion because the student identified AP course work as being a necessary factor in academic success.

Simultaneous coding should not be confused with subcoding, however (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Subcoding refers to codes that branch from primary codes. For example, "personal challenges" was a subcode of the meta code or major category "common challenges." The complexity of the students' excerpts that surfaced contained multiple meanings requiring a better way to organize their stories. Thus, I employed a qualitative software tool in order to create subcodes that related to primary codes. After I uploaded all participants' stories into *Dedoose* I reread and coded the respondents' excerpts under the three major categories.

Set of codes

Codes were selected due to frequency. The frequency was determined on the amount of times in which a term occurred or was repeated. The development of the codes used came from the analysis of each student's excerpts that linked to the major category corresponding to the appropriate research question. Initially, the analysis produced over 60 different codes. This occurred because a particular topic was mentioned once by only one person. The code was either omitted or combined under another subcode. The codes glossary in appendix (D) reflect the final codes that appeared more frequently in the stories of the respondents.

Analysis of navigational stories

The thematic analysis of the navigational stories examined common challenges theorized to impede educational achievement, factors of persistence of the individual, and factors that foster academic success. According Braun and Clarke (2006) "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). They suggest following six phases to help organize and analyze the data: 1) familiarity with data, 2) creating initial codes, 3) combing for themes, 4) analyzing themes, 5) defining and labeling themes, and 6) producing results. Thematic analysis was used in this study to tie the respondents' narratives to the research questions as well as to identify reoccurring topics. The process of thematic analysis also helped in the organizing and operationalizing the data to the final results.

To provide analytical rigor, a secondary analysis was conducted to verify if all three researcher-identified themes matched the key theories covered in the literature review and with the respondents' narratives. This was done to determine what was related to the existing body of research and what was different. This was an important step for validating previously identified challenges. Table 3.2 on page 94 illustrates the corresponding theories with the various factors identified in the students' stories.

The frequency of common challenges was the highest across all three major categories. Participants' excerpts of common challenges were coded 137 times in comparisons to factors that foster success (124 times) and factors of persistence (101 times). Under the category of common challenges eight different codes were developed. The frequency of both issues of financial struggles/lower SES and ethnic identity came

up in the respondents' story equally in comparisons to the other subcodes. These two interlocking factors will be further discussed in chapter four of the results.

The second category, factors of persistence produced two codes; academic self-efficacy and resilience/resistance. These particular codes were broken down further into various subcodes. For example, under academic self-efficacy I coded the students' excerpt with examples of the way this operates in their story such as, a) extracurricular activity, b) good student/habit skills and c) athletics. Under the resilience/resistance code two subcodes were created a) education opportunities, and b) self-reliance. The most mentioned factor in this category was academic self-efficacy, namely having good study skills or the belief of being capable students. The frequency of resiliency/resistance appeared much less than that of academic self-efficacy. Some of the challenges identified were unique to one or two individuals and were combined into one of the established codes. For example, only two of the respondents addressed balancing home and school, therefore they were combined under the subcode self-reliance branching off of resiliency/resistance. Also, some of the respondents focused more on factors that foster success and less on challenges. Academic self-efficacy as the most frequently occurring factor was the foundational component of question two and the most significant factor in the stories of all the respondents.

The particular category and the subcodes concerning persistence highlights navigation differently than the factors that foster success. During the analyzes of the participants' accounts of transitioning from high school to postsecondary, it was apparent that transitioning to a 2-year community college into 4-year university comes with its own set of challenges. Most of the respondents identified some sort of challenge

associated with their individual education experience. However, the intensity of the challenges encountered and the specific ways they overcame obstacles were diverse and worthy of noting. For example, the challenge of being homeless or having to care for younger siblings on top of getting through the last year of high school was the reality for some of the respondents. Self-reliance made apparent in their narrative underscores the persistence of these individuals who went on to achieve academically.

Under the third major category, supportive factors that foster education attainment six corresponding codes were established. The both factors, supportiveness of parents, siblings, and peers and non-familial agents in the form of teachers had the highest frequency. Secondly, the benefits of college readiness support, AP or Honors coursework.

The code application was examined through various procedures using the analysis tools in Dedoose. First, all the applied codes were examined through a packed code cloud. This helped determine the frequency of each construct. Second, the code application component in Dedoose was utilized to analyze how many time the codes came up in each story. Third, the code frequency was analyzed by examining the descriptor and the code count per each case.

Analysis of Key Theories and Student Identified Factors

Following the analysis of code frequencies discussed in the last section, the findings of the analysis of the navigational stories were compared with key theories discussed in the literature review. The table on the following page contain theories covered in chapter two of the literature review. These theories were then linked with the factors identified in stories and comments of the study respondents.

Table 3.3. Research question linking general theories and factors identified in the students' stories.

Research Question	General theory	Student identified factor
Challenges	Social, cultural and economic reproduction	1. Financial struggle/Lower SES
Challenges	Societal contextual interaction	1. Ethnic/cultural identity 2. Immigration status (their own or parents
Challenges	Deficit-based perspectives	Inadequate schools/ Institutional barriers
Persistence	Theories of Resistance	Cultural/Ethnic/self-awareness
Persistence	Academic self-efficacy	• Good study skills • Athletics • Extracurricular activities
Persistence	Resiliency theories	Self-reliance
Supportive factor	Community cultural capital theories and social networks	Cultural competence (secure in their identity
Supportive factor	Parents and familial influences	• Emotional Support of Parents/Family/Peer
Supportive factor	Non-Familial agents & college readiness	Non-familial Agents: • Teacher • Community member College readiness support: • AP Courses • College Transition Programs

The primary objective of this study was to analyze the stories of navigational success of 13 individual Latin@ undergraduates and the factors they personally identified that either impeded or could have impeded their outcome. Also documented in the study is the manner in which they met these challenges and the various factors they attributed to their current educational status. The three major themes that came out from the dual

analyses will be further discussed in the next chapter. In the remaining portion of this chapter the role of the researcher, the study assumptions, and the general limitations are discussed.

Role of the Researcher

"College!?! What do you mean college? *Estas pendeja!* College is for White people, we Mexicans work for a living."—My Dad[2]

As the researcher, the way in which I have experienced the educational system, whether at the public school level or in higher education, needs to be made explicit. I realize that qualitative research "is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and that the representation or rather the construction of reality is filtered through the lens of researcher (Lichtman, 2010). Especially important to acknowledge is the notion that reality is multidimensional and beyond one objective and universal certainty (Schram, 2006). Research is not developed in a vacuum, often there are specific reasons why an individual chooses a topic to develop. I am no different, however who I am as an individual differs greatly. I am not your typical PhD candidate. I am an older Chicana raised during a volatile time in our nation's history, therefore my identity development as a Chicana is influenced by the historical events of that particular time period. In other words, I was born in 1960 and grew up during the civil rights movements. I pluralize "movement" because contrary to popular belief the struggle for civil rights were fought on multiple fronts, not just a singular struggle by a singular oppressed group (Donato, 1997; Vaca, 2004).

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[2] My father's response to me when I told him at the age of 9 that I wanted to go to college.

I grew up in the border state of Arizona, the middle child of working-class parents who never went beyond an elementary education. My younger most formidable years were spent between the projects of south Tucson and the barrios of the Westside of the city. I attended predominately Black and Mexican-American schools—at that time I had no concept of what segregation was. Years later I learned that the educational system in the southwest circumvented the law by claiming that White and Black students were in fact attending school together, because Mexican-Americans at that time were considered White (Haney-Lopez, 1996, 2003). Thus, it appeared that desegregation was occurring in our school system. The only White individuals in our public school system were the teachers and superintendents.

All these aforementioned facts concerning my lived-reality, especially the way in which I experienced education must be made explicit in order to be forthright about possible bias held toward this particular institution, i.e. the education system. Yet the reason for engaging in this particular research topic is primarily predicated on my desire to "engage in research that investigates and helps to shift social injustice as part of a larger effort to empower Chicana/o students" (Pizarro, 1998, p. 66). While not to deny the many social inequalities woven into the fabric of not only the greater society, but through our educational system, from pre-school to post-doc programs, I wanted to focus in a different direction. In other words, I wanted to produce and contribute to research that praises the accomplishments of the study participants as stories celebrating survival (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999), rather than contributing to damaged-centered research (Tuck, 2009). My objective was to develop a project of affirmation, one of empowerment of Chican@ students beyond victimization. Instead of producing another study of Latin@

students who are pushed out or who dropout, I opted to investigate the stories of Latin@ students who despite the challenges that are common to Latin@ students navigated the educational system and are now attending a 4-year university.

My academic pursuits spanning 17 years focused mainly on studies of colonization and oppression of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, including Chican@s, the largest Indigenous based group in the U.S. However, it was through my education courses where I solidified my research focus on Latin@ education. I became much more aware of the history of Chican@ schooling, including the high drop/pushed out rate and low college graduation numbers. I also noticed that the educational research literature assigned in our course work often framed the schooling experiences of Latin@s and other poor minorities through deficit-based perspectives. It made me wonder if teacher education programs were responsible for some of the challenges encountered by Latin@ students. Could it be that framing Latin@ education issues exclusively through the lens of inequality and the achievement gap reproduces the same conditions it aims to challenge? Are these programs replicating a deficit-based perspective by the continual portrayal of Latin@ students as at-risk and in need of rescuing? Perhaps centering solely on the disparities in education reinforces the notion that Latin@ students are meant to fail. Without alternate examples of academically successful Latin@s, the singular focus promotes a narrative of failure, rather than one of success. The studies that focus exclusively on poor academic outcomes continue to outweigh studies reflecting success, Zalaquett (2004) underscores this sentiment by stating,

> The research literature about Hispanic/Latino students' characteristics and
> academic success presents a large body of information about possible causes of

their poor academic success. Fewer research examples are found regarding the characteristics of those Hispanic/Latino students who succeed in high school and make the transition to college (p. 629).

I am also quite cognizant of the politics of representation (Hall, 1997) thus I act with respect and responsibility to ensure as suggested by Fine et al. (2000) that I "write in ways that attach lives to racial structures and economies, and construct stories and analyses that interrupt and reframe victim-blaming mantras" (p. 169).

It was my genuine intention within and throughout this study to privilege the voices of the study respondents as data, and to approach it with the same respect as any quantitative positivist driven and collected data. I was determined to make central their stories and their experiences within the study, hence I continually considered my own subjectivity and lived-experience in order not to let that subjectivity hinder the story of the participants. I also kept at the forefront what Clandinin and Connelly (1994) underscore, suggesting that,

> When we enter into a research relationship with participants and ask them to share their stories with us, there is the potential to shape their lived, told, and relived and retold stories as well as our own. These intensive relationships require serious consideration of who we are as researchers in the stories of participants, for when we become characters in their stories, we change their stories (p. 422).

As well as wanting to make sure as suggested by Creswell (2006) that as the "researchers collect stories, they negotiate relationships, smooth transitions, and provide ways to be useful to the participants" (57). This is why I viewed the study participants as co-creators in the new paradigm of how we should be thinking about Chican@/Latin@ students. I

believe my usefulness is in my promise to help them achieve their educational goals in any way I can, i.e. writing letters of support or recommendation, mentoring.

Given the immense amount of research, government policy reports both at the federal and state level, and individual case-studies centering on the educational disparities of Chican@/Latin@ students there is no denying that the fight for the educational rights of this population of students is a struggle worthy of attention. Most importantly it is a struggle worthy of solutions. To put it simply, scholarship that focus on Latin@ education should be balanced between the issues affecting students and the perseverance of these students—assets rather than deficits.

Assumptions of the Study

Because this is a qualitative-based narrative study, certain assumptions concerning the data can arise. For one there is an assumption that study participants were forthright and genuine in the accounts provided. While I trust that they are being honest there could be questions as to whether their particular narratives were accurate representations of their actual experiences. Another issue revolves around four of the stories analyzed were in the form of written essays, while nine of the stories were face-to-face audio recorded sessions. To put it another way, I witnessed the story emerge directly from the respondent who I interviewed, hence I know they are the storyteller. With the essays submitted a question concerning authorship could occur.

Another assumption made by the findings of the study is that the economic struggles of the study respondents mirror the experiences of other Latin@ students as found in the literature, therefore a tendency to reduce all Latin@s to a population living in poverty could occur. Similarly, the assumption that Latin@s are a monolithic group

could also be a factor. While there were commonalties located within each story and within the case-studies of other Latin@ students, variances were also noted. Lastly, the assumption that the findings of this study will positively influence the future enrollment of other Latin@ students is one the researcher makes.

Limitations of the Study

As a qualitative study focused on the first-person stories of self-identified Latin@ undergraduates the results gathered by their multiple narratives cannot by any means be generalized to the larger Latin@ population. However, this study's findings are consistent with the literature regarding Latin@ students. While most of the study participants are high achieving and resilient this is not meant to assume that all Latin@s reflect the same or similar traits. In other words, I make no claims as to the generalizability of experiences of the study participants to other situational occurrences, nor am I inferring any such similarities. Merriam (2009), maintains that generalizability "in the statistical sense cannot occur in qualitative research" (p. 224). While the findings of the participants may not be generalizable because they are individual case studies Riessman (2008) suggest however, that studies such as my own moves beyond population-based sample type of studies and reminds us that "case-centered models of research can generate knowledge that over time becomes the basis for others' work" (p.13). Furthermore, while the small sample could be a limiting factor in regards to generalization of the results. My findings however were consistent with the related literature on academic achievement and Latin@ students.

The original proposed study was interested exclusively on collecting and documenting the stories 1st and 2nd year Latin@ students who graduated from a public

high school and enrolled directly at this university, however time constraints and low interest by this specific group led to the reevaluation of the parameters. I restructured the parameters to include all Latin@ undergraduates, and the attendance and graduation from high school included private school as well as the acquiring of a GED as opposed to a traditional high school diploma. Also altering the study parameters to include community college transfers rather than focusing exclusively on those students who enrolled at a 4-year institution directly after high school could be thought of as the reality of most Latin@ college students according to the literature. In other words, Latin@ students compared to their peers are more likely to delay their college enrollment and to have started their college trajectory at a community college (Kennen & Lopez, 2005).

Whilst this study's initial recruitment efforts did yield a total of 25 individuals whom I interviewed for possible study participants and who said they were interested, in total thirteen stories were documented. The small sample of stories used within this study may be seen as another limitation, however for phenomenological narrative type of research and with the use of in-depth analysis smaller samples are often encouraged (Gray, 2013). Since all the study participants who contributed their story to the present study attended the same university, their experiences and personal characteristics may differ from other students who attend other universities especially universities deemed as Hispanic serving institutions. While their narratives are unique to their experience, the analysis found commonalties across the majority of the participants' cases. These commonalties will be further expanded in next chapter.

Summary

This chapter covered the methodology utilized to document the stories of the study participants. The three overarching frameworks, Chicana feminist epistemology in education (CFE), critical race theory (CRT), and Latin@ critical race theory (LatCrit) were defined as the epistemological and ontological assumptions guiding the entire process of the study. This trio was systematically intertwined with biographic-narrative-interpretive method (BNIM) that used a singular question to induce a narrative (SQUIN). This unique style of interviewing employed one carefully crafted question rather than a series of questions intended to provoke definitive responses.

The research design section provided a description of the methods along with limitations when using SQUIN. The data collection and management section discussed four different parts. First, the location where the study occurred, followed by specific recruitment and participant selection that occurred. The final portion described the techniques utilized to gather data.

The remaining sections included a discussion of the role of the researcher, the assumptions of the study and the general limitations. While the demographics included some of the attributes of the respondents it is but a mere sketch of the entire portrait of these individuals. The following chapter on the results of the study will provide a deeper nuanced discussion of the participants and the factors identified in their stories.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The aim of this study was to collect, document and analyze the stories of navigational success of 13 Latin@ undergraduate students enrolled at a research university in the Pacific Northwest. Secondly, the focus of the study was based more on the aspirations of the students and less on their struggles. While one of the categories focused on common challenges, the other two centered more on factors that highlight the students' successful navigation into the university. The primary research question guiding this study "what was the navigational experience of the Latin@ students that ultimately led to their university enrollment" provided the overarching theoretical framework. The discussion of the results centers primarily on the three subquestions that correlates to the three major categories.

1. What challenges did the study participants highlight in their stories?

2. What factors of persistence did the students identify that ultimately resulted in their enrollment at a university?

3. What did the students identify as supportive factors in their navigational success into the university?

In the following sections the three major themes that addressed the three subquestions will discussed. The findings that correspond to each research question will be broken down into three areas: common challenges, factors of persistence, and finally factors that foster success.

Results of Narratives of Navigating Toward Success

During the data analysis stage, themes relevant to the theoretical framework and the literature review were determined mainly by the frequency occurring in each story. Three major themes corresponding to the three research questions of the study respondents' stories were analyzed. The results of that analysis revealed what the students experienced during their navigational experiences. In the next sections each question and the various themes relating to the major categories will be discussed.

The results of the study analysis illustrated in Figure 4.1 provides a visual of the themes identified by the individual student. For instance, each of the circles represents the top factors identified in the stories influencing the navigational success of the student. All factors represented within figure 4.1 will be further discussed and explained under their respective sections.
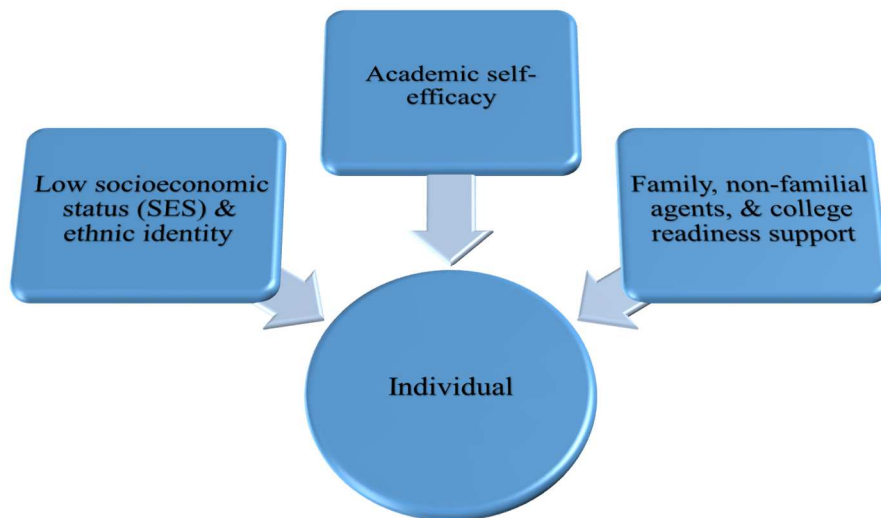

Figure 4.1. Results of analysis of student navigational stories

Q 1: Common challenges affecting college-enrollment

Numerous research studies have documented the common challenges affecting the college enrollment of Latin@ students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hernandez, & Lopez, 2004; Irizarry, 2012; Padilla, 2006). Most of these scholars identify such obstacles as low socioeconomic status (SES), immigration status, and matters within the family including but not limited to little to no interest in their child's education (Padilla, 2006). Low SES also correlates with lower education levels and inadequate health. House and Williams (2000) suggest that low SES and race/ethnicity are conflated often determining the socioeconomic status of an individual.

Other key causes of the lower academic attainment for Latin@ students are linked to deficit-based perspectives of teachers and school personnel (García & Guerra, 2004; Valencia, 1997, 2010, 2011). Social reproduction theorists argue that the educational experiences of low-income students are exacerbated by the ways social class and cultural capital operate and are reproduced in schools (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu,1986; Stanton-Salazar, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

All these factors, either in combination or alone have been found to impede Latin@ students from pursuing higher education opportunities (Rios Agular & Deil-Amen, 2012). Research also shows that Latin@ students often encounter three key obstacles: lack of parental guidance, inaccurate information including poorly informed options (Immerwahr, 2003; Kelly, Schneider, & Carey, 2010; Zalaquett, 2005). Other factors such as concerns about paying for college also influence the decision of either attending 2-year community colleges or vocational schools or delaying higher education enrollment in lieu of finding employment (Nora, 2001; Saunders & Serna, 2004).

While most of the aforementioned factors mirror the results of my analysis, two factors were more pronounced. These were financial struggle/lower SES and ethnic identity. Other factors related to ethnic identity such as language and immigration status were coded separately because not everyone mentioned these two factors in relations to being Latin@. Often the study participants' narratives contained multiple factors occurring simultaneously, which made it difficult to tease these factors apart. For example, narratives about race often also included socioeconomic hardships. When this occurred, I drew attention to the intersectional moment.

Themes of low socioeconomic & ethnic identity

"We ended up moving and money got really tight really fast and we struggled for about a year before moving back to California. I never managed to make it back to school because that entire year we spent trying to keep up with bills."—Vanessa

"I used to work at McDonald's and I had the interview in English, even though they knew that I spoke English, they sent me to the back of the kitchen with all the Mexican women."—Irmina

The analysis of the respondents' stories found that the top challenge centered equally on issues of financial or low socioeconomic status (SES) and race/ethnic identity. At least 12 of the stories consistently mentioned some form of economic struggle thus aligning with the key studies on Latin@ college experiences and issues of lower socioeconomic status. However, the frequency of the topic centering on race/ethnic identity was equally mentioned.

In my analysis, financial hardship was frequently mentioned and instances of socioeconomic struggles surfaced significantly in some of the respondents' accounts. These students were subjected to adverse living conditions that included homelessness, living from paycheck to paycheck, and food insecurities persisted in their navigation. The

hardship discussed by the students often intersected with other "common challenges" (CC). For example, low socioeconomic status often meant students in my study attended impoverished neighborhood schools. In other cases, low SES influenced the individual's home life. In terms of family, one respondent (Vanessa) reported how financial hardship impacted the time she spent with her mother after her father lost his job:

> When I was still in middle school, my dad had been fired from a job that he had worked at for 15 years and got very seriously sick really soon after. He never recovered and has been unemployed since so my mom had to take over as breadwinner. She had tried to obtain her GED on multiple occasions but was always distracted by things that kept getting in the way. Eventually, she got a license to be a cross-country truck driver and so we wouldn't see my mom for months at a time. We would usually not have much to eat so the free school lunches that we received sometimes where the majority of my food would come from.

Analysis of Vanessa's experience demonstrates the challenges encountered in her earlier schooling, thus supporting the literature on socioeconomic challenges and Latin@ families. Further analysis of other students' words such as Dolores, underscore the low SES environment coupled with an awareness concerning the role education plays in the earning capabilities of individuals. She described her parents' education background, stipulating that,

> My parents only made it the 9th grade, so my parents have always worked like food services jobs. And like all the adults around me, they all had similar levels of education, they all worked the same type of jobs such as physical labor with no

benefits. Benefits were a thing I knew of, so I was kind of like well if I don't want

to do one of these jobs, I probably need to go to school.

Dolores' excerpt stresses the importance of getting a good education for the students in

my study, which brings to mind the different economic struggles associated with

attending college. When talking about attending a 4-year university Dolores remarked

that "one of the most common barriers that I have faced is not having the economics and

having to borrow."

My analysis also showed how the navigational experiences of some of the

respondents demonstrated economic issues related to their decision on the type of college

to enroll in. Corrina for example, dreamt of studying cinema at one of the larger

universities. However, because of financial issues she opted to attend a local community

college instead. She recalled how issues of funding influenced her decision on where to

begin her postsecondary education,

When I was looking for colleges, obviously my dad was really big about you

know yes go to a good college. He wanted me to go to college for sure, but money

was an issue, it became a factor when looking for a good school to go to. Because

of my circumstances my mom is a single mother, she divorced my dad, and she

was unemployed. My entire college career she's been unemployed, and because I

am female, I am Latina, and I have good grades I got a lot of help from the

government. I did apply for scholarships, but none were getting me into these big

universities.

There are a couple of things occurring in what Corinna says. First, she underscores issues

of economics and issues in the family, namely single-parent household as a challenge in

her college-going choice. Secondly, she focuses on ethnic identity not as an obstacle, but rather as a benefit. The analysis on the multiple ways ethnic identity operated in the lives of these respondents will be further discussed in the next chapter.

My analysis also located in some of the low-income students' excerpts examples of the ways cultural and social capital operated in their lives. Vanessa's straightforward comments concerning her high school experience reflects issues of socioeconomic class, she recollects how she,

Attended school in an amazing school district where the surrounding homes were multi-million dollar homes. The majority of the students in my particular high school were Asian, Filipino, or Caucasian and the minorities were African American and Hispanics. Most of the Latinos attended school a couple blocks down the street at Nogales High in Covina. My school was considered the "rich school" and I felt it. Almost everyone I knew had the latest gadgets and toys and money was never an issue. Going over to friend's houses was always an adventure. Everyone had their own rooms, a backyard, a pool, and theater rooms! My house on the other hand was a two-bedroom mobile home that housed a total of six of us.

Class-based issues found in Vanessa's experience mirrors the literature on social and cultural capital by emphasizing and juxtaposing the scarcity of one community against another. Her excerpt contains an interesting view of how ethnicity and class intersect. Her words also reinforce what the literature stipulates about certain racial/ethnic groups attend certain types of schools, while other type of students attend other types of schools. In other words, Latin@s attend lower SES schools, while Asians and White students go

to better funded schools. Further examples of race and class also came up in Dolores'

account. When discussing her university experience, she recalled,

> Most of my friends were White and that was difficult and not only the racial
>
> impact of it, but the class impact, like my roommate, both her parents are lawyers.
>
> Her parents are paying her out of state tuition out of pocket, like they're not
>
> taking out loans. And I'm like that insane, like trying to process that amount of
>
> money to me was just crazy. Like her tuition cost about $40,000 that's more than
>
> my dad makes in a year. Oh it's crazy, also like Portland rich is very different
>
> than LA rich, I was sort of familiar with Portland rich, but LA rich is like a totally
>
> different thing.

Her comments are interesting because a couple of things are occurring. Dolores like some

of the other students conflate race and class, but in this sense she is subtly conflating or

equating White with being rich. Secondly, her comments suggest an awareness of

economic inequalities, such as the tuition and her family's income. What Dolores'

excerpt also emphasizes is the alienation factor often experienced by first-generation low

income racialized college students as per the literature (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco,

2005).

> Other instances of financial struggles or issues of lower SES especially as it

relates to education were found in other student's narratives such as Irmina. When

discussing AP courses in high school she remembered this particular financial struggle,

> I couldn't really pay for some of the fees and for the books and stuff attached to
>
> AP courses and it was hard because I wasn't with my mom and I had to pay for it
>
> out of my own pocket.

Issues of economic struggles such as the one underscored by Irmina align with the literature on economic challenges and Latin@ students. Some of the students experienced other factors such as immigration or issues in the family that exacerbated financial struggles. The concurrent factors occurring in their narratives are important issues that require further analysis and are beyond the scope of this dissertation, however the issues revealed by the analysis highlights areas for additional research.

The analysis also found that half of the respondents grew up in first-generation middle-class households. What I mean by this is that some respondents indicated within their account that their parents did not grow up under the same economic conditions that they enjoy. For example, Marty reported that her parents came from poor working-class backgrounds; her mother was originally from Compton, California, and her father, from the mission district of San Francisco. Marty recounted how she,

> Grew up with my grandpa, my mom had me at very young age, so we didn't have anyone else to watch me, so I lived with them a lot. We had always lived in apartments and townhouses and then we moved so that we could go to better schools. We moved to this nice neighborhood in North San Jose, California we went form east San Jose to north San Jose. My parents knew they didn't have to worry about anything like they did in my last neighborhood. My last neighborhood was very, well I guess you could say ghetto. I mean I liked it but other people would be uncomfortable even driving through it.

While Marty's comments do not necessarily mention ethnicity or race, the environment mentioned in her account have been racialized. The analysis of the two distinct factors, low SES and Latin@ ethnic identity were often difficult to tease apart. Respondents, even

though their narratives were prompted by the study's SQUIN, most of them racialized their socioeconomic experiences. Dolores, the child of undocumented immigrants while speaking about growing up in Portland, underscored the economic or class differences that are part of that city. When describing where she grew up she said,

> I lived where the people of color are mostly concentrated. So for me that's what I thought was normal. Growing up most of my friends were also Chicanos or from Mexico or Filipino. There were also a lot of eastern Asians, and a lot of Koreans. I grew up in East Portland, and not east as in terms of the river, but east of I-205. This area was annexed to the city about 25 years ago, so it's always been marginalized from the rest of the city and it's where rent is the cheapest, that's where I grew up.

In my analysis of Dolores' narrative, her words reflect the intersectionality of race and class. She lived in a neighborhood unlike the majority of Portland, comprised mainly of people of color, which also had affordable rents. Marty may not have mentioned the racial or ethnic background of the community members living in Compton or east San Jose in the same manner as Dolores, nonetheless the same narrative of race and class is occurring.

The narratives of other respondents highlighted Latin@ ethnic identity and the lack of knowledge as the actual challenge. Corrina who identified as ethnically "mixed" when talking about how little she knew about her ethnic identity said,

> My mom isn't Latina she's American. When my dad came from Mexico he wanted to leave the environment. He was not happy with this country, he knew how unstable it was, and how corrupted it was. He wanted to come to the US for a

better life, and he wanted to be an American citizen. So I never learned Spanish

the most Mexican culture he brought me up was like teaching me about the food.

The analysis of her words uncover another stereotype often associated with Mexican

ethnicity, that is the socioeconomic instability and corruption that permeates Mexican

society. Her description of her father's attitude while subjective is still her perception of

this ethnic identity. When discussing her ideas of Latin@ identity she revealed that,

All my life I wanted to learn more about where I came from, what my culture is.

I'm very Americanized, and I've always been curious about what it means to be

Mexican-American. And you know it's kind of hard when your dad doesn't really

have that much you know, love for his old country. So where do I go, for this

information. So cultural identity was put on the back burner until I got to the

university actually and I started taking the Spanish heritage classes.

The analysis of the terms "American" and "Americanized" used by Corrina to define

herself and her mother's identity is an interesting racialization of nation-state identities.

The use of this term can also be found in the accounts of other study participants. For

example, both Edwin and Irmina utilized the term "American" when describing their

step-fathers and their teachers rather than "White." Growing up in the US Southwest

during the 60-70s the term "Americano" was also utilized by my parents and community

members when referring to White people. The use of the term "American" during that

particular era is somewhat understandable, because during that time period the label

Latin@ or Hispanic was not as readily utilized and Mexican-Americans were considered

White by law (Haney-López,2003), yet we understood that our identity was not

congruent with the nation-state identity. However, I was surprised how the respondents used these terms so naturally without the consequences of what this means.

Within my analysis I found that often Latin@ ethnic identity was associated or correlated with issues or terms such as "illegal," "immigration," and "non-English speakers." The connotation of "Latin@," or more specifically "Mexican" is something the researcher, the respondents, and Chican@/Latin@ scholars understand are terms that strongly underscore identity politics. For example, Irmina whose ethnic identity intersected with issues of immigration she said,

> I guess I used to think of myself as Mexican and I am seen as my nationality, but now I don't consider myself anything because I'm not from there anymore but I'm not from here either. I guess you could say that I am bicultural/bilingual, most of my boyfriends have been white. I think back for example when I was going to get married and I didn't want to change my name. My ex was German, and my first name is already German so people are going to think I'm white, and then if they see me face-to-face they might accuse me of stealing someone's identity.

Again, my analysis uncovers the nuances of nation-state terms in the form of race or ethnic identity. As demonstrated in Irmina's comments Latin@ identity depending on your appearance or citizenship status was experienced differently by these students. Corinna for example who grew up in Oregon, when discussing the ethnic makeup of her high school disclosed that,

> I did not have Latino friends because I did not fit in with other Latinos because they all spoke Spanish and I didn't. They had their own culture you know they had their own lives. I was kind of different in the way that most of the Latino kids

that I met were not as driven as I was and not that there was anything wrong with

that. But there was a definitely a disconnect.

The analysis of her comments concerning Latin@ students "not as driven" accentuates a

deficit-based stereotype of Latin@ students. Respondents' narratives acknowledged that

stereotypes operated in multiple ways in society and while their stories supported the

notion they did not wish to promote or embody, often their comments were

problematically uncritical. Jessica's following account highlights how her mother would

spend time with her to support her school efforts:

I remember my mother always spending extra time with me because I was being

raised in the US she did not me want me to fall into the stereotype, oh I'm

Hispanic so I'm struggling, or I'm not going to be up to par with the rest of my

classmates because I'm Hispanic.

While Jessica's excerpt emphasis her mother's commitment to her learning, her

comments also stresses a common belief found in the literature on deficit-based

perspectives and Latin@ students. My analysis of their opinion of Latin@ students draws

attention to the way stereotypes operated in these students' lives and conjures up

questions concerning the sociocultural influences on their perception. A discussion of the

analysis on the way ethnicity and race operated in the students' navigational success is

beyond this section and will be covered in the next chapter.

The conflation of the two themes and the complexity of low SES and ethnic that

occurred in this section often made it difficult to discern separately. However, mirroring

the literature my analysis demonstrated that often societal depictions of Latin@s as being

poor, as residing in poorer communities, and engaging in criminal behavior (i.e.

gangster/gangs) influenced these students' view of their ethnic identity as seen through their narratives. Up next, the more personal factors of the way the students persisted through their navigation will be discussed.

Q 2: Factors of Persistence (Personal Characteristics)

"They tell me that my passion drives my success and improvement."—Edgar

"You know step by step I won't let my own perfection or my idea of perfection be the enemy of my progress."—Raul

Studies that focus on the characteristics of Latin@ students who successfully transition from high school to the university are few compared to those that make failure and student attrition the primary focus (Zalaquett, 2005). Latin@ student persistence can be characterized as thriving in the face of historical and socioeconomic factors that have been theorized to impeded degree attainment. Studies focusing on Latin@ student persistence highlight the experiences of individual Latin@s, who persist albeit challenges encountered. The majority of the accounts attribute their accomplishment to familial support above all other factors (Hernandez, 2000). Other studies found that Latin@ academic persistence relates to having the support of non-familial agents such as teachers (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Additional theorists suggest that resiliency is key to persistence (Morales, 2008). Resiliency which is defined as "the ability to cope with adversity and overcome the most challenging circumstances" (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005, p. 319) is the leading factor in countering stressful situations. Garza, Reyes, and Trueba (2004) consider resilience "as the ability to confront and to resolve problems and the capacity to utilize personal or social resources to enhance limited possibilities" (p. 11). These two definitions for

Latin@ students also defines the intersectionality of resistance and resilience (Yosso, 2000).

Finally, the literature on academic self-efficacy and the influence on persistence has been key in explaining how Latin@ students persevere in these learning environments. While the term self-efficacy refers to more a generalized attitude about ones' abilities, academic self-efficacy, on the other hand, applies to performing scholastic type of tasks at the assigned level (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). As defined by Lent et al. (1997), academic self-efficacy refers to the degree of confidence that a student feels concerning their ability to complete academic assignments or reach academic goals.

While two factors were mentioned in the students' stories only one within this category had the highest frequency. Academic self-efficacy in comparisons with the factor of resistance/resilience occurred equally across all stories. The results of the analysis found that the main influence that propelled these students forward in their navigational success was their personal belief in their abilities. The 13 stories all contained multiple examples of how their conviction in their capabilities as students outweighed all other factors of support. That is, other factors labeled as persistence while present in over half of the stories were not as highly specified as academic self-efficacy. Take for example Raul, as a young boy his belief in his ability influenced his confidence, remembering an early period in his childhood he had this to say,

> I've always felt, and there's no way to say this and try to be humble, I've always
> felt like I was a little more intelligent than certain people. I mean, when I entered
> middle school I was ranked as number three out of my elementary. So I've always
> known that in standardized testing and all, that I've always done really well.

Most participants attributed academic self-efficacy as qualities they believed made it possible for them to succeed in their pathway to the university. Irmina, who had already earned her bachelors by the end of this study, also described how earlier experiences in elementary school influenced her levels of academic self-efficacy, she recalled her experience learning English,

> I was in this ESL class, and because I was so used to being by myself, I was the most advanced one in English, speaking it and writing it, and so the teacher would make me grade everybody else's homework. And so they changed my class, they put me in a class with all white kids. I was very self-conscious and very shy when it came to speaking in front of everybody. But I could write, and sometimes the teacher would say, oh you don't have to write as much because of English not being your first language. But I would still write as much as other students and so I think it was a bit of a challenge, but I think it paid off not having anyone translate for me the first years that I was here, because by the 8th grade I was doing things on my own.

Her perception of her English learning experience demonstrates her academic self-efficacy especially in the face of deficit-based perspective in the form of her teacher. Her teacher's misplaced empathy concerning Irmina's language aptitude supports another form of deficit-thinking, that is the propensity to disbelief the language minority's abilities.

In the literature on academic self-efficacy one fundamental aspect centers on instilling a college-going attitude from an early age. Some of the students talked about

how the idea of attending college was something instilled in them early. Selena recalls that,

> Going to college was always my goal. Even with the minor setback, I never gave up on the idea that I would go back to college. Since I was a child, I always imagined myself as some sort of business women, psychologist, or doctor. I have always loved sciences in any form, I suppose.

Selena's words of college always being a goal was a reoccurring theme that connected a lot of the respondents' accounts. For example, even though Irmina experienced multiple challenges such as her family's homelessness and balancing school and work she never lost sight of going to college, she remembered how she, her little brother, and her mother stayed in a homeless shelter after her "American" step-father had abandoned the family. During her last year in high school, she recalled,

> We were in a shelter, we were homeless for two months while I was a senior in high school and I still went to school. It wasn't a choice; it was a natural thing for me to finish high school and it was hard.

The resiliency demonstrated by this student goes beyond the academic self-efficacy to one of self-reliance. Along with her resiliency was her family's respect for higher education, which debunks the literature that depicts Mexican parents as disinterested in education. She said,

> I come from a family that is well educated, in other words, all my aunts and uncles all went to college. That's what has influenced me. So even though my mom was a single mom, I could have opted not to have gone to college, but because we already have that background, I felt lucky that I already had that

influence, that background so it was just more natural for me. It wasn't like oh

I'm not going to college or not, it was more like *I'm going to college.*

The subject of continuing education beyond a high school as mentioned by Irmina was something they all admitted was a goal, Raul had this to say,

Growing up in the late 90s to the 2000s its kind of like some people went to

college, some people went to trade school, some people just started working, so I

just assumed I actually was intelligent that I can actually do good in school, I like

learning. So going to the University always seemed like a logical choice.

The comments made by Raul about their peers choosing to work rather than attend college was also a theme that set these students apart. Kyle like Raul also defined his decision to attend college as successful. When talking about his pathway into the university he remarked,

I'm a transfer success because I didn't face a bunch of adversity going through

high school. Like there are some who had to quit school to get a job, or others

who are in community college and have three kids and I didn't have to do that,

fortunately I was privileged in that way.

My analysis of both Kyle and Raul's comment about varying pathways highlight how they made different choices about their education in comparisons to their peers. Jessica's narrative contained comments about minority students appeared to be funneled into certain disciplines at the university, remarked that the absence of minorities in the STEMs influenced her pursuit of this field, she said

The fact that there is a lack of minorities has been a factor that has always kind of

pushed me, that has made me want to stay in the sciences and in math. Because I

want to be able to show that, well I think that history and art are very, very important, but I want to be able to show that a female Latina can be successful in the STEM subjects. It doesn't have to be, oh I'm Hispanic so my major is you know Latino studies or sociology it can be anything. It can be math; it can be chemistry; it can be whatever you choose it to be.

Jessica's comments mirror the literature on the lack of minorities and women in the STEMS and while it reflects academic self-efficacy it underscores the factor of persistence related to resistance. Student resistance in this student's sense is seen through her attitude that being Latina will not prevent her from pursuing academic subjects devoid of both minorities and women.

My analysis of the ways in which academic self-efficacy operated in the students' narratives found varying example of good study skills or being a good student. This aspect also influenced a love of learning as can be seen in Jessica's comments, she said,

I remember really enjoying my math classes, my math classes the most. I was in TAG, which is talented and gifted program., and as a TAG student I, always did really well in my classes, on my exams. I was always a very shy student, so I didn't speak up much in classes, but I do remember really enjoying the material and classes and liking homework and things like that.

Aside from possessing academic self-efficacy or a love of learning, the students' accounts also contained examples of high achievement. For instance, Paula reported that,

Elementary school and middle school were a breeze; I always got straight A's or check pluses. I succeeded in high school, and I was in the highest math class my school offered, I made honor roll my entire life.

Again, my analysis is on their perceptions about their accomplishments and not on actually examining the students' transcripts. Other students such as Selena, whose personal struggles were due to living between two countries, nonetheless, was a high-achieving student, remembered,

> While I was at Roosevelt High School, I was taking "college prep classes" passing with A's, so when I transferred to Jefferson High School, they thought it would be better for me to go straight into 11th grade after completing 9th grade.

Other examples of being advanced to the next grade, also found in the account provided by Edgar who in high school went from freshman to junior level chemistry class.

Some of the ways students demonstrated academic self-efficacy was also reflected via athletics. Marty, the youngest of all the respondents when talking about her love of sports especially soccer, said, "I did really good in classes, I was a scholar athlete, meaning I got higher than a 3.0 my entire time there." Similar to Marty, both Edwin and Raul also underscored their involvement in sports, for instance, Raul recalled that playing high school sports did not mean one was not academically driven, he said,

> I received the scholar athlete award when I played varsity football, which is like having the highest GPA on the team. So I always knew that I was a little different than everyone else; I experienced both worlds. So even when I run into people, I went to high school, like they're really smart, intelligent people, that you know already graduated and went to a straight 4-year university, private university. Well, they've always looked at me as if seeing a peer, not just someone like oh yeah he's just a jock that tries to take hard classes.

Although most of the students in the study possessed a high amount of self-confidence that fueled their academic self-efficacy, a couple of them reported that they did not consider themselves "smart" and mentioned other qualities, such as passion and a desire to change the world as being central in enabling achieve academically. Dolores, who candidly underscored her struggles, downplayed her intelligence and capabilities, however, she recognized the importance of extra-curricular activities beyond grade point average, she said

> In high school I didn't walk in my graduation, essentially I graduated late. And that was because of math because I failed math. And I needed the math credits, so that was very traumatic especially at this point. The newspaper was the first thing I was involved in, but then I got involved in other things as well. For example, I took stats for my high school wrestling team, I worked on a project, which does a lot to involve young people in politics, and I did redistricting drives, canvassing for politicians, testifying as state legislations. In my junior and senior years, I was on the Willamette youth commission, which is the official youth advisory for the city Portland. My senior year I was elected co-chair of the commission, and there were many types of kids on this board, many who went to good high schools were from well-educated families, the kind that will go on to Yale, Harvard, Georgetown.

The focus on the individual characteristics of the student is not meant to imply that they did not benefit from external factors that guided their central motivation. Rather, what I am implying is that the student recognized and drew on their individual strengths

as good students, or on their resiliency by taking advantage of a situation such as various learning opportunities.

In this next section the analysis of the themes associated with the third research question is presented. While the section of factors the promote persistence demonstrated the students' personal strengths, the upcoming discussion centers on the supportive factors that enhanced the students' perseverance.

Q 3: Familia, non-familial agents and navigating towards higher education

While Latin@ students encounter numerous challenges in their pursuit of higher education, some studies found that despite the obstacles many Latin@ students go on to succeed academically (Anthrop-Gonzalez, Velez, & Garrett, 2005; Gándara,1995; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2015). Studies that examined the experiences of Latin@ college students reported various types of supportive factors influencing academic achievement. For example, Zalaquett (2005) established that having a supportive family and a sense of responsibility for siblings were all vital to the educational achievement of Latin@ college students (Zalaquett & Feliciano 2004). Similarly, Ceballos (2004) noted that the most influential component in high academic achievement among Latin@ college students had to do with the importance placed on higher education by parents. Another crucial factor was having mentors and role models (Luna & Prieto, 2009). Other studies relegate school personnel such as teachers as playing an important part in the student's decision to pursue higher education (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Martinez & Klopott, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 2010).

The analysis of the accounts of the study participants found that families and non-familial agents fostered their navigational success that ultimately lead to the university.

The factor of parents and family were overwhelmingly present in all of the stories, however the frequency of the non-familial agents was high but not necessarily mentioned by all respondents. Family members and non-familial agents in the form of teachers had the highest frequency of all supportive factors mentioned. Part of the non-familial agent factor was the role college readiness and AP or Honors coursework played. An important feature of the analysis revealed that most of the respondents centered their accounts more on supportive factors, and less on the challenges encountered. Also, most of the study participants were aware of challenges specific to Latin@ students and admitted to feeling privileged in comparisons to other Latin@s. They spoke about being grateful that they did not encounter obstacles that could have impeded their pursuit of higher education. All respondents identified features that they either benefited from directly, i.e. AP courses or school support that they recognized as being beneficial in fostering positive educational outcomes.

The discussion of the analysis of this third area occurs differently than the factors of persistence and common challenges. Similar to common challenges in which the factors of low SES and ethnic identity tied in their frequency, supportive factors also had two factors that were equally mentioned. Therefore, each frequently mentioned factor will be discussed separately rather than weaving them together due to intersectional occurrences as in the case of common challenges. Conversations around family support will be covered first, followed by non-familial agents and ending with college readiness support.

"I think a lot of my personal success has to do with having a person who believes so much in my potential and that is unwavering, my dad was my rock."—Corrina

"I think I am the way I am because of my mom, if I would have stayed in Mexico with my dad, I think I would probably be married by now with kids, I think things happen for a reason, that's one of the reasons why I'm here."—Irmina

"My parents were supportive of me wanting to attend college, it was never an option or up for discussion, that's all my parents ever wanted us to do was to get an education."—Selena

Participants reported parental support as a factor that helped them navigate into the university. This support mostly included encouragement and high expectations, though some participants also mentioned financial support. Raul, for example, reported that while "I can't say that my parents rode me about education, my parents continually reminded me that education was one way that I would do something with my life." Kyle, on the other hand, attributes his decision to a more active manner of parental involvement. Namely, while Raul's parents took a more passive yet encouraging attitude, Kyle's recalls his mother being more assertive in her desire to have him attend college:

> My parents think education is a big deal. Especially my mom since she went to school in Chile felt that education is something that was very important, so she always took it seriously. She always pushed me; there was never any doubt that I would go toward something that required school, and there was no doubt that I would get a higher education.

In my analysis of both of their comments, while differing in their approach, still reflected encouragement. Paula's academic success on the other hand is clearly attributed to the role her parents played, she recalled,

I would contribute my success to my parents and their determination to make me great. They broke their necks providing for me and encouraging me in all my academic and extra-curricular endeavors. My dad worked all day long and still came home every Tuesday and Thursday to coach my soccer teams. My mom stopped working while I was young so she could be there when I get home from school every day, then started working again as I grew so that she could help pay for my high school activities.

This parental sacrifice can also be seen in Edwin's account. Edwin, the son of an undocumented single-mother, talked proudly about his mother's dedication and commitment to his education. With a smile, he recounted his mother's determination for his future,

Well, my mom, she's always loved education, she always said her biggest regret was that she couldn't finish college and stuff. My mom was like I want you to go to private school for high school because I want you to have a better opportunity at education. I started applying to private schools, and I ended up getting into this really prestigious all-boy Catholic school in LA called Loyola, named after St. Ignatius.

The education opportunity while encouraged by his mother was also facilitated by her employer whom after years of service paid for his education opportunity, Edwin recalled,

Around my sophomore year we were paying tuition at this school, I mean I got a half scholarship every year, but we were struggling. Then the family that my mom was still working for, and she's still doing that to this day, said well you've been working for us many, many years I would love to help your son get through high

school here's money for tuition every year. So they helped us pay my tuition

through high school.

In Edwin's account not only did he have the support of his mother and his father, but his

mother's employer as well. The literature on parental support often highlights the role of

the mother (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Corrina, on the other hand,

credited her academic persistence to her dad, she said,

I think a lot of my personal success has to do with having a person who believed

so much in my potential; my dad was my rock. He has always been like you are

going to college. That's not even a question; you're going to go to college, and

you're going to succeed. Because I believe in you, your potential is so high and

having someone believe in you like that does so much for your self-esteem.

Other students such as Edgar who wrote "My parents are both illegal immigrants from

Mexico and have always pushed me to succeed in school. They said it was for my own

good and to set an example for my younger brothers." While Edgar's example may not

appear at first to be a supportive factor, the literature on Latin@ families demonstrate that

serving as a role model is more of a persistence that inadvertently helps propel them to

achieve academically (Torres, 2004).

Still, other students attributed their success not only to parents, but to other family

members such as siblings. Ruth had this to say about her support base,

Honestly, I never thought college was a possibility because throughout my high

school career no one truly told me that I too could further my education. My drive

to learn has been a motivating factor in getting me through public education and

into college. However, if there is one thing that has helped me navigate my public

education it would not be the long hours of hard work or the teachers that pushed me, although they have had a great impact on me, it would be my brother, my final cushion that always caught me when I slipped. I owe it to him because he has been my greatest motivator.

My analysis of Ruth's words underscored the role of siblings and other family members beyond parents. One form of familial support that promoted respondents' motivation in their navigational success and college persistence had to do with the attitude exhibited by parents and family members. For instance, Marty recalled the enthusiasm expressed by her family when accepted into the university, she recalled,

When we came to visit Oregon and as soon as we drove up to the campus it was so surreal, there's no way I got into this school. My mom was like "yeah this is your school I told you it was a good school, I googled it." She said it's a prestigious university beyond just the football team. I remember I cried because I didn't get into UCLA and that same day I got my letter of acceptance here, and I looked at my dad, and he was crying, and he said "I am so proud of you." My parents were really proud, my little sister was too, but she wasn't happy because she knows that Oregon is far. She asked why I couldn't just go to San Jose State, and I said trust me when you grow up you'll know that this is a good thing for me. I brought my sister with me because my family has a big impact in my life, so I knew if she liked the campus I'd feel much better about leaving home.

Marty's comments about the importance of involving her family in her college experience mirror the literature on Latin@ college success. Research found that students

who stay connected to their families has been found to promote college persistence and completion (Gonzales, 2012).

Finally, other students while not specifying parents or other family members as key in their success named others who supported them throughout their navigational experiences. Dolores, who perceived her parents as disinterested in her success, found solace with her friends, while Vanessa attributed her accomplishment to her partner, stating,

> I was able to go back to community college full time and after about a year and a half I was ready to transfer to a four-year university. I truly credit my ability to go to the university to my partner's guidance and support.

Whether the students indicated their parents as their primary support system or included siblings as in the case of Ruth and Marty, the subject of family support corresponds with the literature on Latin@ college students and the role family support plays in their success. Supportiveness of family and non-familial agents including various agencies and programing can have a profound impact on students' navigation into the university.

Non-familial agents: Teachers

"My experience and success in high school was shaped and helped by the various teachers that supported and encouraged me. The combination of an educator that liked to teach and actually cared about my education helped me get through high school and influenced me to get a higher education."—Edgar

"I established great connections with teachers that I still cherish."—Paula

A frequently mentioned support factor found in some of the stories had to do with teachers. Some of the students provided specific examples of the role influential teachers

had on their navigational success. Irmina for example, recollected a teacher that helped

her with learning English when she first arrived in the US,

> There were two other girls who were like me who didn't speak English. The
>
> teacher would separate us from the rest of the class, and she would teach us how
>
> to read books, stories for 1st graders, simple books so that we might accelerate
>
> our English skills. And so I'm a quick learner, and I learned quickly because of
>
> this teacher who went out of her way to help us.

The attention provided to them by an educator was another instance mentioned by some

of the students. Edgar, the eldest son of undocumented farmworkers, attributed his

academic success to the support and encouragement he received from various teachers.

When recounting his navigational success, he had this to say about his educational

experience,

> In high school, there were several teachers that helped me succeed. I had one
>
> teacher that help me transition from middle school to high school. This teacher
>
> also recruited me during my 8th-grade year to participate in National History Day.
>
> I learned to write an actual paper with a thesis and in MLA format. This helped
>
> me succeed in my English classes since I was exposed to the level of writing in
>
> the competition.

Edgar's story contained many different examples of the way teachers can impact the

positive outcome of students who may be thought of as at-risk. His account provided

many instances of the way teachers supported him. He remembered one particular

example that for him reflected support toward his success, he wrote,

I had several math, science, English, and health teachers whose goal was solely for me to learn. I remember a science teacher moved me up to a junior chemistry class when I was a sophomore. I was terrified since I didn't know anyone and I was only a sophomore. I remember the first test we had, the teacher said the class did badly. I was bummed out, and I remember thinking that the juniors were going to make fun of me. The teacher continued saying that there was one person that scored a perfect score. The class started saying that it had to be one of the two "smart" kids in their class. When I turned to look at the teacher, he was by my desk. He congratulated me saying that it's a pleasure having me in class and not to be intimidated or nervous because of the juniors.

For some of the others, having teachers that not only encouraged and supported them as students but having teachers they could relate to culturally/ethnically was also important. Irmina remembered one teacher in particular,

I had a teacher for my native Spanish speakers' class she was Hispanic, so I felt really close to her. She treated us more like her children, rather than just her students. She would ask us how are you doing? How is your day going, tell me what's going on? She was involved in our lives; compared to my "American" teachers I didn't feel like they were like her as much. I felt like my Latina teacher was much more warm and welcoming compared to my white teachers.

The difference in her teacher's cultural background and the lack of Latin@ teachers Irmina mentioned can also be found in Dolores's comments as well. When talking about things that influenced her to pursue higher education Dolores stated,

One of the people who was influential was my Spanish and homeroom teacher during 7th grade, who was from Peru. He was the only Latino teacher in the school, and he was very much like, you will need to get an education, you need to stay in school. So he told us about his school experience, and that was one of the first representations I think I had, before this I don't think I ever had a Latino teacher, honestly before him all of my teachers had been white.

Both students while underscoring the absence of teachers that resembled them no less attributed the caring nature of teachers as an important feature in their schooling. Paula when discussing her pathway to the University wrote, "I established great connections with teachers that I still cherish." Similar to Paula, Edgar also said that his "experience and success in high school was shaped and helped by the teachers that supported and encouraged me." When Edgar spoke about his community-college experience and transition to the university, he wrote,

It took one good, well-educated teacher to inspire me to major in psychology, specifically developmental psychopathology. After talking with her, she told me that she would like to be my advisor. I filled out the necessary paperwork, and she became my advisor and has helped me to the point I am at now. I am also very grateful to her, she gave me knowledge about scholarships and talked to me about possible schools to transfer to.

While teachers were frequently mentioned within some the students' narratives, another type of example of non-familial agents were community members. An example of the role community members play can be found in Edwin's account. When discussing his high school experience Edwin talked about the generosity of his mother's employer, such

as paying for his college tuition at the University. Marty's account as well contained an example of the support that fosters success coming from community members. When talking about the difference in attitude concerning college bound between her old community versus her new community Marty remembered how,

> The parents from my soccer club they all had gone to college, they're all like Stanford graduates, some went to Harvard, some went to you know some state schools, but they were college graduates, like UCLA. And my parents were all like shit we didn't go to college but they never made my parents feel out of place. Which was great unless we had team Bar B Qs and they would always talk about college, but that's how my parents begin to understand about college, like how does FASA work and so another soccer mom explained the whole process to my mom, so her help was so helpful to my future. All those experienced adults helped my parents, which in return helped me.

The accounts of both Marty and Edwin while providing examples of non-familial agents their words also reflect the importance of establishing and building social networking capital.

The frequency of teachers in the students' stories was as highly mentioned as parents or family support, however not all the students shared this sentiment. The high frequency occurring was not necessarily elevated because all of the 13 students enjoyed a positive experience with their teachers, rather the frequency had to do with the amount of times teachers were mentioned. What I mean is, that it was only a handful of these respondents who enjoyed positive relationships with their teachers, while others did not mention any teacher relationship or if they did that type of relationship occurred early in

their schooling but did not continue into their secondary or post-secondary experience.

Another reason for the high frequency of the term "teacher" had to do with the notion of

what the students perceived as fostering academic success and not because they "had" a

good teacher.

Besides having positive relationships with teachers, access to AP or honor

coursework, or college transition programs were also mentioned as beneficial in their

success. All of the students' accounts contained some form of AP or honors coursework.

However, only a few reported having access to specific college readiness programs.

College Readiness & AP/Honors Coursework

"The program definitely helped me engage in math and science, which at the time I hated math, but through this program it showed me that if I like science I like math because they are intertwined"—Edgar

"The bridge program really attempted to help steer us in the right directions to make resources available to us."—Vanessa

All of the participants reported having academic goals that included obtaining

some form of education beyond high school. Every one of these students mentioned that

at an early point in their lives that college was something that they were going to pursue.

Not all students had access to college readiness programs, however, but most reported

taking AP or honors coursework. Jessica's story of success included specific examples of

her experience with a college readiness program, she stated

> When I was in high school, I was in a program called AVID, which is
>
> advancement via individual determination. AVID is an elective course, and they
>
> are in a lot of high schools here in Oregon. I graduated from South Salem High
>
> School and AVID that basically focus on helping students that are minorities or

first generation going to college students or student that come from working class

families to get to a four-year university.

Jessica's comment revolved around the importance of this program, especially for

students of color, she indicated,

> I think the AVID program was very helpful because it was a way to take classes
>
> with other minorities. I was in the IB program, which is similar to AP classes, and
>
> the school, in general, is mostly Caucasian, and definitely the IB program was
>
> 99% Caucasian. I think that having AVID was a great way for me to have a class
>
> with other people who had similar backgrounds like me, so that we could talk, and
>
> work together as a cohort in gaining that college dream.

My analysis of her comments mirrored the research on programs such as AVID and the

benefits of this type of academic support (Mendiola, Watt, & Huerta, 2010). Other

students such as Vanessa also took advantage of a college readiness program, she wrote,

> During the last year of school, the local community college frequently came on
>
> campus to recruit new students, so I signed up and got into a program called the
>
> Bridge Program. This was a program meant to help the transition between high
>
> school and college for first-generation college kids.

> In their story of successful navigation, students such as Edgar had access to

different types college readiness programs such as "SkillsUSA, Mock Trial, Graphics

Tech club, and SMILE." He was also a band and chemistry honor student.

> The support of college readiness or transition type of programs for these students

was a supportive factor that enabled their navigational success. For those who did not

underscore this type of support but spoke of AP or honors coursework their words imply

the benefit of the learning experience. Most importantly the narratives of AP or honor coursework reflects the academic self-efficacy of the individual coupled with or mitigated by the supportive factors discussed in this section.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the results to the analysis of the varying factors of common challenges, factors of academic persistence, and factors that foster success. The common challenges identified by the students that could have impeded their academic achievement included issues of lower socioeconomic status and ethnic identity, including immigration and language. The excerpts used in the discussion of the results highlighted the supportive factors in their navigational success in the form of family members and non-familial agents, mainly teachers. Also highlighted in their narratives were the varying educational opportunities such as college readiness programs, AP and/or honors coursework.

The factor influencing persistence had one major factor while common challenges had two and factors that foster success resulted in three. Rather academic self-efficacy or the overwhelming belief in one's capabilities outweighed the other factor of persistence, that is, resiliency/resistance. While a few of the students displayed examples of both resiliency and resistance, it was not consistently mentioned across all 13 stories as academic self-efficacy was. Therefore, the results of the analysis of the narratives of successful navigation point to the individual student as being the number one influence in their success.

CHAPTER V

CONVERSATIONS ON LATIN@ IDENTITY BEYOND THE CONCEPTUAL

FRAMEWORK

"A Chican@ lives in the space between the hyphen in Mexican-American"—Anonymous

The results of the analysis of the students' stories uncovered one factor in particular that appeared across all of the three major categories. Latin@ ethnic identity was mentioned as a challenge, but it also appeared in factors of persistence and supportive factors that foster achievement. Besides the conflation of race and socioeconomic class as discussed in the previous chapter, the factor of identity operated in different and interesting ways worthy of discussion. In the next sections three collective themes, composites of the students' stories of these themes will be discussed. The themes considered are not exclusive to what was taking place or being said in the students' accounts. Rather, these three narratives highlighted generates further questions concerning the varying ways Latin@ identity is (re)presented in educational research.

Narratives of Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes

"I want to conquer the ivory tower and if at all possible, try to change it. I want to be able to say yeah I conquered that. I went somewhere, where I am not the majority. I went somewhere out of my comfort zone."—Raul

Race and ethnicity was something prominent in the narratives of the students in this study. This is not surprising since the respondents were aware that the recruitment criteria called for self-identified Latin@ undergraduate students. While the intent was to focus more on the aspirations of these students and less on their struggles, I cannot ignore the nuances of race occurring in their narratives. The message conveyed through the

words of more than half of the respondents was that their race was not a factor in their achievement, yet their narratives were strewn with images of a racialized world.

The way in which Latin@ ethnic identity operated in the lives of the students varied, however instances of ambivalence toward Latin@ or Chican@ identity were present. As discussed in the previous chapter, the conflation of race and class while not necessarily a purposeful act by the respondents occurred throughout most of their stories. In other words, I am not saying that the students themselves consciously conflated being Brown with being poor, as the researcher I recognized the phenomenon taking place. Yet, the words or comments toward being Latin@ were often talked about in stereotypical notions. Certain terms were utilized to emphasize Latin@ ethnicity, for example Raul when discussing his high experience said,

> I remember a guy I've known since the 1st grade, we grew up together. All of his cousins basically lived throughout the city I grew up in, and even though I was very smart, I also ran with all the homies and like everyone, so, I remember him telling me, "you know dude you're going to be the smartest gangster of all time." Like back then it was like oh that's cool, but thinking about it now, wow that was his expectation, like that was the life I was going to be set on. And now that I think about it, I see that now but then it was something cool like my friend is calling me a future gangster something to look up to.

While Raul does not specifically mention Chicano or Latino in his comments, the context of our conversation was about Los Angeles demographics. All the students in this study grew up in different areas of the West Coast and most of them held stereotypical notions of Latin@s. Similar to Marty's comments made in in the previous chapter about growing

up in a neighborhood some would label ghetto, Selena's description of her high school

also contains connotation of race she said,

> The school was known for its colorful reputation of gangs, fights and drive-byes.
>
> They even had their own police officer on duty every day before and after school.
>
> If you arrived after the bell rang, they would make you dump out your backpack
>
> at the entrance and scan you with a metal detector.

Again, Latin@ students attending unsafe, underfunded schools while a reality for many

minority students is still no less a stereotype representing this population of students.

While the depiction provided by Selena also does not mention race per say, the context of

her statement was in relation to the demographics of the school she attended.

Other terms such as unmotivated or underachieving, terms that further stereotypes

of Latin@ students as incapable of achieving academically were found in their

comments. For example, some of the students such as Paula and Jessica in their accounts

referred to Latin@ students as individuals who are supposed to fail academically. Other

students stressed how Latin@ students are absent from AP or honor courses. For

example, when discussing her experience with AP course classes Marty said,

> In high school, I took some AP classes starting my sophomore year until my
>
> senior year. I did get put into an advanced English class my freshman year.
>
> English has never been hard for me despite my bilingualness. In these AP classes,
>
> that's probably where I met all my Indian and Asian friends because I was the
>
> only Mexican in those classes. I only ever had one other class with a Mexican
>
> person, and that was weird that was really weird because in my other classes they
>
> were like irregular.

In my analysis of the literature concerning the lack of Latin@ students in AP courses

Marty's candid comments about being an anomaly in these courses support what I found

in other case studies. In Paula's description of her high school experience she reminisced

how,

> People didn't see me as a Latin@ or different what they saw was the girl from
> their calculus class or from theater or the girl that coached soccer. Based on all the
> previous ideas, in comparison to all the white kids in my school, I should have
> been below average academically and probably a lot less social, but instead I am
> much more successful and well-rounded than most of the white students I went to
> school with.

Paula's assumptions are problematic because she attributes being "Latina" with being

below average academically and being a lot less social. I can only conclude based her

comments that her experience stems from color-blindness. Her words underscore the fact

that these students live in a racialized world and the racialization has particular

connotations. Also, Paula's comments along match the statements of other respondents

that highlighted racial identity as challenges because of a societal assumption and less

about the identity itself. Other students such as Raul whose words embody race but at the

same challenge racial assumptions said,

> If one didn't really grow up with an abundant amount of Chican@s all that's left
> is what the media portrays us as. So I had to experience a lot of that out there, like
> the fact that I was even going to a 4-year university, or the fact that I was doing
> better at a 4-year university than non-minority students. Also the idea that as a
> Chicano I faced a lot more adversity than I really did.

While Raul's comments mention similar assumptions concerning Chican@ students, his assertions do not appear to stem from color-blindness as in the case of Paula.

The blanketed Latin@ label that leads to assumption not only about Latin@ student's lack of learning abilities, but also as Raul stated an assumption that as a Chicano he faced more difficulties. The presupposing of a Latin@ student's learning needs or what they require for success could lead to educational benefits or resources co-opted because of an identity and not because of actual need. What I mean by this is while racial minority students come from historically marginalized groups, often they personally have not been marginalized. One issue raised by some of their comments was the idea of meritocracy. The system of meritocracy prides itself in being fair, that students are judged on their capabilities and not their perceived race or class. However, the results for low SES students equals unfair educational outcomes from a system that is supposedly fair. Paula on the other hand when talking about her academic success wrote,

> I graduated with a 4.0, recognition from the National Honor Society and recognition from the California Scholarship Federation. I think ethnicity used to be a huge stigma, and it effected a lot of people, but I also think that with pure determination and a loving support system, anyone can succeed in this time.

The analyses of Paula's comments about being determined and having the right support system equals success is an example of the myth of meritocracy. This is not meant to take away from her success, what I'm saying is there is a lack of critical thought to issues of socioeconomic and sociohistorical and how this has and continues to affect most Latin@ students. Paula, as a student navigated through a system by being color-blind and by having the financial resources that many Latin@ students do not enjoy.

Another issue concerning Latin@ identity is the notion of appearance of perceived ethnicity. Kyle identified as Latin@ and acknowledged in our first interview that he was of mixed parentage

> My identity as a Latino has never been a factor for me because I was always looked at as a white guy, so when I was taking Spanish that was the only thing that ever really came out. Like when I was in community college, the professor knew that I was not all "white." And identity hasn't really determined anything and doesn't really lead to anything.

Kyle's comments about race are interesting and point to something different than Paula. For Kyle identifying as Latin@ to him was of no benefit. Similar to Kyle's experience of appearing White, Corrina talked about her perception of being Latin@; she claimed that,

> I don't have an accent I don't sound you know, Latina. I don't fit the stereotypes I don't look on first glance very Latina, I'm very Americanized, my grades or my presence or presumed identify as a Latina never was a factor, no one ever questioned me about that.

With Paula while she stipulates in her story that being Latina never held her back, yet when discussing her current university experience, she reported benefiting from a program aimed at minority retention. On one hand she wrote "I have never been divided or hindered because of my ethnicity; what sets me apart is my intelligence and drive to be the best." On the other hand, she writes,

> When I first came to the University, I joined a program called Building Business Leaders, which placed me in a dorm with other students of various ethnicities. This was supposed to make diverse students (feel) comfortable and give us a

community in which we would feel welcome given our different backgrounds.

The goal of our cohort is to fight against stereotype threat which hinders students

of color like ourselves, but I've realized in college that the success of the students

around me, like myself, are not dependent on our race but on our work ethic and

the nature of the support we receive.

The contradiction occurring in her statement is profound. To the contrary while saying

she is not depended on race but on hard work, yet she accesses resources earmarked for

low-income racialized students. My analysis of her situation is grounded on the literature

on cultural capital theory. The literature makes a case that low SES minority students do

not have access to the cultural capital needed to succeed in college. Many of these

students of color are first-generation, bicultural/bilingual college students living away

from home and their community for the first time. Per contra, financially well to do

minorities such as Paula who attended good schools, grew up in a solid middle-class

homes had all the advantages that scholars say members of the mainstream have. These

students often have or enjoy the same cultural capital as students coming from the

dominant culture and thus are not at-risk of dropping out of college due to feelings of

alienation or inadequacy.

Similarly, Corrina talked about not knowing what it was to be Latin@ because

like Kyle grew up in a mixed heritage home in which her father was (according to her)

ashamed of his Mexican past. Corrina, said when talking about educational funding "I am

Latina, and I have good grades I got a lot of help from the government," yet the lack of

knowledge of being Latin@ however did not discourage her from benefiting from this

identity. While on the other hand students such as Dolores or Irmina who needed the

financial assistance and institutional support were either unaware of the resources or were not allowed to access due to immigration status.

The critique made or the questions raised in this section are not intended to lessen the navigational success of the students mentioned, rather it is to underscore the underpinnings of social reproduction occurring in higher education. It highlights as well on question about affirmative action. While affirmative action program was created in order to discourage discrimination based on differences, to break down barriers and level the playing field, often it did not benefit individuals it was intended for. To put it another way, in higher education programs such as affirmative action or minority retention do nothing more than reproduce the same inequality found in public schools. The literature demonstrates for example, that affirmative action has benefited White woman (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and minorities of financial means such as well to do individuals coming from Asia, or Latin America who in their own country enjoy economic privileges and have not experienced discrimination in which they have been restrained from educational or economic opportunities, as in the case of involuntary minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Secondly, what this aspect of the discussion also highlighted was that some of the students lack historically relevant knowledge about their own ethnic identity. In the next segment of this chapter narratives of double-consciousness/la falcultad provides a discussion on another theme about ethnic identity that came up. The way in which some of these students navigated the boundaries of their ethnic identity perhaps will be explained through the experiences of some of these students.

Narratives of Double-Consciousness/*La Falcultad*

"There have been times that I wish there were more people like from my background, so we could kind of be together, but there's really none."—Edwin

"I'm not ashamed in any way that I am Mexican from these communities, I feel that is what makes me open minded."—Marty

The way in which minority students experience schooling has been examined through many different lenses. Issues of the impact race has on the educational outcomes is one of the major components of these examination. Some theorists may call what the students experienced double-consciousness (Dubois, 1903), others because of the students' ethnicity may label it as *la facultad* (Anzuldua, 1987,2007), or contradictory consciousness (Darder, 2012, Gramsci, 1971). Double- consciousness defines a fragmented identity, in which the individual cannot reconcile the two halves of their identity into a whole "American" one. For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter nation-state identities such as "American" and "Mexican" were racialized in their stories. Additionally, possessing double-consciousness is also about being aware of how you are perceived through the eyes of others, especially society. *La facultad* as defined by Anzuldua (2007) on the hand speaks more to the notion of sensing what may not be necessarily discernable by someone outside of Mestizo consciousness. This particular sensing is "the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the dee structure below the surface' (p. 60). The depiction of Mexican/Chican@s as perpetual foreigners or recently arrived immigrants induces the need to develop "a quick perception "sixth sense" or "instant sensing" "a kind of survival tactic that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate" (p.61).

With the exception of Dolores, Irmina, and Raul, the accounts of some of the other respondents were devoid of any sociopolitical or sociohistorical situated knowledge or awareness. Other students while they made comments that demonstrated some semblance of cultural or sociohistorical knowledge tended to have more of a colorblind or conformist attitude. Many of the students' comments as mentioned stemmed from parental or familial ideas about the racialized Latin@ identity. The students discussed the varying societal imposed constructs such as race, immigration status, and gender, in different ways. Overwhelmingly, their experiences centered on the in-betweeness of identifying as "Mexican" or "American." These two nation-state identities are racialized, in which "American" is often equated with White while "Mexican" means non-White. This attitude was highlighted in some of the students' comments, such as Edwin who when talking about funding his university education remarked how his mother had remarried an "American man who was strongly against education." Other students like Irmina discussed the gender expectations of each culture. For instance, Irmina described varying attitudes about what is considered success as a woman, she stated,

> If I compare myself to my friend and this stupid idea of how we should be as women right now, I don't want to say that I'm a failure. But I feel like I haven't gotten there because compared to my Mexican friends I'm not married and I don't have any children, and I don't know how to cook. If I was to consider myself 100% Mexican woman, then I would consider myself a failure. But if I consider myself an "American" woman I think that I am okay because compared to my other white friends I am in college, I am doing something with my life; I'm going to go on to graduate school.

Irmina's ideas of what is success and what constitutes failure are interesting. My analysis of her excerpt reflect how her views of success in one culture are not the same in the other. For example, to Irmina being successful in the Mexican sense is grounded in the domestic capabilities or roles of mother, wife, caretaker. When she compares herself to "White" friends her accomplishments stem from practices outside the realm of the home or family.

Not all comments that racialize the term "Mexican" was negative, for example Edgar remembered an experience at a school event that he listed in his essay as paramount to his academic success. In his account he wrote about his experience in the state's school Mock Trials, which consisted of learning legal amendments and prepared the students for a mock trial competition, he recalled,

> We were the only diverse team, we were Mexican, White and Native American, the rest of the teams were White. Some of the people said they would even write letters of recommendations for us. I felt good despite the loss, I was getting compliments on my ability to work with my team and to quickly phrase a question differently and to change my tactic based on the other teams' slip ups. That day I felt very proud to be Mexican and representing my culture in an environment that is not culturally diverse. This compelled me to keep up with my education, the positive reinforcement made me feel good about focusing on my education.

Edgar's experience while coming from a low-income farmworker household focuses mainly on the multiple supportive factors such as teachers who guided him throughout his educational trajectory. With the exception of financial challenges listed by him, such

as not being able to afford his band instrument, Edgar did not frame his ethnic identity negatively.

Still, for other students their ethnicity or rather their racialization was something they experienced strongly, and frequently not in a positive way. For example, some of the respondents highlighted feelings of alienation because of being the only minority in a classroom, Dolores said,

It's always classroom conversations where I end up feeling very "othered." For example, I was in a political science class, and we were talking about affirmative action and obviously some of the people in the class were White and they were talking about Black and Latino students and if affirmative action should be a thing, basically discussion topic 101. It always makes me feel othered because it's like oh I'm the only brown student and you probably think I'm only here because I'm brown, right? And it is conversations like that one or in any classroom when we're talking about like issues around immigration like my parents came from Mexico, my parents are still undocumented and it's all these things you just got to, I don't know, you just end up taking it, it's hard to speak up and say something about it.

What Dolores experienced in her classroom are instances found in other case studies of Latin@ college students (Gloria, et al, 2005; Herrera, 2003, Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Raul, when talking about his experience at the university and the city he lived in said,

Going to class sometimes is challenging, I'm in a strange place, I'm a minority you know, I'm have to make sure I get home safe. It's the people, you know

where I have to talk to complete strangers or things of that nature, I'm constantly

questioned if whether or not I am Samoan cause I have very long hair.

Sometimes, well it's happens so often that I've gotten used to it, but sometimes I

get frustrated and I feel like yelling at them, my culture had long hair too.

Sometimes I get frustrated about that and sometimes it's the way they phrase the

questions. Not so much about microaggression, more about not knowing. It's also

about the way people ask the question, like if they insert "really," like where are

you really from?

Some of the students reported off the record or during the preliminary interviews that

were not recorded feelings of inadequacy as students, for instance Raul when talking

about the courses he was in enrolled in at the university said,

I never, felt unintelligent around the smartest people in my high school. It wasn't

really until I got to the university level where I started questioning my own

intelligence. Because certain things that I learned, certain things that I was

exposed to I had never seen before. So for someone who always seemed like in

control of their life, and they would take a class and the professor would give an

example an everyday example and I would just be confused because that wasn't

my everyday experience. I had never been introduced to that, or had it explained,

and so you can't stop a lecture where there's 300 people and say "hey can you

change that to a broader scenario one that it represents my experience."

While Raul's comments underscored his alienation within a classroom, other students

spoke about experiencing discomfort when interrupting comments of other insensitive

students. For example, Dolores discussing the same incident of the one quoted previously

commented how during a group discussion a White male student made a snide comment, she recalled,

> I think my group asked him like was there any people of color in your town. And he was like yeah but they're mainly migrant farmworkers and they all live in this trailer park that we called "beaner town," and when he said that he looked at me. I lived in a trailer park for a few years when I was growing up, and so it made me really upset and I just like shut down, I know he didn't mean it in a bad way, but it's just like why do they have the need to say this.

Either way, similar to the experience of other Latin@ college students, Dolores or Raul are not unique in the feelings they reported. What is impressive is that in the face of adversity like feelings of alienation as indicated by Dolores, that Latin@ college students continue to persist.

The persistence factor in the study discussed the students' experience being in enrolled in either AP or honor courses. Being in these courses, as expressed by some, was often a double-edged sword. Some students like Dolores also noticed the lack of minorities in AP course when talking about her schooling experience she remembered,

> They put me in some advanced classes, but I didn't do so well in those just because I often felt like I didn't belong in those classes. And as usual I was the only Latina, Chicana. It's not that I was told directly that I didn't belong, but I felt like I wasn't part of that world or that type of kids who were in advanced classes. Because everybody knows which kids are in advanced classes, but I never felt like I was really a part of them.

Dolores' perception of the type of students who belong in advanced placement courses was something that other students mentioned as well. For instance, Ruth's account about high school and advanced coursework mirror Dolores' sentiment. She said,

> I took as many AP classes as I could and found refuge in certain teachers and counselors that believed in me. I won't deny that I had certain teachers and even a principal question my potential. I know they meant no true harm. Nevertheless, I will never forget the awe painted on my principal's face when she found out that as a senior I was playing sports and balancing three AP classes. Plus, her comment, stating "wow many students like you don't take classes like that," made it clear that she expected inferiority of me as well.

Ruth's internalization of the way in which the school's principle viewed her capabilities, is a phenomenon discussed by other Latin@ students outside of this study. As a former Chican@ studies instructor and popular guest lecturer in Latino@ cultural classes I have witnessed Latin@ students frequently talk about not only what they perceive as disbelief of their intellectual abilities by others, but how they themselves internalize this view of themselves. I remember a bright young Chican@ student asking if White people were genetically smarter than Mexicans. I asked him what gave him that impression, he responded that most students and professors at the university are White, while most Mexicans work menial labor. The lack of examples of academically successful Latin@s sadly reinforces this notion that results in the questioning of their own academic abilities.

While all of the students mentioned taking either AP or honor's courses, some did not talk about experiencing conflict, however some students like Irmina underlined an important occurrence. When discussing her AP experience Irmina recalls,

In my AP Spanish class, there was this assumption that it was easy for me because I already spoke the language, so I would tell them, then how come you don't know the difference between "than" and "then" and you speak English. Or how come you don't know how to spell "there" and "their" and "your" and "you're." I told them I wanted to learn the grammar, and I don't know it any more than they do. Well, it's not a crime to want to know grammar right?

Irmina's anecdote of her experience with AP classes, while containing an element of irony underscored the typical experience of Latin@ students who take advanced classes. The things brought up by some of the respondents concerning their experience with AP courses mirrors different conversations I have had with local high school students about being the only minority student in the entire course. Another situation that occurring mainly to low-income students of color are teachers' doubts in a student's academic ability. Irmina recounts her high school experience in which her ability to understand math came up,

By the time I was in 9th grade I was already ahead in math. I should have graduated high school with calculus but because of the English thing I didn't. They [school administration] said my understanding of math wasn't the same as other English speakers, yet I was in 9th grade helping a South Korean kid with their algebra II homework when I was merely in pre-algebra! I never felt discriminated, but I did when it came to math and I think it affected me in a way that I didn't really like math. I was good at it, but I didn't care for it anymore just because I felt discouraged. I was already in a higher level of math, but because of the language barrier, their attitude was like, because you don't speak the

language, that means that your math understanding isn't as much as it should be

especially compared to the kids that already speak English. And the same thing

happened to my friend, due to the language barrier or difference, you can't

possibly be doing better in math than the student who speaks English. Because

apparently you need English to know math. Math has its own language; numbers

are the same no matter what language.

Irmina, similar to Ruth's comments captures how their perception of the ways in which

the school administration viewed their academic capabilities. Some of the experiences

discussed by the students emphasized school personal's lack of conviction toward the

students' capabilities, or being looked at as an affirmative action pity case as underscored

by Dolores's comments.

Narratives of Student Resistance

"You would think that because (this place) is so open minded, but they say go back to
your country, or they call me the Mexican chick. And at times it has made me cry, and
other times I'm like fuck you. And there are somedays that I don't know if I should laugh
or I should cry, so I ask myself do I play victim or do I keep going?"—Irmina

Student resistance another theme that was a prominent component found in the

respondents' stories. The students in the study fall between two of the constructs in

Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal's (2001) model of student resistance. While the authors'

outlined four types of student resistance, the students within this study fall between only

two types; 1) conformist, and 2) transformational. The ways in which these two types of

student resistance operated in their stories were interesting and begs for further

exploration which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It could be argued that *All* of

the respondents' academic success could be viewed as student resistance simply because

they achieved academically despite being Latin@. For reason discussed in the literature used in this study Latin@ students are overwhelmingly represented as at-risk and in need of intervention. It does not matter if the literature is drawing attention to pervasive inequalities embedded in our school system or advocating for policy changes, Latin@ education is often discussed as a problem. Educational research more often than not is damaged-centered and shows Latin@ students as less than capable in comparisons to their White peers.

The forms of student resistance demonstrated by some of the students in this study mirrored more what Yosso (2000) refers to as resilient resistance. The student stories while reflecting student resistance in either the conformist or transformational form shared a common theme, that is, resisting stereotypes. For instance, Irmina said:

> Some people say "oh the fact that you are a Hispanic and female and you should victimize yourself" and I myself I don't like to be a victim. I don't like to play victim; I could play the role very well. "Oh I'm this Mexican victim and came here at age 11 and didn't speak English and went through all this abuse with my mom's ex-husband and I could use that and maybe I could have gotten a lot of scholarships for it. But it's not my thing, it's my pride, I don't like to play victim, and honestly I don't really like to talk about that part of the abuse, it makes me cry but at the same time it makes me feel minor, it makes me feel tiny

Her comments about her experience emphasis resisting a stereotype of immigrant students. Similar to earlier comments made by students concerning the assumptions of the students' plight. Irmina while not downplaying her struggles demonstrates feelings of ambivalence toward utilizing her identity to access resources. Jessica's assertions of,

I want to be able to show that a female Latina can be successful in the STEM

subjects. It doesn't have to be, oh I'm Hispanic so my major is you know Latino

Studies, or Sociology it can be anything. It can be math; it can be chemistry; it can

be whatever you choose it to be.

What Jessica's comment stresses first, she notices the lack of minorities in the STEMs

and secondly, that this can be counteracted by not giving into this particular stereotype.

When analyzing the students' stories for examples of student resistance the notion

of aspirations was central. What I mean by this, some of the students' sense of ambition

extended beyond an established goal. The manner in which the students spoke about their

goals suggested something greater beyond personal gain; a desire to succeed in order to

improve existence for themselves and their families. Also some of them spoke about

working toward needed changes in policies, laws, and educational approaches that affect

Latin@/Chican@ communities. The use of the word aspiration instead of ambition was

important because within Latin@ communities, ambition can have a negative connotation

because it conveys individualism rather than community. The students in this study were

divided into two camps; social justice informed goals or ambition driven goals. Some

students such as Irmina, Dolores, Edgar, Jessica and even Kyle mentioned majoring in a

field that could be utilized to help address problems in society. Jessica, for example was a

pre-med student whose goal was to become a doctor. During our conversation about what

she was majoring in she said,

I used to be pre-med, but now I'm interested in medicine not so much because,

well after going to Nicaragua I started getting less involved in medical research

and more involved with public health and nonprofits and things like that. And I

started noticing that I was really interested in more of a community development and being able to speak one-on-one with the local people we were helping and just focusing on the issues that health care systems have internationally in general.

So I kind of deviated from the medical aspect to the more health system aspect.

Her comments show how this particular study aboard experience changed the direction of her course toward a more egalitarian goal. In our first meeting Jessica mentioned that a medical doctor in her opinion touches the lives of people one person at a time. She felt that working in public health policy she could reach more people. Ingrid's desire to go into law on the other hand stemmed from the way her mother was treated in the immigration court. While discussing an issue of domestic violence that occurred in her family, she remembered,

> No one in my family had ever been in jail; my mom was like the first person in my family to go to jail. So when they took her to Washington for her deportation hearing, they wanted her to sign some papers, and she's like no I'm not signing. Even though she didn't speak that much English she was like I know my rights, and I'm not signing anything not until I talk to a lawyer and my embassy. Many people don't understand their rights and end up signing their own deportation papers. My major right now is Spanish and Political Science; this was why I want to be a lawyer.

Kyle when discussing what influenced his future goals remembered his trip to Chile where his mother was originally from, he recalled,

> I went to Chile when I was in the 11th grade so my essay to get into the University was about this event. I knew that Chile is a 3rd world country but it never really

affected me because my family there is well off. But when I went to school there that year I had to walk through the actual worst parts and I saw this little kid without shoes and it really hit me. That the fact that I would never have that problem and so that was a life changer and made me realize that I was born with a silver poon in my mouth, even though I may not feel like it but I am. It totally affected the way I look at things now, just looking at my certain privileges of the things I do have and how much better off I am. So I want to work with kids. At first it used to be drug rehabilitation, to working as a counselor and now I'm torn between working with kids and marriage and family therapist.

Other students spoke about their academic major without any mention of improving their family's financial status or addressing issues of social justice in their respective communities. For example, Paula and Edwin are both business majors, while Marty's ambition is to be a sports attorney. The socioeconomic and degree attainment of both Edwin and Marty's parents were not the same as Paula's solid middle-class. Both Edwin and Marty's accounts contained candid comments concerning both race and class, yet, their comment suggest that goals of these two students' were not centered on solving problems for others less fortunate than themselves.

The examples of student resistance located within the stories of navigation told by these Latin@ undergraduates while unique in their own right, are also reflections of other Latin@ undergraduates. What the individual stories collectively tell us is that the identity these students have inherited is racialized and to some degree stamped with lower SES classification. Most importantly what these stories conveyed were the resistance to the

label and microaggression some experienced, coupled with the resiliency to continue forward even in the face of adversity.

Summary

While the literature on Latin@ identity or ethnic development were not part of my theoretical framework or literature review the frequency of this factor could not be ignored. Latin@ ethnic identity was found throughout all three major categories and was identified as a common challenge, as a factor of persistence, and finally as a supportive factor fostering academic achievement. Although less than half thought critically about their identity, the results of the ways in which ethnic identity operated in their navigational and university experience underscores their racialized perception not only of themselves, but of their surroundings.

The topic of ethnic identity presented in this chapter brought to the surface issues affecting Latin@ college students, such as being the only Latin@ student in a university classroom, or not knowing about resources that could enhance and support their academic experience. One critical issue uncovered by this study centers on questions of affirmative action in higher and allocated resources earmarked for minority students. Finally, the chapter discussed examples of student resistance and resilience that occurred within the students' stories. The last chapter provides suggestions and points out implications of theory, practice, and policy that have impacted the three major factors examined in this study and provides a discussion for future research.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL THOUGHTS

The rapid increase of the Latin@ population in the US has influenced the political, economical, and educational arenas. One educational institution experiencing an increase never experienced before are 4-year universities. This study examined the stories of Latin@ undergraduate students at a 4-year research university in the Pacific Northwest. While certain individuals may not consider the enrollment of Latin@ students at 4-year universities as an example of success, the literature and the students in this study tell a different story. Albeit the rise of college enrollment of Latin@ students has occurred mainly at the community college level, a number of universities such as the one where this study occurred have in fact reported significant increases of Latin@ enrollment.

The final chapter's main focus is in providing a discussion that ties the literature with the study's conceptual framework, and the results of the students' narratives. A summary of the study's significant findings as it relates to the research questions is presented first, followed by a discussion of the findings and the relevance to three specific areas that should be considered; implications for theory, implications for practice, and implications for policy. Finally, recommendations for future research are discussed.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study "what was the navigational experience of the Latin@ students that ultimately led to their university enrollment" provided the overarching theoretical framework. The significant findings centered

primarily on the three subquestions that correlated to the three major categories; common challenges, factors of persistence, and supportive factors that foster academic success.

1. What were the common challenges identified in the students' stories?

2. What were the individual's persistence factors that ultimately resulted in their enrollment at a university?

3. What identifiable supportive factors fostered their academic achievement?

Summary of Significant Findings

The major categories in the analysis of the students' stories were constructed around the three research questions. The summary of the significant findings provides a synopsis of the findings for each research question/category.

Research question one focused on the common challenges faced by the students in the study. Common challenges were based on the literature as well as the students' stories and resulted in two factors; Latin@ ethnic identity and low socioeconomic status. In the stories of the respondents often these two factors were conflated, resulting in a narrative that perhaps ask does identifying as Latin@ equal being poor, rather than wondering if living in poverty equates being Latin@. Some of the comments provided concrete examples of poverty mirroring the literature such as attending underfunded schools, residing in low-income neighborhoods or in a homeless shelter, or not having the proper equipment or fees to put toward academic development or college readiness.

Research question two examined factors of persistence occurring in the students' stories. This particular theme drew from established literature on the persistence of Latin@ college students and juxtaposed it to the respondents' accounts. Two factors were mentioned in the students' stories, academic self-efficacy and resistance/resilience. Academic self-efficacy in comparisons with the factor of resistance/resilience had the

highest frequency and occurred equally across all stories. The results of the analysis found that the main influence that propelled these students forward in their navigational success was their personal belief in their abilities. All of the students' stories contained multiple examples of how their conviction in their capabilities as students outweighed all other factors of support. That is, other factors labeled as persistence while present in over half of the stories were not as highly specified as academic self-efficacy. The literature on academic self-efficacy centers on one fundamental aspect, namely instilling a college-going as a possibility early in their schooling experiences. Some of the students talked about how the idea of attending college was something instilled in them when they were in elementary school.

Research question three contained three combining factors fostering the students' academic achievement; family, non-familial agents, and college readiness support. The analysis of study participants' accounts found that both families and non-familial agents equally fostered their navigational success of their ultimate enrollment in the university. Familial support mostly consisted of encouragement and high expectations, though some participants also mentioned financial support. One recurrent support factor found in nearly all of the stories centered on their relationships with their teachers. The comments of some students provided specific examples of the influential part teachers played in their own navigational success and future aspirations. Other respondents identified authentically engaged teachers as an important supportive component for Latin@ students to succeed academically even if they personally did not have such a teacher. Besides having positive relationships with teachers, access to AP or honor coursework, or college transition programs were also mentioned as beneficial in their success. Generally,

all the students' accounts comprised of either AP or honors coursework. However, only a few reported having access to specific college readiness programs. All of the participants reported having academic goals that included obtaining some form of education beyond high school. Every one of these students mentioned that at an early point in their lives that college was something that they were going to pursue.

The factor influencing persistence had one major factor while common challenges and factors that foster success resulted in multiple ones. The significant findings demonstrate that academic self-efficacy or the overwhelming belief in one's capabilities outweighed the other factor of persistence, that is, resiliency/resistance. While a few of the students displayed examples of both resiliency and resistance, it did not occur consistently across all 13 stories as a factor of persistence. Therefore, the results of the analysis of the narratives of successful navigation suggest that the individual student is ultimately the number one influence in their success.

Theoretical Implications

Theories utilized to explain the discrepancies in university degrees earned by low income racialized Latin@ students are often damaged-centered (Tuck, 2009). Even theories such as those by Bourdieu (1986) whose aim was in explaining the low academic attainment of lower SES students nevertheless are framed in such a way that according to some scholars places the blame of the lack of capital on the individual rather than highlighting income inequality (Leonardo, 2013; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Yosso, 2005). In other words, even though the aim of Bourdieu's work was to offer "a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor"

Yosso, 2005, p. 76). According to Leonardo (2013) applying Bourdienan theory to issues of race in education,

> Is not without problems…it is a lopsided attempt to speak to issues of racial domination. This is where the love affair with "cultural capital" turns south. Favoring the domination half of the story, Bourdieu fails to capture the agency side of resistance theories. Or worse, without reinventing his theory of cultural capital, race scholars recapitulate a deficit model of people of color. Conceived primarily through the master race's imaginary, people of color come out of the other end as derogated groups, whose culture lacks honor in the eyes of Whites (p. 37).

The assertions above mirror those of Yosso's (2005) and Smith (1995) who remind scholars and educators alike that while traditional research have a tendency to frame low-income racialized communities as deficient and damaged (Tuck, 2009), the strength located within those communities are often overlooked. Furthermore, Leonardo's (2013) stipulates that,

> Within this (Bourdieuan-inspired) framework, people of color embody pathological cultural practices, lack moral principles, and do not persevere, again, according to the White imaginary…But to people of color, being a minority is defined not by a fundamental lack but by the strength to withstand oppression, build beautiful cultures in the face of denigration, and even thrive when they were not expected to survive…Bourdieu's theory does not account for these resistant threads in minority lives and even aids in further marginalizing them while it reinforces the deficit discourse about them (p. 37).

The sentiment captured here is similar to deficit-based perspectives held by some educators (Valencia, 2010). This study which drew from critical education theorists and empirical researchers addressed the need to question theories that continue to frame Latin@ student experience through frameworks of victimology and less on students who achieve academic success despite common challenges faced by low income racialized Latin@ students. Interestingly, the scholarship on practitioners concerning postsecondary student success is particularly t noticeably absent in comparison to the scholarship on K-12 student achievement (Bensimon, 2007).

One recommendation for expanding theories examining Latin@ college students would be to encourage more studies on academic self-efficacy and Latin@ students. Especially relevant would be studies based on the conjecture that higher academic self-efficacy beliefs are associated to more positive academic outcomes. Other avenues for the expansion of theory utilized when examining issues affecting Latin@ students would be to apply theories that consider the life-experiences of students coming directly from them. Encouraging scholarship and empirical studies grounded in methodologies such as participatory action research (PAR), a collaborative process with the youth it professes to speak about is such an example.

Implications for practice

"I never thought college was a possibility because throughout my high school career no one truly told me that I too could further my education."—Raquel

Most of the students within this study acknowledged that having a good teacher, one who is authentically engaged is important for achieving academically. One crucial factor concerning their pre-college schooling experiences underscored however, the need for teachers from their own culture and ethnic background. Most importantly, some of

their assertions called for teachers as well as guidance counselors who were more invested in their success. While a fair number of the student excerpts credited their success with their teachers, others did not feel the same. A handful of the respondents either omitted or briefly mentioned a teacher, while others candidly felt that their success was in spite not having the encouragement and genuine support of teachers. I arrived at this conclusion based on my observations of the students' narratives, the literature on preservice teachers, and my own experience as a graduate teacher assistant in numerous education courses. The main issue arrived at is the possibility of increasing the number of Latin@ students attending 4-year universities as opposed to 2-year community colleges if teachers were more aware of the way Latin@/Chican@ students have been academically impeded.

As per the literature high-quality teachers are central in the academic achievement of Latin@ students (NCES, 2014; Valencia, 2010). While Latin@ students make up 25% of all students in public schools, with future projections showing a continual increase in this student population, Latin@ teachers on the other hand represent a mere 8% of all US public schools elementary and secondary teachers (NCES, 2014). The disproportionate number of Latin@ teachers versus non-Latin@ educators requires us to consider an important area requiring further attention, that is pre-service teacher programs and the influence on Latin@ education outcomes.

The percentage of students of color, especially Latin@ students do not mirror the teacher population across the nation. Again, the population of Latin@ students as mentioned outnumber the number of teachers of the same background, which means, 82% are mainly White female and middle-class (National Center for Education Statistics,

2012). This percentage also mirrors individuals enrolled in pre-service programs across our nation (Téllez, 2004). Many of these enrollees often do not come from the cultural or socioeconomic background of most students in the public school system, and are frequently unware of the lived experiences of their future students. For the most part their teacher training is devoid of course work covering the social context of the US student population, such as Latin@ students, including practice-based teaching and community field experience (Zeichner & McDonald, 2011).

The reading assignments and curriculum content provided to students in teacher education programs influences the educational outcomes of Latin@ students (Téllez & Varghese, 2013). One crucial reason why teachers enter the classroom with an assumption on the capabilities of this student population could be correlated with the assigned readings and lessons conveyed. Empirical studies depicting Latin@ students as capable learners and possessing positive assets as opposed to deficit ones are very limited in the research and often overshadowed by the literature centering on education inequalities and school failure (Gándara, 1995). For example, Rodriguez and Morrobel 's (2004) review of the research concerning Latin@ youth development argue that,

> The limited attention to Latino youths in the development research is discouraging. Even more so, the research is further limited because of its negative orientation that is largely based on the deficit model with a focus on intervention (p. 121).

The point made by the above statement is disconcerting if individuals in pre-service teacher education programs or graduate students in education leadership program are

assigned readings that center primarily on the inequalities of education and school failure

and less on examples of minority students as capable learners (Kane & Milner, 2012).

The coursework in most teacher education programs frequently portray Latin@

and other lower SES students of color as at-risk and in need of rescuing. Ladson-Billings

(2000) contends that the literature often frames urban teaching for example, from a

deficit-based position. Throughout their training pre-service teachers are taught via a

curriculum based more on "what to do" and less on the social context in which they teach

(Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2011). These deficit-based assumptions of lower SES students of

color gained through this form of literature reproduces, encourages, and justifies school

personnel's low expectations of the student (Cortes, 1986). Deficit-based thinking

embedded in the school or teaching practices operates in two ways, a) it blames the

student and their family for school failure, and b) the student is inherently deficient in

their learning ability (Valencia, 1997, 2010).

Albeit teachers who are well meaning and social justice minded this deficit

ideology (Gorski, 2010) can become embedded in their practices, which leads teachers to

negate the academic capabilities of students of color (Milner, 2011). To put it another

way, no matter how well intended a teacher who has internalized the deficit-view of a

low-income racialized student are, they will more often than not will not truly believe in

that student. Howard (2010) suggest that deficit-based impressions of lower SES students

of color can be even more detrimental "when students' abilities are questioned based

solely on factors such as their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, culture, language, or

gender" (p. 42).

Wanting to do right by her students the teacher who has been socialized by her background, i.e. White, middle-class, coupled with a deficit-based teacher training become what Howard (2010) refers to as "sympathetic teachers." These individual teachers on the opposite end of deficit-based perspectives lower expectations due to feeling sorry for the student and do not have an authentic belief in the capabilities of these particular learners (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The propensity to disbelief or question the academic abilities of low-income students of color is a deficit-based perspective that attributes race and poverty as inherent virtues (Howard, 2003). Teachers who have no faith in the learning capabilities of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are detrimental to the student's future college-going perception of themselves. Howard (2010) suggests that many middle-class teachers have internalized "that poverty makes some students incapable of high academic achievement" (p. 47). Often, this occurs when the socioeconomic background of teachers and students are different.

Important in breaking the cycle of internalized assumptions about a student's academic abilities starts with the practice of reversing the belief of Latin@ student underachievement by providing examples of successful Latin@ students. Gonzales' (2012) study of successful Latina scholars found that their personal stories of academic achievement "confronts major assumptions that are built into many deficit-based policies, practices, and methods that are in place today" (p. 131). Other studies of Latin@ students' story of success coming directly from students is the type of literature that offers an alternative narrative or counterstories of Latin@ students (Zalquettt, 2006).

Teacher education professors ought to assign empirical studies that "recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge (and) who have much to offer in

transforming educational research and practice" (Bernal-Delgado, 2002, p. 107-108). By supplementing coursework with case studies of successful students moves pre-service teachers beyond the literature of inequality. The supplemental readings provide richer understanding of Latin@ education and promotes a view of Latin@ students as capable of attaining positive academic outcomes and worthy of encouraging beyond a high school diploma. Moving teacher education in the direction of a more balanced view of low income racialized students can also enhance the recruitment of teachers of color.

More so than having high-quality teachers who are informed, culturally sensitive and historically aware, some studies reveal that when educators and students share cultural/ethnic background student engagement is likely to occur (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Conchas, 2001; Klem & Connell, 2004). In their report Monzo and Rueda (2001) examined student-teacher relationships of Latin@ teachers and paraeducators and student engagement. These researchers found that sharing their students' background coupled with the way they relate to the student had positive effects on keeping them involved and engaged in school. Questions concerning teaching approaches that considers the learning needs of Latin@ students such as culturally-relevant or affirming pedagogy or hiring more Latin@ teachers were issues that came up in the stories of the study respondents. The implications highlighted in this section are not meant to suggest that teachers are ultimately to blame for the low number of Latin@ university students. Rather what is underscored by this recommendation is the need for more professional development and increasing the education and training of teachers that moves away from a deficit mindset toward one that promotes and requires high expectations from their students. In other words, "instilling the idea that academic engagement (is) expected and achievable and

that college (is) a desirable and attainable goal" should become an ingrained practice of all teachers (Darling-Hammond, Ramos-Beban, Altamirano, & Hyler, 2016, p. 61).

Therefore, we are grateful for good teachers influencing the success of students from traditionally marginalized communities. However, the implications for practice found in this research project highlight areas such as professional development for current teachers and teacher education programs in order to insure the continual success of Latin@ students. Every profession begins with teachers, there would be no doctors, lawyers, or engineers if it wasn't for teachers. The examples of authentically engaged teachers provided by some of the study respondents should be the norm and not the exception. Imagine how many more students of color would enter 4-year institutions with better prepared teachers or if their teachers looked like them.

Policy Implications for Latin@ Student College Enrollment

"It would have been nice to have been able to meet with an advisor who was also a first-generation, also Latino, or someone who just doesn't know the academic requirements but understands the whole experience."—Dolores

The study revealed some interesting issues that affect Latin@ students at the public school level and at the post-secondary one. The two previous areas of implication, theory and practice provided some discussion to help further Latin@ student enrollment at 4-year universities, this area discusses the polices that should be considered in order to reach and maintain this goal. While implications for practice mainly emphasized the role public school teachers play in the experience of Latin@ students, especially teacher education, the policy suggestions covered here are influenced more by the results of the study. There were multiple issues underscored in the narratives of these students, however one aspect in particular requires attention. As mentioned one major issue that

needs to be affected and migrated by policy changes has to do with resources allocated toward minority retention and success in higher education.

College-readiness programs as per the literature and the respondents' comments, aid in the preparation of low-income racialized students (Haro, 2004). The empirical evidence of this factor has been suggested by various studies (Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010) Other studies on Latin@ college students cover the resources to assist students through their undergraduate trajectory (Alva, 1991). The students in my study highlighted a couple of important questions needing further evaluation and discussion. For example, what type of students are actually benefiting from academic assistance? Secondly, are postsecondary programs whose primary functions are in assisting minority students actually helping the students that really need support? One conversation that occurred with every one of the respondents was about the university's McNair scholars program. The McNair program is:

> A federal TRIO program funded at 151 institutions across the United States and Puerto Rico by the U.S. Department of Education. It is designed to prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair participants are either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education and have demonstrated strong academic potential. The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society (mcnairscholars.com/about).

Most of the respondents were first-generation low-income students and all of them identified as members of one of the underrepresented groups mentioned, yet not one of these students knew about this resource. Policies concerning programs at this university need to be reexamined to see how students are being informed about opportunities such as the McNair scholars program. Second, as emphasized by some of the respondents' comments, programs that are earmarked for the retention of minority students while the stipulation of financial need is not necessarily criteria as in the case of the McNair program, need to be assessed in order to make sure that the resources are actually going to serve the students it professes to support.

Second to the need of connecting low-income racialized students to the resources needed to go beyond a Bachelor's degree are changes to policy in recruitment of future faculty and support staff. Having faculty and college advisors who come from the same cultural or ethnic as well as economic background as these students was an area underscored in the results of this study. The argument could be that the hiring practices of a university cannot include coming from working class as a qualifying factor, yet race and gender are utilized for the purpose of diversity, why would class background be any different.

During this study I learned just how small the percentage of Latin@ faculty members at the university level in comparisons to that of other groups is. The numbers or the lack thereof begs the question: while Latin@s are intellectual individuals why are they so underrepresented in the halls of academia? Those few fortunate individuals that happen to be present at various universities are often housed in what Chela Sandoval (2000) refers to the apartheid disciplines. Studies show that the presence of Latin@s in

the STEM is disproportionately lower than any other ethnic/racial group, again with the exception of Native-Americans.

Although more Latin@ students are graduating from the US public school system and college enrollment has increased, the challenges addressed by this work reflects questions as to the maintenance of this recent increase especially when historically the academic achievement has been chronically low. The issues as well as accomplishments provided by the narratives of these students are messages for institutions to visit their policies in order to assure that the retention of this student population is taken serious. Latin@ postsecondary has indeed increased, yet the question remains why do a small percentage of Latin@ students finish their bachelor degree programs and go on to pursue doctorates? The excerpts of these respondents coupled with the literature suggest that the low attainment of 4-year degrees may be associated with the fact that while the rise of Latin@ student college enrollment has occurred the number of Latin@ faculty has not increased equally (Adams, Solís, & McKendry, 2014). For example, Ponjuan (2011) writes that:

> These contrasting images between the faculty and student demographics portend
> an inevitable truth that, while the higher education student population is
> dramatically changing, the faculty members of color still are not representative of
> the incoming cohort   of students of color, especially the Latino student
> population (p. 99).

Ponjuan comments are furthered supported by the table on the following page, which show that out of the 1.5 million instructional degree-granting institutions, 79% of full-time faculty are White while only 5% are Latin@.

Table 6.1: Percentage distribution of full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by academic rank, selected race/ethnicity, and sex: Fall 2013
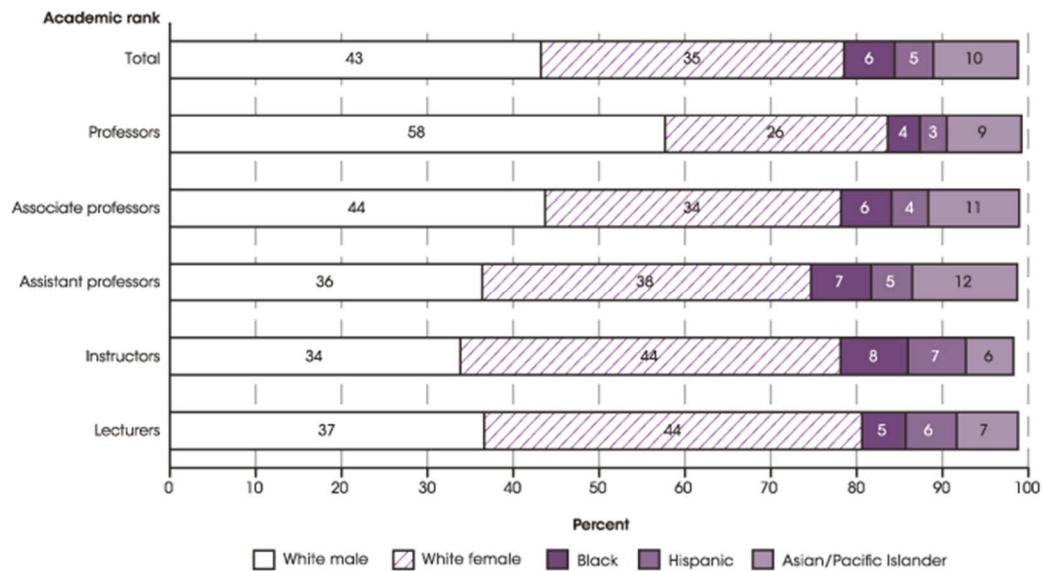
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015* (NCES 2015-144), Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty.

The table above provides context of the discrepancies between student enrollment versus faculty retention. While the number of students of color enrollment has grown, especially with the increase of Latin@ students the number of faculty of color does not remotely equal that expansion. For example, Latin@s make up 3% of full professors while 84% are White. The small number of Latin@ faculty is an area that requires further exploration and beyond the scope of this study, but nevertheless something to consider for future studies.

Future Research

The fundamental purpose of this study was to underscore and magnify the positive educational outcomes of Latin@ college students. Furthermore, it was also to show that while some of these students faced various adversities that according to the substantial literature should have resulted in their academic failure, they have either

accomplished or on their way to accomplishing their academic goals. The plethora of sociocultural issues encountered by many of the study participants were factors that could have prevented their enrollment at this research university. Yet, for some the desire to persevere even during the most challenging aspects in their trajectory propelled them forward. Several of the individuals within this study were acutely aware of their racial/ethnic and social class position.

Countering the stereotype of race and class for some of the study participants was paramount in their success. Above family, or institutional/empowerment agents, these students credit the act of defying these misleading stereotypes of Latin@s as a driving force in their navigational success. The factors of resiliency and resistance demonstrates the number one feature that the study participants and the researcher have in common. These two attributes contribute to the persistence and final outcome of our educational trajectory. While three of the study participants earned their bachelor's degree, I have no doubt that the remaining individuals will complete their degree programs as well. Morales (2008) reinforces this sentiment by stating that "the focus on positive and successful Hispanic students should be continued. By exploring those who have been successful, a deeper understanding of achievement processes can be attained" (p. 25). While this an area that requires further study, I am positive that other studies will follow suit.

Another area is in refocusing the attention on the educational experiences of Latin@ students rather than on the adult-centric literature, i.e. studies on the experiences of teachers who work with low-income Latin@ students. The exclusive focus on practitioner overlooks the unique and personal perspective of students (McHugh, Horner,

Colditz, & Wallace, 2012). Insights provided by this study's analysis of the narratives of Latin@ navigational success contributes to:

- Empirical studies that focus on stories of Latin@ student success countering the research that commonly depict Latino@s as at-risk and in need of intervention.

- Understanding the patterns of success through the individual navigational experience, what worked and what did not work.

- Promoting stories of educational success that will continue to encourage future academic attainment of Latin@ students.

- This study contributes to the literature that depicts Latin@ students as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado-Bernal, 2002).

The narratives of navigational success of the Latin@ university students in this study, especially the various sources of support identified are rich data important in examining the structural changes in education. This analysis of student narratives of successful navigation supports the previous research studies that highlight certain attributes in the student's personal background, i.e. community, family, and will contribute to the existing literature. The analyzing of stories of educational attainment of Latin@ students provides avenues for greater understanding of the barriers and supportive factors identified by individuals who have actually experienced schooling as Latin@s.

Summary and Conclusion

This final chapter centered on three areas that should be considered; theory, practice, and policy in the educational experience of Latin@ students. The study drew attention to the different ways the respondents navigated different realms in order to be at the university. While less than half of the students directly entered the university, the

other percentage demonstrated multiple challenges in their navigational experiences. The analysis of their individual stories underscored different factors that were challenging to some of these students and it also revealed various supportive and persistence factors that either aided in their navigational success or they recognized as factors that foster success.

All in all, the one crucial lesson gathered from the literature, from the countless of case stories poured through, from the accounts of the study respondents, and from my academic experience; the conviction of our abilities drove our desire to succeed. While many low-income racialized students are told that education is the key to success often they are not aware that the locks continually change. Higher education may be providing these individuals that key, but frequently it's not to the right doors. How do we ensure institutions are held accountable for providing the assistance they have been contracted to deliver? The enrollment of Latin@ students at 4-year universities has increased, however less than 25% finish their degree program within the allotted four-years. The individual stories of navigational success while reflecting the perseverance of the respondents it also underscored areas where further support could have gone toward low-income, first-generation students. Other supportive factors such as educators from their respective backgrounds were also suggested areas for improvement. The residue of the study's results while leading to questions highlighting the plethora of issues, the results are also a propellant toward actively assuring that the means of support are getting to the students that need it the most.

The narratives of navigational success coming from the study participants conveyed examples of resistance, resiliency, and perseverance. While the majority of the participants' narratives provided instances of personal struggle, their accounts

overwhelmingly reflected the persistence and resistance that accompanied them along the way to their current university status. This study was greatly influenced by the growing number of educational scholars asking the question: In the face of adversity, why do some individuals coming from similar backgrounds thrive and successfully attain their goals, while other do not? The collective narratives of navigational success within this work were not meant to answer this overarching question, rather they are simply shining examples of persistence, resistance, and competence.

Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

My name is Zelda López Haro and I am a PhD candidate in the Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education (CSSE) here at the University. I am interested in learning about your schooling experience and the manner in which you navigated the US public high school system and came to be enrolled at the University. Your personal story is important for it can provide learning opportunities for future and current educators. Your personal story of navigational success can be used in addressing the educational needs of future Latin@ students, by providing concrete examples of the individual lived realities of Latin@ students.

1) What is your student status?

    a) Freshman

    b) Sophomore

    c) N/A

2) Are you a transfer student?

    a) Yes

    b) No

3) Do you identify as Latina/o or Hispanic?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) N/A

4) What cultural group or nationality would you say is your heritage?

a) Chican@

b) Mexican

c) Central American

d) Puerto Rican

e) Cuban

f) Other Latin American group.

5) Did you obtain a traditional high school diploma or GED?

      a) High school diploma

      b) GED

      c) Other

If you are interested in sharing your story, please provide your email address below and I will contact you in order to set up an initial meeting:

Email_____

Appendix B: Instructions for Study Participation

This study uses a Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), which requires study participants to construct their story of public schooling, (including transferring from community college to 4-year university) that lead to their current status as undergraduates at this university. You may tell your story in any way you choose and writing as long of a narrative as you want.

After I receive your story I will analyze the content and develop topic questions from your narrative and may need to schedule another meeting to ask the questions developed through the analysis of your story. If at any time you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Below is the SQUIN—Single Question to Induce Narrative, please write your narrative based on this question:

"Tell me the story of how you navigated the US public school system, especially high school, well enough to get into the university?"

Please remember, that you do not need to worry about structure, grammar, etc. this is your story of navigational success and how you got from point A to point B. When completed please send me your story as an attachment by September 15th to tharo@uoregon.edu. Thank you!

Appendix C: Glossary of codes used for respondents' excerpts

Common Challenges: Factors that according to the literature impede the pursuit of higher education. These factors range from immigration issues to issues of economics.

Ethnic/racial identity: Latin@, Hispanic, Mexican, or Chica@ identity.

Financial struggle/Low SES: Comments concerning economic challenges or comments about poverty, low socioeconomic.

Gender: The socio, cultural, or psychological traits associated with one's biological sex.

Immigration: Immigration status of either the respondent or their family.

Issues in the family: Issues in this category can include a myriad of things affecting Latin@ families. Often this factor can be exacerbated by low SES.

- **Lack of interest**

- **Single parent household**

Lack of higher education information: Information about funding, application deadlines, enrollment, is not provided.

Language: Individual communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way as well as the system of communication used by a particular community or country. In this study Spanish and English are the languages covered in the study.

Factors of persistence: A willingness to overcome challenges, to gain an understanding of themselves, move toward determination, while understanding the perception of others. Persistence demonstrates the resourcefulness of the students in seeking mentoring opportunities and other educational resources that generate a culture of success as factors that helped propel them toward succeeding in higher education.

Academic self-efficacy: The conviction to be successful in formal learning environments and to achieve academically.

- **Athletics**

- **Extra-curricular activities**

- **Good student/good study skills**

Resiliency/Resistance: Resilience is a dynamic process in which individuals positively adapt although they have experienced significant difficulties. Resistance has two intersecting dimensions: (a) critique of social oppression, and (b) motivated by social justice and in this case are resisting in two forms: c) conformist, and d) transformational

- **Educational opportunities:** Enrolling or accessing in courses beyond traditional schoolwork such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or Honor's classes. Also included under this term are college-access or college readiness programs, i.e. AVID, Upper Bound.

Supportive factors or factors that foster support academic achievement: Factors used to advance or support Latin@ students' higher education opportunities.

Access to good schools: Schools that are in safe neighborhoods, are well-funded, well lighted. Also relevant to good schools are having proficient teachers and school administrators.

Cultural competence: Occurs when individuals have a healthy outlook and appreciation for their ethnic or cultural identity beyond simply having pride. Rather individuals who are culturally competent know their group history and are aware of their identity in relation to mainstream culture. Also ethnic identity as an individual promotive

factor (asset) instead as a deficit.

Financial means: Having the finances to support student by paying their tuition or being able to support them while in college.

Non-familial agents: These individuals who are not family in the traditional sense are seen as being influential in the academic success of these students.

- **Teachers**

- **Community members**

Pre-college opportunities: Educational opportunities students identified as helping in preparing them to enter higher education.

- **AP/Honors coursework:** Advanced placement (AP) courses provide college-level courses and examinations to high school students. Colleges and universities often grant placement and course credit to students who obtain high scores on the examinations. Honors classes often offer the same curriculum as regular classes but are tailored for high-achieving students — covering additional topics or some topics in greater depth. Honors courses may be the highest-level courses or "track" offered by the school, or they may be above "college prep" but below specialized courses such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate. In some schools, however, AP and IB courses will be considered the school's "honors course."

- **College transition support/program:** The primary goal of college transition programs is in providing students early with the knowledge of the benefits of continuing their education by enrolling in college. These programs encourage students to think about college, and at the same time offer academic and other

support services they may need to enroll in college. Sometimes referred to as "early intervention programs," services range from academic tutoring, to college application assistance, in order to help students in accessing student aid.

Support of parents/family/peers: Supportiveness of parents/family/peers beyond financial such as emotional support including encouragement.

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