LOS LOGRADORES: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH IN THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINO MALE ACHIEVERS AT A SELECTIVE PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

A Dissertation in
Higher Education
by
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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the educational crisis facing Latino males has garnered the attention of numerous stakeholders within higher education. While researchers offer numerous explanations regarding the underrepresentation and underachievement of Latina/o collegians, this study offers a different response to this emergent crisis by focusing on factors that contributed to the achievement of Latino males at a highly-selective, predominantly White research university. Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework was utilized to explore how Latino males conceptualized and demonstrated their achievement.

Qualitative research methods were used to explore the achievement patterns of 10 logradores [Latino male achievers] who were born or raised prior to the age of five in the United States, traditional age college students, enrolled full-time, entered as freshmen at the institution, completing their junior or senior year, and maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher during the 2010 – 2011 academic year. Logradores were asked to participate in a three hour semi-structured interview, complete a demographic profile form, and submit a copy of their academic transcript. A phenomenological approach guided the execution of this study.

The manner in which logradores conceptualized their achievement deviated from traditional measures of success. While Latino males acknowledged the importance of grades, they emphasized the importance of being the best, being involved, and being well-rounded college students. These conceptualizations of achievement were associated with specific forms of capital reflected in Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework. Implications for research, theory, policy, and practice are presented with emphasis placed on increasing the achievement of Latino male collegians at predominantly White institutions.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Lograr [A1] vt <objetivo> to attain, achieve; <éxito> to achieve . . .


El logro mucho [He achieved a lot],” my grandfather would say. Like many words translated from Spanish to English, the meaning and significance of logro is lost in translation. By definition, the term lograr literally means “to achieve” in English. However, this term implies much more in Spanish. To be recognized as a logrador [high achiever], an individual must struggle, overcome significant obstacles, and strive to achieve academic excellence. In many respects, high-achieving Latino male collegians, referred to as logradores in this study, are students who display qualities associated with resilience – the ability to overcome difficult, or what some might consider to be debilitating, life circumstances (Morales & Trotman, 2004; Wang & Gordon, 1994). This study contributes to the extant literature on racial/ethnic minority achievers by focusing on how logradores [Latino male achievers] conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement. Although attention has been increasingly directed toward the underrepresentation of Latino males within the American higher education system (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009), emphasis will be placed on factors that contribute to the achievement of logradores at a highly-selective, predominantly White institution.

While the proportion of Latinas/os\(^1\) attending colleges and universities has increased since 1975, several studies indicate that Latinas are enrolling and graduating from postsecondary institutions at greater rates than their male counterparts (Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Cabrera, \(^1\) In this paper, the terms Latino and Hispanic will be used interchangeably when referring to individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central- and South American descent. Although the term Hispanic is used by the U.S. Census Bureau to categorize individuals who originate from Spanish-speaking countries, the term Latino has been adopted to identify Hispanics born and raised in the United States. Accordingly, the use of the terms Hispanic, Latino, and other subcategories will be determined by how they are referred to in the literature.)
2008; Ryu, 2008; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Data available through the U.S. Census Bureau (2008a) confirms that Latino men (9%) between the ages of 25 to 29 are less likely to earn a bachelor’s or more advanced degree in comparison to African American (18%), Non-Hispanic White (32%), and Asian American males (60%). In fact, Latino males are more likely to drop out of high school, liable to seek employment instead of enrolling in college, and least likely to graduate from a four-year institution than any other racial/ethnic group in the U.S. (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005b).

Although the aforementioned studies draw attention to a myriad of factors that contribute to underrepresentation of Latina/o collegians, we know very little about Latino male students who defy the odds by graduating from high school, enrolling in college, and excelling at predominantly White institutions (PWI). In response to this emergent educational crisis, this study explores how logradores [Latino achievers] overcome social, cultural, and institutional barriers at a selective postsecondary institution. Furthermore, this study explores how Latino males conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement. The reports offered by logradores are intended to enhance future research, policies, and practices intended to enhance the educational outcomes of Latina/o college students.

**Statement of the Problem**

To better understand the underrepresentation and underachievement of Latino males at postsecondary institutions, attention needs to be given to several demographic and educational trends occurring within the Latino community. As of 2002, Hispanics have become the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002). A recent report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau (2007) estimates that Hispanics comprised 40.5 million
(14.2%) of U.S. households in 2004. Additionally, Hispanics are recognized as the youngest ethnic group living in the United States. It is projected that Hispanics will soon constitute 27 percent of the U.S. population under five years of age (Census Bureau, 2008c).

These trends have important implications when considering the experiences of Hispanics within the American educational system. Increasing the representation and degree attainment of Hispanics at postsecondary institutions is vital to sustaining an educated U.S. labor force and maintaining the nation’s international competitiveness in a global economy (Tienda, 2009).

Shifts in the racial/ethnic composition of the U.S. calls for research that informs policies and practices used to foster high academic achievement among the burgeoning Latino community.

The Latino Achievement Gap

While the Latino population has increased considerably over the last four decades, these gains have not necessarily translated to levels of academic performance and achievement equivalent to that of other racial/ethnic groups. Numerous studies suggest that Latinos have lower high school completion rates, matriculate to a four-year postsecondary institutions at lower rates, and are less likely to earn a college degree than their peers (Fry, 2002; Solórzano, et al., 2005; Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004; Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005a; 2005b; 2005c). Despite increases in the representation of racial/ethnic minority collegians, a recent report published by the American Council on Education indicates that significant gaps between Hispanics and other racial/ethnic groups persist with regard to college enrollment and persistence rates, translating into Hispanics earning a smaller share of degrees from both two- and four-year institutions (Ryu, 2008). For example, the number of Hispanics who earned an associate’s degree increased by 112.7 percent (i.e. 36,000 students to 76,000 students) from 1995 to 2005. Over the

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2 These figures are based on sample limited to the household population and does not account for individuals living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters.
same period, the number of Hispanics who earned a bachelor’s degree increased by 86 percent (i.e. 57,000 students to 106,000 students). Despite these gains, the number of degrees awarded per 100 students enrolled in two- and four-year institutions was higher for Whites (14.3), Asian Americans (13.0), and American Indians (11.3) than for Hispanics (10.4) in 2005. African Americans (10.4) were awarded a similar number of degrees the same year (Ryu, 2008).

Research indicates that low high school completion rates contribute to the underrepresentation of Hispanics at postsecondary institutions (National Women’s Law Center & Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2009; Swail, et al., 2004). While high school completion rates for Hispanics increased from 59 to 68 percent, the largest percentage increase of any racial/ethnic group between 1987 and 2006, their completion rates still fall below those of Asian Americans (91%), Whites (87%), African Americans (76%), and American Indians (71%) (Ryu, 2008). Although Hispanics are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S., they are least likely to earn a high school diploma, presenting a unique challenge to policymakers and educators committed to improving Latina/o educational outcomes.

Hispanics also lag behind other racial/ethnic groups in relation to college enrollments. According to the American Council on Education (ACE), college enrollment rates for Hispanics increased from 18 to 25.4 percent over the past two decades, yet they remain grossly underrepresented in comparison to Whites (44%) and Asian Americans (61%). African Americans (32%) also enrolled in postsecondary institutions at higher rates than Hispanics (Ryu, 2008). While Hispanics have made considerable gains in college enrollment rates, researchers consistently report that Hispanics are still more likely to enroll in two-year colleges than four-year postsecondary institutions (Fry, 2002; Santiago, 2008; Swail, et al., 2005b).
With the exception of African American students, Ryu (2008) notes that rates of persistence\(^3\) for all racial/ethnic groups have declined over the last two decades. In fact, Hispanics have experienced the sharpest declines in persistence rates at both two-year (62% to 54%) and four-year (81% to 76%) institutions. In comparison to other racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic students who began their education at community colleges were least likely to persist. It should be noted that persistence rates across all racial/ethnic groups were much lower at two-versus four-year postsecondary institutions. Thus, students who begin their education at a community college are less likely to earn a baccalaureate degree.

While the aforementioned completion, enrollment, and persistence rates illuminate disparities that exist between Hispanics and other racial/ethnic groups within the U.S., these educational trends draw attention away from the emergent gender gap within the Hispanic community. In 2006, Hispanic men (63%) had the lowest high school completion rates based on race/ethnicity and gender. Moreover, Hispanic women outpaced men in high school completion rates by a margin of 10 percentage points (Ryu, 2008). The “vanishing Latino male” phenomena described by Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009) also becomes apparent when considering the gains Hispanic women have made in college enrollments over the last two decades. Between 1987 and 2006, the enrollment rates for Hispanic women increased from 18 percent to 31 percent; whereas, Hispanic men only increased from 17 percent to 21 percent during the same period (Ryu, 2008). In summary, Hispanics have the largest high school completion and college enrollment gender gaps of any racial/ethnic group in the United States.

**The Latino Research Gap**

\(^3\) In this study, college persistence rates are “measures of the percentage of first-time freshmen who remain enrolled in postsecondary education or complete their certificates or degrees over a specified time… [and] compares the persistence rates over three years for two cohorts of students: those who for the first time enrolled in college in the academic year 1995-96 and those who began in the academic year 2003-04” (Ryu, 2008, p. 20).
Statistics are useful in illuminating educational disparities that exist between Latinos, males in particular, and other racial/ethnic groups. However, educational researchers and policy makers still face the challenge of translating this information into educational interventions that are effective in addressing the achievement gap. Numerous studies have been published on factors that contribute to the low academic achievement of Latinos student in American schools (Gándara, 2007; Valencia, 1997). The premise behind this body of literature was that if researchers could identify obstacles that interfere with students’ academic success, schools could provide interventions that would increase the academic achievement of Latino students. Despite efforts to identify challenges Latinas/os encounter in U.S. schools, there are several areas in which research directed at narrowing the achievement gap is deficient.

First, scholars who explore disparities in academic achievement often adopt deficit-oriented paradigms that reinforce, or worse, perpetuate stereotypes regarding factors that contribute to the underachievement of racial/ethnic minority students. Namely, the lack of success Latinas/os experience in school is often attributed to factors beyond the control of educational institutions – individual deficiencies, family background characteristics, and low socioeconomic status (Flores, 2005; Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). As a consequence, scholars do not adequately address the extent to which environmental factors contribute to the Latino achievement gap.

Secondly, studies that address the achievement gap often focus on the experiences of low-achieving Hispanic students in relation to their high-achieving White and Asian American peers. Although this practice is quite common, scholars may be better served if they account for the experiences of high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students as well as low-performing students (Miller, 2005; Miller, Ozturk, & Chavez, 2005). In Fragile Futures, Gándara (2005)
contends that aligning the academic performance of low-income racial/ethnic minority students with middle-class White students who possess the resources needed to succeed in school can be problematic. She asserts:

From a statistical perspective, this strategy of bringing up the bottom to close the achievement gap is illogical. It would require a massive movement of lower-performing students toward the middle of the score distribution to achieve similarly “average” scores if nothing is done simultaneously about raising test scores at the upper end of the score distribution (p. 3).

Gándara’s comments are not intended to suggest that decreasing the achievement gap between low- and high-performing students is a fruitless endeavor. On the contrary, reducing the Latino achievement gap is a national imperative that requires policymakers, scholars, and practitioners to reconsider the “fragile futures” of high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students. Addressing the experiences of high-achieving Latino students can lead to the development of culturally-responsive policies and practices that increase the achievement of low-performing students within this community, as well as other racial/ethnic minority student populations. In addition, empirical research on high achievers can lead to the development of interventions that serve all students and maintain the educational progress of high-achieving Latinas/os.

Finally, the term high achievement can be problematic because it does not fully acknowledge the struggles of racial/ethnic minority achievers. Although scholars consistently report students of color are forced to contend with stereotypes and racism (Fries-Britt, 1995, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Strayhorn, 2008), the prevailing assumption is that racial/ethnic minority achievers do not require supportive services to maintain their academic performance in college (Freeman, 1999). To facilitate this process, Latino
achievers must receive adequate support within the college environment. Unfortunately, previous studies have shown that high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students are often expected to make the transition to college on their own, leading to unfavorable educational outcomes (Arnold, 1996; Fries-Britt, 1997; Novels & Ender, 1988). These students enter postsecondary institutions full of promise, but do not always receive the support needed to reach their full potential.

**Statement of Purpose**

Numerous reports indicate that the prosperity of the U.S. economy is dependent on educating the burgeoning Latino community (Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Swail, et al., 2005a; Tienda, 2009). Considering that Latinos are the largest, youngest, and fastest growing racial/ethnic group, it would appear that educating this population presents both an opportunity and crisis. Latinas/os encounter numerous social challenges that contribute to their low levels of attainment and achievement in education; however, this crisis has not been adequately acknowledged by educators, practitioners, and policy-makers. The reports offered by Latino male collegians in this study are intended to enhance Latino educational outcomes by contributing to our collective knowledge of the struggles and strategies adopted by logradores [Latino achievers].

Over the last thirty years, scholars have devoted increased attention to the academic and social experiences of racial/ethnic minority achievers in response to studies that focus disproportionately on the maladjustment, underachievement, and early departure of underrepresented student populations. However, the extant literature on racial/ethnic minority achievers focuses almost exclusively on African American students (Bonner II, 2000, 2001a, 2010; Freeman, 1999; Fries-Britt, 1995, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner,
2001, 2002; Griffin, 2006; Harper, 2003, 2006, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008). With the exception of Gándara (1982, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995, 2005), few scholars have devoted considerable attention to Latina/o achievers within higher education (Ceballo, 2004; Clewell & Joy, 1988; Hurtado, 1994; Rivas-Drake, 2008; Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006). This study will contribute to the growing body of literature on Latina/o achievers by focusing exclusively on Latino males who excel academically and overcome social, cultural, and institutional barriers at a predominantly White institution. The research questions proposed for this study are as follows:

1. How do Latino male achievers conceptualize their achievement?
2. How does community cultural wealth translate to the achievement patterns of Latino males at a highly-selective predominantly White institution?

Significance

“Today the most urgent challenge for the American educational system has a Latino face” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 1). Despite sizeable increases in the U.S. population, Latinos remain grossly underrepresented at postsecondary educational institutions. Likewise, high-achieving Latino male college students remain absent from discourse within higher education. While a disproportionate amount of research indicates that Latina/o students are least likely to graduate from a four-year postsecondary institution (Fry, 2002; Ryu, 2008; Swail, et al., 2004; Swail, et al., 2005a, 2005b, 2005c), these studies present an inaccurate portrait of Latina/o collegians because they do not attend to the experiences of high achievers. This study seeks to address the Latino achievement gap by focusing on the experiences of logradores [Latino achievers] at a highly-selective, predominantly White institution.
Latino men have much to gain from the findings of this study. Latino college aspirants or those currently enrolled at postsecondary institutions can learn how *logradores* achieved their academic goals instead of referring deficit-oriented discourse regarding the experiences of Latina/o collegians (Flores, 2005; Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001; Valencia, 1997). These latter paradigms are inadequate because they are based on what we ‘think’ may work with Latino males opposed to models of success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005a; Padilla, 2009; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). This study draws on the experiences of Latino males who report on what they ‘know’ fosters high achievement in college.

Postsecondary institutions committed to the recruitment and retention of racial/ethnic minority students also stand to benefit from the findings of this study. The reports offered by Latino males can lead to the identification programs, services, and institutional resources that aid *logradores* in achieving exceptional academic outcomes. Thus, faculty and administrators will be better prepared to provide culturally-responsive programs and services that facilitate the achievement of Latino students, particularly males, pursuing their baccalaureate degrees at predominantly White institutions.

Finally, this study has significance for policymakers committed to decreasing the achievement gap and sustaining the U.S. economic system. In short, the Latino educational crisis is a national imperative. Gándara and Contreras (2009) write:

As a group, Latinos students perform academically at levels that will consign them to live as members of a permanent underclass in American society. Moreover, their situation is projected to worsen over time. But as alarming as this is for Latinos, it is equally so for
the U.S. population as a whole; neither the economy nor the social fabric can afford to relegate so many young people to the margins of society (p. 304).

Given that Latinos are the largest, fastest growing, and youngest racial/ethnic group, how they fare in the American educational system should be of primary interests to policymakers. Beyond contributing to our knowledge of this burgeoning student population, the study of *logradores* [Latino achievers] can enhance the economic and social outcomes achieved by Latinas/os in the United States.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature relevant to understanding the experiences of Latino achievers within higher education. Latina/o demographic trends are presented to emphasize the importance of education within this burgeoning racial/ethnic minority group in the United States. Although this study focuses exclusively on Latino male collegians, discourse regarding the Latina/o educational pipeline is presented to illuminate factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of these students at postsecondary institutions. Literature related to the postsecondary experiences of Latinas/os and men is also presented to illuminate potential obstacles Latino males encounter in college. A review of the extant literature on high-achieving racial/ethnic minority collegians is also included with an emphasis placed on students’ experiences during college.

Latinas/os in the United States

Before engaging in any productive discourse related to the educational attainment and achievement of Latinas/os in the United States, it is important to address several demographic trends relevant to enhancing the postsecondary educational outcomes of Latinas/os. In 2002, Hispanics became the largest racial/ethnic group in the United States (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002). A report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau (2007) estimated that Hispanics comprised 40.5 million (14.2%) of the U.S. household population in 2004, of whom the largest ethnic group were individuals of Mexican origin (64%). It should be noted that Puerto Ricans (9.6%), Cubans (3.6%), Salvadorans (3.0%) and Dominicans (2.6%) also make up a considerable proportion of the Hispanic population; however, the percentage of Central Americans (7.2%) and South Americans (5.5%) in the U.S. exceed the latter three groups by a relatively small margin.
Nevertheless, the three largest Hispanic ethnic groups include Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. Between 1970 and 2000, the Hispanic population increased exponentially – 9.6 million (4.7%) to 35.3 million (12.5%) – and the U.S. Census Bureau (2009) projects this population will double within the next twenty years. By 2030, one in five individuals (73 million or 20.1%) residing in the U.S. will identify as Hispanic.

Immigration has contributed substantially to the increased representation of Hispanics in the United States. However, reports from the Pew Hispanic Center indicate that the number of Hispanics immigrating to the U.S. has decreased over the last three decades (Fry, 2008; Fry & Passel, 2009; Suro & Passel, 2003). Similar to Whites, the majority (44.8%) of Hispanics immigrated to the U.S. prior 1990; whereas, only one-third (34.7%) immigrated between 1990 and 1999, and approximately one in five (20.5%) arrived after 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). According to Fry (2008), the Latino population growth in the new century is marked by a reversal in trends, where 60% of the increase is due to natural increases (i.e., births minus deaths) versus international migration. By 2020, the number of second-generation immigrants in U.S. schools is expected to double, and the number of second-generation Latino immigrants in the U.S. labor force will triple (Suro & Passel, 2003).

Shifts in Hispanic settlement patterns have also been observed in the United States over the last three decades. Although nearly three-quarters of the Hispanic population resided in counties within California, Texas, Florida and New York during the 1990s; Fry and Passel (2009) observed that the fastest growing Hispanic counties at the turn of the century were located in Virginia, Georgia, Illinois, and Pennsylania. Although the majority of Mexicans reside in the West (54.6%) and South (34.3%), over half (58.0%) of the Puerto Rican population lives in the Northeast and a substantial number of Cubans (75.1%) reside in the South. In contrast,
individuals who identify as Central American and South American are more evenly dispersed in the southern (34.0%), northeastern (31.5%), and western (29.9%) regions of the United States (Gloria, Castellanos, & Kamimura, 2006). Researchers have noted that educational outcomes vary across Latino ethnic groups (Muniz, 2006; Solórzano, et al., 2005; Torres, 2004).

Beyond their designation as the largest racial/ethnic group, Latinas/os are also recognized as the youngest and fastest growing population in the United States. U.S. Census (2007) data confirms that the median age of the Hispanic population (26.9) was approximately 13 years younger than the non-Hispanic White population (40.1) in 2004. Although Hispanics make up a larger proportion of the population under the age of 18 (34.3% versus 22.3% for Whites) and a smaller proportion of the population over the age of 65 (5.1% versus 14.5 for Whites), these percentages vary between Hispanic ethnic groups. For example, the median age for Mexicans was 25.3 in 2004; whereas, the median age for Cubans was 40.6 which approximates non-White Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Colleges and universities will need to prepare for the influx of Latinas/os who continue their education beyond high school.

Numerous reports indicate that the prosperity of the U.S. economy is dependent on educating the burgeoning Latina/o community (Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Swail, et al., 2005a; Tienda, 2009). Considering that Latinas/os are the largest, youngest, and fastest growing population, it would appear that educating this population presents both an opportunity and crisis. According to Gándara and Contreras (2009), increasing the educational attainment of Latinas/os can enhance the nation’s economy by generating tax revenues and decreasing social services expenditures. Furthermore, Latinas/os are more likely to engage in civic activities including voting and community service within their respective communities (Baum & Ma, 2007). Unfortunately, the Latina/o education crisis has not been adequately addressed by
policymakers, educators, and practitioners. The reports offered by Latino male collegians in this study are intended to provide a response to this issue and enhance the educational outcomes of all Latinas/os in the United States.

The Latina/o Educational Pipeline

Latinas/os, particularly Latino male college students, are likely to enter postsecondary institutions that are not equipped to address their needs. Drawing on the words of Malcolm (1990), to better “understand the reasons for the mere trickle at the end of the [Latina/o educational] pipeline… we must go all the way back to the headwaters” (p. 249). Accordingly, educational researchers and policymakers must understand the cumulative disadvantages Latino males experience as they progress through the P-16 educational pipeline. To this end, the following section addresses the experiences of Latinas/os in early childhood education programs and elementary “headwaters.” Consideration is also given to the achievement and attainment of Latina/o adolescents in middle- and secondary schools. Additionally, where possible, attention is given to the channels Latino males navigate as they progress through the postsecondary educational pipeline.

Latinas/os & Early Childhood Education

Participation in early childhood education programs can provide Latina/o children with the foundation needed to successfully progress through the U.S. educational pipeline. Although research suggests that these programs can foster the cognitive development and academic achievement of young children (Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, & Ramey, 2001), Latino parents are reluctant to entrust the care of their children to non-family members (Schwartz, 1996). According to a report from the National Center of Educational Statistics (2007), Hispanic children (27%) were more likely to be cared for by their parents or family
members than Non-Hispanic Whites (18%), Asian Americans (18%), and African Americans (16%) between 2005 and 2006. The delayed enrollment of Latinas/os in early childhood education programs can have an adverse effect on the achievement of Latina/o children as they enter elementary school and continue through the educational pipeline (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).

**Latinas/os in Elementary & Middle Schools**

While Hispanics are more likely to delay enrollment in early childhood education programs, their representation in public elementary and middle schools has steadily increased over the last three decades due to broader growth in the Latina/o population nationwide. In 2007, Hispanics accounted for 21 percent of the total student population enrolled in pre-kindergarten through grade 8, an increase of 15 percentage points since 1972. In contrast, the percentage of White students decreased from 78 to 56 percent (22%) during the same time period (Planty, et al., 2009). Unfortunately, researchers consistently report that Hispanics are relegated to attending impoverished elementary and middle schools that are underfunded, structurally unsound, and staffed with higher concentrations of ill-prepared teachers that lead to less favorable educational outcomes (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999).

Researchers attribute the gender gap observed among Latina/o children to a myriad of factors. Gurian and Stevens (2005) attribute the underachievement of males in reading to educational practices that fail to meet the unique learning styles of boys. Educators who fail to adopt inclusive pedagogical practices can initiate a disconnection for boys that leads to a “steady diet of shame and anxiety throughout their elementary school years, and from it they learn only to feel bad about themselves and to hate the place that makes them feel that way” (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 26). Research also indicates that boys, particularly Latino and African
American males, are more likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, emotional disturbances, etc.), placed in special education programs, or held back in elementary and middle school (Mead, 2006; Mortenson, 1999; Planty, et al., 2009).

The cumulative disadvantages of segregation, poverty, inadequate educational practices, and overrepresentation in special education leave many Latino boys ill-prepared for high school, or worse, disenfranchised by their early educational experiences.

**Latinas/os in Secondary Schools**

High schools serve as a critical transition point for students seeking to matriculate to postsecondary institutions. Unfortunately, the 3.1 million Latinos (22.4%) enrolled in high schools are likely to be educated in secondary schools that magnify cumulative disadvantages experienced earlier in the educational pipeline (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008b). Similar to the patterns observed in primary education, researchers consistently report that Latinas/os are effectively ‘tracked’ out of college preparatory courses; instead, students receive inadequate instruction, poor academic advising, and risk exposure to hostile school climates that diminish their academic achievement (Griffin & Kimura-Walsh, 2009; Lipson, 2001; Lleras, 2008).

Researchers who have interrogated these educational practices question whether Latina/o students dropout, or indeed, are “pushed out” by unresponsive educators (Marín, 1995; Secada, et al., 1998). While Hispanics have made considerable gains in high school completion over the last three decades, numerous studies indicate that Hispanics have the highest dropout rates of any racial/ethnic group in the U.S. with the largest gaps persisting between men and women (Ryu, 2008; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Additionally, it should be noted that high school completion rates vary across Latino ethnic groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007), approximately 85 percent of Peruvians, Columbians, and other South Americans graduated from
high school; whereas, a smaller percentage of Cubans (74.2%), Ecuadorians (73.8%), and Puerto Ricans (71.4%) earned similar credentials in 2004. During the same year, Mexicans (52.4%), Guatemalans (48.3%), and Salvadorans (41.3%) were least likely to complete high school. This presents a significant educational crisis considering that the high school completion rates of the four largest Latino ethnic groups – Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Salvadorans – fall below the national average (82%).

The cumulative disadvantages Latino males experience navigating the P-12 educational pipeline leave many young men disenfranchised and less prepared to make the transition to college. Research indicates that Latino males are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education programs that provide the foundation needed for future success in school (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). These students often attend under-resourced schools staffed by ill-prepared educators who possess low expectations of Latinas/os (Kozol, 1991; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2004). As Latino males progress through the educational pipeline, they are more likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities, enrolled in special education, held back or tracked out of college preparatory courses (Mead, 2006; Oakes, 2005; Planty, et al., 2009). Collectively, these factors help to explain why very few Latino males successfully transition from high school to college.

**Postsecondary Educational Experiences of Latinas/os**

In recent years, Latino males have garnered the attention of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers within higher education. Efforts to address the “vanishing Latino male” phenomena at postsecondary institutions have been attended to by a number of organizations including the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, Morehouse College, and Excelencia in Education (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). While the extant literature published on Latina/o students centers on
increasing access to college and enhancing retention efforts (Braxton, 2000; Castellanos & Jones, 2003b; Muniz, 2006; Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009), emphasis should also be placed on fostering the academic achievement of Latina/o collegians. To achieve this goal, Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009) argue that race-sensitive frameworks are needed to capture the “sociopolitical, cultural, and psychological facets of Latina/o schooling experiences” (p. 39).

Gloria and Rodriguez’s (2000) psychosociocultural (PSC) framework illuminates some of the common obstacles Latina/o students encounter in college. More importantly, the PSC framework seeks to redefine success through the examination of psychological (e.g. self-concept, resiliency, etc.), social (e.g. peer networks, mentors, etc.), and cultural (e.g. values, gender roles, etc.) dimensions of students experiences at postsecondary institutions (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). Beyond providing a more holistic view of Latina/o students’ experiences, the PSC framework draws attention to the role postsecondary institutions play in sustaining educational environments that are responsive to the needs of Latinas/os.

**Psychological Factors**

Although numerous psychological factors contribute to college student persistence, scholars maintain that attending to racial/ethnic minority students’ perceptions of the environment and degree of comfort on campus is critical (Castellanos & Jones, 2003a; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005). To this end, the following section is devoted to addressing the role campus climate and cultural congruity play in Latina/o collegians’ experiences.

**Campus Climate.** Nearly two decades of empirical research examining the racialized experiences of college students indicate that the campus climate can present numerous challenges to racial/ethnic minority students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). According to Hurtado,
Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999), the climate for diversity is shaped within educational institutions by the historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of groups, the numerical representation of diverse populations, interactions across various groups, and students perceptions of the environment. Researchers consistently report that students’ perceptions of the campus climate vary by race/ethnicity (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003).

Racial/ethnic minority collegians generally, and Latina/os specifically, perceive the campus climate to be more hostile than their White peers (Ancis, et al., 2000; Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Suarez-Balcazar, et al., 2003). While these studies generally suggest that Latina/o students’ perceptions of the climate are more favorable than African American and Asian American students, several scholars (e.g., Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Villalpando, 2005) contend that incorporating more culturally responsive frameworks may draw attention to the ways in which immigration, language, and phenotype play a role in students’ perceptions of the campus climate. As it pertains to this study, researchers should also consider the role of gender in relation to Latina/o students’ perceptions and experiences of the campus climate at predominantly White institutions.

Studies that focus exclusively on the campus climate for Latinas/os draw attention to an interesting paradox. Although research indicates that Latina/o students derive a sense of belonging from their interactions with diverse peers and faculty members, participation in academic support programs, and the completion of courses that emphasize diversity (Hurtado & Ponjuan, Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; 2005); several studies confirm that these experiences also contribute to Latina/o students’ negative perceptions of the
According to Nunez, Latinas/os who are actively engaged on campus are “more apt to be critical judges of their racial/ethnic interactions and environments” (p. 38). She contends that access to social and intercultural capital facilitates Latinas/os’ sense of belonging and, simultaneously, contributes to the negative perceptions they share regarding the institutional climate for diversity. Additionally, data available from the *Diverse Democracy Project Study* confirms that language-use, generational status, and immigration also contribute to Latina/o students’ perceptions of campus climate and sense of belonging (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Nunez, 2009). Developing a more nuanced understanding of how Latinas/os experience the campus climate can enhance their educational outcomes.

**Cultural Incongruity.** Given that postsecondary institutions retain policies and practices that maintain predominantly White norms, Latina/o collegians often experience incongruity between their cultural values and those espoused by the institution (Castellanos & Jones, 2003a; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). According to Castellanos and Jones (2003b), cultural congruity refers to the “cultural fit or match between one’s internal values and those of the university environment” (pp. 80 – 81). While researchers have shown that cultural congruity influences academic persistence (Fields, 1988; Fiske, 1988; Munoz, 1986), more recent studies highlight the importance of enclaves (i.e., subcultures) in helping underrepresented students become acclimated at postsecondary institutions (Kuh & Love, 2000). In particular, ethnic enclaves provide racial/ethnic minority students with supportive peers that increase persistence. Similarly, Museus and Quaye (2009) contend that ethnic enclaves can foster positive interpersonal relationships that contribute to students’ academic success; however, they stress the importance of fostering educationally purposeful connections between “new minority students and cultural agents” who
“validate student’s cultural heritages” (p. 91). Essentially, faculty and staff mentors can assist racial/ethnic minority students with becoming adjusted on campus.

Consistent with previous research, Gloria, Robinson, and Kurpius (1996) found that perceptions of the environment and cultural congruity contributed to Chicana/o students’ persistence at two large Southwestern universities. A more recent study conducted by Gloria, Castellanos, and Lopez (2005) revealed that university comfort (i.e., cultural congruity), social support, and self-belief were interrelated and subsequently predictive of academic non-persistence decisions for Latina/o undergraduates. The authors noted that Latinas/os who were able to maintain relationships with family members and establish new connections with peers felt at home within the campus community. Furthermore, Latina/o students’ coping responses and well-being were determined by the degree to which they experienced cultural congruity in college. With regard to Latina college students, Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) found that congruency led to the adoption of healthy coping strategies that included talking with others about problems, actively seeking information, and developing a plan action. Beyond contributing to their well-being, Gloria et al. (2005) assert that Latinas who experienced greater congruity perceived fewer educational barriers that might prompt most students to withdraw from college.

Social Factors

Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) define social support as the “helpfulness of social relationships, the manner of human attachments, and the resources exchanged among members of the support system” (p. 150). Familial ties serve as an important source of support for Latina/o college students; however, research indicates that students also derive social support from their relationships with peers, faculty, and administrators at postsecondary institutions (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Hernandez, 2000; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, &
Cardoza, 2003; Santos & Reigadas, 2002). Unfortunately, Latinas/os encounter several challenges establishing these connections at PWIs.

**Peer interactions.** In general, interactions with peers have been linked to a number of positive academic and social outcomes in higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). With regard to Latina/o collegians, scholars have noted that peer interactions play a critical role in students’ initial transition and subsequent adjustment to college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al., 1996; Kim, 2009). For instance, Garriott et al. (2010) found that Latina/o students had an easier time adjusting at predominantly White institutions if they were able to establish caring and trusting relationships with peers. Similarly, Schneider and Ward (2003) reported that general peer support was a strong predictor of social adjustment and institutional attachment. Thus, peer interactions play an integral role in Latina/o students’ transition to college.

Some scholars assert that the relationships Latinas/os establish with peers are more important than faculty/staff interactions as well as familial ties (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006; Rodriguez, et al., 2003). Research confirms that interactions with peers, particularly other Latina/o college students, facilitates the acquisition of skills needed to persist and allows students to make sense of the physical, social, and academic/cognitive environment (Attinasi, 1989; Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004; Hernandez, 2000; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al., 1996). In fact, Gloria et al. (2005) found that Latina/o students’ perception of peer support was one of the strongest predictors of persistence. Collectively, these studies confirm that the retention of racial/ethnic minority college students often “hinges upon there being a sufficiently large number of similar types of students on campus with whom to form a viable community” (Tinto, 1993, p. 60). Unfortunately, the opportunities Latina/o collegians have to establish meaningful connections with other Latino students is often diminished by their
underrepresentation on college campuses, limited awareness of organizations that serve racial/ethnic minority students, and other competing academic and social commitments (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Padilla, et al., 1997).

**Faculty interactions.** Although the extant literature on student-faculty interactions among Latinas/os is limited, researchers consistently report that these relationships play an important role in the experiences of college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). The degree to which these relationships foster Latina/o student’s academic achievement is equally sparse; however, Anaya and Cole (2001) found that Latina/o students’ interactions with faculty increased their college grades. Their analysis revealed that students’ academic performance was positively associated with the perceived quality of personal and academically-related interactions. In an earlier study, Thile and Matt (1995) observed that racial/ethnic minority students who participated in the Ethnic Mentor Undergraduate Program (EMUP) were less likely to drop out of college and earned grades that exceeded the university-wide average.

Latina/o student-faculty interactions have also been linked to other outcomes associated with higher education. Santos and Reigades (2002) noted that Latina/o students’ participation in a Faculty Mentoring Program contributed positively to their self-efficacy, articulation of academic goals, and increased concern regarding academic commitments. Students perceived that faculty who provided emotional support, access to resources, and other relevant information facilitated their adjustment to campus. This is not surprising given that earlier studies indicate Latina/o student’s sense of belonging is facilitated by student-faculty interactions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Similarly, Hernandez (2000) observed that Latinas/os students who perceived faculty and staff to be supportive contributed positively to their retention. The degree to which
interactions between faculty and staff differed was not reported; however, Hernandez suggests that Latina/o students acquired similar information and resources from both groups.

Despite the benefits Latinas/os students derive from their interactions with faculty and staff, studies have shown that racial/ethnic minority students do encounter obstacles establishing connections with faculty in college. Researchers consistently report that racial/ethnic minority collegians are often subjected to prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination from faculty (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). It should be noted that even racial/ethnic minorities who excel academically are subjected to similar scrutiny and are less likely to have positive interactions with faculty (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Hurtado, 1994). While Latinos are recognized as the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the United States, they remain grossly underrepresented among full-time faculty and administrators at postsecondary institutions. In 2005, Hispanics constituted less than 5 percent of all full-time faculty and administrators within higher education (Ryu, 2008). Thus, Latina/o students are likely to enter colleges and universities that afford them with limited opportunities to establish connections with faculty and administrators who not only share their ethnic identity, but can also serve as mentors, advocates, and role models.

Cultural Factors

**Familismo.** Familismo [familism] is a central and enduring value within the Latino community. This value manifests in the strong ties Latinas/os maintain with members of their immediate and extended family from generation-to-generation and is accompanied by feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, VanOss Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Sy & Romero (2008) add “familismo requires an individual family member to put the needs of the family first, even if it means
making personal sacrifices” (p. 214). This deviates from the values of individuality and independence espoused within U.S. culture and can have profound implications on the behaviors, educational decisions, and professional aspirations of Latinas/os (Fuligni, Witkow & Garcia, as cited in Sy & Romero, 2008).

Sy and Romero (2008) contend that studies examining the influence of familismo on Latinas/os’ educational experiences focus primarily on perceived obligations that are often fulfilled by adolescents. These obligations include serving as a translator for parents, helping with household chores, caring for younger siblings, contributing financially to the home, and spending time with family members (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Sy, 2006; Tseng, 2004). It should be noted that familismo serves to define gender roles and expectations regarding the way in which Latinas and Latinos fulfill their familial obligations.

While Latinas/os receive similar messages regarding the importance of family, Latino males are often raised with a different set of expectations that include the provision and protection of their family (Morales, as cited in Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). According to Saenz & Ponjuan (2009), “The expectations to work, contribute to the family, and assume traditional gender roles remain a predominant characteristic of the young Latino male experience” (p. 215). In fact, research indicates that Latino males who immigrate to the U.S. during late adolescence are less likely to attend college in favor of pursuing employment (Fry, 2005). Thus, a considerable number of Latino males succumb to the social, familial, and economic pressures they encounter in the U.S. and vanish from the educational pipeline prior to college.

While these findings suggest that Latino parents place a considerable burden on their children, research indicates that familismo also plays an important role in supporting the educational attainment and achievement of Latina/o collegians (Ceballo, 2004; Hernandez,
Drawing on in-depth interviews conducted with 10 Latinas/os, Hernandez (2000) found that parents provided their children with support and encouragement, but more importantly, placed pressure on them regarding the importance of doing well in school. Additionally, researchers consistently report that familial attitudes serve as a critical source of social capital that facilitates Latina/o students’ academic success (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994; Yosso, 2005). Collectively, these findings indicate that maintaining strong family ties is central to supporting the adjustment, persistence, and achievement of Latina/o college students. Unfortunately, research indicates that postsecondary institutions have yet to embrace practices that purposefully engage Latino parents in their children’s education (Lopez & Vázquez, 2006).

Latinas/os remain grossly underrepresented at four-year colleges and universities across the United States. This is particularly true for Latino males who “vanish” as they progress through the P-12 educational pipeline (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The small percentages of Latinas/os who enroll in college are more likely to attend less selective institutions due, in part, to inadequate educational experiences and limited resources needed to facilitate the college-choice process (Muniz, 2006). Unfortunately, Latinas/os who successfully matriculate to four-year colleges or universities may not receive adequate support to overcome psychological, social, and cultural stressors they experience at predominantly White institutions.

**Postsecondary Educational Experiences of Men**

Men are not typically characterized as an “at-risk” population within higher education. However, several recent publications draw attention to disconcerting trends related to the experiences of college men including decreased levels of engagement, substance abuse, and violence (Harper & Harris, 2010; Kellom, 2004). The following section draws attention to the role masculinity and gender role conflict plays in facilitating less favorable educational outcomes.
among college men. Additionally, discourse regarding Latino hypermasculinity is addressed in this section.

The Masculation of College Men

The recognition of masculinity as a social construction is central to understanding the gendered experiences of college men. According to Mason-Grant (2000), masculinity encapsulates a “range of physical, behavioral, and attitudinal qualities that characterize what it means to be a ‘man’ in any given historical or cultural context” (p. 322). Men are not born with an awareness of how to express their masculinities; rather, they receive social messages about manhood and actively construct their masculinities over the course of a lifetime.

Although Mason-Grant’s (2000) conceptualization of masculinity emphasizes how gender is socially-constructed and performed, she does not acknowledge variations in masculinity articulated by Kimmel and Messner (2001b). Considering that gender intersects with other identities (i.e. race, social class, etc.), Kimmel and Messner (2001a) argue that a hierarchy of masculinity exists, privileging some men over others. Whereas the prevalence of racism situates White men at the “top of the masculine hierarchy,” racial/ethnic minority men are often marginalized in the United States. This may help to explain why racial/ethnic minority men, particularly African American and Latinos, achieve less favorable educational outcomes (King, 2000; Mead, 2006; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). It should be noted that several socializing agents (i.e. families, peers, and schools) have an enduring effect on the masculine identities of boys (Harper & Harris, 2010; Kimmel & Messner, 2001b).

Familial influences. Research indicates that parents play a central role in the social construction of their children’s identity. Early studies indicate that parents are more likely to engage males in aggressive play, discourage the display of emotions, and physically punish them
for inappropriate behaviors (Hartley; Hyde & Linn; Rabinowitz & Cochran, as cited in Ludeman, 2004). MacNaughton (2006) asserts that parents also role model what is expected of children regarding the performance of gender roles, communicating expectations verbally and non-verbally. Girls are domesticated and learn that it is okay to cry; whereas, little boys are taught that they must be tough and strong like their fathers. Harper (2004) writes, “No father wants his son to grow up being a “pussy,” “sissy,” “punk,” or “softy”—terms commonly associated with boys and men who fail to live up to the traditional standards of masculinity in America” (p. 92). This socialization process can have a detrimental effect on boys and manifest in maladaptive behavioral patterns young men display as they progress through the educational pipeline. The extant literature on college men draws attention to several disturbing trends including, but not limited to substance abuse, violence, and emotional problems (Ludeman, 2004).

Peer influences. The relationships students establish with peers exert considerable influence on the gender identity of males. In fact, Harris (2006) argues that male peer influences appear to be more intense than parental influences. Similarly, Davis (2002) reported male college students were conscious of gendered rules in determining how and when they communicated with peers. When interacting with other males, participants indicated that the use of humor and “put-downs” dominated their conversations. Participants described intimate conversations they had with male peers; however, these interactions were infrequent and only took place in one-to-one situations. Davis asserts that fear of femininity placed significant constraints on their interactions with peers, particularly other male college students. The restrictions described by Harris and Davis appear to be deeply rooted in what Pollack (2000) referred to as a “boy code” that forces males to repress their emotions and conform to the expectations of their peers. In many instances, young males express attitudes and engage in behaviors that are not only
incongruent with their self-perceptions, but can lead to depression, helplessness, and failure in school.

**Institutional influences.** Harris III and Harper (2008) write, “Gender-related lessons and messages that are consumed by boys in schools are remarkably consistent with those reinforced within families and peer groups” (p. 28). Swain (2005) refers to these as masculinizing practices which are deeply embedded in the culture of schools and reflected in management, policy and organizational practices, curriculum, teacher- and pupil-pupil relations, as well as athletics. As previously mentioned Latino and African American males are often diagnosed with learning disabilities and placed in special education programs (Mead, 2006; Mortenson, 1999). While these practices can have a debilitating effect on young racial/ethnic minority men, in particular, the general consensus is that educators fail to consider the unique learning needs of boys which may explain why they are more likely to be held back in primary school (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Mead, 2006). It should be noted that masculinizing practices manifest beyond the classroom in educational settings.

Research indicates that participation is sports reinforce masculinities (Harris, 1995; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Although participation in athletics can foster peer interactions, these activities do not necessarily contribute to student’s academic success (Swain, 2005). Empirical research published over the last three decades consistently indicates that student-athletes, particularly racial/ethnic minorities and undergraduate men engaged in major revenue generating sports do not achieve equitable educational outcomes in college (Beamon, 2008; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Harper, 2009b; Horton, 2009). As noted by Maloney and McCormick (1993), the “exploitation of athletes extends beyond the sidelines and into the classroom” (p. 555). Men
receive conflicting messages regarding the importance of athleticism that comes at the expense of their academic achievement.

**Gender Role Conflict**

The process by which males are socialized into men can have an adverse effect on their development and increase gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1990; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 2005). By definition, gender role conflict is a “psychological state occurring when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles learned through socialization, result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others and self” (O'Neil, 1990, p. 25). Males are taught at a very early age to reject attitudes, values, and behaviors that are deemed feminine within society. The fear of femininity and adoption of what O’Neil (1981a, 1981b) refers to as a masculine mystique or optimal masculine identity can have detrimental effects on males.

Several problematic behavioral patterns emanate from men’s fear of femininity. O’Neil et al.’s (2005) gender-role scale led to the identification of six problematic behaviors: 1) Restrictive emotionality; 2) Homophobia; 3) Socialized control, power, and competition; 4) Restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior; 5) Obsession with achievement; and 6) Health care problems. As it pertains to college men, research indicates that gender role conflict (GRC) can lead to a host of negative outcomes including increased stress, anxiety and depression, substance abuse and addiction, disregard for health, and other self-destructive behaviors (Ludeman, 2004). Unfortunately, young men are less likely to seek supportive services to address these problematic behaviors which can hinder their progress in school (Good & Wood, 1995; O'Neil & Lujan, 2009).
**Restrictive emotionality.** College men may refrain from disclosing their feelings or displaying their emotions because these actions are often associated with femininity. As noted by O’Neil (1981a), “Restrictive emotionality implies that men will have difficulty expressing feelings openly, giving up emotional control, and being vulnerable to self and others” (p. 206). Although O’Neil suggests that males may encounter difficulty expressing their emotions, he also notes that repressed emotions can manifest as displays of anger and hostility directed at others. Restrictive emotionality can hinder the interpersonal relationships and interactions men have with their peers. Thus, college men are less likely to derive positive cognitive, intellectual, and educational outcomes associated with peer interactions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).

The difficulties men encounter in establishing positive interpersonal relationships has been documented by several scholars. Davis (2002) found that men adopted distinct communication patterns with male and female peers. Although participants in this study were able to establish relatively positive relationships with peers, Davis noted that males worried about other men perceiving them as feminine and expressed concern for their safety on campus. Participants reported having intimate conversations with male peers in one-to-one settings; however, humorous comments and insults were often exchanged in larger group settings with men. Similar patterns have been observed with regard to men’s help-seeking behaviors (Good & Wood, 1995). In general, men engage in riskier behaviors (i.e., substance use, fighting, etc.) than women and are less likely to adopt healthy coping strategies in college (Stanton & Courtenay, 2003).

**Socialized control, power, and competition.** Men’s obsession with control, power, and competition emanate from their fear of femininity. O’Neil (1981a) summarizes this behavioral pattern as follows:
Control implies to regulate, restrain, and have others or situations under one’s command. Power is to obtain authority, influence, or ascendancy over others. Competition is an act of striving against others to gain something or the comparison of self with others to establish one’s superiority in a given situation (p. 207).

Men are socialized, primarily by other men, at an early age to exercise control over their environment and compete for power among their peers. O’Neil argues that the struggle for power and control can foster dysfunctional relationships between men. As it pertains to male undergraduates, numerous studies have been published on students’ interpersonal relationship in Greek-letter organizations (i.e., fraternities). Research indicates that men derive positive outcomes from their membership in fraternities (Guardia & Evans, 2008; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2001; Pike, 2003); however, scholars have also identified several disturbing trends related to student engagement in Greek-letter organizations including substance use and abuse (Capraro, 2000), sexual assault (Boswell & Spade, 1996), and hazing (Nuwer, 2004). Although hazing is intended to serve as a ‘rite of passage’ for young men (Hollmann, 2002), researchers have noted that these practices facilitate the development of hyper-masculine identities and result in less favorable academic outcomes including decreased academic performance and higher rates of attrition during college (Grove & Wasserman, 2004; Jones, 2004).

**Obsession with achievement.** This pattern is characterized by men’s relentless pursuit of achievement, preoccupation with work, and accomplishments which serve to substantiate their masculinity. In contrast, femininity is equated with cooperation, communality, and lack of achievement, power and influence. O’Neil (1981a) writes, “Although these characteristics may seem exaggerated, they can twist men’s lives into combative, competitive struggles that leave little time or energy for relaxation, pleasure, and a healthy non-work life” (p. 208). Under these
circumstances, men may experience greater psychological distress and physical disorders, but are less likely to seek support. To date, little empirical research has been conducted on men’s obsession with achievement in college.

**Health care problems.** Men are socialized to ignore physical symptoms associated with illness or more severe health conditions (O’Neil, 1981a). Fear of femininity prevents many men from sharing health-related concerns and adopting health conscious behavioral patterns. O’Neil provides a summary of “feminine characteristics men avoid, including: expressing emotions and pain, asking for help, paying attention to diet and alcohol consumption, self-care, dependence, and being touched” (p. 209). Unfortunately, college men are plagued by similar health-related concerns.

Substance abuse, particularly alcohol, leads to a host of negative outcomes among college men. As previously mentioned, students who binge drink are more likely to engage in risky and life-threatening activities including irresponsible sexual activity, physical or sexual assault, and driving intoxicated. Rothman, Dejong, Palfai, and Saitz (2008) found that students who began consuming alcohol during their first year of college earned lower grades and were more likely to get into trouble for missing school. Similarly, research indicates that students who abuse alcohol generally possess poor study habits and earn lower grades in college (dePyssler, Williams, & Windle, 2005; McAloon, 1994; White, Jamieson-Drake, & Swartzweider, 2002).

Men are also more likely to engage in violent behavior that places their lives in jeopardy. Oquenda et al. (2001) found that annual rates of suicide for White, Black, and Latino men (68%) were significantly higher than women (13%); however, rates among Latino males (33.6%) were higher than Whites (22.5%) and Black (11.9%) males. Similarly, Davis (2002) found that boys were four times more likely than girls to take their own lives. Considering that suicide is the third
leading cause of death among males age fifteen to twenty-four, the development of college programs that effectively respond to the health care needs of men is necessary.

Gender role conflict research presents a very disconcerting portrait of men within higher education. Although these studies illuminate how men are socialized and respond to gender role conflict, researchers offer few examples of men who adopt healthy coping strategies in response to these stressors (Harper & Harris, 2010). Essentially, young men seeking to make the most of their college experience are relegated to modeling negative behaviors displayed by male peers including substance abuse, sexual violence and assault, and a lack of help-seeking. Unfortunately, the extant literature published on Latino men draws attention to equally problematic behaviors.

**Conceptualizations of Latino Masculinity**

Since the 1960s, social scientists within anthropology, psychology, and sociology have utilized the term *machismo* to characterize masculine gender roles specific to Latinos (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). Although ample literature exists on this topic, scholars have yet to reach consensus regarding a definition of machismo. According to Saez, Casado, and Wade (2009), “Some conceptions of machismo emphasize exaggerated forms of male gender role behaviors such as heavy drinking, toughness, aggressiveness, risk taking, and virility… while alternative definitions for machismo have been proposed that endorse machismo as a culturally valued and desirable ideal of courage, honor, virility, physical strength, and as representing a protector, provider, and authority figure” (p. 117). Despite these varying conceptualizations, scholars maintain that empirical investigations tend to be guided by negative conceptualizations of machismo (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Saez, et al., 2009; Torres, et al., 2002).
The masculine behavioral patterns displayed by racial/ethnic minority men, particularly Latinos, are often characterized as extreme forms of traditional masculinity ideology or hypermasculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). Although researchers speculate that hypermasculinity places Latino men at greater risk of engaging in harmful behaviors, the extant literature suggests that these maladaptive behavioral patterns are no different from those described by O’Neil (1981a, 1981b; 1995; 2005). An early study conducted by Mosher and Anderson (1984) illuminated three defining characteristics of the macho personality constellation: 1) callous sexuality toward women, 2) a perception of violence as manly, and 3) the view that danger is exciting. Similarly, machismo has been associated with aggressiveness, physical and sexual violence, as well as substance abuse (Caetano & Medina-Mora; Jakupcak et al.; Neff et al.; Parrot et al., as cited in Saez et al., 2009). Beyond contributing to the overrepresentation of men among campus judicial offenders (Harper, Harris III, & Mmeje, 2005), studies confirm that these behavioral patterns can decrease students’ academic achievement and increase rates of attrition (Grove & Wasserman, 2004; Pike, 2003).

In response to discourse on racial/ethnic minority hypermasculinity, Latina/o scholars have offered alternative perspectives that seek to illuminate positive dimensions of machismo (De La Cancela; Mirandé; Torres, as cited in Saez et al., 2009). Torres et al. (2002) asserts that alternate conceptualizations of Latino masculinity ideology “requires men to be family oriented, hardworking, brave, proud, and interested in the welfare and honor of their loved ones, including providing for, protecting, and defending their families and less fortunate members of society” (p. 165). Furthermore, positive dimensions of machismo can be reflected in Latino men exercising greater autonomy, being assertive, taking risk, and having forceful personality. According to
Torres et al. (2002), the latter dimensions operate in conjunction with positive displays of emotion (i.e., caring, respect, etc.).

Collectively, the aforementioned studies suggest that Latino men adopt both positive and negative behavioral patterns associated with machismo. The acknowledgement of positive conceptualizations of Latino masculinity is not intended to dismiss how these behaviors can be harmful to self and others. However, research is needed to address how behaviors that may perceived as ‘negative’ may facilitate better educational outcomes among Latino male college students. Considering the psychosociocultural challenges Latinas/os experience at predominantly White institutions (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, et al., 2005; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000), Latino men who exercise independence and are assertive may be more likely to persist when faced with opposition (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas, 2009).

Postsecondary Educational Experiences of Latino Men

It is assumed that Latinas and Latinos experience similar challenges within higher education; however, there is a dearth in empirical research to support this claim (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria, et al., 2009; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Much of what we know about racial/ethnic minority males within higher education is based on empirical research that addresses the experiences of African American collegians (Bonner II, 2001a, 2001b, 2010; Harper, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hrabowski III, 1991; Hrabowski III, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Maton, et al., 1998). In contrast, discourse regarding the unique experiences of Latino male college students has yielded only five empirically grounded studies within the last two decades (Gloria, et al., 2009; Gonzalez, 2002; Morales, 2008c; Reyes III, 2006; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009).
Few studies focus exclusively on the undergraduate experiences of Latino males at postsecondary institutions. Gonzalez (2002) conducted a two-year study on Chicano\textsuperscript{4} males attending a predominantly White university to identify elements of the campus culture that hindered and facilitated their persistence. Drawing on multiple sources of qualitative data, Gonzalez identified “three cultural systems of asymmetrical representations” that influenced participant’s experience on campus including the social, physical, and epistemological world. The social world encompasses the racial/ethnic composition of students, faculty, and staff on campus; the political power these groups and subgroups possess; and the languages that are spoken on campus. Gonzalez states that the campus’ buildings, sculptures, artwork, and other symbols including posters, banners, and flyers represent the physical world. He notes that the epistemological world consists of “the knowledge that exists and is exchanged on campus, both inside and outside of the formal class environment” (p. 207). Collectively, these systems reinforced cultural representations of the dominant community and simultaneously marginalized Chicano students on campus. This was reflected in students’ reports regarding the underrepresentation of Chicanas/os on campus, the absence of affirming cultural spaces, and limited opportunities for all students to learn about Chicano culture.

In the Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education, Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009) note various sociocultural and structural forces contribute to the underrepresentation of Latinos at postsecondary institutions. Hall and Rowan (2001) observed that campus environments marked by racism and a lack of diversity racism were problematic for Hispanic males; however, they noted that successful students possessed “exceptional skill and personal qualities” (p. 572). Similarly, Gonzalez (2002) found that Chicano males engaged in acts of resistance to preserve

\textsuperscript{4} The term Chicano is used as a “self-identification label that describes the cultural, political, and geographic identities of individuals of Mexican descent who are partially or primarily raised in the United States” (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 216).
their culture as they navigated various cultural systems in college. He notes that students received “cultural nourishment” through the maintenance of relationships with other Chicanos (i.e. family, peers, faculty), displaying cultural artifacts (i.e. flags, posters, etc.), and completing courses in Chicano Studies. Gonzalez maintains that the aforementioned actions should not be considered acts of “self-segregation or balkanization, but rather as an act of cultural replenishment” (pp. 214-215). In fact, a recent study published by Gloria et al. (2009) indicates that cultural congruence and emotion-focused coping (i.e., social and emotional support) were the most predictive of psychological well-being among Latino males.

Consistent with Gonzalez’s findings regarding Latino male’s social world, research indicates that relationships students forge with peers and faculty mentors can foster positive educational outcomes (Morales, 2008c; Reyes III, 2006; Stolar & Cowles, 1992). Stolar and Cowles (1992) analysis on twenty Black and Hispanic male participants in Cumberland County College’s mentoring program revealed that this initiative facilitated students’ college-choice process, encouraging more than half of the participants to attend Cumberland. More recently, Morales (2008c) observed that Dominican males derived social capital from relationships they forged with faculty mentors at a comprehensive public university. Mentors provided students with ‘inside information’ related to academic and professional matters. Students reported that mentors often served as approvers who validated, legitimized, and facilitated their educational plans. Mentors also engaged students in dialogue regarding their immigration status and pursuit of the ‘American Dream.’ These conversations appeared to enhance feelings of pride among participants, but more importantly, contributed to their academic achievement.

The extant literature published on Latino male college students communicates very little about factors that facilitate academic achievement. Although Morales (2008c) found that
relationships with faculty mentors play a critical role in student’s academic progression, Gonzalez’s (2002) study suggest that this process may be dependent on Latinos successfully negotiating three interrelated cultural systems. With exception to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009) and Reyes III (2006), it should be noted that the remaining studies only present descriptive data regarding the experiences of Latino males (Hall & Rowan, 2001; Stolar & Cowles, 1992). While these studies draw attention to factors that may enhance recruitment and retention practices, they offer few insights on how to inspire academic achievement among Latino male collegians.

Racial/Ethnic Minority Achievers at Postsecondary Institutions

Discourse regarding the experiences of racial/ethnic minority achievers at postsecondary institutions has increased over the last two decades (Bonner II, 2001a; Freeman, 1999; Fries-Britt, 1994; Griffin, 2006; Harper, 2003; Strayhorn, 2008). Although the majority of these studies focus on African American collegians (Fries-Britt, 1998, 2002; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Griffin, 2006; Harper, 2005; Maton, Hrabowski III, & Schmitt, 2000), several scholars have devoted considerable attention to the academic and social experiences of Latina/o achievers in college (Gándara, 1982, 1993a, 1995; Rivas-Drake, 2008; Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008, 2009). Despite the proliferation of studies on high-achieving African American male college students (Bonner II, 2001a; Harper, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hrabowski III, 1991; Hrabowski III, et al., 1998; Maton, et al., 1998), the experiences of Latino achievers have not been acknowledged within higher education.

Scholars argue that racial/ethnic minority achievers do not receive adequate support from colleges and universities, particularly predominantly White institutions (Bonner II, 2001a; Freeman, 1999; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001, 2002; Gándara, 2005). Fries-Britt (2002) states, “Because high achievers tend to do well on standardized tests and may be enrolled in honors
programs, we assume that they have fewer problems and needs” (p. 4). This is, irrevocably, untrue. Numerous studies conducted on racial/ethnic minority achievers highlight that these students encounter adversity which may decrease their academic achievement and hinder their progression in college (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Hurtado, 1994; Strayhorn, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006). The following section explores nearly two decades of research on racial/ethnic minority achievers and highlights the challenges, unique behavioral patterns, and mechanisms of support these students draw on to achieve their educational goals at postsecondary institutions.

Challenges & Behavioral Patterns

Similar to other underrepresented student populations, racial/ethnic minority achievers often experience prejudicial treatment and other forms of discrimination at predominantly White institutions (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001, 2002; Hurtado, 1994). Although research indicates that racial/ethnic minority students are adversely affected by unwelcoming and hostile campus climates (Harper & Hurtado, 2007), studies have shown that high achievers respond to these challenges in a manner that is distinct from their same-race peers (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper, 2006; Hurtado, 1994; Strayhorn, 2008). The aforementioned challenges and behavioral challenges are explored in the following section.

Stereotypes and the Proving Process. According to Fries Britt and Griffin (2007), African Americans are often “portrayed and stereotyped as criminals, gang members, athletes, and entertainers, but rarely as academics” (p. 510). This should not come as a surprise given that the stereotypes are reinforced by media, prevalent within educational institutions, and remain uncontested, or worse, are internalized by Black students. Several studies conducted on high-
achieving African American collegians revealed that these students were forced to contend with stereotypes held by Whites and/or internalized by African Americans (Fries-Britt, 1995, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001).

Research indicates that stereotypes held by faculty and peers can divert racial/ethnic minority achievers from engaging in more intellectually purposeful activities. Instead of focusing on academic tasks, studies have shown that high-achieving African American collegians spend a considerable amount of time demonstrating their intellectual competence to White faculty and students (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Strayhorn, 2008). Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) indicate that Black achievers engage in the ‘proving process’ to debunk myths held about African Americans. Participants in their study exhibited a variety of behaviors deemed incongruent with White stereotypes of the African American community such as singing Mozart in Latin or capitalizing on opportunities to educate their White peers in classrooms (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). While these acts of resistance help to dispel myths and stereotypes held about African Americans, they can also place a considerable burden on Black achievers and inadvertently direct attention from their academic endeavors (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Strayhorn, 2008).

Earlier studies have consistently shown that stereotypes can hamper the academic performance of racial/ethnic college minority students. Steele (1997) and colleagues (Steele & Aronson, 1995, 1998) investigation of this phenomena reveal that the mere threat of a stereotype can erode African American students self-concept, motivation, and performance on standardized test. Steele (1997) defined a stereotype threat as:

The social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies. This predicament threatens
one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype… It is a situational threat—a threat in the air (p. 614).

Although the aforementioned studies suggest that the mere threat of a stereotype can foster less favorable educational outcomes, Strayhorn (2008) found that high-achieving Black collegian’s grade point averages were not adversely affected by this ‘burden of proof.’ While this finding appears to contradict those reported by Steele (1997), they do not necessarily counter previous studies on racial/ethnic minority achievers (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). In fact, Strayhorn contends that additional research is needed to determine the extent to which this ‘burden of proof’ affects other outcomes including racial/ethnic minority achievers’ sense of belonging, confidence, and satisfaction with college. This study will explore the degree to which Latino males experience similar burdens; although, emphasis will be placed on identifying factors that facilitate academic resilience.

**Campus Climate.** The extant literature on campus climate draws attention to an interesting paradox regarding the experiences of racial/ethnic minority achievers. Hurtado (1994) found that Latinas/os who sought to promote racial understanding were more likely to report experiences with discrimination at selective colleges and universities. She asserts that Latina/o achievers “do not retreat when faced directly with discrimination, but may actually turn a negative experience into a goal for social change” (p. 33). While the majority of students (75%) reported having positive interracial interactions, more than one-quarter indicated that the campus climate was marked by racial conflict and a lack of trust between racial/ethnic minority students and institutional administrators. Additionally, Hurtado reported that a significant percentage of
Latin/o achievers did not feel like they "fit in" on campus (29%) and believed their peers perceived them as special admits (43%).

Subsequent studies conducted by Hurtado and colleagues provide a more nuanced understanding of how the campus climate affects high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students. A study conducted Hurtado et al. (1996) explored whether Latina/o students’ transition to college influenced their academic, social, and personal adjustment as well as their sense of belonging. Their analysis revealed that perceptions of a hostile climate were negatively associated with all adjustment outcomes; however, Latinas/os who perceived faculty and administrators to be student-centered were more likely to make the academic adjustment during their sophomore year. A follow-up study conducted by Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that Latina/o sophomores who perceived the campus climate to be hostile were less likely to experience a sense of belonging during their junior year of college. Collectively, the aforementioned studies indicate that institutional characteristics rather than individual characteristics determined the degree to which Latina/o achievers experience difficulty in making the transition to college.

**Isolation, Camouflaging, and Adaptation.** Early studies on Black achievers suggest that these students experience difficulty interacting with other African American collegians. This, in part, is influenced by the isolation high achievers experience in secondary schools and manifests during college as a dual dilemma – segregation among Whites and separation from African Americans. Fries-Britt (1995, 1998) observed that Black achievers were often referred to as “nerds” by their African American peers. Researchers assert that displaying an interest in academic or other intellectual activities is a characteristic often associated with White students (Ogbu, 2004). As a consequence, Black achievers are likely to experience ridicule from same-race peers who perceive them to be ‘acting White.’ According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986) the
acting White phenomenon emerged, partly, because Whites refused to acknowledge the intellectual abilities of African Americans who internalized these racist ideologies and “began to define academic success as white people’s prerogative, and began to discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving” (p. 177). Thus, Black achievers are faced with the challenge of reconciling their intellectual and racial identity and may conceal or downplay their academic abilities to preserve relationships with same-race peers. This process is referred to as camouflaging and poses significant social, emotional, and psychological challenges to racial/ethnic minority students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Grantham & Ford, 2003).

It is important to note that while the aforementioned studies provide evidence in support of Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) hypothesis, several scholars argue that African Americans place a high premium on education evidenced by their positive self-concept, high aspirations, and internalized racial identity (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey; Cook & Ludwig; Ferguson; Spencer, Noll, Stolzfus, & Harpalani; as cited in Harper, 2006). Harper’s (2003, 2006, 2008) research on Black achievers attending six highly selective postsecondary institutions revealed that students had not internalized racist ideologies, nor were they ostracized by African Americans for engaging in any educationally purposeful activities. On the contrary, Black achievers were acknowledged as positive role models, competent student leaders, and champions of the African American community.

Although African American and Latinas/os are presumed to share history of social exclusion and marginalization, Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2008) contend that immigration plays a unique role in the experiences of Latinas/os. Rivas-Drake and Mooney’s (2008, 2009) research on Latina/o achievers enrolled at 28 highly selective postsecondary institutions adds a layer of complexity regarding the academic and social experiences of racial/ethnic minority achievers.

According to Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2008), *assimilators* did not believe their minority status limited access to opportunities. In general, these students did not perceive individual or societal barriers to mobility and believed that educated minorities were able to “get ahead” (p. 13). Similarly, *accommodators* believed that Latinos possessed equal access to opportunities for social mobility. However, they believed this was a function of individual effort and preparation. Accommodators achieved the least favorable academic and social outcomes during their freshmen year; however, the optimism espoused by these students led to increases in academic performance that exceeded resisters by their sophomore year. Finally, *resisters* perceived the most inequities in opportunities and were more likely to report prejudice than their Latino peers. Contrary to accommodators, they believed encounters with prejudice and discrimination fostered less favorable outcomes for even the most qualified Latinos. Rivas-Drake and Mooney noted that resisters were “most clearly distinguished by their skepticism about equal opportunity, perceptions of job discrimination and perceived social distance from Whites” (p. 13). Although resisters earned the lowest GPAs, Rivas-Drake and Mooney contend that this is not necessarily a function of prejudicial experiences at selective colleges and universities. Latino students’ minority status influenced their perceptions of inequality and blocked opportunity.

In a follow-up study, Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2009) found that engagement in extracurricular experiences varied by students' orientation. While students devoted approximately eleven hours per week to extracurricular activities during their first year, resisters appeared to increase their level engagement in campus activities outside of the classroom during
their college career. Rivas-Drake and Mooney theorized that resisters may have been "socialized to negotiate their minority status in ways that compelled them to engage in socially responsible ways on campus" (p. 649). This socialization process may lead resisters to invest time in educationally purposeful activities that are aligned with the values, needs, and interests of the Latino community. This latter finding appears to be consistent with previous research conducted on racial/ethnic minority achievers at postsecondary institutions (Harper, 2003, 2006, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hurtado, 1994). Generally, Latina/o and African American achievers become engaged in co-curricular activities that provide access to other racial/ethnic minority peers, address the needs of underrepresented students, and enhance the institutional climate for diversity.

**Mechanisms of Support**

While the aforementioned studies reveal that racial/ethnic minority achievers encounter distinct obstacles and display unique behavioral patterns in response to these challenges, it is important to illuminate the mechanisms of support – individual attributes, affectional ties (i.e., parents, siblings, and extended family members), and environmental factors (i.e., peers, faculty and administrators) – that facilitate positive educational outcomes at postsecondary institutions.

**Individual Attributes.** Empirical studies present conflicting reports regarding the demographic profiles of racial/ethnic minority achievers. Clewell and Joy (1988) conducted one of the earliest studies on high-achieving Hispanic scholarship recipients and found that these students more closely resembled White students than Hispanics with regard to their socioeconomic background (i.e. parental income and education level). This is somewhat surprising given the median household income disparities between Hispanics ($20,359) and Whites ($29,574) in 1988 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Their analysis also revealed that high
achievers had an excellent command of the English language, and in several instances, reported being bilingual in English and Spanish. Furthermore, these students attended secondary schools that prepared them for the academic demands of college. On average, high-achieving Hispanics earned grades and SAT scores that exceeded both their White and Hispanic peers. Based on these findings, it should come as no surprise that high achievers encountered few challenges and excelled academically during the first year of college.

In contrast, Gándara (2005) highlights several disparities that persist between high-achieving Latinas/os and White students. Her mixed method analysis revealed that high-achieving Latinos in the Puente Project were more likely to be first-generation college students and were less affluent. In comparison to Whites (5%), approximately one quarter of the Latino students reported that their parents did not have a high school diploma or college degree. Gándara also noted that elevated levels of parental education and family income only benefited White students in maintaining their academic performance. Recognizing that White and Latino students entered postsecondary institutions with different resources, Gándara stressed that the needs of high-achieving Latino achievers should be considered on the “basis of potential achievement” and not on their previous achievement in schools (p. 19).

Despite variations in their demographic profiles, researchers conclude that racial/ethnic minority achievers are very ambitious, self-directed, and goal-oriented students (Bonner II, 2001a; Fries-Britt, 2000; Gándara, 1982, 1994; Gándara & Osugi, 1994; Griffin, 2006). Furthermore, Gándara (1995) noted that participants described themselves as “persistent and not the most intellectually capable of their ethnic peers” (p. 89). Although research suggests that the reconciliation of high-achieving African Americans intellectual and racial identity can present
challenges, studies indicate that these students have a relatively healthy self-concept (Bonner II, 2001a; Fries-Britt, 2000).

**Affectional ties.** Latino and African American families play a critical role in helping their children establish a positive self-concept (Gándara, 1995; Griffin, 2006). In *Preparing the Way*, Maton, Hrabowski, and Greif (1998) contend that raising high-achieving African American males requires a complex “tapestry of family processes and contexts” (p. 639). The authors identified several parenting practices that countered negative environmental influences and promoted students’ academic achievement. Parents displayed an inordinate amount of determination to ensure their children were academically successful by emphasizing the importance of education, setting high expectations, and maintaining their involvement in school activities. They also advocated to have their children placed in appropriate courses, provided assistance with homework assignments, and engaged their children in summer educational programs.

Similarly, research indicates that Latino families play a critical role in educational experiences of Latina/o achievers (Ceballo, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Zalaquett, 2006). For instance, Ceballo (2004) found that Latina/o achievers at Yale University attributed their success to parents who stressed the importance of education, expressed support of their educational endeavors nonverbally (i.e. hugs, excusing them from chores to complete school work, etc.), and facilitated their independence. Regarding the latter finding, Ceballo noted that “students received a ‘blank check’ regarding all academic matters” (p. 178). Given parent’s limited schooling experiences and language barriers, they entrusted their children to manage all aspects of their academic career. Gándara (1995) observed similar patterns among the high-achieving Latinas/os she interviewed, but added that the lack of parental involvement in schools actually helped
students. She argues that teachers were unable to form opinions about students’ potential based on parents’ limited English proficiency and educational background. Furthermore, Gándara found that aspirations of Latina/o achievers were enhanced by interactions with siblings who served as role models and counselors.

Environmental factors. Research indicates that student-faculty interactions are associated with a host of positive educational outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). One of the few longitudinal studies conducted by Freeman (1999) on twenty one high-achieving African Americans revealed that faculty mentors played an instrumental role in students initial adjustment to campus, but more importantly, encouraged students, broadened their thinking, and served as an extension of their family. While faculty mentors were supportive of students, Freeman noted that high achievers did not receive support to sustain these relationships. Bonner (2001a) observed similar interactions between two high achievers attending a predominantly White institution (PWI) and historically Black college (HBCU). Whereas the high-achieving HBCU student reported that faculty were more accessible and willing to meet outside of the classroom, the high achiever attending the PWI indicated that opportunities to interact with faculty were not as prevalent. Thus, the two high-achieving African Americans interviewed by Bonner had “uneven” academic and social experiences across institutions.

With exception Hurtado and colleagues, scholars have not adequately examined the interactions between Latina/o achievers and faculty at postsecondary institutions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al., 1996). Hurtado’s analysis revealed that students who perceived faculty and administrators to be supportive were less likely to report racial/ethnic tension and experiences with discrimination. However, a small percentage (15%) still indicated that faculty made inappropriate remarks about racial/ethnic minority collegians. Beyond Hurtado’s research,
three studies have addressed student-faculty relationships among Latina/o achievers in secondary schools and offer conflicting findings. Whereas participants in Ceballo’s (2004) study indicated that they were mentored by educators who challenged them intellectually, encouraged their engagement in extracurricular activities, and assisted them with college applications; Zalaquett (2006) reported that very few Latinas/os acquired adequate support from educators and other school personnel. Along these lines, Gándara (1995) found that high achievers were very critical of teachers and counselors, yet many of them commented that they served as positive role models. This was particularly true for Latinas, who despite displaying extraordinary academic potential, were less likely than Latino males to report being mentored.

Several researchers indicate that high-achieving racial/ethnic minority collegians experience greater difficulty establishing supportive peer networks at predominantly White institutions (Bonner II, 2001a; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). As indicated earlier, Latina/o and African American students are more likely to experience feelings of isolation and encounter discrimination at PWIs. However, Lopez (2005) notes that these experiences lead Latina/o achievers to establish supportive networks within their own racial/ethnic groups. These relationships allow Latinas/os to become socially integrated at the institution, but can lead to other equally important educational outcomes.

Harper’s (Harper, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008) research on high-achieving African American males at six public institutions draws attention to the importance of student engagement in co-curricular experiences. Harper (2008) found that older African American males often reached out to their peers during the first year of college to inform them about meaningful co-curricular experiences and to personally introduce them to key administrators and prominent faculty members. Furthermore, the relationships Black achievers established with other high-achieving
African American males suggest that same-race peers provide support and validation that "significantly enhanced the quality of their experiences as high achievers in predominantly White learning environments" (Harper, 2006, p. 347). Participants indicated that their peers supported them in securing highly sought after leadership positions in organizations that served both the African American and university community. However, Black achievers devoted a substantial amount of time to addressing issues pertinent to African Americans. These experiences were central to facilitating interactions between Black achievers and other racial/ethnic minority students.

In general, the literature on racial/ethnic minority achievers draws attention to several themes. Scholars have noted that these students often contend with negative stereotypes held about racial/ethnic minorities and experience isolation among their peers. Racial/ethnic minority achievers also exhibit distinct behavioral patterns in response to these challenges. On the one hand, high achievers conceal their academic abilities from their racial/ethnic minority peers. On the other hand, Latina/o and Black achievers also experience pressure and feel they must prove their intellectual competence among Whites. Finally, the growing body of literature on racial/ethnic minority achievers draws attention to several mechanisms of support that facilitate their academic and social transition in college including individual attributes, affectional ties, and external support systems.

Although the aforementioned studies present a relatively consistent narrative regarding the experiences of racial/ethnic minority achievers at postsecondary institutions, there are several limitations to this relatively small corpus of research. First, the majority of these studies do not address the experiences of Latino achievers. Scholars that focus exclusively on males only address the experiences African Americans at postsecondary institutions (Bonner II, 2001a;
Harper, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hrabowski III, 1991; Hrabowski III, et al., 1998; Maton, et al., 1998). Secondly, with the exception of Griffin (2006) and Harper (2003), studies conducted on Black achievers draw on uni-dimensional frameworks that do not adequately capture the myriad factors that contribute to students’ academic success. Finally, conceptualizations of high achievement among racial/ethnic minority students vary considerably based on grades (Bonner II, 2001a; Hurtado, 1994), participation in rigorous academic programs or attendance at highly selective institutions (Ceballo, 2004; Fries-Britt, 1998; Hrabowski III, 1991; Rivas-Drake, 2008), and the completion of advanced degrees (Gándara, 1995). This study draws on a multi-dimensional framework to explore how Latino males conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement at a selective, predominantly White institution.

**Summary of Reviewed Literature**

In the words of Castellanos and Jones (2003b), Latino men who excel academically and successfully matriculate to selective four-year postsecondary institutions are likely to experience being a “majority in the minority” (p. ix). Although recent reports indicate that Latinas/os are enrolling in postsecondary institutions at much higher rates, these increases are not proportional to the representation and growth of the Latino population in the United States (Ryu, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Padilla (2007) notes that for every 100 Latina/o elementary school students, 52 complete high school, 31 enroll in a postsecondary institution, and only 10 graduate from college. While similar trends have been observed across Latino ethnic groups (Solórzano, et al., 2005; Yosso, 2006), few studies disaggregate data based on gender among Latinas/os (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Numerous social, cultural, and structural forces contribute to the underrepresentation of Latino males within higher education. According to Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009), Latino males are
enrolled in school much later than Latinas and are often targeted by educators who misdiagnose them with a learning disability or place students in less academically rigorous courses. Additionally, Latino males are forced to contend with cultural pressures (i.e. acting White, familismo, machismo) that can lead to less favorable educational outcomes. While attending to the aforementioned challenges can enhance the academic and social experiences of Latinas/os at predominantly White institutions (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria, et al., 2009; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000), little is known about the gendered experiences of Latino male collegians. Generally, Latino males are perceived to adopt hypermasculine behavioral patterns that impede their success in college (Saez, et al., 2009; Torres, et al., 2002).

The extant literature on Latina/o college students generally focuses on increasing access to postsecondary institutions, particularly four-year colleges and universities, as well as improving retention practices (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Oseguera, et al., 2009). Yet, research indicates that Latina/o collegians experience psychological, social, and cultural challenges that can hinder their persistence (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, et al., 2005; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). This is particularly true for Latino males who are more likely to perceive the college environment as unwelcoming and dismissive of their needs. As noted by Gloria et al. (2009), Latino males must “reformulate the expectations that they will receive help within the environment, moving from a collectivistic to a more self-reliant and individualistic approach to coping” (p. 331). This may help to explain the problematic behaviors displayed by Latino males who are often characterized as hypermasculine (Kimmel, 2010; Saez, et al., 2009; Torres, et al., 2002).

Although the recruitment and retention of Latino collegians are desirable goals, emphasis should also be placed on promoting the academic achievement of Latinas/os. The extant
literature on high-achieving racial/ethnic minorities indicates that these students also experience obstacles at PWIs. Racial/ethnic minority achievers often contend with negative stereotypes and other forms of oppression (Bonner II, 2010; Fries-Britt, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Gándara, 2005), yet they adopt unique behavioral patterns to overcome these challenges (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Gándara, 1995; Harper, 2005, 2008; Hurtado, 1994). Unfortunately, scholars consistently report that racial/ethnic minority achievers are often relegated to making the academic and social transition to college with limited institutional support (Freeman, 1999; Gándara, 2005).

This study will contribute the growing body of literature on racial/ethnic achievers by focusing exclusively on Latino males. Although numerous studies have been published on Latinas/os within higher education, few researchers have attended to the experiences of Latino males (Gloria, et al., 2009; Gonzalez, 2002; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Thus, little is known about the experiences of Latino male achievers and the factors that contribute to their achievement in college. Despite the proliferation of research on Latina/o achievers, much of what is known about high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students is based on the experiences of African Americans (Fries-Britt, 2002; Harper, 2005). Drawing attention to the experiences of logradores [Latino achievers] will not only contribute to the discourse on racial/ethnic achievers, but can expand how scholars, practitioners, and policymakers conceptualize achievement. Furthermore, exploring how Latino males conceptualize their achievement and overcome social, cultural, and institutional barriers at a selective predominantly White institution can enhance the educational outcomes achieved by other Latina/o collegians in similar settings.
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study is guided by two theoretical frameworks to facilitate an understanding of how Latino male collegians’ conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement: resiliency theory and community cultural wealth. Originated in psychology, resiliency theory explains how individuals successfully adapt and achieve exceptional outcomes despite exposure to debilitating or deleterious life circumstances. While early studies focused on psychopathology and other psychological dimensions of resilience (e.g., Garmezy, 1971, 1983; Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982), this theory has garnered considerable attention from educational researchers in recent years (Alatorre Alva, 1991; Alatorre Alva & Padilla, 1995; Morales, 2001; 2008a, 2008b, 2008d; Morales & Trotman, 2004; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009; Wang & Gordon, 1994). Modeling the latter scholars, this study will explore whether academic resilience plays a role in the educational achievement of Latino males at a selective, predominantly White institution.

Based on a critique of Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) theory of cultural capital, Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework focuses on the cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by Latinas/os and shifts attention away from deficit-oriented paradigms that often guide research on marginalized student populations. Within the community cultural wealth framework, racial/ethnic minority students are perceived as drawing on various forms of capital to overcome challenges encountered in predominantly White educational settings. This framework advances resiliency theory by drawing attention to different forms of capital Latino achievers utilize to maintain their academic performance in college.
Academic Resilience

Since the 1970s, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the study of resilience (Masten, 2001). Generally, the term resilience has been used to describe the process by which individuals overcome adversity or debilitating life circumstances including, but not limited to economic hardship, child maltreatment, chronic illness, delinquency and criminality (Masten, 1994, 2001, 2009). In recent years, researchers have adopted this theoretical framework to explore “educational achievement outcome anomalies that occur after an individual has been exposed to statistical risk factors” (Morales, 2008a, p. 228). Accordingly, the term academic resilience refers to the process by which individuals adapt to or overcome deleterious circumstances and achieve exceptional academic outcomes.

In Educational Resilience in Inner-City America, Masten (1994) contends that researchers must delineate between risk, assets, vulnerabilities, and protective factors to adequately conceptualize resilience. Scholars who have adopted this theoretical framework to examine the experiences of Latino collegians generally focus on the role protective factors play in either facilitating positive educational outcomes or reducing and avoiding negative outcomes associated with risk (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Gonzalez, 2007; Morales, 2001; 2008a, 2008b; Perez, et al., 2009; Reynoso, 2008). Although the presence of risk and protective factors is central to resilience, researchers rarely acknowledge the influence of assets and vulnerabilities offering a limited conceptualization of academic resilience. To provide a more nuanced understanding of this process, the interplay between risk, assets, vulnerabilities, and protective factors are described in the following section. Figure 1: Theoretical Framework illustrates the relationships between the aforementioned constructs.
Risk Factors and Assets

Researchers contend that risk factors and assets yield consistent outcomes irrespective of adversity (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Masten, 1994; Tiet, et al., 1998). As it pertains to academic resilience, risk factors can be understood as factors that decrease the probability of achieving favorable educational outcomes. For instance, numerous studies confirm that children raised in poverty are less likely to do well in school. Additional factors deemed to place Latina/o students ‘at-risk’ includes: 1) parents with no high school degree, 2) limited English proficiency, 3) being held back in school, and 4) earning low grades in school (Swail, et al., 2005b, 2005c). It is important to note that educational outcomes will vary among individuals deemed ‘at-risk’ (i.e., low-income groups, racial/ethnic minorities, etc.); however, studies confirm that individuals...
exposed to multiple risk factors are least likely to perform well in college (Swail, et al., 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

Despite the attention given to risk, resiliency theorists are more concerned with the identification of factors that facilitate positive outcomes. Masten (1994) utilizes the term *assets*\(^5\) to describe the positive counterparts of risk which include high socioeconomic status, supportive family members, and other resources. The presence of multiple assets increases the probability of achieving desirable outcomes. However, it should be noted that the absence of assets does not necessarily constitute a risk factor. As it pertains to this study, assets can include the knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources Latino males employ to achieve exceptional educational outcomes. The function of assets will be addressed in greater detail when presenting Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework.

**Vulnerabilities and Protective Factors**

Scholars assert that vulnerabilities and protective factors moderate the degree to which risk factors inhibit academic achievement in the face of adversity (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Masten, 1994). Essentially, *vulnerabilities* are defined as individual characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, class, etc.) that increase a person’s susceptibility to risk factors (Masten, 1994). For example, research indicates that racial/ethnic minority students are more likely to perceive and experience the campus climate at predominantly White institutions as hostile (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Despite the fact that all racial/ethnic groups are adversely affected by climates that are unwelcoming and hostile, the marginalized social positions that racial/ethnic minorities occupy in the U.S. increase their susceptibility to prejudice and discrimination (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Rivas-Drake, 2008; Smedley, et al., 1993). Hence, when vulnerabilities are

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\(^5\) Researchers use the terms *compensatory strategies* (Garmezy, et al., 1984) and *promotive factors* (Sameroff, 2000) synonymously to describe assets.
coupled with risk factors, Latino college students are more susceptible to negative academic outcomes.

*Protective factors* are individual or environmental characteristics that facilitate more favorable outcomes in people exposed to significant adversity or risk (Masten, 1994). Whereas protective factors serve as a buffer in high risk situations, they exercise little to no effect in the context of low risk. Scholars that have employed this theoretical framework note that resilient Latina/o college students possess unique *dispositional attributes* (i.e., internal locus of control, intelligence, sociability, etc.) that drive them to excel academically (Morales & Trotman, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates that Latinas/os who achieve exceptional academic outcomes are sustained through *affectional ties* (i.e., familial relationships) and *external support systems* including peers, institutional agents, and community-based organizations (Morales & Trotman, 2004). Garmezy (1991) referred to the aforementioned protective factors as a *characteristic triad* which nurtures academic resilience.

**Community Cultural Wealth**

Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework advances resiliency theory by illuminating the cultural assets possessed by Latina/o students. In *Whose Culture has Capital*, Yosso (2005) argues that researchers have misappropriated Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) theory of cultural capital. Although Bourdieu sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, researchers have used his theoretical framework to assert that racial/ethnic minorities are culturally impoverished. Stated differently, researchers assume that racial/ethnic minority college students do not possess the cultural capital that is valued by their privileged White counterparts and needed to succeed in school.
Yosso’s (2005) application of Critical Race Theory suggests that Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) conceptualization of cultural capital is narrowly defined and fails to account for the “knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77). Collectively, the aforementioned sources of capital constitute what Yosso refers to as community cultural wealth and may serve as assets that facilitate exceptional academic outcomes among Latino male collegians. Community cultural wealth is nurtured by six forms of capital possessed by racial/ethnic minorities including:

1. *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real or perceived barriers.

2. *Familial capital* refers to [the] cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia* [kin] that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.

3. *Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.

4. *Navigational capital* refers to the skills of maneuvering through social institutions.

5. *Resistant capital* refers to [the] knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

6. *Social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources (see Yosso, 2005, pp. 77-81).

While the descriptions noted above suggest that these forms of capital are mutually exclusive and static, Yosso contends that community cultural wealth is fostered through a dynamic process whereby one form of capital may be sustained by other forms of capital. Yosso notes,

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6 Solórzano (1997, 1998) identified five tenets of Critical Race Theory including the: 1) Intercentricity of race and racism; 2) Challenge to dominant ideology; 3) Commitment to social justice; 4) Centrality of experiential knowledge; and 5) Utilization of interdisciplinary approaches.
“Aspirations are developed within social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice (consejos) that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions” (p. 77). Similar to Garmezy’s (1991) characteristic triad, the various forms of capital that comprise community cultural wealth work in unison to facilitate positive educational outcomes among Latinas/os.

**Latino Resilience, Community Cultural Wealth, and Achievement**

The application of resiliency theory and community cultural wealth is relevant to exploring the achievement patterns of Latino males as well as the process by which logradores [Latino achievers] overcome social, cultural, and institutional barriers. Figure 1: Theoretical Framework illustrates the complimentary relationship between both frameworks in regard to facilitating exceptional academic outcomes among Latino male collegians.

The acknowledgement of risk is central to understanding the academic resilience displayed by Latino males. Research indicates that, on average, Latina/o students are exposed to more risk factors than any other racial/ethnic group with exception to African Americans (Swail, et al., 2005a, 2005b). The low college enrollment and completion rates observed among Latinas/os are associated with a myriad of risk factors including poverty, parents with limited education, sibling dropouts, poor academic achievement, and teenage pregnancy (Swail, et al., 2004). Latinas/os who attend predominantly White institutions are likely to encounter psychosociocultural challenges (e.g. culture shock, racism, etc.) that diminish the educational outcomes students achieve in college (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004). Similarly, researchers contend that racial/ethnic minority achievers experience tremendous adversity in college (Fries-Britt, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin,
2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Hurtado, 1994). Unfortunately, the needs of Latino achievers often go unrecognized within higher education (Gándara, 2005; Gloria, et al., 2009).

Although the term *invulnerable* has been used to characterize resilient Latina/o collegians (Alatorre Alva, 1991; Alatorre Alva & Padilla, 1995; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Garmezy, 1976), this term can be misleading in that it diverts attention away from the racialized and gendered experiences of Latino male college students. For instance, Smedley, Myers, and Harrell’s (1993) seminal study revealed how racial/ethnic minorities experience unique stressors that lead to psychological distress and decreases in academic achievement. More recent studies indicate that Latinas/os are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of the campus climate at predominantly White institutions (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al., 1996). Furthermore, the extant literature on college men and masculinities suggests that Latino males are more likely to adopt maladaptive behavioral patterns (e.g., substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, etc.) that increase their susceptibility to academic deterioration. Collectively, the aforementioned studies draw attention to how race/ethnicity and gender increase Latino males’ vulnerability to the campus climate at PWIs and susceptibility to engaging in less academically purposeful activities in college.

Protective factors play an important role in reducing negative outcomes associated with risk factors as well as facilitating academic resiliency in vulnerable Latino males. As previously mentioned, Garmezy (1991) *characteristic triad* highlights three factors that serve as a protective mechanism in high risk situations: dispositional attributes, affectional ties, and external support systems. The presence of protective factors has been well-documented in the literature on academically resilient Latinas/os (Alatorre Alva & Padilla, 1995; Morales & Trotman, 2004; Perez, et al., 2009) and Latina/o achievers (Clewell & Joy, 1988; Gándara, 1995; Rivas-Drake &
Mooney, 2009). However, few studies have focused exclusively on the protective factors that foster academic resiliency in Latino male collegians (Morales, 2008c). Identification of the protective factors that reduce negative outcomes associated with risk and foster academic resiliency among Latino males is central to this study.

The role assets play in promoting the achievement of resilient Latino male college students has not been adequately acknowledged by resiliency theorists. Generally, emphasis is placed on how protective factors reduce negative outcomes or facilitate academic resiliency in individuals deemed ‘at-risk.’ Yosso’s (2005) *community cultural wealth* framework advances resiliency theory by introducing cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts that serve as assets and contribute to the academic success of *logradores* [Latino achievers]. According to Yosso, *culture* is comprised of “behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people… and evidenced in material and nonmaterial productions of a people” (p. 75). Thus, Latino males who possess or acquire differential forms of capital including aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital are more likely to excel academically at predominantly White institutions. It is worth noting that the absence of assets should not be constituted as a risk factor. For instance, research indicates that Latina/o students who are bilingual (linguistic capital) or who have supportive parents (familial capital) are more likely to succeed in school (Yosso, 2006); however, the absence of these resources do not necessarily pose risk. It is quite possible that in the absence of linguistic and familial capital, Latino males may draw on other sources of capital to facilitate their achievement.

Both resiliency theory and community cultural wealth provide a response to deficit-oriented discourse regarding the experiences of Latinas/os within higher education. Whereas resiliency theorist acknowledge the cumulative disadvantages associated with risk factors and
vulnerabilities, researchers emphasize that protective factors moderate the degree to which Latino males achieve less favorable educational outcomes. Additionally, scholars contend that protective factors can facilitate exceptional academic outcomes among Latinas/os who experience significant adversity. The integration of community cultural wealth in this study is relevant because it draws attention to various forms of capital or assets that are present within the Latina/o community and contribute to the achievement of Latino male collegians. Collectively, these theoretical frameworks will be used to explore how logradores [Latino achievers] conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This study contributes to the extant literature on high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students by examining the achievement patterns of logradores [Latino achievers]. Specifically, this study explores how Latino male achievers conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement. The research questions proposed for this study are as follows:

1) How do Latino male achievers conceptualize their achievement?
2) How does community cultural wealth translate to the achievement patterns of Latino males at a highly-selective predominantly White institution?

In this chapter, the significance of qualitative methods in educational research and how the methodological approach is applied in this study are addressed first. Details regarding the site of this study, the purposeful selection of Latino male participants, data collection, and analysis procedures are described next. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, along with a description of the researcher's background and role in the study.

Qualitative Research in Education

Scholars who engage in qualitative research are guided by a unique set of beliefs, philosophical assumptions, and paradigms. According to Creswell (1998), “These assumptions are related to the nature of reality [ontology], the relationship of the researcher to that being researched [epistemology], the role of values in a study [axiology], and the process of research [methodology]” (p. 74). Moreover, these assumptions reflect several features that define qualitative research and distinguish this methodological approach from other forms of inquiry. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) contend that qualitative research is naturalistic, descriptive, process-
oriented, inductive, and focuses on meaning (i.e., the participants perspective). Accordingly, Creswell (2005) summarizes this process as follows:

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (p. 4).

The use of qualitative research methods is particularly useful in gaining an in-depth understanding of how students make sense of their experience at a predominantly White institution (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). How Latino males conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement is central to this study. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methods allows Latino male participants to provide a first-hand account of how they experienced college.

**Methodological Approach: Phenomenology**

During the early 1900s, Edmund H. Husserl introduced the concept of phenomenology. Husserl conceptualized phenomenology as “the study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses” (Patton, 2002, p. 105). This particular approach to qualitative inquiry focuses on understanding and describing the ‘lived experiences’ of participants involved in the study (Moustakas, 1994; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Van Manen, 1990). Within higher education, scholars have used this methodological approach to examine a variety of phenomena including the engagement patterns of high-achieving African

While autobiographical and biographical accounts describe the lived experience of a single person, a phenomenological account seeks to describe the experiences of a group of people. In particular, phenomenologists are interested in describing what participants have experienced, how they experienced it, and the meanings they make of their shared experience (Moustakas, 1994). In *Researching Lived Experience*, Van Manen (1990) asserts “the essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived experience in a fuller and deeper manner” (p. 10). This study seeks to understand and describe how Latino males conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement at a highly-selective, predominantly White institution.

**Methods**

**Site**

This study was conducted at Private University, a highly-selective research university located in the northeast region of the United States. Data were collected during the 2010 – 2011 academic year. Founded in the middle 1700’s, Private University is recognized as one of the first Colonial Colleges to offer undergraduate and graduate studies. Private University (PU) has maintained its stature as a leading research university and is currently ranked among the top 10 national universities. The university is comprised of four colleges offering more than 100 majors several of which are situated among the top national programs. Given the institution’s academic reputation, this site served as an ideal location to gain access to Latino male achievers.

In 2010, Private University enrolled approximately 25,000 students of which 48% were undergraduates. Data available through the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) 7

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7 The pseudonym, Private University, will be used when referring to site of this study.
indicates that approximately half (45.3%) of all undergraduates were White and 30.7% self-identified as racial/ethnic minorities. Asian Americans (16.8%) constituted more than half of the racial/ethnic minority undergraduate population, and African Americans (7.3%) and Hispanics (6.2%) were equally represented at Private University. Additionally, Latino males constituted 2.8% of the total undergraduate population which exceeded the percentage of American Indians and Alaskan Natives (.43%) enrolled at the institution. Nearly one-quarter (22.9%) of all undergraduates self-identified as Other and 1.0% indicated that they were of two or more races.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Ten Latino male undergraduates were selected to participate in this study. Participants were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy. Patton (2002) contends that the “logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry…” (p. 230). To this end, Latino male undergraduates were eligible to participate if they were: 1) Born in the United States; 2) Traditional age college students (i.e., under 24 years of age); 3) Enrolled full-time (i.e., completing 12 or more academic credit hours); 4) Entered as freshmen at this institution (i.e., did not transfer from another college or university); 5) Juniors or seniors (i.e., earned 59 or more academic credit hours); and 5) Maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale). Regarding the latter criterion, this study deliberately focused on Latino males who maintained a 3.0 cumulative GPA because similar academic measures are often used to identify and select college students for merit-based scholarships and awards, undergraduate research or internship experiences, and other educationally purposeful activities.
Prior to recruiting participants, I sought the approval of the Pennsylvania State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research involving human participants and forwarded my approved application Private University’s (PU) IRB. Once approval was granted by PU’s Institutional Review Board, I utilized several recruitment strategies to identify Latino male achievers. First, I contacted the Dean’s Office within each college at Private University to request email addresses for Latino males who fit the criteria for participation in this study. In particular, these offices were asked to identify Latino males who were recognized for their academic achievement. That is, students who were on the Dean’s List. Second, I contacted senior-level administrators from several departments within Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (i.e., Student Activities, McNair Scholars Program, etc.) to ask for assistance with identifying additional participants. Third, I contacted undergraduate leaders involved in student clubs and organizations that addressed the needs of Latinos at Private University. This latter strategy proved to be the most useful in the recruitment of participants. Finally, Latino male achievers were also asked to identify potential research participants. This latter process, *snowball sampling*, is a relatively common practice used in qualitative research (Krathwohl, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Based on nominations offered by senior administrators, staff, and students, the Principal Investigator extended invitations to potential Latino male participants to participate in this study. Students who accepted the invitation were asked to complete a Demographic Profile Form (see Appendix A) accessible via Survey Monkey, a secure online survey site, and also expected to provide an electronic-copy of their academic transcript. The profile form was used to gather information related to participants’ demographics, academic background, co-curricular activities, and other relevant data. This information was used to assign attributes to each participant’s
transcribed interview using NVivo 9®, qualitative software. For example, participants could be identified based on personal (i.e., ethnicity, generational status, etc.) academic (i.e., major, college affiliation, etc.) or social attributes (i.e., engagement in particular co-curricular activities on campus). Academic transcripts were also reviewed to verify participant’s cumulative grade point average. Collectively, the aforementioned documents were utilized to gain a sense of each participant’s background and were useful in adapting specific questions noted in the interview protocol (see Appendix D).

Once this process was completed, Latino male achievers received an invitation to participate in a three hour semi-structured interview. Prior to conducting the interview, each participant was provided with an Informed Consent Form that described the purpose and procedures used in this study (see Appendix C). Information gathered from participants through semi-structured interviews served as the primary source of data in this study (see Appendix D). According to Merriam (1998), semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they allow the researcher to “respond to the situation at hand, to the merging worldview of the respondent, and to the new ideas on the topic” (p. 74). Essentially, the use of a semi-structured interview format allowed me to ask standard questions and engage in dialogue that appeared conversational in nature. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and disseminated to participants.

Data Analysis

Researchers have outlined numerous approaches to guide the process of conducting phenomenological data analysis (Crotty, 1996; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Broadly, phenomenological data analysis involves “the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings” (Creswell, 1998, p. 52). In
Phenomenological Research Methods, Moustakas (1994) advanced this methodological approach and provided a step-by-step guide to facilitate phenomenological data analysis. This process was adapted to analyze interview data gathered from Latino males in this study.

To minimize my biases as a researcher, I first engaged in a process of critical self-reflection known as *epoche*. This process requires researchers to set aside their personal views, experiences, and biases to achieve an understanding of participants’ lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Patton (2002) characterizes *epoche* as a “phenomenological attitude shift” intended to remove researcher bias toward the subject matter as much as possible (p. 407). To this end, I attempted to suspend any preconceived notions that I had of Latino male achievers by addressing my own experiences of this phenomenon in the Researcher’s Role section of this chapter.

The manner in which Moustakas (1994) outlines this methodological approach suggests that *epoche* only occurs at the beginning of data analysis; however, Patton (2002) contends that this is an ongoing process. To ensure my understanding of participants’ lived experiences were based on their reports rather than my own experiences, I used a technique qualitative researchers refer to as *bracketing*. Moustakas describes bracketing a “process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look as see them again, as if for the first time” (p. 85). While I attempted to read each transcript as if I had never heard participants’ stories, I believe the passage of time between data collection and data analysis also facilitated this process.

Utilizing the annotation feature in NVivo 9®, I bracketed my initial thoughts and assumptions as I read each participant’s transcript. Most of these thoughts were associated with my own experiences as an undergraduate student, the extant literature published on Latino
collegians, as well as the theoretical frameworks I proposed using in my dissertation. Surprisingly, this process resulted in the elimination of resiliency theory as a theoretical framework in this study. As I read each transcript and continued to bracket my assumptions, I became increasingly aware that Latino male achievers did not experience or overcome the same hardships that ‘resilient’ racial/ethnic minority college students experience at postsecondary institutions. However, it should be noted that Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework indicates that resiliency is a form of navigational capital. These insights were captured in reflective memorandums in the midst of bracketing as well as after I read each participant’s transcript. This process continued until the final transcript was reviewed.

After bracketing, Moustakas (1994) recommends that researchers engage in horizontalization. This process requires the researcher to give equal attention to every statement pertaining to how participants experience the phenomenon under investigation. I found this process to be particularly helpful when reviewing coded text associated with Latino males’ conceptualizations of achievement in NVivo 9®. I examined passages, statements, and phrases participants used to describe their achievement. These texts were later grouped and labeled using terms, or what Bazeley (2007) refers to as in vivo codes, Latino males shared regarding their achievements. This process resulted in the identification of four conceptualizations of achievement that were consistent for a minimum of eight participants in this study. When exploring how Yosso’s (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework translated to the achievement patterns of Latino males, a more deductive approach was utilized to analyze data. This process was facilitated by comparing participants’ reports to the six forms capital represented in Yosso’s framework: 1) Aspirational, 2) Familial, 3) Social, 4) Linguistic, 5) Navigational, and 6) Resistant Capital. Statements coded under the aforementioned forms of
capital were later reorganized under sub-themes. Adhering to Moustakas’ recommendation on *horizontalization*, equal attention was given to participants’ statements regarding how community cultural wealth translated to their achievement patterns. The reports offered by Latino males led to the identification of fourteen themes associated with Yosso’s framework.

Subsequent steps involved the articulation of Latino male achievers’ lived experiences at Private University. This process was facilitated using two strategies. First, I focused my attention on describing ‘what’ participants experienced. Moustakas (1994) refers to this as a *textural description*. After coding each participant’s transcript, I drafted a brief summary that captured what participants experienced in relation to their conceptualizations of achievement and their use of different forms of capital. Although Moustakas recommends that researchers draft a *composite textural description* to describe what participants experienced collectively, I elected to draft reflective memorandums throughout this process which drew connections between the Latino males who participated in this study. Second, I devoted attention to describing ‘how’ participants experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Moustakas refers to this as a *structural description*. Similar to the previous step, structural descriptions were created for each participant and reflective memorandums were used to draw connections across participants. Again, emphasis was placed on how participants’ conceptualized their achievement and made use of different forms of capital reflected in Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework. The findings presented in Chapter Six are based on the integration of participant’s textural and structural descriptions, or what Moustakas refers to as a *composite textural and structural description*.

**Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance**
Several well-recognized practices in qualitative research were employed to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the findings presented in this study. To enhance internal validity, member checks were conducted with participants at two time-points. Participants were provided with an electronic-copy of their transcribed interview and a memorandum that articulated my preliminary interpretations of their experience based on our interview conversation. Students were invited to provide written or verbal feedback in response to my initial interpretations. Participants were also provided with a summary of the study’s findings and asked to provide similar feedback during the spring 2012 semester. Further measures were taken to ensure that the findings reported were dependable. The collection of data from participants via documents (i.e., profile form and transcript) provided multiple sources of evidence that facilitated *triangulation*. Merriam and Associates (2002) maintain that utilizing multiple sources of data strengthens the conclusions drawn by the researcher and presents evidence of the phenomena under investigation. Finally, I utilized NVivo 9® to complete an audit trail that included a research journal and memorandums described earlier. Audit trails are particularly useful in that they provide a detailed account for how data is collected, categories are derived, and decisions were made throughout the study (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

**The Researcher’s Role**

Researchers serve as the primary instrument of data collection and data analysis in qualitative studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although the aforementioned practices present opportunities to maximize the collection and analysis of data, researchers are fallible and may miss opportunities to collect relevant data, or worse, introduce biases that may affect the study (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Merriam (2009) adds, “Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or ‘subjectivities,’ it is important to identify them
and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data” (p. 15). This process can be facilitated by the researcher articulating their positionality, the relationships between the researcher, participants, and focus of inquiry (Jones, Torres, & Armino, Fine, 1994; 2006). To this end, the section that follows is devoted to addressing my positionality.

My interest is in studying Latino male achievers at a selective predominantly White institution derives from my own collegiate experience. In 1993, I was selected as a Posse Scholar and awarded a merit-based scholarship to attend Vanderbilt University, a highly selective postsecondary institution located in Nashville, TN. While my overall experience at Vanderbilt was positive, it was not absent of the challenges that many first-generation Latina/o college students encounter—poor academic preparation, culture shock, and low academic self-efficacy. Membership in Posse offered me peer support, opportunities to connect with faculty and staff mentors, and a much-needed connection to the larger campus community. Unfortunately, racial/ethnic minority achievers often lack support systems intended to increase their engagement on campus and enhance their abilities to negotiate institutions at which they are underrepresented (Griffin, Nichols, Pérez II, & Tuttle, 2008).

Despite my membership in Posse, I encountered numerous challenges making the initial academic and social transition at Vanderbilt University. I vividly recall experiencing feelings of isolation due, in part, to the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minority students on campus. I was the only racial/ethnic minority student in my first-year orientation group, residence hall, and most academic courses. My feelings of isolation were magnified by the fact that most faculty and

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8 The Posse Foundation is a nationally recognized college access and youth leadership development program. The foundation recruits and selects diverse groups of students to form “Posses” that promote positive change at postsecondary institutions across the United States.
administrators at the university were White; whereas, racial/ethnic minority staff members were relegated to service positions (i.e., grounds keepers, maintenance staff, etc.).

I believe the limited opportunities I had to interact with other racial/ethnic minorities also had an adverse effect on my academic performance. After completing my first semester at Vanderbilt, I was placed on academic probation for earning a 1.4 cumulative grade point average. While this experience might offset most students, I remained resilient and continued to seek out academic and social support from my family as well as students, faculty, and staff affiliated with the Posse Foundation. Although I earned average grades in comparison to my peers, I was never placed on academic probation again and worked diligently to improve my academic performance.

As my cumulative grade point average increased incrementally each semester, I participated in more educationally purposeful activities. I assumed a leadership role in Vanderbilt’s Association of Hispanic Students (VAHS) and became an active member of the Black Student Alliance (BSA). I maintained my involvement in both student organizations for the duration of my academic career. During my junior year, I was selected to participate in Peabody College’s Study Abroad Program and completed a semester of course work at Cambridge University while serving as a student intern at the Hockerill Anglo-European College, a renowned international boarding school in Bishop’s Stortford, England. Additionally, I distinguished myself as a student leader within the Office of Housing & Residential Education and was subsequently hired to serve as a Head Resident Assistant for first-year students during my senior year.

While I earned additional accolades during my undergraduate career at Vanderbilt University, I would not characterize myself as a high-achieving racial/ethnic minority college
student. To assume that any student is a high achiever implies that others are low achievers. As noted in Chapter Two, scholars have conceptualized achievement among racial/ethnic collegians in distinct ways. This study will contribute to discourse on racial/ethnic minority achievers by drawing on two theoretical frameworks – Resiliency Theory and Community Cultural Wealth – to provide a more holistic, in-depth description of Latino achievers at a selective predominantly White institution. To this end, I use the term *logradores* [Latino achievers] when referring to Latino male participants in this study. Conceptualizing achievement in this manner assumes that Latino males encounter obstacles and must put forth considerable effort to succeed academically in predominantly White educational settings.
CHAPTER FIVE: PARTICIPANTS

The ten Latino males who elected to participate in this study are briefly profiled in this chapter. During the time of this study, participants were either completing their junior or senior of college at Private University (PU). Thus, Latino male achievers were all expected to graduate. The sample included 8 seniors and 2 juniors pursuing a variety of academic majors and minors across PU’s four undergraduate schools. All participants were traditional age college students (i.e., 18 – 25 years of age) who were single and had no legal dependents. Seven participants reported that they were raised by both their parents and one student indicated that his father was deceased; his mother never remarried. The two remaining participants were raised by their mothers; however, their fathers continued to play an active role in their lives.

Greater variations were observed in participants’ household incomes. Three were raised in households where the average annual income was less $29,000. Another three students indicated that their parents earned between $30,000 to $49,000 per year. The four remaining students reported that their average annual household incomes exceeded $80,000. Half the participants self-identified as first-generation college students, with three of these students indicating that their parents did not possess a high school diploma and two completed college outside of the United States. Among the remaining five participants, three reported that their parents earned a graduate or professional degree in the United States.

As noted in the previous chapter, all participants were nominated by senior-level administrators, student affairs professionals, and Latino students based on the following criteria 1) Be born in the United States; 2) Be traditional age college students (i.e., 18 – 25 years of age); 3) Be enrolled full-time in college (i.e., completing 12 or more academic credit hours); 4)
Entered as freshmen at the institution (i.e., did not transfer from another campus, college, or university); 5) Have junior or senior class-standing (i.e., earned 59 or more academic credit hours); and 6) Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher. The mean cumulative grade point average (GPA) for students in the sample was a 3.34, with averages ranging from a 3.02 to 3.85. Participants possessed equally stellar academic profiles prior to attending college and were awarded over $200,000 in merit-based scholarships during their tenure at Private University.

Latino male achievers participating in this study also distinguished themselves outside of the classroom. In total, participants were involved in over 20 recognized student clubs and organizations. Eight out of ten participants specifically stated that they were actively involved in at least one Latino-based student organization on campus. While most participants held formal leadership positions in both Latino-based and mainstream student organizations, it should also be noted that almost half of the participants founded new organizations that addressed issues related to homelessness, cross-cultural dialogue, and spirituality.

The participants in this study all voiced high educational and career aspirations. Whereas half did not plan on pursuing advanced-degrees prior to attending college, by the time of their interview, nine intended to continue their education after graduating from Private University. Seven intended to pursue terminal degrees (i.e., Ph.D., J.D., M.B.A.) and two were admitted to research universities for masters and doctoral degrees during the time of this study. Only one student expressed interest in pursuing a Master’s degree and the remaining two indicated that they needed to gain professional experience prior to pursuing advanced-degrees in Business and International Relations. One of these students had secured employment with a very competitive business firm during the time of this study.
**Participant Profiles**

**Antonio** grew up in Fort Bragg, CA and always wanted to attend a “reputable” institution on the east coast. He was a senior majoring in Political Science and minoring in French. Although his parents ended their education with elementary school in Mexico, they were very supportive of his educational and career aspirations. When Antonio was in the sixth grade, he applied to participate in the Partnership Scholar’s Program, which provided him with myriad resources needed to facilitate his access to college. During the time of this study, Antonio served as Chaplain of his fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon, but also maintained his ties with MEChA and the Latin American Student Association (LASA). He was interested in pursuing a career in International Development and participated in Alternative Spring Break at Private University.

**Enrique** was born and raised in San Francisco, CA. His family emigrated from El Salvador during the 1980’s when civil war erupted in the country. He was a senior majoring in Political Science and had aspirations to attend law school after graduation. During his sophomore year, Enrique became increasingly involved in the Latino community at Private University. He served on the executive board of several organizations including the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA); La Voz, a Latino student magazine; and the Latino Honor Society. Enrique also co-founded two organizations that addressed issues related to homelessness and the occupation of Palestine. He was one of the more politically active participants and spoke extensively about using his education to “create a more just, socially-responsible, and democratic world.”

**Gilberto** was a native of Philadelphia, PA and self-identified as Puerto Rican. During the time of this study, Gilberto was pursuing his Bachelors and Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering at Private University. He was also completing a minor in Mathematics. Both of
Gilberto’s parents graduated from high school and his father returned to college after serving in the Vietnam War, but did not complete a bachelor’s degree. Gilberto was the recipient of several merit-based scholarships, totaling approximately $40,000. Gilberto was not involved in any Latino-based student organizations, but he co-founded group to promote cross-cultural dialogue among students on campus. He held several different leadership positions within his fraternity and was inducted into Engineering Honor Society during his sophomore year. Gilberto also participated in the McNair Scholars Program and conducted research at the University of Maryland. Gilberto believed that becoming an engineer was one way he could “help society.”

**Manuel** was raised in Princeton, NJ and expressed pride in his Puerto Rican heritage. He was a senior Nursing and Economics major, and was acknowledged by several other participants as a high-achieving Latino male. Manuel’s parents both possessed terminal degrees. In fact, his mother was an alumna of Private University. Among his academic accolades, Manuel maintained a 3.8 GPA and was awarded approximately $50,000 in merit-based scholarships including the Truman Fellowship and National Merit Scholarship. Manuel was a highly-visible student leader and served on the executive boards of several prominent student organizations including the Minority Student Coalition and Student Government Association. He served as a Resident Assistant and initiated both a student- and institutionally-sponsored program focused on spirituality issues. Manuel is currently pursuing a master’s degree at a prestigious university located outside of the United States.

**Marcos** was raised in Camden, NJ. His family emigrated from the Dominican Republic when he was an infant, primarily for “economic reasons.” He was a senior majoring in Comparative Literature and minoring in Latin American and Latino Studies. Neither of his parents completed high school. Marcos noted that participating in the Camden Honors
Intermediate Program for Scholars (CHIPS) and New Jersey SEEDS provided him with the preparation needed to excel at Private University. Marcos was a very active student-leader in both the Queer and Latino community; evidenced by his involvement in seven student organizations. He had also distinguished himself as a scholar through the McNair Scholars Program and Leadership Alliance research program at another highly-selective research university. He was the recipient of several merit-based scholarships; most notably, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship. Marcos planned to pursue a career in academia and was accepted to a doctoral program at Rutgers University.

Mateo was born in Bogota, Columbia, and his family immigrated to the United States when he was four years old. He spent most of his youth in St. Cloud, MN. Mateo was a senior Finance major and recently accepted an offer to work with J.P. Morgan after graduation. Mateo’s aspirations to pursue a Master’s in Business Administration were fueled by his father, who possessed similar educational credentials, but passed away when he was ten years old. With exception to La Sociedad, the Latino Honor Society, Mateo was not active in any other Latino-based student organizations. He devoted most of his time to the Undergraduate Business Council and served as Co-Chair of the organization during the time of this study. Mateo was the recipient of three merit-based scholarships awarded by Private University.

Oscar grew up in Frisco, TX. He self-identified as Mexican and African American. During the time of this study, he was completing his junior year of college and pursuing Economics as his major with a minor in Creative Writing, indicating writing was his “passion.” Oscar’s parents were both college graduates. Although he was not involved in any Latino-based student organizations, Oscar devoted a considerable amount of time to working with underserved populations on campus and in the community. He volunteered weekly at a Hillel Soup Kitchen
and also mentored students through the Big Brother Big Sister program and the University’s High School Access Program. His dispositions toward community service were influenced by his Christian faith. In addition to being a recipient of the Ron Brown Scholarship, Oscar was awarded several university grants totaling approximately $60,000. Oscar expressed an interest in serving as an elected official or “public servant” in the future.

**Tito** grew up in the Bronx, NY and self-identified as Dominican. He was a senior majoring in Health and Society in the College of Liberal Arts. His father completed college in the Dominican Republic and his mother completed a high school education. Through the support of his sixth grade teacher, Tito was selected to participate in the Oliver Scholars Program, which he believed contributed to his academic success at Private University. He was very active in the Latino community on campus. Tito served on the executive board of the Raices; the Latino dance troupe, the Latino Student Coalition and Dominican Student Association. He was also inducted into the Latino and Black honor societies on campus due to his academic performance and leadership activities. During his tenure at PU, he conducted research with a private educational foundation and completed several internships. Tito was awarded a full scholarship by the university and earned several other merit-based awards during college.

**Victor** self-identified as Dominican and was raised in the Bronx, NY. He was a senior majoring in Psychology and minoring in Anthropology. Although Victor’s father did not complete high school, his mother was a PU alumna, which played a role in his decision to attend the university. Additionally, he participated in Prep for Prep, which facilitated his access to a prestigious high school in New York City and provided him with additional resources needed for college. Victor was only involved in Latino-based student organizations on campus. He was a choreographer for Raices, president of his fraternity, and served as a head delegate at the Latino
Ivy League Conference. One of Victor’s most significant accomplishments was coordinating his fraternity’s philanthropy, the Palante Dinner, which raises money to provide scholarships to Latino college aspirants.

**Vincente** self-identified as Mexican and was raised in Las Cruces, NM. He was a junior Anthropology major and aspired to attend Medical School immediately after graduation. His aspirations to become a doctor were influenced by the poor treatment his mother received from health practitioners for epilepsy. Both his parents were college graduates, but his father also completed a master’s degree in Engineering in the Soviet Union. During his first year of college, Vincente was a Division-I athlete on PU’s rowing team, but discontinued his involvement to focus more attention on his academics. He later joined MEChA and served as Vice President of the organization. Vincente was also inducted into the Latino Honor Society because of his academic performance and involvement within the Latino community.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Latino Male Achievers provides additional information about participants in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>First Gen. Student</th>
<th>Major(s)</th>
<th>Minor(s)</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>Latino Org</th>
<th>Minority Org</th>
<th>Mainstream Org</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS

The findings reported in this chapter are drawn from the interviews conducted with ten Latino male achievers at Private University. Throughout this chapter, quotes are used to disclose participants’ shared, lived experiences at a highly-selective research university. In particular, the findings provide new insights regarding the manner in which Latino males conceptualize their achievement. Additionally, the reports offered by participants draw attention to how Community Cultural Wealth translates to the achievement patterns of Latino male collegians.

Conceptualizations of Achievement

Latino male achievers’ conceptualizations of achievement deviated from traditional measures of success. They did not equate success with just their grades. Although participants acknowledged the importance of earning ‘good grades’ and maintaining a strong cumulative grade point average, they perceived these measures to be superficial. In fact, when Marcos was prompted to elaborate on his peers’ preoccupation with grades, he asserted that the aforementioned measures “do not account for alternative understandings of productivity and success that exist within marginalized communities.” Similar critiques were offered by Latino male achievers and resulted in the identification of four themes that reflect participants’ conceptualizations of achievement: 1) It’s Not Just About Grades, 2) Being the Best, 3) Being Involved, and 4) Being Well-Rounded. As previously noted, participants did not base their achievement on their academic performance. Latino male achievers emphasized that being the best was about setting and achieving ambitious goals. They also stressed the importance of being involved in educationally purposeful activities that allowed them to make the most of college and
serve others. Additionally, Latino male achievers highlighted that being well-rounded was central to their learning and the development of personal and worldviews.

Figure 2. Conceptualizations of Achievement.

**It’s Not Just About Grades**

Participants in this study problematized traditional notions of achievement in subtle ways. Prior to participating in the interview process, several students inquired about the criteria used to identify potential participants. In particular, Latino male achievers were interested in the grade point average (GPA) criterion utilized in this study and asked thought-provoking questions such as, “Why did you choose a 3.0 as your GPA requirement?” “Did you consider making the GPA requirement higher?” “Is this how achievement in measured in college?” In addition to stimulating dialogue, similar questions suggested that participants’ conceptualizations of achievement were simply not about grades.
Research participants were reluctant to equate their achievement with academic performance during the interview. When asked to define achievement, Oscar immediately responded “Academic success . . . probably Magna Cum Laude or above, if you had to put a number on it.” However, after reflecting on his initial response, Oscar added:

Here’s the thing though . . . I acknowledge that GPA is a pretty poor indicator of success . . . the correlation, at best, in terms of your intelligence and how well you’re going to do has to be a .2 or .3 which isn’t very good.

Although Oscar maintained a 3.5 cumulative GPA in Economics, he did not necessarily believe this was a significant achievement. On the contrary, Oscar expressed pride in his community service activities and how he was involved in the School of Business’ Impact Initiative which emphasizes public service within the business sector. In general, Latino male achievers did not equate achievement with their intellectual abilities or academic performance. While they expressed pride in their academic achievement, participants reported that they were less concerned about earning good grades than their peers. In fact, Mateo did not express any regret after earning his first ‘D’ in college, because he believed study abroad was an invaluable educational experience.

Despite the perceived “pre-professional” atmosphere at PU, Latino male achievers did not limit their involvement to activities that resulted in earning good grades to secure competitive employment opportunities. For instance, Mateo became increasingly involved in the Undergraduate Business Council (UBC) after successfully completing his first semester in PU’s School of Business. Although his GPA suffered, Mateo did not believe devoting more time to studying would have been “worth the better grade.” Similarly, Enrique reported that it was important to maintain a “respectable GPA,” but excelling academically was not a priority. Latino
male achievers expressed similar sentiments when addressing their involvement in educationally purposeful curricular and co-curricular activities on campus.

In this study, Latino male achievers expressed a sincere interest in learning. It should be noted that when participants reported getting good grades in college as their “most significant accomplishments,” their remarks drew attention to outcomes that extended beyond their academic performance. Victor, a senior Psychology student, offered the following account regarding the first time he earned an ‘A’ in a class:

. . . actually getting my first ‘A’ in college was a pretty big achievement, because I had always be on the cusp of ‘B+’; but actually getting that ‘A’ was actually pretty nice . . . I had been so close previous semesters and thought I put the effort into classes, but something always tripped me up . . . You know, most of our grade was based on a paper we submitted at the end of the semester. It was a summation of everything we learned, but then extrapolating it to a different topic we hadn’t covered and proposing an experiment . . . having that all come together in that paper and this top researcher actually thinking it was worth an ‘A’ was very respectable.

Although Victor focused on the grade he received in this course, his remarks also illustrate a central outcome of higher education: learning. Victor was not the only participant who emphasized the importance of learning. Enrique believed learning about Marxism and feminist theory was his most significant accomplishment because it “deeply challenged his core beliefs.” He believed that engaging in similar activities during college helped him become a well-rounded person.

The manner in which other participants described their achievements was equally interesting. Whereas Oscar perceived his definition of success to be “way too nebulous,” Manuel
found it difficult to separate his own “liberal, frutti-tutti definition of success” from one he “felt more comfortable actually putting into practice.” Participants felt the things they were most proud of were difficult to quantify. Marcos captured the essence of participants’ conceptualizations of achievement when he stated, “I don’t think success is something you necessarily achieve . . . it’s a way of thinking and being.” Essentially, the most significant accomplishments of Latino male achievers were demonstrated through their actions, not necessarily the academic outcomes they achieved in college.

**Being the Best**

While the notion ‘being the best’ implies that Latino male achievers were competitive and self-serving, the reports offered by eight of the ten participants proposes a different conceptualization of what it means to be the best. Students emphasized the importance of achieving their goals and proving they could excel in college. In fact, Mateo believed there was a “continuum of success.” Whereas, participants believed their peers were preoccupied with achieving high grades, Mateo and others were more concerned with “achieving their potential.” When asked if he was successful, Mateo stated:

> Do I think I’ve reached my potential as a student? Definitely not. I hope, if I studied more, I’d do a lot better, but I think I’ve been successful . . . I think if you [set] standards for yourself and do what you expect of yourself, you’ve been successful . . . and just because someone else gets a 4.0 and you only have a 3.5, I don’t think the other person is necessarily more successful than you are. I think it’s very hard to define what success is. I think it’s dependent on the individual, but if I had to define it generally and apply it to everyone, I would just say ‘doing your best.’
Participants did not impose their conceptualizations of achievement on others; however, they expressed deep convictions when articulating their definition of success. As noted by Tito, Latino males believed it was important to set “very high standards” that would enable them to achieve their educational aspirations.

Achievement had little to do with where Latino males started, but more so where they ended. This was reflected in several accounts offered by participants regarding the academic challenges they encountered at Private University. For example, Tito expressed disappointment after earning a ‘C’ in Calculus II, because he believed he could have done better. However, Tito believed he was successful because he sought out tutoring services and worked hard to earn a ‘C+.’ Despite his poor academic performance in Calculus II, Tito was expected to graduate with honors from Private University (PU). Gilberto encountered similar challenges in pursuit of his B.S. and M.S. in Electrical Engineering. Although he worked hard, Gilberto did not believe his efforts were necessarily reflected in his grades. Yet, Gilberto believed that acquiring the skills needed to be a competent engineer was enough for him. Similar sentiments were expressed by Latino male achievers who often equated success with accepting their limitations, seeking support, and putting forth their best effort.

**Being Involved**

The reports offered by Latino male achievers in this study suggest that they equated success to their involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities that helped them *make the most of college*. Latino males also believed that *serving others* was central to their conceptualization of achievement. Collectively, these themes draw attention to the importance participants placed on engaging in educationally purposeful activities that would leave them better prepared to serve others.
Making the most of college. Latino male achievers did not squander the educational opportunities available to them at Private University. Manuel, one of the most ‘accomplished’ participants, was determined to “go all in” and "make the most” of his college education. He maintained a 3.85 cumulative GPA and received numerous awards; most notably, the Harry S. Truman Scholarship. Manuel was also the recipient of a prestigious scholarship that allowed him to pursue graduate study outside of the United States. Recipients of this scholarship had to maintain a 3.7 cumulative GPA, possess an extensive record of leadership, and demonstrate potential as global citizens. When Manuel was informed about his selection, he characterized this as a “life changing” experience because he was the first nursing student and the only Latino to receive this distinction at Private University. This served as evidence that Manuel made the most of his college experience. In contrast, Oscar talked about how his poor academic performance during his first-year of college served as an important source of motivation. Oscar’s lack of participation in co-curricular activities and poor academic performance led him to conclude that he “was not living up” to his full potential. This experience motivated Oscar to volunteer at a soup kitchen, mentor youth through Big Brother Big Sister, and join a Christian student organization on campus. He believed that getting involved on campus and in the community contributed positively to his academic performance. The accounts offered by Manuel and Oscar capture the sentiments expressed by other participants who believed in “making the most” of their academic and social experiences during college.

In contrast to their peers, participants believed they were genuinely invested in the academic enterprise. Tito believed his professors would characterize him as a student who “takes advantage of the opportunities afforded.” When he was asked to elaborate on this point, Tito shared the following:
. . . somebody who wants to get their money’s worth out of the tuition. I don’t want to just sit at home, take a class, and read off slides because that to me is boring. To me, a part of coming to college is being intellectually stimulated . . . just being a part of this network of vastly intelligent people that have so much to offer you. So, I think that’s what I’m trying to get out of it; especially in these last couple of months that I have at [Private University]. I'm trying to make sure that I get the most out of it.

Participants engaged in a broad range of activities that enhanced their academic experience during college. Beyond taking courses they found interesting and intellectually stimulating, Latino males served as teaching assistants and conducted undergraduate research. Among the five participants who conducted research, three of them were affiliated with nationally-recognized research programs including the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program and the Leadership Alliance Summer Research Early Identification Program (SR-EIP).

Both Gilberto and Marcos indicated that participating in the McNair Scholars Program facilitated their transition to graduate school. Whereas Gilberto was pursuing his B.S. and M.S. in Electrical Engineering, Marcos was preparing to matriculate into a doctoral program at Rutgers University. Marcos added that being a McNair Scholar enhanced his application for the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellowship and SR-EIP. Collectively, he believed these experiences allowed him to make the most of college.

Latino males also believed they distinguished themselves from peers outside classroom. Although Mateo maintained a 3.4 cumulative GPA in Finance during his senior year, he believed it was equally important to “distinguish himself” outside of the classroom. When Mateo was asked to elaborate on this point, he shared the following:
... it’s a way to set yourself apart from the group. You could do very well in school ... but you don’t have to show anyone your transcript. You could have a 4.0 and no one would ever know, right? But when you do well in extracurricular activities, it’s very, very visible ... other people will say, ‘He’s setting himself apart. He’s doing something well.’ So, I think there’s definitely something to say about success outside the classroom.

Through his involvement with the Undergraduate Business Association (UBC), Mateo had the opportunity to periodically meet with the Dean and Chief Executive Officers who served on the Board of Trustees in the School of Business. Data collected from participants via the Demographic Profile Form revealed that participants held formal leadership positions in over 20 recognized-student clubs and organizations at Private University. It is worth mentioning that eight of the ten participants reported that they were specifically involved in Latino-based organizations. Both Tito and Victor were involved in Raices, a Latino dance troupe at Private University, and talked about how they performed at the International Salsa Congress in New York City with world-renowned choreographers. Tito indicated that this was a significant accomplishment because Raices was “the only college team” invited to perform in the International Salsa Congress (ISC). While he never imagined performing on an international stage, Tito clearly made the most of college through his involvement with Raices. It should be noted that through their involvement in both mainstream and special interest groups, participants were able to serve as positive examples of the Latino community.

**Serving others.** Perhaps one of the most powerful conceptualizations of achievement offered by participants was rooted in the value of serving others. Whereas Latino male achievers

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9 Whereas the term “mainstream” is reserved for organizations that are traditionally and/or historically White; the term “special interest groups” is used to describe organizations that are specifically designed to support underrepresented student populations on campus. In this study, Latino-based student organizations are referred to as special interest groups.
perceived their peers as equating success with getting “good grades,” securing “the best job,” and “making a lot of money;” their definition of success was based on how they could contribute positively to society. When asked how he conceptualized success, Manuel shared:

My own definition of academic success is, obviously, not failing . . . but getting the skills that I need to ensure I’m able to serve the people that I want to serve, in the best way I possibly can; and to do it in a way that is a credit both to myself and to people who I’m working with and who supported me.

It should be noted that all participants shared this sentiment. As noted by Antonio, Latinos did not “place too much emphasis on personal success.” Rather, Latinos based success on their “relationships with people.” For Latino male achievers, the purpose of doing well in school was equated with being able to serve their families, community, and society.

In this study, the most significant accomplishment for Latino males was who they became or how they evolved during college. Enrique credited his success to “settling a lot of conflicting ideas about my place in this world.” One of the few occasions Enrique smiled during the interview was when he shared his “romanticized” views of education and reflected on how students were encouraged to use their education to contribute to society during the 1960’s. Prior to attending PU, Enrique wanted to attend Law School so that he could become an “advocate of democracy.” He believed his purpose in life was to be an advocate for social justice in the world. Marcos also spoke about his “ethos, perspectives on community, and the importance of giving back.” When asked if he was successful, Marcos stated, “you don’t achieve success . . . [it] is an ongoing process.” He enacted his values by serving as President of La Sociedad, the Latino Honor Society, which emphasized academic achievement, leadership, and public service. More
than half of the research participants were members of the La Sociedad and were expected to participate in monthly service projects sponsored by the organization in the local community.

Similar to other participants, Oscar was proud of the work he was involved with on campus and in the community. He served as President of a Christian student organization in the School of Business, mentored students affiliated with the University’s High School Access Program as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters, and volunteered at a Hillel Soup Kitchen since his first year of college. Similarly, participants frequently referenced their involvement in Latino-based student organizations, activism on campus, and volunteerism when discussing their most significant accomplishments. “Anyone can get straight A’s,” Marcos asserted, “but it means more … when you’re putting others first than when you’re solely putting yourself first.” In the midst of pursuing their education, Latino male achievers engaged in activities that demonstrated the value they placed on serving others.

**Being Well-Rounded**

The reports offered by Latino male achievers resulted in the identification of two themes associated with this particular conceptualization of achievement. Most participants indicated that learning was their most significant accomplishment during college. Learning contributed to participants’ personal development and worldview. Collectively, these themes illuminate how Latino male achievers in this study aspired to become well-rounded individuals.

**Learning.** Contrary to the extant literature published on Latinas/os in the U.S. educational system, participants in this study emphasized the importance of learning and valued their education (Diaz Soto, 2008). For example, Enrique stated that his willingness to learn and think about things that made him uncomfortable were his “biggest accomplishments.” Similar sentiments were expressed by other participants couched in terms like “being well-rounded,”
“learning to learn,” and “liberal education.” Although their conceptualization of learning varied, Latino male achievers believed what was most important is that they applied what they learned in their lives in order to become better people.

With exception to Vincente, Latino male achievers were willing to “take risks” and engage in activities that enhanced their learning. Although he shared similar dispositions, Vincente did not believe he could take the same risks because his parents were “paying all this money” so that he could get a good education. Vincente believed he had to be more “strategic” about taking courses that did not compromise his academic progression. In a similar vein, Victor noted that his grades did not accurately reflect his achievement:

. . . in getting my 3.0, I have explored a lot of different fields that I wouldn't have before [and] taken classes that I knew were hard. But I decided to push myself . . . I know some people who have a 3.7, but they took a lot of classes that were easy A’s . . . On one hand, your transcript looks great, but I've always felt like you're wasting your time if you are not really learning anything, not excited, or challenged somewhat by a class. So, even though I may have gotten a lot of ‘B’s’ instead of ‘A’s,’ I've always felt like I was intellectually challenged. I think that is a hallmark of doing well academically.

Contrary to his peers, Victor believed that what he learned in his courses was more important than the actual grades he earned in his classes. Victor wanted to be intellectually challenged in his courses. Similarly, participants articulated how they enjoyed making “weird connections” and “looked at things from different perspectives” across academic disciplines. Although these activities did not always translate into getting good grades, Latino male achievers believed these activities contributed positively to their intellectual development.
While Latino males believed it was important to engage in activities that facilitated learning, they also emphasized the importance of using their education to serve others. Participants did not limit their involvement to activities that focused exclusively on the Latino community. For example, Manuel was “determined” to use his education in the service of marginalized communities:

I received course credit for an internship that [Private University] set up for me at the National Museum of American Jewish History. I’m not Jewish, but I still thought it was awesome . . . I was able to do research on social history in America and Reconstructionist Judaism . . . I think most of the research I do pulls in things that I learned from all of my classes, even the statistical methods I use to run my datasets to as complicated as the theoretical framework I use to conceptualize vulnerable populations and safety in hospitals, which is what most of my work is on now.

Along these lines, Victor indicated the “ultimate value of an education” was the ability to solve complex problems. Learning was a means in which participants could not only resolve their own issues, but problems they observed in their communities and society at-large.

**Personal development and worldviews.** When addressing their most significant accomplishments, participants also talked more often about their development than their academic performance during college. While this process was “hard to quantify,” according to Mateo, other participants stated that they used college as a time to focus on themselves, seek “spiritual fulfillment,” and engage in activities that promoted their “holistic development.”

Participants shared powerful stories that captured how they transformed during college. For instance, when Enrique was asked to articulate his most significant accomplishments, he shared the following:
Honestly, I would say they’re sort of more personal... coming to terms with the person that I am and being okay with that... being happy with all the imperfections and accepting that I’m still working towards bettering myself. And I think that’s something I was never okay with... always feeling inadequate, but getting to the point where I’m pretty okay with myself. I think that's a great accomplishment... I’m very proud of myself for that. It takes a lot of soul searching and breaking down to really find a place where you’re okay with yourself.

Similarly, Vincente reported that his most significant accomplishment was “finding out who I am.” While Vincente characterized his first three years of college as being “emotionally unstable,” the process of self-discovery enhanced his outlook on life and worldview. Vincente came to the realization that there was “a little bit more to life than grades and succeeding in life.”

Latino male achievers perceived success as a combination of their academic accomplishments as well as discovering their place in the world. Marcos, for instance, drew attention to both “quantitative” and “qualitative” dimensions of achievement that were aligned with how other participants’ conceptualized their achievement:

... on a more quantitative end, the [La Sociedad] has a standard... we don’t accept anyone who has a cumulative GPA below a 3.0. That is something the [Honor Society] decided upon. Personally, I think it should be higher; nothing below a 3.3... But on a more qualitative end... you’re coming in at one level, but leaving with a much broader understanding of who you are and your relationship to the world. And by default, an understanding of your relationship and commitment, whether you want to accept it or not, to your surroundings... I think that’s success.
While Marcos’s remarks draws attention to the connection between participants’ personal development and worldviews, his remarks also reveal how Latino male achievers developed a sense of awareness and responsibility to their surrounding community. In many respects, Latino males were fulfilled by pursuing an academic experience that allowed them to become well-rounded individuals who could use their collegiate education in the service of humanity.

Summary on Conceptualizations of Achievement

The manner in which Latino males conceptualized their achievements deviated from traditional measures of success. Although more than half of the participants expected to graduate with honors, they did not base their conceptualizations of achievement solely on earning good grades or maintaining a high cumulative grade point average at Private University. Contrary to their peers, Latino male achievers were more concerned with being the best and achieving their potential in college. Additionally, participants devoted considerable attention to being involved on campus as well as in the community. Participants made the most of college by engaging in educationally purposeful curricular and co-curricular activities, but more importantly, engaged in activities that allowed them to serve others. Furthermore, Latino males equated their success in college to being well-rounded individuals. This was reflected in participants’ reports regarding the development of their personal and worldviews. How these conceptualizations of achievement translate to the achievement patterns of Latino males are explored in greater detail in the following section.

Community Cultural Wealth

This section addresses how Community Cultural Wealth translates to the achievement patterns of Latino male collegians. In particular, this section explores how Latino male achievers
employed aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, navigational, and resistant capital to facilitate their achievement.

**Aspirational Capital**

Aspirational Capital refers to the ability to maintain one’s hopes and dreams in the face of real and perceived barriers. This is reflected in individuals who “allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Considering that half the participants in this study possessed demographic profiles similar to middle-class White families, it would appear that aspirational capital did not play a central role in the achievement patterns of Latino males. These students were raised by upper-middle class college-educated parents who were capable of providing them with the resources needed to facilitate their transition from high school to college. Yet, the reports offered by Latino male achievers suggest that this particular form of capital was still needed to facilitate their achievement.

**I always knew.** Consistent with previous research on high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students, Latino male achievers possessed high educational aspirations at Private University (Gándara, 1995; Griffin, 2006; Harper, 2003; Hrabowski III, et al., 1998; Zalaquett, 2006). This was not surprising considering that half the participants were raised by parents who completed college. In fact, Manuel and Victor reported that their mothers were alumnae of PU. Manuel noted that his mother was one of the first Latinas to earn a professional degree from the School of Dentistry which served as a “major point of pride” within his family. Victor also “grew up with the mentality of going to college” and believed these aspirations were cultivated by his mother, who earned a Bachelor’s degree from PU a year before he was born. She worked
in the hotel industry for several years, but after his younger brother was born, she decided to become a homemaker.

Similarly, Mateo always knew he would “follow the footsteps” of his father and pursue a Master’s in Business Administration (MBA). He possessed these educational aspirations since his childhood; however, his father was not present to reinforce these aspirations during middle and high school. When Mateo was seven, his father was diagnosed with brain cancer and passed away. The following statement draws attention to how Mateo’s aspirations were nurtured posts this tragic event:

I could talk to you about my mother for three hours. She sacrificed so much for us and I think that’s something else that still motivates me . . . not just with academic achievement, but in everything. Because of the example she sets . . . that’s why I feel there are so many things that are important along with academics . . . like being a good person, being nice to people, and helping other people.

Mateo’s family briefly returned to Bogota, Columbia after his father passed away. He noted that his mother had the option to stay with family and did not need to work considering that most of their family still lived in Columbia; however, she elected to return with her three sons to the United States. Although life would have been much easier in Columbia, Mateo believed his mother made the “ultimate sacrifice” to provide his family with a better quality of life. This experience served as a source of motivation to Mateo as well as his siblings in following through with their educational aspirations.

First-generation participants acknowledged that their parents were unable to provide them with the guidance needed to make the transition to college, yet they emphasized that education was still highly-valued in their homes. Despite being a low-income student, Tito always knew he
would attend and graduate from college. To nurture his college aspirations, Tito’s mother talked about the opportunities a college education would afford him as well as his family:

... they always ingrained in me that college was where I was supposed to end up, especially my father. My mother always told me, when I grew up, I had to become a lawyer and buy her a house. At the time, we lived in the Bronx in a fifth floor apartment with no elevators. So, the conditions weren’t great... even at that age, I could see we didn’t live in the most affluent neighborhood. And that’s something that sticks with me until this day... those words that my mother would say to me... but I guess that’s how I really started thinking about college.

Although Tito “always had a sense” of his trajectory, his college plans did not become “concrete” until he participated in the Oliver Scholars Program.

Interestingly, six of the participants in this study indicated that they participated in college preparatory programs to nurture their educational aspirations prior to attending Private University. Enrique participated in the Spanish Emergent Program that organized trips to postsecondary institutions within his home state. Enrique noted that the “first time” he could actually see himself attending a university was during a trip to UC-Berkeley. Similarly, Marcos indicated that participating in the New Jersey SEEDS Program provided him the resources needed to fulfill his educational aspirations. With the exception of Victor, it should be noted that all first-generation participants were involved in similar programs prior to attending Private University.

It’s what they said. Participants recounted numerous messages their parents shared with them to convey that education was a priority. As noted by Mateo, the “question was never if I was going to college... but where I was going college?” Participants cited similar messages
they heard from their parents such as “You’re going to college” and “Now is your chance.” Yet, these messages do not adequately account for alternative approaches parents used to inspire their children’s educational aspirations.

Participants were able to articulate alternative approaches their parents used to inspire achievement; however, these practices were not always validated. This issue emerged during a conversation with Victor, a senior Anthropology student, regarding an article in PU’s student newspaper about differences between Asian and Latino parenting practices. When Victor was asked to share his perspective on this article, he reported the following:

Maybe it’s because I'm an anthropologist, but I think culture is the biggest reason . . . I really think culture has a lot to do with achievement. And I don’t want to get [this misinterpreted] . . . I don’t think Latino culture is inferior to White culture or Asian culture . . . But I think there is a difference when it comes to education. I don’t think in Latino culture [and] maybe other cultures . . . to attain higher education isn't as emphasized in Latino culture.

Although Victor possessed an awareness of how culture may influence the educational pathways of different racial/ethnic groups, his remarks also suggest that alternative approaches (e.g., cuentos [stories], dichos [proverbs], etc.) Latino parents utilize to inspire their children’s educational aspirations continue to go unrecognized.

In several instances, Latino males indicated that their parents trusted them to make sound educational decisions. For instance, Mateo indicated that his mother was not “pushy” with him about his homework. Rather, their relationship was marked by a level of “respect” and understanding that he would follow through on his educational obligations. Similarly, Enrique reported that his parents trusted him to make the “right decision” with school. In fact, Enrique
indicated that he selected his middle and high school prior to attending Private University. As noted by Manuel, Latino male achievers were “custodians of their future” and entrusted with making important educational decisions with minimal input from their parents.

Participants also recounted stories their parents told them to inspire academic achievement. As a child, Mateo recalled his mother telling him stories about his uncle’s academic accomplishments:

In Columbia, there is a competition to find the smartest kid in the whole country. So, they complete standardized tests in high school and my uncle got second place . . . she always talks about how he got into college when he was 16 and how they were always very proud of him.

With the passing of his father, Mateo noted that his uncle served as a “positive male role model.” Hearing the same story repeatedly as a child reinforced the importance of doing well in school. Similarly, Latino males reported hearing stories about how family members overcame significant hardship in pursuit of a better life or an education in the United States. These stories were intended to nurture a ‘culture of possibility’ as participants navigated their way through college (Gándara, 1995).

Lastly, participants talked about how their parents occasionally brought them to work to teach them the “value of a dollar.” Tito’s father managed a travel agency in the Bronx, NY and would bring his children to work on the weekends to show them how he was able to provide for them. Tito attributed the development of his strong work-ethic to the time he spent with his father. Similarly, Marcos indicated that his father expected him to help with the family’s bodega [local grocery store] on the weekends. He recalled numerous occasions when his father told him, “We didn’t have this opportunity . . . but you do.” Neither of Marcos’s parents completed high
school, but the expectation was that their children would, “at the bare minimum,” graduate from college.

It’s what they didn’t say. Simply communicating high expectations was not enough to nurture the aspirations of Latino males in this study. While participants acknowledged that what their parents told them played a central role in nurturing their educational aspirations, they also reported that what they observed was equally important. In some instances, Latino males noted that observing the work-ethic of their parents reinforced the importance of working hard in school. In other instances, participants indicated that watching their parents endure and overcome hardship enhanced their aspirations. Collectively, these experiences nurtured aspirational capital.

Latino parents served as very powerful role models to their children. When participants were asked to identify male and female role models, they almost always referenced their parents first. This was also true for Victor who stated that his father was one of the most influential male figures in his life. Despite the fact that his father never completed high school, Victor believed he played a central role in nurturing his aspirations to attend college. When Victor was asked to elaborate on this point, he shared the following:

. . . it wasn’t what he said, but it is what he didn’t say that kind of pushed me more. My father works in maintenance in a residential building . . . growing up and seeing him wake up at 4:35 a.m. just so he could get to work on time for a wage that barely met our necessities at some points . . . that motivated me to be like, ‘That is not the life I want to live.’

Although he had tremendous respect and admiration for his father, Victor did not want to be “busting his ass for a job that’s not going to pay you anything.” This experience motivated Victor to be more “academically inclined” so that he could have a better future. Similar
sentiments were expressed by participants, particularly first-generation college students, who observed their parents performing labor-intensive tasks at work.

Participants shared other stories that demonstrated their parents’ strong work-ethic and emphasis on education. For instance, Mateo talked about how his mother “attended college twice” so that she could provide her children with a better quality of life. She completed college in Bogota, Columbia but her educational credentials were not acknowledged in the United States. Observing his mother raise three children independently, while working full-time and going to school made Mateo and his siblings want to do well in school. Similarly, Gilberto drew inspiration from his father who was injured in the Vietnam War. He returned to college, applied for several loans, and became a successful entrepreneur who owned a bodega [local grocery store], a jewelry store, and two night clubs. Additionally, while completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) may not be considered a major feat, Tito’s father encountered difficulties with this process because he was not as proficient with English. Yet, Tito indicated that his father would make him sit down to complete the FAFSA. Tito added, “It drives me crazy sometimes, but at the same time, I appreciate it.” His parent’s limited proficiency with English did not deter them from being involved in his education.

Latino male achievers also reported that observing their parents endure hardship also motivated them to achieve. What was particularly interesting about these reports was they almost always centered on the experiences of women in their families. When sharing who his female role models were, Marcos shared the following:

I just think about the women in my family . . . the men have been physically around, but they don’t do shit. So, the women . . . oh my God, these women work so hard and have to
deal with so much shit. Again, sexism and adultery, and all these things . . . they are role models in their own right.

While he did not share additional details regarding the hardships women endured in his family, Marcos derived a great deal motivation from their ability to persevere. Similarly, participants indicated that mothers were forced to contend with racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination in school as well as the workforce. Oscar indicated that his achievements were fueled by his mother’s ability to overcome hardship.

You can’t go through the things she’s gone through and not be a strong person. She’s incredibly spiritual, obviously, since I’m religious . . . that’s important to me. The fact that she raised three boys on her own with no help from her family and was the first person to attend and graduate from college . . . you know, she’s fought through racism her whole entire life. I mean, she’s the definition of a fighter. So, I think life’s a big fight [and] I’m one of the best fighters.

Participants were not afraid to pursue their dreams. In fact, Vincente’s desire to become Surgeon General of the United States was motivated by the maltreatment he witnessed regarding his mother’s epilepsy. Manuel shared similar career aspirations as he reflected on how Latinos do not receive the same care within the medical and mental health community.

**Familial Capital**

Familial capital refers to “those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). The concept of familia is not limited to immediate family members, but may include extended family members (e.g., grandparents, friends, etc.). Through these relationships, individuals learn to value and maintain their ties with families and their communities. As noted by Yosso, our
familia “model lessons of caring, coping and providing (educación), which inform our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness” (p. 79). This section will address how familial capital was nurtured and employed by Latino male achievers to serve others on campus as well as in the community.

**Nurturing Familial Capital.** Latino males placed a high premium on maintaining close ties to their families and communities. Participants attributed the emphasis placed on family values to their Latino culture which they perceived to be “less individualistic than the White American culture.” Antonio added that his peers placed “too much emphasis on personal success.” Latino male achievers believed it was equally important to support their families, peers, and communities success. In general, participants believed these dispositions were nurtured within the context of their families.

Participants learned the importance of giving back by observing their parents’ sacrifices. These sacrifices were generally observed in parents’ efforts to ensure their children received a quality education. For example, Manuel reported that his parents would spend nearly two hours each day driving him to and from his high school. Although Tito’s parents supported his decision to attend a boarding school prior to college, Marcos’s mother did not express similar sentiments when she learned he was admitted to a prestigious high school in North Carolina. Marcos offered the following account of this experience:

I remember when the FedEx package arrived . . . I was gleaming with excitement as I pulled out the school book bag . . . my mother told me, "Y no es pa tanto, porque tu no vas" [Why all the fuss, you're not going] . . . for the next three months, there were these huge battles between my parents and I about them letting me go and me wanting to go . . .
and my parents telling me, ‘No child of mine is going to go off to God knows where to suffer y pasar tiempo duro [suffer and experience hardship]."

While Marcos’s parents were supportive of his educational aspirations, they were reluctant to entrust their care of their son to strangers in a boarding school. This was not surprising considering that emphasis Latinos place on maintaining close familial ties (Sabogal, et al., 1987); however, they recognized this experience would provide him with the quality of life they sought when emigrating from the Dominican Republic.

Participants believed they were expected to make similar sacrifices on behalf of their families. With exception to Manuel and Vincente, most participants indicated that college would provide them with the means to contribute financially to their families. In fact, Oscar reported that his families “financial situation” ultimately influenced his decision to attend Private University. Although he was accepted to several other research universities, Oscar believed PU’s reputation would provide him with the “best means” to care for his family. Remarks offered by other participants suggest that Latino males were expected to fulfill specific expectations based on their gender. Marcos was one of the few participants who specifically discussed these “gendered expectations” in his household:

When I think of my family there’s this whole expectation, and I agree with this expectation . . . the whole notion of having a family, providing for that family, and as a male providing for my parents . . . I don’t think that expectation is as high for my sisters as it is for me.

Oscar and Victor expressed similar sentiments, but indicated that these expectations had less to do with being men and more to do with being the eldest children in their families. Although Oscar was passionate about creative writing, he pursued economics as a major because the
financial gains would allow him to care for his mother and two younger siblings. Whether these expectations were ‘gendered’ and/or based on birth order, most participants indicated that they were expected to make similar sacrifices to support their families. Tito added that he went to college so that he could “get his mother out” of their Bronx, NY neighborhood.

Latino parents also emphasized the importance of giving back to the broader community. Participants indicated that their parents taught them to be humble, respectful to those less fortunate, and civically-minded. Oscar offered one of the most memorable examples regarding his involvement in a Hillel Soup Kitchen:

I almost had to leave last semester because my mom was having health problems . . . I thought, ‘I have to go home and take care of her,’ but we developed a plan and so I ended up staying. But I remember her telling me, ‘You can’t leave . . . because too many people need you in [location of Private University]. I’ve got your brothers here. They can take care of me . . . you need to stay where you’re needed’ . . . So, that’s what keeps me tethered here.

Despite her poor health condition, Oscar’s mother was willing to set aside her needs for the betterment of a homeless community. Familial capital, in this instance, was used to reinforce the importance of serving others and simultaneously provided Oscar with the support needed to continue his studies uninterrupted. It is worth mentioning that Oscar’s civic involvement, particularly with the Hillel Soup Kitchen, was reinforced by his “Christian faith” and the fact that his family was nearly homeless. Although participants did not express similar convictions based on their faith, most indicated that they were involved in service activities that met the needs of populations they identified with on various dimensions of their social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.).
Beyond verbalizing these expectations, Latino male achievers reported that their parents modeled these behaviors. For instance, Mateo discussed how his mother “devoted her life” to serving disenfranchised populations through a non-profit organization. Although she struggled financially, Mateo admired his mother’s willingness to serve others. He added, “I think that made me realize how important it is to go out of our way to help other people . . . and doing things because they’re right, rather than because they’re easy.” Gilberto also expressed tremendous admiration toward his mother who recently started working as a house cleaner in a nursing home. Although she was not formally-educated, Gilberto respected the compassion his mother displayed toward others. During the interview, Gilberto became teary-eyed as he discussed his mother’s interactions with residents in the nursing home. He recounted a recent conversation with his mother regarding a resident who passed away at the nursing home and wished that he could model “half as much” compassion.

More economically-privileged participants’ parents also emphasized the importance of service. Manuel characterized his mother as one of the “most unyielding forces for social justice” and shared the following about her dental practice:

> Having seen the way that she works with her patients . . . she has a practice that treats both undocumented immigrants as well as high-priced lawyers from all over the world. She has patients that fly in from Japan, but she also treats people off the street. I think bearing witness to that was extremely important.

Manuel expressed similar sentiments regarding his father’s “strength of character.” He was employed by the Department of the Army (DA) and designed weapon systems intended to protect soldiers during combat. He believed his father could be making “three times as much money” working in the private sector, but he elected to do “work that was far more
consequential.” Collectively, these experiences played a formative role in Manuel’s dispositions toward service. After completing graduate study abroad, Manuel planned to use his knowledge in economics and nursing to address global health disparities.

**Employing Familial Capital.** For many participants, witnessing their parents’ sacrifices and public service played an important role in the activities they became involved in during college. It was interesting to hear Latino males discuss the origins of their altruistic motivations. When discussing their involvement on campus as well as in the community, several participants indicated that they had always been invested in giving back. In fact, Enrique believed his purpose in life was to “create a more just, socially-responsible, and democratic world” in any way possible. When asked to elaborate on this statement, Enrique added:

> Whether that means in my relations with my family and friends . . . it doesn’t necessarily have to be like, ‘I’m going to solve poverty.’ But in whatever I do . . . always thinking of my principles and working towards a more just society. And that can come in the form of education, direct action, being a lawyer . . . but knowing that I’m trying to create a more socially-just world.

Although Latino male achievers expressed similar convictions when sharing their educational and professional aspirations, other participants attributed the development of their altruistic motivations to their development during college. As Tito reflected on his service activities, he shared the following:

> I think this reflects my thinking now and my maturity over the years . . . when I came to college I thought more about my career and money, because that’s what I saw . . . but now I'm learning a lot of different things . . . like what I can do to add value to someone
else’s life or society, in general. Which is why I’ve decided that I'm going to go back to school . . . I have to do more than just work. I have to do something of value.

Tito attributed his disposition toward service to his development during college; however, his aspiration to pursue a lucrative career was motivated by the desire to provide for his family. While Tito perceived that getting a good education would provide him with the means to serve his family, he later recognized that his education could also serve society. Thus, Tito’s disposition toward service was nurtured within the context of his family. Oscar expressed similar sentiments when discussing his “transformation” during college. Although he struggled in making the initial transition to college, Oscar believed his experience was enhanced once he focused less on himself and directed his attention to the needs of others. It should be noted that Oscar’s mother played a central in nurturing familial capital. Similar reports were offered by participants who engaged in curricular and co-curricular activities that were aligned with their altruistic motivations and presented them with opportunities to serve others.

Despite the fact that only a few participants commented on their involvement in curricular activities, their reports suggest that Latino male achievers valued classroom experiences that facilitated their engagement in the community. Victor, for instance, talked about the value of learning about “reciprocal altruism,” a social interaction phenomenon where an individual makes sacrifices for another individual in expectation of similar treatment. Similarly, Oscar and Tito commented on several courses that influenced their decision to pursue careers in public service. For Oscar, learning about the not-for-profit sector in his Management 100 course was a “pivotal experience” and influenced him to participate in the School of Business’ Impact Initiative, a program that emphasizes innovation, global awareness, and public service within the business sector. In pursuit of his Urban Studies minor, Tito conducted research, volunteered at a
charter school, and completed an internship with the New York City Department Health which he perceived to be very formative experiences. Although he was still unclear about whether to pursue a career in education or health policy, Tito was certain that he would continue to focus his attention on addressing social problems in urban settings. Collectively, these experiences reveal how familial capital influenced the involvement patterns of participants in this study.

Latino male achievers invested a considerable amount of time in co-curricular activities that presented them with opportunities to give back to their communities and peers at-large. After successfully completing his first year of college, Gilberto served as a counselor for first-year students affiliated with the University’s College Achievement Program (UCAP), a summer bridge program that provides academically-talented underrepresented student populations with resources and other supportive services needed to make the transition to college. Through the UCAP, Gilberto organized educational workshops, social outings, and other activities to promote group cohesion among students. Seven of the ten participants indicated that they participated in similar bridge programs prior to attending Private University and most of them served as formal mentors to first-year students affiliated with other offices on campus including El Centro [The Center], the Latino Cultural Center; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center; and High School Access Program. Vincente was one of the few participants who indicated that he did not benefit from participating in similar programs, but this did not deter him from serving as a first-year mentor through El Centro. When Vincente was asked to elaborate on this point, he shared the following:

I participated in the mentor program, because I didn’t want someone to make the same mistakes that I did . . . give someone the mentor that I never had, so they wouldn’t have
to learn the same things . . . I wish I would’ve [had] help . . . So, that’s why I joined the mentoring program at [El Centro].

Along these lines, Manuel talked about how his experience as a first-year resident informed his decision to serve as a Resident Assistant (RA) in a first-year residence hall:

I made the active choice to live with freshmen . . . because most people would run to the high rises. Those are the really desirable spots . . . not because being an RA is easy or getting that job is easy, but the high rises are often the halls that have so many applicants. I actively chose to be in the [first-year residential community] because I think having a strong RA is one of the most important things that a first-year student could have, right.

While the aforementioned examples focused on how Latino males served others through formal co-curricular activities, it should also be noted that participants also engaged their peers in more informal settings. For instance, Mateo indicated that he served as an informal mentor to students in the School of Business. Similarly, Tito and several others shared how they supported their Latino peers by offering them advice, introducing them to members of their social networks, and connecting them to resources on campus. Participants viewed their peers, particularly other Latino students, as extensions of their families and offered them support to facilitate their transition to college.

Latin male achievers also reported that they demonstrated a “steadfast commitment” to serving others in the broader community. This was reflected in the monthly service activities Marcos organized through La Sociedad, the Latino Honor Society, of which more than half of the participants were inducted into because of their academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to serving the Latino community. As Victor reflected on his involvement with Phi Theta Lambda, a historically Latino fraternity, he stated that organizing their Annual
Thanksgiving Dinner was “one of the highlights” of his career at Private University. While the event was sponsored for students who could not afford to travel home during Thanksgiving, the proceeds generated from this philanthropy were used to fund a scholarship sponsored by the fraternity’s foundation for Latino high school students.

It is also worth mentioning that participants did not limit their service activities to the Latino community. Whereas Enrique established an advocacy group for homeless youth in the community, Oscar spoke extensively about his volunteerism at a local Hillel Soup Kitchen after completing his first year of college. Whenever he returned home, Vincente would visit his former high school and other neighboring schools to talk with students about applying to college and the opportunities available to them at Private University. Tito was involved in a similar educational intervention sponsored by PU’s Student-School Partnership Program. He served as an after-school tutor at a local elementary school. When asked what he derived from this experience, Tito shared:

I’ve gotten a [better] understanding of myself . . . especially coming from where I’ve come from and being someone who has definitely benefited from these types of programs in the past . . . it’s just a way of giving back . . . So, I guess those are the benefits. It just makes me [happy] that I’m adding value to others’ lives and paying my dues for all the things that I have received. And at this point, I still don’t feel like I’ve given back enough.

While Tito believed it was important to serve others, his remarks also reveal that Latino male achievers gave back to communities they closely identified with and perceived as extensions of their families. Participants expressed similar convictions regarding the importance of giving back to the community; particularly, populations they perceived were underserved. As previously mentioned, Latino males did not equate success with doing well in school. Rather, they equated
success with being able to serve others in their community. In many instances, these were communities they received similar support from prior to attending Private University.

**Social Capital**

Social capital can be understood as “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Yosso suggests these networks provide both instrumental and emotional support. Whereas *instrumental support* is a direct form of social support, encompassing help in the form of money, time, and other explicit interventions; *emotional support* is generally derived from family members or friends who convey empathy, concern, love, or trust. This section will address how Latino male achievers’ networks provided them with instrumental support and emotional support at Private University.

**Instrumental Support.** Latino male achievers derived instrumental support from various sources. However, the reports offered by participants generally focused on how others reached out to them prior to attending college as well as during their time at Private University (PU). Although Latino male achievers spoke extensively about their interactions with peers, specifically older Latino students, participants also noted they received instrumental support through college preparatory programs and educators who were committed to their success.

Contrary to their interactions with White students, participants reported that their Latino peers often reached out to them when they arrived on campus. As he reflected on his first year at PU, Marcos indicated that he became “jaded” because of the interactions he had with White students in his residence hall. As the only Latino student in his residence hall, Marcos made a conscious effort to connect with other residents living in his building. However, his peers never “reciprocated.” He added:
As I look back, I wonder . . . ‘Why was I extending my hand?’ Statistically, you would think that being in the majority they would reach out to [me]. But it wasn’t like that. And that has sort of repeated itself in multiple instances throughout campus as far as my engagement with the larger upper-middle class White community at [Private University].

Interestingly, Marcos found the community he was seeking among a group of Latina seniors living in an off-campus apartment. He indicated that they invited and welcomed him into their home, but more importantly, they never stopped checking in on him during his first year at Private University. Several participants shared similar reports regarding their interactions with Latinas on campus. In fact, when Vincente was asked to identify individuals who were most supportive of him during college, he immediately responded, “My girlfriend . . . by far.” She reviewed his papers, shared studying tips, and discussed strategies related to balancing academic and social commitments.

Older Latino male students also played an instrumental role in participants’ transitions to college. For example, Tito attributed the connections he made within the Latino community to his relationship with Andrew, a Latino upperclassmen, who took him around campus and introduced him to students who were involved in Latino-based organizations:

He introduced me to a lot of people . . . and the great thing was that every time he introduced me to someone . . . I would branch out and meet a whole different group of people. Like, when he introduced me to the president of the [Dominican Student Association] . . . I met all the students in [Raices], the Latino dance troupe . . . and then I met all the people who lived in the Latino Residence Hall at [Private University].

So, that’s kind of how my transition started.
Along these lines, Victor shared how his “big brother” in Raices also helped him transition at Private University. Although this student was primarily responsible for teaching him dance techniques, Victor indicated that the support he received from him extended beyond the organization. On one occasion, Victor recalled that his brother took him out to dinner and gave him a tour of a neighboring Puerto Rican community. Similar to other participants, Victor did not believe he would have ever left the “[PU] bubble” if he had not joined Raices.

Although the reports offered by Latino male achievers generally centered on how their peers supported them in making the social transition to college, several participants indicated that their peers also provided them with academic support. When Victor was participating in his fraternity’s induction process, he noted that one of the members would “stay up late” with him until he completed his statistics assignments. Victor believed that had he not been in “close proximity” with his fraternity brother, he would have failed the course. Through the Latino Honor Society, Vincente became acquainted with his girlfriend who provided him with feedback on his writing and other academic assignments. Participants also noted how their Latino peers supported their academic success in more subtle ways. For example, Latino male achievers reported that their peers would offer them words of encouragement, form study groups, and occasionally prepare meals for each other throughout the semester. Although Tito believed he was “lucky” to have a strong Latino peer base, the reports offered by other participants indicate that these relationships were not based on good fortune. Participants who were involved in Latino-based student organizations indicated that their peers had a vested interest in supporting members of their community at Private University.

Latino male achievers also derived instrumental support from networks that extended beyond their peers at Private University. While only half of the participants commented on their
involvement in college preparatory programs, their experiences reveal that these programs provided students with myriad resources. For instance, Antonio talked about participating in the Partnership Scholars (TPS), a program for low-income college aspirants, which provided him with mentorship, educational and cultural enhancement activities, and guidance with the college application process. Antonio also noted that the TPS provided him with a generous stipend that he used to travel to Europe, participate in a tennis camp, and visit several colleges outside of California.

Those who participated in programs like Prep for Prep, New Jersey SEEDS, and the Oliver Scholars Program also noted that these programs facilitated their access to prestigious and well-resourced high schools. Coincidentally, both Victor and Tito indicated that their sixth grade teacher was instrumental in getting them into their college preparatory programs. Victor added that participating in Prep for Prep (PFP) helped him to gain admission to the Horace Mann School, secure his first internship, and travel to South Africa. While Marcos believed the financial support he received from NJ SEEDS and several other programs was much-needed, he emphasized that the network was essential. He attributed his success to the “constant networks of folks” who understood the challenges he faced and who were willing to intervene on his behalf.

Latino male achievers did not report receiving as much instrumental support from faculty or administrators at Private University. Notable exceptions were Manuel, who indicated that several faculty members drafted letters in support of his application for the Truman Fellowship, and Gilberto who discussed how his advisor went to “great lengths” to support his application to the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. He presented the following account of this experience:
She was the first person who told me about the program and wrote one of my letters of recommendation. Actually, I applied a little bit late, but they accepted my application with heavy-heavy support from [my advisor], who is pretty good friends with the Director of the McNair Scholars Program.

Gilberto later reported that his McNair faculty mentor offered him unsolicited assistance with securing a paid summer research position at the University of Maryland. Victor also noted how a faculty once reached out to him when he was experiencing some personal difficulties. He indicated that the professor made several accommodations for him after he “opened up to her” and he was able to earn a ‘B’ in a course that he was expected to fail. Marcos presented a similar account of how his supervisor in the LGBT Resource Center recognized he was struggling in school and had a candid conversation with him about reassessing his priorities.

Unfortunately, other participants did not report having similar experiences with faculty or administrators at Private University. While Latino male achievers did not offer substantive explanations regarding their limited interactions with faculty and administrators, those who did indicated that they were hard to access and did not necessarily reach out to them in the same way their peers did on campus. Additionally, Marcos perceived the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic faculty members on campus might be a contributing factor to Latino students’ limited interactions with faculty outside of the classroom. As an aspiring scholar, Marcos noted that participating in the McNair Scholars Program and Mellon Mays Program provided him with the support needed to realize his educational aspirations. Whether participants desired similar support from faculty and administrators at the university was unclear.

**Emotional Support.** Participants perceived the emotional support they received from their peers to be central to their success. When Enrique was asked whether high-achieving
students required support, he noted that having “moral support” and a “sense of community” were essential. For most participants, this sense of community was derived from relationships they established with peers involved in Latino-based student organizations on campus. However, in a few instances, participants reported that administrators at the institution also provided them with emotional support.

Contrary to their experience in mainstream student organizations, participants characterized the relationships they established with peers in Latino-based organizations as being more familial in nature. For instance, when Victor discussed his involvement in Raices, a Latino dance troupe, and Phi Theta Lambda, a historically Latino fraternity, he shared the following:

. . . they’re more than just their namesakes. They have been like my extended family . . . that’s just the nature of being in a fraternity . . . if you’re calling that person your brother, you’re going to look out for them in every aspect of the word . . . academically or emotionally . . . and the same thing with [Raices] . . . those two organizations became pseudo-families when I came here.

Similar sentiments were expressed by participants as they discussed the impetus to join Latino-based student organizations. Enrique, for example, believed the mainstream student organizations he was involved with initially on campus only resulted in the development of “superficial friendships and no sort of family.” This prompted him to join the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), a well-known Latino activist group after his first year of college. During his junior year, Mateo was inducted into La Sociedad, the Latino Honor Society, and described the organization as being “very tight knit” in comparison to the Undergraduate Business Association (UBC), an organization he was involved with since his first year at PU. Similar to other participants, Mateo indicated that the opportunity to establish a
support peer network within the Latino community was the main benefit he derived from La Sociedad.

It was through Latino-based student organizations that most participants derived emotional support from their peers. However, Latino males involved in these organizations reported that this particular form of support was conveyed in subtle ways. Whereas Marcos talked about how his peers would provide him with the “occasional pep talk,” Latino male achievers believed their peers conveyed emotional support by sharing words of affirmation and inquiring about their experience at Private University. When Tito was asked whether Latino students were supportive of him, he shared the following:

Like I said, the community here is very strong. And I think it’s built into the culture that people always ask, ‘How are classes going? How did your midterm go? How is your semester going?’ You know, that’s a big one. People want to know how you’re doing.

Tito perceived his Latino peers to be very supportive of his academic achievement. Similar to his social transition, Tito shared a brief account related to how one of friends reached out to him when they heard he was having trouble in a Mathematics course. Tito did not believe he would have received similar support if he was not involved in Latino-based student organizations on campus. Although participants shared similar reports regarding their interactions with Latino students, it should be noted that a few participants commented specifically on their interactions with Latinas on campus. For instance, Vincente talked about how his girlfriend helped him deal with “the deepest parts of his insecurities” after he failed several courses his sophomore year. Beyond sharing words of encouragement and affirmation, Vincente indicated that hearing about her insecurities was equally helpful. He felt they were able to support each other emotionally.

Tito also reported that several Latina student leaders took care of him when he arrived on
campus. For instance, he noted that the president of the Dominican Student Association (DSA) referred to him as her “DSA baby” and checked up on him all the time during his first year at Private University.

It was rare to hear participants share similar reports regarding their relationships with other Latino males on campus. However, Victor and Tito believed the fraternal bonds they established with other males through Latino-based student organizations provided them with similar support. When discussing his relationship with the individual (i.e., Line Dean) responsible for his induction into Phi Theta Lambda, Victor shared the following:

When I am going through something, I talk to him first . . . really just bear my soul to him. He’s like the big brother I never had . . . He always asked me, ‘How are you doing? How are your grades?’ When I’m struggling, he’ll ask me, ‘What are you going to do to fix that?’ That’s the one thing that I love about him. He never spoon fed me the right answers.

Although Tito was not a member of a Latino fraternity, he indicated that the “fraternal bond” he established with men through Raíces was very positive. Tito stated, “We’re dudes that dance . . . and there’s not that many dudes who dance here.” He believed the males in this group all looked out for each other.

With exception to staff at El Centro, the Latino Cultural Center, participants did not report that they received much emotional support beyond their peer networks at Private University. Participants who frequented El Centro considered it home away from home. While he was not as active in the Latino community during the time of this study, Antonio noted that he would visit El Centro periodically to connect with the staff. This was one of the few places where he felt he could relax on campus. Tito also reported that the staff were “always there if
you needed to vent.” As Vincente reflected on his interactions with the Associate Director of El Centro, he stated, “I’ve spilled out everything . . . even cried in front of her.” During his time at the university, Vincente believed he established a friendship with the Associate Director and like many participants considered the staff an extension of his family.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital includes the “intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Although Yosso offers a much broader conceptualization of linguistic capital, this section will focus primarily on how the ability to communicate in Spanish translated to the achievement patterns of Latino males in this study. Participants indicated that linguistic capital was tied to notions of identity and engagement within the Latino community, and the ability to nurture social capital to a lesser extent. While data collected via the Demographic Profile Form revealed that seven out of ten participants spoke Spanish, the reports offered by Latino males during the interview tell a more complex story.

“Latino enough.” Although notions of identity were not central to this study, the manner in which participants discussed linguistic capital revealed that proficiency with Spanish was tied to their sense of identity and connection to the Latino community. Victor, as well as other participants who were fluent in Spanish, never questioned their identity as Latinos. Marcos believed that Latino students entered the institution with “preconceived notions” of what it meant to be “Latino enough” and attributed much of this to language. This was clearly reflected in Victor’s comments:

Are you really a Latino if you do not speak Spanish? What makes you different from the average American, if you do not know how to speak Spanish . . . language is one of the
essential parts of culture and if you do not have that than what do you have? Do you really know what your culture is [or] what your culture stands for? Then are you really part of the Latino community?

Victor’s remarks draw attention to how language was associated with some participant’s sense of identity and whether other Latino students perceived them as members of their community.

While Vincente served on the executive board of MEChA, a Chicano\textsuperscript{10} activist group on campus, for two years, he questioned whether to identify as “Hispanic” or “American” because he was not as fluent in Spanish. However, he joined the organization as a way to assert his Chicano identity. As a child, Vincente’s father discouraged him from learning Spanish because he experienced discrimination when he arrived in the United States. Although Vincente was raised in La Cruces, NM, he reported that most of his childhood friends were White. Hence, Vincente was unable to maintain his proficiency with Spanish.

Most participants indicated that being able to communicate in Spanish affirmed their ethnic identity and contributed to their sense of responsibility to the Latino community. Manuel believed that being able to speak Spanish served as a “cultural touchstone” and “affirmed an identity” he knew was there, but “didn’t know how to actualize.” Manuel added that he derived strength from his identity as a Latino and attributed this to his proficiency with Spanish. In contrast, Enrique indicated that he did not always identify as Latino. However, language was one way he was able to establish roots within the Latino community. Enrique’s remarks regarding a trip he took to Costa Rica during his first year of college draws attention to how becoming proficient in Spanish contributed to his sense of identity:

\textsuperscript{10} The terms “Chicano” is generally used to reference U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. However, these terms have a wide range of meanings within the Mexican community.
I learned how to speak their way a lot quicker . . . no matter where I was in Latin America, I wouldn’t feel not at home, because of that connection with the language . . . I think that connection with the language was the first thing that got me to identify as a Latino, because before that I didn’t give a shit about Spanish . . . I guess, that’s sort of when I started identifying [and] feeling like, ‘Okay, this language is a part of me. These people are a part of me. When I go back to the States, how do I recreate this feeling?’

Becoming proficient in Spanish not only enhanced Enrique’s sense of identity, but also facilitated the connection he was seeking within the Latino community. It should be noted that prior to this trip, Enrique was not involved in any Latino-based student organizations. When he returned to campus, Enrique joined the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) as well as La Voz, a Latino student magazine, and was later inducted into La Sociedad.

Engaging Latinos. Linguistic capital appeared to play a role in participants’ engagement patterns within the Latino community. With the exception of Oscar and Gilberto, participants reported that they were involved in Latino-based student organizations and other activities pertinent to their community. When prompted to discuss the extent to which proficiency with Spanish contributed positively or negatively to his experience at Private University, Oscar reported that he did not “really use Spanish” on campus. Gilberto indicated that he was “semi-fluent” and could “survive” if he traveled to Puerto Rico; however, he was not as proficient in reading and writing in Spanish. While Oscar and Gilberto did not perceive their limited proficiency with Spanish to be a disadvantage, it was certainly reflected in their engagement patterns within the Latino community.

Participants who were involved in Latino-based student organizations indicated that more complex dynamics were at play within their community. For instance, Mateo stated that he
“could not imagine” attending a Latino-based student organization meeting if he did not speak Spanish. While he did not perceive students would be treated differently, Mateo believed it would be difficult for them to become actively involved in the organization. He perceived students would feel uncomfortable when Latinos communicated in Spanish during organizational meetings. In contrast, Victor did not believe non-Spanish speaking students would be “rejected” by Latinos, but he did note they would be “more inclined to explore other opportunities” available outside of the Latino community.

Although most Latino male achievers perceived their community to be welcoming, it should be noted that four participants indicated that there was a “divide” within the Latino community. When Marcos was asked why some Latinos were reluctant to get involved in the Latino community, he shared the following:

When we talk about the Latino community at [Private University], we need to talk about the international and domestic divide. I hate the word ‘divide,’ because they’re definitely students who bridge the gap . . . But within the domestic Latino sphere, everything for the most part takes place in English. So, folks are hesitant because of their language issues . . . because they don’t know how ‘Americanized’ the Latino community is at [Private University] . . . I think any apprehensions to get involved are very much self-formulated, [but] I don’t think that makes those concerns any less legitimate . . . I just think the domestic Latino community like puts off this image: “Aqui, se habla Espanol [Here, we speak Spanish],” but the reality is that very few do.

While Marcos perceived the divide was pronounced between international and domestic Latino students, his remarks suggest that the domestic Latino community was equally fractured. Within both communities, proficiency with Spanish was a central issue. Among domestic and
international Latinos, Victor believed that “if you did not know how to speak Spanish, you would probably be rejected from the Latin American scene, but not the Latino American scene.” Whereas Latinos were receptive to students who were not proficient in Spanish, Victor perceived that Latin Americans were not receptive of students who could not speak the language. The assumption was that domestic Latinos assimilated into the American culture. However, Tito noted that even within the domestic community, Latino students were expected to preserve their language. Tito expressed pride in being a “Spanish-speaking Latino” and believed that students who did not share his identity would have a more difficult time engaging in the Latino community.

**Nurturing social capital.** Participants who were proficient in Spanish indicated that they were able to take advantage of opportunities that were not accessible to their non-Spanish speaking peers. For instance, Enrique indicated that language served as his “key” into the Latino community at Private University. When Enrique was asked to elaborate on this point, he shared the following:

> I hadn’t always identified as Latino . . . I grabbed on to the idea of language . . . I can speak Spanish well, so that was how I grounded myself . . . If I didn’t know how to speak Spanish, there was no way I would have tried to become part of the [Latino] community.

Although Antonio did not believe speaking Spanish “made that big of a difference,” he noted that his proficiency with the language played a role in the relationships he established with students involved in MEChA and the Latin American Student Association (LASA). Similarly, three participants indicated that they would not have had the opportunity to meet other Latinos, particularly international students, if they were not proficient in Spanish. Tito added that being able to communicate with other Latinos in his “mother-tongue” contributed positively to his
sense of comfort on campus as well as when he visited El Centro, the Latino Cultural Center at Private University.

Linguistic capital also played a role in the opportunities participants were able to take advantage of off-campus. When Mateo interned at J. P. Morgan, a leading financial services firm, he indicated that Mr. Willsey, Head of Investment Banking, had taken an interest in him simply because he could speak Spanish. Mr. Willsey worked in Latin America for nearly a decade and expressed an interest in meeting informally to practice his Spanish; whereas, he “never even looked at” the other summer interns. Interestingly, Mateo reported that he was hired to work under Mr. Willsey’s unit at J. P. Morgan after graduation. Victor shared a similar account regarding an internship he completed with Kaplan Thaler, an advertising firm, during his junior year of college:

. . . businesses value having somebody who cannot only speak Spanish, but who knows the culture . . . Since I knew Spanish and [understood] some of the cultural innuendos, they were coming to me and asking me, “What are they really trying to say here in this advertisement?” So, I translated for them . . . and they were able to make better decisions on which advertisements they approved . . . because even the Mexican advertisers would try to explain it to the U.S. advertisers, but even they had a cultural gap and I was able to ‘bridge that gap.’

Both Manuel and Tito also reported that they were often called upon to translate information when working with organizations that served the Latino community. During his junior year, Manuel completed a rotation in Obstetrics Nursing where he “saw more births than anyone else” because he could speak Spanish. More importantly, Manuel believed that he was “able to reach
patients who were undocumented . . . or grossly disenfranchised” by the U.S. healthcare system because he was proficient in Spanish.

**Navigational Capital**

Navigational capital refers to the “skills of maneuvering through social institutions” that do not consider the specific needs of racial/ethnic minority populations (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Although Yosso (2006) contends that one’s social location influences their navigational strategies, the reports offered by Latino male achievers also reveal that one’s social location plays a role in their access to resources that nurture navigational capital. This was reflected in participants’ reports regarding their participation in various programs that facilitated their navigation to college and use of various social networks at Private University. Furthermore, Latino males discussed how navigational capital was employed to negotiate their perceptions and experiences of the campus climate.

**Navigating through college.** With exception to Mateo, six participants who identified as first-generation and/or low-income students were involved in college preparatory programs prior to completing middle school. These programs provided Latino males with various resources needed to attend prestigious high schools, in some instances; sustain participants’ postsecondary educational aspirations; and gain admission to selective institutions similar to Private University. The reports Latino males shared regarding their participation in programs like Prep for Prep, the Oliver Scholars Program, and New Jersey SEEDS was addressed earlier in this chapter.

Contrary to their peers, Latino male achievers believed they were much more proactive about seeking the support needed to excel in college. As Manuel reflected on his transition to college, he insisted that he was “not afraid” to seek out the resources needed to achieve his goals in college. Similarly, Mateo believed that he took advantage of a lot of opportunities that his
peers missed out on at Private University (PU). Mateo cited his participation in PU’s Preparation Program, a comprehensive four-week summer residential program for incoming first-year students, as evidence of his investment in making the most of college. Victor also took ownership of his experience, but shared a slightly different report regarding his initial transition to the university:

I wish there was more guidance . . . I thought the whole game plan was to get a job after college. But I wish there would have been more information about pursuing research opportunities in Psychology, going into academia, or something else . . . it's there, but you have to be active about actually pursuing it . . . You have to really know your plan and I think I was late in terms of knowing my plan.

Considering that Victor participated in Prep for Prep, it was surprising to hear that he missed out on opportunities to conduct research and engage in other educationally purposeful activities during college. He was able to establish positive relationships with educators through Prep for Prep, but this did not translate to his experience at Private University. The reports offered by other participants revealed that being able to establish similar support systems during college was essential. Marcos asserted, “It’s about the systems in which intelligence is supported, harnessed, or in some cases . . . challenged, undermined, and not validated.” Beyond his “sense of agency,” Marcos attributed his success to participating in programs that facilitated his academic and social transition at Private University.

Prior to their first year of college, several Latino males indicated that they participated in programs that facilitated their academic and social transition to Private University. The most widely cited program was PU’ Preparation Program (PUPP). Although only four participants
attended this program, it should be noted that they all perceived PUPP to be an invaluable experience regardless of whether they needed these services. Marcos added:

"Historically, the purpose of [PUPP] is to assist students who come from more disadvantaged backgrounds . . . And I knew I was an atypical applicant, in the sense that I had gone to this boarding school, but at the same time I attended a boarding school in the mountains of North Carolina. So, I guess, there was a transition coming from the middle of nowhere to an urban center . . ."

Those who participated in PUPP as well as other programs indicated that they were able to get a head start at Private University. Both Manuel and Gilberto commented on how they were able to easily navigate campus and the surrounding community after participating in PUPP. For Manuel, knowing “simple things” like the location of the library and how to get to other academic buildings was extremely beneficial once classes started. Similarly, Gilberto noted that he “knew the campus better than anyone else” before classes commenced and believed that the social outings coordinated through PUPP helped him become more familiar with the city. Furthermore, participants indicated that the opportunity to establish and maintain connections with peers, specifically other Latino students, was a major benefit of the program.

A few participants also commented on how programs like PU’s Preparation Program facilitated their academic transition at Private University. In addition to PUPP, Mateo participated in a leadership development program within the School of Business that he believed contributed to his success. Although Mateo was concerned that he would get “crushed” academically, he later reported that his cumulative GPA during his first semester was higher than subsequent semesters. Participants shared similar concerns regarding their academic performance; however, the opportunity to take courses in various disciplines and get feedback on
assignments from faculty diminished concerns regarding their potential to excel academically. Manuel added that participating in PUPP helped him to develop a strong sense of his resources and trajectory at Private University.

It is worth mentioning that Latino male achievers did not limit their involvement to programs that simply facilitated their initial academic and social transition to college. Several participants commented on internship and research programs that facilitated their navigation to graduate school as well as the workforce. For instance, Victor indicated that through Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) he gained access to prospective employers and professional development opportunities that enhanced his “networking skills [and] interviewing skills.” Similarly, Marcos and Gilberto discussed how conducting research through the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program prepared them to navigate the process of applying to graduate school. While Gilberto was working on his Master’s degree during the time of this study, Marcos reported that he was admitted to a doctoral program at Rutgers University. With the exception of Manuel, Latino male achievers who did not participate in similar programs did not report achieving similar outcomes.

**Navigating the campus climate.** Although several participants acknowledged that Latinos were highly-underrepresented on campus, they never reported being the target of blatant racism at Private University. When asked whether they had experienced prejudice, discrimination, or racism at PU, the reports offered by participants focused on how other racial/ethnic minorities were subjected to more “blatant” forms of racism. Tito shared the following observation of students’ interactions with staff on campus:

... you notice things here and there ... sometimes even in the way that students interact with staff in the dining halls. You will see that there is a difference ... where the students
don’t appreciate the kind service that they receive from what appears to be an all-Black staff in the dining halls. And you hear them say . . . ‘they’re all mean’ [and] ‘always grumpy’ . . . And in the back of my head, I think, ‘If I was serving all of you and making the amount of money that I am making here, I would probably be grumpy too.’

As a “dark skinned” Dominican male, Tito questioned whether his peers would have treated him with the same disregard if he was not enrolled at Private University. He added, “It’s like all of sudden, I have this PU sticker on me . . . so, I’m a completely different species than people in [location of Private University].” Tito’s remark suggests that he was tokenized by his White peers. Tito noted that hearing his White peers talk poorly about African Americans was difficult, because he identified with many of their experiences. He looked the same, shared similar cultural interests, and was raised in a neighborhood that resembled the surrounding community. Mateo shared a similar observation regarding the interactions between White students and African Americans in the community:

. . . the staff who work in the cafeterias are 90% African American and I’ve seen students say some pretty crazy things to them . . . For example, freshman year there was a student who was at the local McDonald’s that is pretty terrible . . . I don’t know if the staff said something to him, but he called the McDonald’s headquarters, complained, and everyone working that night got fired . . . I’ve definitely seen prejudice in that sense . . . maybe not between students, but definitely between students and people who work at the university and in the community.

Similar observations were reported by other Latino male achievers; however, participants maintained that they were never subjected to the same treatment by peers, faculty, or administrators on campus. While participants did not appear disillusioned by these encounters,
several indicated that they expected their “bright” and “intelligent” peers to be more accepting of other cultures. This was not reflective of their experience at Private University.

Although Latino male achievers did not experience overt racism, eight out of ten participants reported that they encountered more subtle forms of racism. When asked to describe these instances, participants often stated that they were “very subtle,” “difficult to point out,” and “always happened.” In fact, Marcos and Manuel used the term “microaggression” to characterize these subtle encounters with racism. While a few participants indicated that they experienced racial microaggressions during high school, their reports focused exclusively on their interactions with peers at Private University.

Participants believed their White classmates dismissed their contributions in subtle ways. Similar to other Latino male achievers, Mateo had difficulty identifying specific instances when his peers behaved in this manner, but he noted that students would never “say it to your face.” Mateo shared how Latino students he knew in the School of Business were often assigned menial tasks when working on group projects. They were asked to run errands, organize supplies, or occasionally proof-read their peers work. When asked if he had similar experiences, Mateo stated that students were “impressed” with his contributions on group projects; however, he did not believe they would express similar sentiments if a White student made a similar contribution. Victor expressed similar concerns regarding his classroom interactions with students in the College of Arts & Science. He questioned why his peers were hesitant to give him greater responsibility when working on group projects. Victor stated that whenever he asked for harder tasks, his peers would only concede if they could “check over” his work or make the “final revisions” prior to submitting assignments. The general sentiment amongst participants was that peers questioned their abilities and possessed much lower expectations of them.
Participants also reported experiencing racial microaggressions beyond the classroom. Marcos shared one of the most memorable accounts regarding his involvement with La Sociedad, the Latino Honor Society:

Last week, we were delivering flyers to students we wanted as new members . . . we’re just waiting outside for somebody to come by and let us in [the building]. And this White girl walks by, opens the door, and we went in behind her and before we even got to the elevator she asked, ‘Do you live in here?’ And I responded, ‘No. But I’m delivering stuff for my Honor Society.’ And on the one hand, I thought she had a valid reason . . . this is [an urban center] . . . Denise and I just walked in right behind her. She lives here and has the right to ask. But then I asked myself, had I been a tall, blond, White guy would she be asking me, ‘Do you live here?’ ‘No, I’m sorry. I don’t think so.’ So, shit like that always happens.

Similar to Marcos, participants frequently questioned the subtle but racist remarks made by their peers. Whereas Mateo wondered why his peers “seemed surprised” by the offer employment he received from J. P. Morgan, Oscar questioned individuals who commented on his ability to “speak well.”

The manner in which participants experienced racial microaggressions appeared to be influenced by their social location. With exception to Manuel and Enrique, it should be noted that Latino males who reported being the targets of ‘negative’ racial microaggressions were students who looked Black or Latino. In particular, the issue of phenotype was raised by several participants who experienced racial microaggressions. Oscar perceived that looking “Black” played a significant role in how he was microaggressed at the Hillel Soup Kitchen at Private University. Although he volunteered weekly at the kitchen since his first year of college, Oscar
reported that student volunteers would often mistake him for a homeless person. When asked to describe an experience, Oscar laughed as he recounted the following story:

... this happens every week, so it doesn’t bother me. But there are a few that I just have to laugh at. One time, I sat down and started talking to several homeless people and a female volunteer placed a plate in front of me. I told her, ‘No, I’m a student.’ I don’t say, ‘I’m not homeless.’ I don’t want to act like I’m better than them. And she responded, ‘Oh, at [Downtown University][11]?’ I asked her, ‘Why would a Downtown University (DU) student come all the way over here to work in a soup kitchen when they can do it at DU?’ Like, I couldn’t be an Ivy League student... that was one time where I thought, ‘Now you’ve gone too far.’ It’s one thing to associate race with socioeconomic factors, but it’s another thing to associate race with your intelligence.

This was one of the few occasions Oscar responded to a racial microaggression at the Hillel Soup Kitchen. Although Oscar wore “preppie clothes,” carried an “iPod 24/7,” and was “clean shaven” when he volunteered at the soup kitchen, student volunteers perceived he homeless simply because he looked Black.

In contrast, the accounts offered by Enrique and Manuel indicate that some Latino male achievers experienced racial microaggressions in a different way. While they reported being microaggressed by their peers, Enrique and Manuel did not attribute this to ‘looking’ Latino. Enrique noted that being Latino was reflected in “the way you look... dress... speak English and even your use of Spanish.” Although Enrique embraced his Latino identity, the standing joke among his Latino peers who attended predominantly White high schools and had limited interactions with other Latinos prior to college was that he was “White... but only on the

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[11] The pseudonym, Downtown University, will be used when referring to this institution which is located in the same city as Private University.
inside,” he insisted. Similarly, Manuel indicated that when he participated in the Leadership Weekend sponsored by the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, his peers nicknamed him “Ethnically Ambiguous Beige” because they could not decipher his racial/ethnic identity. As he continued to reflect on this experience, Manuel noted that skin color served as a very handy proxy to examine his level of comfort moving in and out of different racial/ethnic communities. This was reflected in Manuel’s active participation in several student organizations including the Student Government Association, Minority Student Coalition, and Interfaith Dialogue Initiative.

Beyond having different experiences from other participants, Enrique and Manuel perceived that not being recognized as Latinos also influenced the manner in which they responded to racial microaggressions at Private University. When he arrived on campus, Enrique noted this was the first time he experienced any “racial politics and tension” in his life; however, he did not perceive these experiences were directed toward him. Enrique added, “People just think I’m Asian . . . so, it’s kind of a free ride, because the stereotypes are not as negative.” Contrary to other participants, the assumption was that he was intellectually competent and deserved to be admitted to the university. While Enrique appeared to experience less dissonance negotiating racial microaggressions, he continued to struggle with not feeling “Latino enough” in comparison to other participants in this study. Manuel presented a slightly different account regarding his ability to “pass for White.” When asked to elaborate on this ‘passing phenomenon,’ he reported the following:

That’s mostly a high school issue. In order to get by . . . I had two different cultural literacies. The Hispanic [literacy] that derives from Tele Mundo and Univision . . . and the cultural literacy you derive from reading people [and] watching American TV . . . And I think having those dual literacies was a large part of being able to pass for White . .
. Passing was very easy, partly because as I said earlier, I was ‘Ethnically Ambiguous Beige.’ That certainly makes things easy.

Although Manuel indicated that “passing” was a high school issue, it was not until his junior year of college that he embraced being an “angry person of color.” It was during this time that he served as Chair of the Minority Student Coalition (MSC) and began to engage in more activist efforts at Private University.

To an extent, the manner in which Enrique and Manuel described the experience of passing helps to explain why a few other participants did not talk extensively about racial microaggressions. Similar to Manuel, both Gilberto and Vincente possessed racially ambiguous features that would lead others to conclude they were not Latino. Vincente, for example, was a light-skinned Mexican with hazel-colored eyes. Although Gilberto never reported experiencing racial microaggressions, Vincente indicated that members of his rowing team were “prejudiced” toward undocumented immigrants. It was not clear whether Vincente’s teammates knew he was Latino, but whenever they made statements about how “illegal immigrants” were taking jobs from Americans and should go back to Mexico, Vincente kept his “mouth shut.” This was reminiscent of Enrique’s willingness to pass as Asian and his disregard of negative stereotypes he heard about Latinos at Private University.

Regardless of whether Latino male achievers were able to pass or not, they were all negatively affected by racial microaggressions. Although participants never indicated these experiences were negative, their reports revealed that racial microaggressions compromised their academic and social experiences in college. Along these lines, Manuel reported that while he “learned a lot from passing” in school, he “never wished this experience on another person of
color.” Similar sentiments were expressed by Enrique regarding his ability to pass at Private University.

**Resistant Capital**

Resistant capital refers those “knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Although Latino male achievers did not speak as extensively about this particular form of capital, the reports offered by few participants revealed that resistant capital manifested in two ways. In response to stereotypes associated with Affirmative Action, participants adopted behavioral patterns to prove they were equally, if not more intellectually competent than their White peers. Latino males also became involved in co-curricular activities that addressed issues pertinent to social justice and promoted positive change at Private University.

**Proving.** Despite their history of academic achievement, participants were still preoccupied with proving they were as intellectually competent as their peers at Private University. While Enrique was confident in his ability to do well in college, he also reported feeling pressure to be the “model Latino student.” More than two-thirds of the participants indicated that they experienced similar pressure and attributed this to the unsubstantiated claim that Latinos were often admitted to the institution because of “Affirmative Action.” Tito dismissed this claim and insisted that his Latino peers deserved to be at PU; however, he questioned the process by which other students were admitted to the institution:

> We all understand that we’re smart individuals [who] deserve to be here. We also understand that there are other people that probably shouldn’t be here . . . a lot of famous people’s children are here because of their name alone . . . a lot of legacies who probably
shouldn’t be here . . . and I think that’s something that always stays in the back of our mind.

While Latino male achievers did not express similar concerns, several participants did emphasize that they were equally “capable,” “worked hard,” and “earned their spot” at Private University. It is worth mentioning that Oscar was the only participant who reported that some racial/ethnic minority students benefited from Affirmative Action. Although he characterized this as a “positive form of racism,” Oscar believed that Latinos were still penalized and treated inequitably because of Affirmative Action. The reports offered by other participants drew attention to other negative outcomes associated with having to prove they were equally competent college students.

A few participants appeared to internalize negative stereotypes held about Latinos and adopted behaviors to demonstrate their intellectual competence. As he reflected on his academic accomplishments, Mateo expressed pride in his ability to “do a lot more” than what he initially thought was possible during college. Mateo thought he was “going to do terrible” in comparison to his peers in the School of Business and believed he needed to prove he was equally capable of doing well academically. Similar to other participants, Mateo reported that he was “very vocal” in class and devoted more time to course assignments to “show people that . . . he was just as qualified to be at [Private University].” Interestingly, participants did not perceive the need to demonstrate their competence in other contexts. Manuel was the only student who reported the need to prove he was equally capable of leading the Student Government Association (SGA) on campus. Manuel attributed this to the fact that he was the “first Latino” to serve on the SGA’s Executive Board. He described the organization as being “vastly unrepresentative” of the racial/ethnic composition of the student body at Private University.
Similarly, the need to prove was magnified by the fact that participants were often the only racial/ethnic minority students in their classes. Tito shared the following account regarding the need to prove himself among his peers:

Honestly, I don’t really feel like talking in my classes sometimes . . . but I have to say something . . . maybe I’m being a bit cynical, but I don’t want students to think that the one Latino student in the class isn’t participating [because] ‘he is not as smart as us.’ I’ve always felt that I had to prove myself, even though I’ve always proven myself to myself.

Tito was accustomed to being the only racial/ethnic minority student in high school and learned to assert himself in similar situations. Latino male achievers also asserted themselves in other ways. For instance, Enrique noted that he did not speak English with a “typical Spanish accent.” Enrique believed that speaking “ultra-correct English” commanded the respect of his peers and conveyed that he was well-educated. In general, Latino male achievers did not believe it was enough to “achieve the status quo;” they had to “go above and beyond” to succeed at Private University.

Although participants believed they had proven they were equally, if not more competent than their peers, a report offered by Marcos revealed that this “burden of responsibility” could have an adverse effect on other Latino male achievers. When Marcos was asked whether he had to prove himself on campus, he shared the following:

In moments of clarity, I tell myself ‘I’m doing well’ . . . but on the day-to-day, it’s all about questioning, insecurity, and feeling like you’ve not done enough . . . and by default, feeling like that’s a reflection of your self-worth or lack thereof . . . it’s this constant grind of proving. I feel like I have to prove everything to everyone around me, because whether I’m saying it or not, my presence here speaks volumes to a lot of things.
While the aforementioned passage draws attention to how proving can have a detrimental effect on minority students, Marcos’s remarks also illuminate the “collateral responsibility” participants assumed for promoting positive change during their time at Private University.

**Advocacy and activism.** Contrary to their peers, participants believed they were more involved in activities that reflected their commitment to social justice. Oscar asserted, “If you did ‘empirics’ on this . . . you’d see that Latinos tend to be more interested in the activities I’m involved in [at the university].” Oscar attributed his involvement in the Hillel Soup Kitchen, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and University’s High School Access Program to identifying with the “plight” of marginalized communities.

Although Latino male achievers did not speak extensively about their advocacy efforts, the reports offered by a few participants highlight how students sought to raise the consciousness of their peers about various issues on campus. Marcos was involved in several initiatives that addressed concerns pertinent to the Latino and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community at Private University. During the time of this study, Marcos also served as Co-Chair of the Latino Dialogue Initiative which provided a forum to discuss social, cultural, and political issues pertinent to the U.S. Latino experience. Through the Palante [Forward] Project, a spoken word group at PU, Marcos also “advocated for queer and Latino issues” and later worked with minority students in the surrounding community on a creative writing initiative. Similarly, Victor reported that after attending the Latino Ivy League Conference (LILC) his first year of college, he served as Head Delegate and prepared a delegation to attend the conference the following academic year. Victor noted that this was one of the few opportunities Latino students had to discuss issues pertinent to Latinos on their respective campuses. Both Marcos and Vincente were selected as delegates for the LILC during their tenure at Private University.
Several participants also started organizations to raise awareness about issues related to social justice. During his first year of college, Gilberto co-founded a student-organization, *Bridges*, to promote dialogue across racial/ethnic minority groups on campus. Enrique also played an instrumental role in establishing several student organizations that addressed pressing national and international issues. In collaboration with several other students, he established the University’s first housing cooperative and also co-founded PU for Palestine to communicate a “different narrative” related to the Arab/Israeli Conflict.

Participants did not limit their advocacy efforts to co-curricular activities. Both Manuel and Oscar pursued similar interests through their course work. For instance, Manuel noted that his senior thesis addressed White privilege in nursing education and “how the doctrine of cultural competence . . . invalidates and hegemonizes non-White cultures.” Manuel also discussed how he drew on theories in gender studies, history, and Black feminism to “conceptualize vulnerable populations” within the U.S. health care system. Similarly, Oscar completed a research paper to raise awareness about the Impact Initiative within the School of Business. While Oscar reported that his classmates were less concerned about the welfare of the surrounding community, he maintained that “if you could leverage the school’s reputation, resources, and faculty into a cohesive unit” through the Impact Initiative, this could enhance the educational experience of all students on campus.

The reports Latino male achievers offered regarding their activism on campus were somewhat inconsistent. Whereas most participants agreed that students were not as politically active on campus, they presented conflicting reports regarding the opportunities to become involved in similar activities. Through the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), Enrique was able to identify students who were inclined to engage in activism on campus;
however, he noted that finding these “pockets of resistance” was difficult. Participants who were involved in Latino-based student organizations did not appear to have difficulty finding like-minded peers. In fact, Tito reported that “the rest of the [PU] community thinks [Latinos] were very active . . . maybe too active . . . and always fighting for things.” When Tito was asked why his peers thought Latinos were “always fighting” for things on campus, he offered the following response:

. . . it’s because we kind of grew up that way. We always have to fight for something here. Nothing is ever given to us. If we want respect in this country, sometimes that’s what you have to do . . . sometimes you have to break down barriers . . . we just have this inner drive to make change . . . We are always going to keep pushing, because [we] never want to see things go back to the way they were or for things to get worse.

While Manuel was not as involved in Latino-based student organizations, he engaged in acts of resistance through the Minority Student Coalition (MSC) and sought similar change within the Student Government Association (SGA). As noted by Marcos, Latino male achievers were not only challenging “systems of oppression” by their presence, but through their activism in student organizations at Private University.

Observing that Latinos were highly-underrepresented served as the impetus for several participants to exercise their resistant capital. When Tito learned that PU enrolled the “lowest percentage” of Latinos within the Ivy League, he mobilized members of the Latino Student Alliance to address this concern with the Admissions Office. While Tito believed this experience helped him understand the “inner workings” of the institution, he noted that increasing the representation of Latinos on campus was the most important outcome of this experience. As Tito continued to reflect on this experience, he shared the following account:
I worked on a lot of projects to help the university with seeking out and attracting Latinos, and this past year we actually had the biggest Latino class in the history of [Private University] . . . I was incredibly proud that I was part of an organization that help bring all these students here.

In collaboration with the Admissions Office, Tito noted that members of the Latino Student Alliance (LSA) organized programs for parents, advocated to have admissions materials printed in Spanish, and contacted prospective students directly to discuss the opportunities available to Latinos campus. Tito added, “That’s what Latinos do here . . . they make change . . . it’s just part of the Latino culture at [Private University].” Although he perceived the minority student coalitions to be fairly active, he noted that the LSA was “historically” the most active coalition on campus. When he was elected to serve on the executive board of the Latino Student Alliance, it was expected that he would maintain the LSA’s legacy of promoting positive change at Private University.

Although Manuel was never involved with the LSA, he sought to achieve similar goals within the Student Government Association (SGA). During his sophomore year, Manuel joined the SGA staff and noticed that the organization was “vastly unrepresentative” of Latinos as well as other racial/ethnic minority groups. Although Manuel was acutely aware that he was the only Latino student involved in the SGA, he believed this was a “powerful experience” and felt compelled to change the organization. Manuel began to work on a project with different racial/ethnic and gender orientation groups to explore their perceptions of the Student Government Association, and whether the SGA was adequately addressing the concerns of underrepresented student populations on campus. The results of this investigation were published in a 40-page report that was disseminated to students, faculty, and administrators across the
institution. Although Manuel did not consider his involvement with the SGA to be the “most fulfilling” experience, he characterized it as a “defining role” at Private University. This experience prompted him to serve as Chair of Minority Student Coalition where he developed his “social justice consciousness” and furthered his “intercultural agenda.” Through the UMC, Manuel collaborated with other minority-based student organizations to raise awareness about issues related to discrimination and oppression on campus.

**Summary on Community Cultural Wealth**

The reports offered by Latino male achievers draws attention to how community cultural wealth was nurtured and employed to facilitate their achievement. With regard to aspirational capital, participants indicated that their parents played a central in nurturing their educational aspirations using verbal and non-verbal messages. Although Latino male achievers reported that they “always knew” they would attend college, not all families were able to provide participants with resources needed to fulfill these dreams. Participation in college-preparatory programs provided first-generation participants with additional support needed to achieve their educational goals. Latino male achievers also reported that they derived different forms of support from their social networks. For most participants, social capital was evidenced primarily through their peer networks at Private University. Although Latino male achievers reported that they derived instrumental support and emotional support from peers, specifically other Latinos, it was surprising to hear that only a few participants derived similar support from faculty and administrator on campus. With exception to the use of cuentos [stories] and Spanish proficiency, Latino male achievers did not speak extensively about other forms of linguistic capital. Whereas cuentos were used to nurture participants’ educational aspirations, Latino male achievers indicated that proficiency with Spanish enhanced their sense of identity and facilitated their
engagement within the Latino community. Participants did not employ the same strategies to navigate their way through college. For some participants, access to college preparatory programs and institutional programs played an important role in their ability to navigate through college. Interestingly, some participants also reported that they were able to make use of an unusual form of navigational capital. Participants who were able to ‘pass’ noted that they experienced racial microaggressions in ways that differed from other Latino male achievers. Finally, resistant capital was demonstrated through participants’ efforts to ‘prove’ their intellectual competence as well as their efforts to raise the consciousness of their peers and promote positive change on campus.
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, & CONCLUSION

This study was inspired by the dearth in published research regarding the experiences of Latino male collegians at predominantly White institutions. Despite the increased representation of Latinas/os at postsecondary institutions, the extant literature published on Latinas/os collegians focuses disproportionately on factors that contribute to their underrepresentation and underachievement (Fry, 2002; Swail, et al., 2004; Swail, et al., 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). While the aforementioned studies illuminate educational disparities that persist between Latinas/os and other racial/ethnic groups, they draw attention away from the emergent gender gap that exists within the Latino community. According to the American Council on Education, Latinas outpace Latinos in high school completion rates by a margin of ten percentage points (Ryu, 2008). It should also be noted that between 1987 and 2006, the enrollment rates for Latinas increased from 18 percent to 31 percent; whereas, Latinos only increased from 17 percent to 21 percent during the same period (Ryu, 2008). College persistence rates among Latinas/os are equally problematic. These disturbing trends warrant research that informs empirical investigations, policies, and practices intended to improve the educational outcomes achieved by Latino males at postsecondary institutions.

To address this emergent crisis, this study explored how ten Latino males conceptualized and demonstrated their achievement at a highly-selective, predominantly White university. The sample was comprised of logradores [Latino male achievers] who maintained a cumulative grade point average above a 3.0, among other criterion, during the time of this study. This chapter provides brief summary of the study as well as an overview of the methods and keys findings. Additionally, the reports offered by logradores are discussed in relation to the extant
literature published on Latina/o collegians, college men, and racial/ethnic minority achievers within higher education. Implications for research, theory, and practice are presented prior to offering concluding remarks regarding the experiences of Latino male collegians in the United States.

Summary

In recent years, the underrepresentation of Latino males within higher education has garnered the attention of scholars, practitioners, and policy makers (Harris, 2009; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009, 2011; The College Board, 2010). Although discourse regarding the emergent gender gap has been met with skepticism, research indicates that the cumulative disadvantages Latino males experience navigating the P-12 educational pipeline leaves many young men ill-prepared to make the transition to college (King, 2000; Mead, 2006). Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009) contend that socio-cultural factors, peer dynamics, and labor force demands contribute to the underrepresentation of Latino male collegians. Furthermore, research indicates that Latino males are likely to perceive the culture of predominantly White institutions as unwelcoming and dismissive. Beyond impeding the educational outcomes achieved by Latinas/os (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, et al., 2005; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000), these experiences can compromise the psychological well-being of Latino male college students (Gloria, et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the extant literature published on Latino male collegians does not adequately account for the experiences of students who excel academically at postsecondary institutions.

Research on racial/ethnic minority achievers provides a response to deficit-oriented discourse regarding the academic and social experiences of underrepresented student populations within higher education. Despite the proliferation of studies on high-achieving African American
male college students (Bonner II, 2001a, 2010; Harper, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009a; Harper & Griffin, 2011; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hrabowski III, 1991; Hrabowski III, et al., 1998; Maton, et al., 1998), the experiences of Latino male achievers have received little scholarly attention and have largely gone unacknowledged within higher education (Pérez II, in press). This study contributes to the extant literature on high-achieving racial/ethnic minorities by focusing exclusively on Latino males who excel academically at a highly-selective, predominantly White institution. The research questions guiding this work were:

1) How do Latino male achievers conceptualize their achievement?

2) How does community cultural wealth translate to the achievement patterns of Latino males at a highly-selective predominantly White institution?

This study employed Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework to facilitate an understanding of how Latino male college students conceptualize and demonstrate their achievement. In Whose Culture Has Capital, Yosso argues that researchers have misappropriated Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) theory of cultural capital which posits that individuals possess forms of knowledge, both tangible and intangible, that facilitate their social mobility. She asserts that researchers’ narrow conceptualizations of cultural capital fails to account for the “knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77). Within this framework, community cultural wealth is nurtured by six forms of capital: 1) Aspirational capital, or the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future in the face of real or perceived barriers; 2) Familial capital, the cultural knowledge nurtured among familia [kin] that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition; 3) Linguistic capital, which represents the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style; 4) Navigational
capital, or the skills of maneuvering through social institutions; 5) Resistant capital, which is the knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality; and 6) Social capital, which captures the networks of people and community resources. It should be noted that the abovementioned forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static; rather, they can be cultivated and sustained through a dynamic process whereby one form of capital may be nurtured by other forms of capital.

A qualitative methodological approach grounded in phenomenology was used to explore how Latino males conceptualized and demonstrated their achievement, as well as the ways in which various forms of capital and community cultural wealth informed their achievement. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), the phenomenological tradition focuses on understanding and describing the “lived experiences” of research participants. Phenomenological inquiry seeks to describe what participants have experienced, how they have experienced it, and the meanings they make of their shared experience (Moustakas, 1994). This study was conducted at Private University, a highly-selective PWI located in the northeast region of the United States during the 2011 – 2012 academic years. Nominations offered by senior administrators, student affairs professionals, and Latina/o students resulted in the identification of ten Latino male achievers at Private University. Latino males who agreed to participate in this study were asked to complete a demographic profile form accessible via Survey Monkey, submit an electronic-copy of their academic transcript as verification of their grade point average, and participate in a three hour semi-structured interview with the Principal Investigator. Adhering to Moustakas (1994) recommendations regarding the analysis of qualitative data, a step-by-step technique was used to analyze interview transcripts.
Discussion of Key Findings

The extant literature published on racial/ethnic minority achievers offers varying conceptualizations of achievement. Broadly, scholars have conceptualized achievement based on: grades (Bonner II, 2001a; Hurtado, 1994), attendance at selective institutions or participation in rigorous academic programs (Ceballo, 2004; Fries-Britt, 1998; Hrabowski III, 1991; Rivas-Drake, 2008), and completion of advanced degrees (Gándara, 1995). While grades were used as a criterion for participation in this study, the reports offered by Latino male achievers indicate that focusing exclusively on academic performance does not adequately account for participants’ conceptualizations of achievement. The manner in which Latino males conceptualized their achievement is illustrated in Figure 3: Conceptualizations of achievement in relation to community cultural wealth.

Latino males maintained that their achievement was Not Just About Grades which is represented by a blue square near the center of Figure 3. Although participants expressed pride in their academic performance, they did not equate achievement simply with maintaining a strong cumulative grade point average. Rather than focusing exclusively on academic performance, Latino males conceptualized their achievements in three distinct ways: 1) Being the Best, 2) Being Involved, and 3) Being Well-Rounded. In Figure 3, these conceptualizations of achievement are represented by three additional squares located beneath and to the left- and right-side of It’s Not Just About Grades. It should be noted that these three conceptualizations of achievement are not hierarchal. The dual-directional arrows denote that these conceptualizations of achievement are associated with It’s Not Just About Grades, rather than being derived from this latter construct. Furthermore, these three conceptualizations of achievement are associated
with specific forms of capital referenced in Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework.

*Being the Best*, represented by a yellow square, is associated with aspirational capital and resistant capital which are represented by the two grey circles beneath this construct. Linguistic capital is also associated with *being the best*; however, this form of capital mediates aspirational capital. This relationship will be addressed in greater detail in the next section. The uni-directional arrows connecting these constructs denote that these three forms of capital inform how participants’ conceptualized *being the best*.

*Being Involved* is represented by a red square and has two additional constructs, *making the most of college* and *serving others* that are associated with this conceptualization of achievement. These latter constructs, represented by grey circles outlined in red, are also associated with specific forms of capital included in Yosso’s (2005) framework. Whereas *making the most of college* is informed by aspirational, social, and navigational capital; it should be noted that social capital is mediated by linguistic capital. *Serving others* is informed by social, familial, and resistant capital; however, the latter two forms of capital were also mediated by social capital. These relationships will also be addressed later in this chapter.

*Being Well-Rounded* is represented by a purple square and has two additional constructs, *Learning* and *Personal Development and Worldviews* which are represented by two grey circles outlined in purple. Whereas *Learning* is informed by familial capital and social capital which are represented by the two grey circles under this construct, *Personal Development and Worldviews* was not associated with any forms of capital in Yosso’s (2005) framework. This will also be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.
A CCW Explanation of Being the Best

Latino male achievers equated *being the best* with setting high standards and achieving their goals. While participants acknowledged that maintaining a strong grade point average (GPA) was important, they placed greater emphasis on their ability to achieve goals they set for themselves in college. Latino males indicated that what mattered most was that they put forth their best effort to achieve their educational goals.

Consistent with previous research on high-achieving racial/ethnic minority collegians, Latino male achievers possessed very high postsecondary educational aspirations (Bonner II, 2010; Ceballo, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Griffin, 2006; Harper, 2003; Hrabowski III, et al., 1998; Maton, et al., 1998; Zalaquett, 2006). Latino male achievers “always knew” they would attend college. While half of the participants could be perceived as having the resources needed to
achieve this educational milestone, the reports offered by Latino male achievers revealed that aspirational capital, linguistic capital, and resistant capital played a role in students’ efforts to “be the best” at Private University.

**Aspirational capital.** Parents played a central role in nurturing their children’s aspirational capital. This was clearly reflected in the messages Latino male achievers heard from their parents about college. The manner in which parents communicated their educational expectations also translated to the “high standards” Latino males articulated regarding the importance of *being the best*. The question was never “if” participants were going to continue their education after high school, but “where” they were going to attend college.

The high standards Latino males referenced when discussing their conceptualizations of achievement were derived from unconventional practices parents used to nurture their educational aspirations. For instance, participants indicated that they were given a great deal of autonomy to make important educational decisions prior to attending Private University. Whereas some parents entrusted their children to complete school assignments with minimal supervision, others were allowed to make important decisions such as selecting their middle schools and high schools. Ceballo (2004) observed similar patterns among low-income, first-generation Latina/o achievers enrolled at Yale University. He found that Latino parents emphasized the importance of getting a good education, but offered their children minimal support with homework, extracurricular activities, and other school projects. In essence, Latina/o students “managed every aspect of their academic career” with little input from their parents (p. 179). Although these practices were unconventional, participants in this study derived similar benefits from parents, who facilitated their autonomy earlier in school. Latino male achievers
learned to articulate goals for themselves that would help them achieve their full potential at Private University.

**Linguistic capital.** Participants’ desire to be the best was also influenced by linguistic capital; specifically through cuentos [stories] their parents shared to inspire achievement. In some instances, these cuentos focused on their parents enduring hardship in their home country as well as overcoming adversity after immigrating to the United States. In other instances, Latino male achievers recounted cuentos about distant relatives who achieved significant educational milestones. In *Over the Ivy Wall*, a seminal study published on “educationally ambitious” Chicanas/os, Gándara (1995) found that parents used family stories as a form of cultural capital. She claimed that stories “represented the creation of a history that would break the links between parents’ current occupational status and their children’s future academic attainment” (p. 55). Similarly, participants in this study indicated that hearing cuentos about family members inspired them to realize their full potential. This was central to how Latino male achievers conceptualized being the best. Thus, in this sense, cuentos served as a form of linguistic capital, through which parents were able to nurture participants’ aspirational capital. This finding confirms Yosso’s (2005) theory regarding the relationship between aspirational capital and linguistic capital.

**Resistant capital.** The manner in which Latino male achievers employed resistant capital was closely tied to their notion of being the best. To be the best, participants could not simply achieve the status quo. Latino male achievers reported that they put forth considerable effort to prove they were as intellectually competent as their privileged White peers on campus. Latino male achievers adopted other behaviors to debunk negative stereotypes held about the Latino community. Whereas Marcos reported that this “burden of responsibility” led him to question his abilities and contributed to his feelings of insecurity, these experiences facilitated his and other
participants’ activism on campus. Participants also reported that they devoted additional attention to their school work to compensate for ‘deficiencies’ and ensure they were able to contribute positively in their classes. Additionally, students reported that they actively participated in courses where racial/ethnic minority students were underrepresented as a means of demonstrating their intellectual competence. While these behaviors appeared to contribute positively to their academic performance, as evidenced by their cumulative GPA, research indicates that efforts to dispel negative stereotypes about racial/ethnic minorities places an additional burden on students and diverts their attention from engaging in other educationally purposeful activities (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 1998).

Research indicates that high-achieving African American students are forced to contend with similar stereotypes at predominantly White institutions and engage in behaviors to prove their worthiness and academic abilities, in and outside the classroom (Fries-Britt, 1995, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Whereas scholars note that African Americans experience these challenges with White faculty and students (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Strayhorn, 2008), the reports offered by Latino male achievers in this study indicate that they were subjected to negative stereotypes primarily by their White peers. While these encounters motivated students to engage in activities that enhanced their academic performance, it is quite possible that having similar interactions with faculty could have resulted in counter-productive activities (e.g., absenteeism, decreased participation, etc.). Latino males did not encounter similar experiences with faculty. This could be attributed to the fact that only a few participants reported having considerable interactions with faculty at Private University. The extent to which ‘proving’ had
an adverse effect on Latino male achievers was unclear and certainly worthy of additional investigation.

A CCW Explanation on Being Involved

For Latino male achievers in this study, being involved was conceptualized in two distinct ways that reflected the literature on student involvement and engagement within higher education (Astin, 1984, 1999; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005b; Kuh et al., 1991). Participants equated making the most of college with engaging in a variety of educationally purposeful activities on and off-campus. Furthermore, Latino male achievers believed that serving others was central to their notions of achievement. Success was not equated with their own social advancement, but with the advancement of their community.

Latino male achievers worked with low-income racial/ethnic minority students in local schools, served the homeless, and engaged in philanthropic efforts. While participants believed it was important to serve others, they felt compelled to serve communities they identified with based on various dimensions of their social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, class, etc.). These conceptualizations of achievement were associated with several forms of capital reflected in Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework. Aspirational, social, linguistic, and navigational capital was central to making the most of college. While familial capital was central to understanding participants’ commitment to serving others, their reports reveal that social capital and resistant capital were also associated with this conceptualization of achievement.

Making the most of college. In College Men and Masculinities, Harper and Harris (2010) urge scholars to pursue research agendas that facilitate the process of “replicating the good in college men” (p. 10). The reports offered by Latino male achievers in this study provide a response to this ‘call for action.’ Contrary to the published literature on college men, Latino
male achievers in this study did not engage in activities that contributed to binge drinking, sexual assault, hazing incidents, or other problematic behaviors on college campuses (dePyssler, et al., 2005; McAloon, 1994; Nuwer, 2004). Rather, participants reported that they were purposefully involved in activities that helped them to make the most of their college experience.

**Aspirational capital.** Aspirational capital played a central role in Latino males achievers’ motivation to “make the most” of college. For some participants, witnessing their parents endure hardship in labor-intensive jobs that offered minimal wages was a central motivating factor. Participants recognized that if they did not take full advantage of this educational opportunity, they would be relegated to assuming similar positions in the workforce. For other participants, witnessing their parents seize opportunities that facilitated greater social mobility reinforced the importance of making the most of college and engaging in a broad range of educationally purposeful activities on campus. Thus, it was not simply what participants heard from their parents that nurtured aspirational capital and inspired them to capitalize on opportunities, but what they observed their parents doing that communicated it was important to make the most of college.

**Navigational capital.** Latino male achievers had to learn how to navigate the campus environment in order to make the most of college. While this process was facilitated primarily through peer networks, students who participated in PU’s Preparation Program (PUPP) prior to their first year of college indicated that they had a distinct advantage over their peers. They were able to acquire information about various campus resources, forged positive relationships with other talented racial/ethnic minority students, and learned to navigate the surrounding community. Fries-Britt (1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2000) has written extensively about how high-achieving racial/ethnic minority students derive similar resources from the Meyerhoff Scholars
Program. It should be noted that not all participants perceived they needed to participate in this program; however, they believed that doing so would provide them with the foundation needed to facilitate their achievement at Private University.

Participants did not limit their involvement to programs intended to facilitate their initial transition to college. They applied for competitive internship programs, conducted undergraduate research, and engaged in other professional development experiences that enhanced the outcomes they achieved in college. Whereas several participants indicated that conducting research facilitated their access to graduate school, others reported that participating in internships and other experiences helped them to secure employment after graduation. Thus, they were able to capitalize on opportunities their parents were not afforded. These reports confirm Yosso’s (2005, 2006) assertion that to successfully navigate predominantly White institutions, students require support from others. Thus, navigational capital not only helped students make the most of their experience during college, but also facilitated the development of social capital. Participants were able to forge relationships with Latino peers who supported their engagement in educationally purposeful activities.

**Social capital.** Harper’s (2003, 2006, 2008) research on Black male achievers indicates that peers, particularly other African Americans, play an important role in students postsecondary educational experience. This was certainly true for Latino male achievers at Private University. Although participants believed they distinguished themselves from other students through their involvement in student organizations, particularly Latino-based groups, their reports also revealed that Latino peers often reached out to them when they arrived on campus. Similarly, Harper (2008) found that access to social capital was negotiated through other high-achieving African American males who "reached out to them early in their college
careers, introduced them to involvement opportunities on campus, and personally facilitated a connection between them and campus administrators" (p. 1041). Regarding the latter, participants did not report having as much access to administrators on campus with exception to staff in El Centro, the Latino Cultural Center at Private University. However, Latino male achievers believed relationships with these campus administrators contributed to their involvement on campus. While they were encouraged by these administrators to get involved on campus, in most instances, Latino male achievers indicated that they followed the engagement patterns of their peers by participating in programs like the McNair Scholars Program, the Latino Ivy League Conference, and other educationally purposeful activities.

*Linguistic capital.* Although participants reported that interactions with students in Latino-based organizations enhanced their experience, the degree to which they could make use of these networks was dictated by their utilization of linguistic capital. To be more specific, participants indicated that the ability to communicate in Spanish was one way they could prove they were “Latino enough” to truly engage in Latino-based organizations.

The notion ‘acting White’ has been used to describe a similar dynamic within the African American community (Fordham & Ogbru, 1986; Fries-Britt, 1995, 1998, 2000; Ogbru, 2004). Some suggest Black students who display an interest in intellectual activities associated with White culture are ridiculed and characterized as ‘acting White’ by same-race peers. However, more recent studies published on Black achievers indicate that students are not ostracized by other African American students for engaging in similar activities (Harper, 2003, 2006, 2008). Black achievers garnered the respect and admiration of same-race peers because they maintained ties and supported members of their community.
Interestingly, Latino male achievers did not encounter similar challenges with regard to reconciling their racial/ethnic identity and intellectual identity. The central issue was language identity, and the connections students could forge with members of the Latino community. Within the field of counseling, research indicates that Latinos who display behaviors that fall outside of one’s cultural group are likely to experience intragroup marginalization (Castillo, 2008, 2009). Proficiency with Spanish minimized intragroup conflict for Latino male achievers and facilitated access to social networks, specifically Latino-based student organizations that allowed them to make the most of their college experience.

**Serving others.** The emphasis Latino male achievers placed on *serving others* was perhaps the most surprising finding to emerge from this study. Participants repeatedly talked about the importance of helping their families, supporting their peers, and serving their communities. This conceptualization of achievement also challenged notions of success which were often associated with earning good grades, receiving numerous accolades, and making lots of money. While participants acknowledged these as significant accomplishments, they did not base their success on achieving similar outcomes. It was far more important that they were ‘good people’ who contributed positively to society.

**Familial capital.** These dispositions were nurtured through the transmission of familial capital. It is well established that Latinos place tremendous value on maintaining strong ties with immediate and extended family members (Marin & Marin, 1991; Marín & Triandis, 1985; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). While research indicates that *familismo* [familism] contributes to the underrepresentation of Latinas/os within higher educations (Fry, 2002), scholars contend that this value also promotes the educational achievement of students in school (Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). This was
certainly reflected in Latino male achievers’ academic performance; however, the manner in which parents transmitted this value also exerted a strong influence on how participants conceptualized and demonstrated their achievement.

Latino male achievers spoke extensively about the importance of serving their families. Although participants did not associate this sense of responsibility with gender expectations, research indicates that Latino males are socialized to protect and provide for their families (Morales, 1996; Torres et al., 2002). Whereas participants believed that doing well in school would provide them with the means to support their families, they also emphasized this as a way to honor their parents’ sacrifices. In addition to describing the sacrifices their parents made to support their success in school, participants also noted that their desire to “give back” was derived from observing their parents serve other underserved populations within their communities.

**Social capital.** Participants’ dispositions to serve others were also reinforced by their interactions with peers, specifically other Latino students, at Private University. It should be noted that students perceived their Latino peers to be extensions of their families. When participants arrived on campus, they reported that Latino upperclassmen often reached out to them, introduced them to other students, and encouraged them to become involved within the Latino community. Harper (2003, 2006, 2008) observed similar behavioral patterns between Black male achievers and African American students at six predominantly White institutions; however, he also found that these relationships were critical to students forging connections with senior-level administrators on campus. Although the opportunity to nurture social capital was limited to peer networks, the care Latino peers demonstrated toward participants reinforced that
it was important to serve members of their community. Thus, familial capital was nurtured through Latino male achievers’ social networks.

**Resistant capital.** Several studies published by Rivas-Drake (2008) and Mooney (2008, 2009) provide a more nuanced explanation regarding the altruistic behaviors displayed by Latino male achievers. Consistent with the immigration adaptation literature, Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2008) identified three profiles – *assimilators, accommodators*, and *resisters* – that influenced the engagement patterns of Latino collegians. As it pertains to this study, participants identified as *resistors* were more likely to perceive inequities on campus and engaged in activities that addressed concerns pertinent to the Latino community.

Similarly, Latino male achievers participated in activities that promoted positive change on campus and enhanced the experiences of Latinos as well as other underrepresented student populations. This was reflected through their involvement in various Latino and minority-based student organizations, mentorship programs, and their activism on campus. In this case, resistant capital could not be activated without access to social capital. While Latino males perceived these activities resulted in positive outcomes on campus, the degree to which these activities detracted from their educational experience is worthy of future investigation.

**A CCW Explanation on Being Well-Rounded**

The manner in which Latino male achievers conceptualized *being well-rounded* was closely aligned with the values of a liberal education. According to the Association of American College and Universities (2012), “Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change.” For participants, this process was facilitated by engaging in activities that promoted their *learning*. They took challenging courses and engaged in other activities that contributed to their intellectual
development. Furthermore, Latino male achievers equated success with the development of their personal and worldviews during college. The connections between Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework and how participant’s conceptualized being well-rounded was not as pronounced. Whereas learning was tied to familial capital and social capital, the reports offered by Latino male achievers reveal that their personal development and worldviews were not necessarily informed by a particular form of capital in Yosso’s framework.

**Learning.** Learning was central to participants’ conceptualization of achievement. Although studies guided by deficit-oriented paradigms suggest that Latino parents do not value education, researchers consistently report that Latino parents place a high premium on education (Ceballo, 2004; Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; Diaz Soto, 2008; Gándara, 1995; Zalaquett, 2006). Participants shared similar values which they enacted by taking courses they perceived to be interesting or that would expand their knowledge base.

**Familial capital.** In Manufacturing Hope and Despair, Stanton-Salazar (2001) contends that Mexican immigrant parenting styles also place a high premium on educación or moral character. When translated to English, the term educación [education] loses it rich meaning; however, the Spanish definition offers a much broader conceptualization of what it means to be an ‘educated’ member of society. Stanton-Salazar asserts that parents demonstrate an unwavering commitment to imparting a sense of moral responsibility they believe will ensure their children’s academic and personal success. While this helps to explain why Latino males were academically successful, it also illuminates how familial capital was associated with this particular conceptualization of achievement. Although participants emphasized that it was important to apply what they learned in college to help others in society, it should be noted that this disposition was initially nurtured within the context of their families.
Social capital. Deficit-thinking also contributes to the perception that Latinos do not possess social capital; however, scholars contend that their social networks often go unnoticed (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, 1997; Yosso, 2005, 2006). If we extended the use of deficit-oriented paradigms to examine the social networks Latino male achievers utilized at Private University, researchers would likely reach the same conclusion. That is, Latino-based student organizations do not provide Latino males with the resources needed to be successful in school. Clearly, the reports offered by participants in this study suggest otherwise. Participants noted how their peers in Latino-based student organizations offered them advice on balancing personal, academic, and professional commitments. On several occasions, students indicated that they formed study groups and received feedback on academic assignments from their Latino peers at Private University.

Well-roundedness. With exception to familial capital and social capital, the forms of capital reflected in Yosso’s (2005) community cultural framework did not necessarily inform the multiple dimensions of well-roundedness. Considering that Yosso’s framework centers on how marginalized populations make use of alternative forms of capital to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression, it is quite possible that becoming well-rounded does not require the use of community cultural wealth. Whether other forms of capital inform this conceptualization of achievement requires additional investigation.
Implications

Within the last two decades, only a handful of empirically-grounded studies have been published on Latino males within higher education (Gloria, et al., 2009; Gonzalez, 2002; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Morales, 2008c; Pérez II, in press; Reyes III, 2006; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Strayhorn, 2010). To effectively address the crisis facing Latino males, scholars must abandon the use of research paradigms that seek to explain why students continue to achieve unfavorable educational outcomes at postsecondary institutions in favor of research agendas that seek to illuminate factors that contribute to the success of Latino male college students. This study provides a response to this issue by focusing on the experiences of Latino male achievers at a highly-selective, predominantly White research university. Implications for research, theory, policy, and practice are proposed in this section.

Implications for Research

Despite the proliferation of research on high-achieving Latina/o collegians, scholars have not adequately attended to the experiences of Latino male achievers (Ceballo, 2004; Gándara, 1993b, 1994, 1995; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Rivas-Drake, 2008; Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008, 2009; Zalaquett, 2006). In fact, Gándara (1982; 1994) published a series of reports that focused exclusively on Chicanas based on her seminal work on “educationally ambitious” Chicanas/os. Clearly, research is still needed to ensure Latinas achieve equitable educational outcomes within higher education (National Women’s Law Center & Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2009); however, scholars should also consider the specific needs of Latino males. Research on Latino
male achievers is still needed to address pressing concerns regarding the underrepresentation and underachievement of Latinas/os within higher education.

Torres (2004) contends that research on Latino collegians is based largely on the experiences of Mexican Americans. Considering that Mexican Americans constitute more than 60% of the Latino population within the U.S. (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002), scholars should continue to conduct research that addresses the needs of this population. However, quantitative and qualitative investigations on other Latino ethnic groups are also desperately needed. This study contributes to this gap in the higher education literature by drawing attention to the experiences of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other Latino ethnic groups. Although Puerto Ricans, the second largest Latino ethnic group, are not forced to contend with the same structural issues (e.g., immigration policy) that other Latino ethnic groups face in the United States, Solórzano et al. (2005) note that they still achieve equally unfavorable educational outcomes. These and other issues pertinent to different Latino ethnic groups are worthy of investigation.

Although generalizability is never an intended outcome of qualitative investigations, particularly with phenomenological studies, conducting this study at a highly-selective research university presents some limitations. Studies that offer insights on the experiences of Latino men attending different types of postsecondary institutions (i.e., liberal arts colleges, minority serving institutions, public universities, etc.) would make valuable contributions to the higher education literature. Considering that more than half of all Latinas/os are enrolled in community colleges within the United States, studies that explore how Latino men successfully transition from two- to four-year institutions would be equally valuable. Duplicating this study in the aforementioned institutional settings would yield interesting results regarding the experiences of Latino male achievers. It would be interesting to explore the extent to which Latino men employ different
forms of capital at minority serving institutions versus predominantly White institutions. For example, do students draw on resistant capital to address concerns pertinent to Latinas/os at Hispanic Serving Institutions? To date, comparative studies on Latino male collegians have not been published.

Latino male achievers did not conceptualize their achievement using traditional measures. Whereas participants believed their peers were preoccupied with earning good grades, they equated success with being the best, being involved, and being well-rounded individuals. In short, it was not just about getting good grades. Whether their peers, specifically other Latina/o students, shared similar conceptualizations of achievement is also worthy of exploration. Considering that familismo is an enduring cultural value among Latinos, it is quite possible that members of their community might define success in the same way. Along these lines, studies that explore how other racial/ethnic minority students conceptualize their achievement might yield similar results or other interesting findings.

 Scholars contend that increasing the representation of Latinas/os at predominantly White institutions can enhance the campus racial climate for diversity (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Although research indicates that increasing the representation of racial/ethnic minority students at PWIs can result in cross cultural conflict (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Nunez, 2009), the findings reported in this study draw attention to similar dynamics within the Latino community. This has important implications considering that intragroup conflict can impede the adjustment of Latino collegians (Castillo, 2008, 2009). While this was not reflective of the experiences of Latino male achievers, several participants described relationships between international and domestic Latinos as “divided” at Private University. Studies that address campus climate issues within the Latino community
could enhance efforts to promote the recruitment, retention, and achievement of Latinas/os at predominantly White institutions.

While this study focused exclusively on the experiences of Latino male achievers, researchers should pursue similar lines of inquiry on high-achieving Latinas at predominantly White institutions. The reports offered by several participants indicate that Latinas played an instrumental role in their success; however, it is not known whether this additional responsibility hampered the educational outcomes achieved by these women. Griffin and Pérez II (forthcoming) found that high-achieving African American females often assume responsibilities that their male counterparts do not shoulder at PWIs. For instance, females were more likely than males to assume responsibility for educating their White peers about the African American community. The extent to which these experiences enhance or compromise the success of Latinas/os is certainly worthy of future investigation.

Reflecting on Latino males’ educational and professional aspirations, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal investigation that involved participants in this study. Follow-up interviews could be conducted with participants in five years to determine whether they achieved their educational and professional goals. Additionally, conducting interviews with participants ten years from now could yield interesting results related to the long-term success of Latino male achievers. Considering that Latinos are the largest and fastest growing racial/ethnic group, how they fare beyond college is central to the economic progress of the United States.

**Implications for Theory**

Yosso’s (2005, 2006) community cultural wealth framework provides a useful lens to examine the experiences of Latino male achievers within higher education. Collectively, the extant literature published on racial/ethnic minority achievers indicates that students draw on
aspirational capital (Bonner II, 2001a; Fries-Britt, 2000; Gándara, 1982); familial capital (Ceballo, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Hrabowski III, et al., 1998); and social capital (Bonner II, 2010; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper, 2006, 2008) to achieve exceptional educational outcomes. With exception to Griffin (2006) and Harper (2003), studies conducted on racial/ethnic minorities largely utilize uni-dimensional frameworks that do not account for the multiple factors that contribute to students’ success. To an extent, Yosso’s framework addresses this limitation by illuminating additional forms of capital (i.e., linguistic, navigational, and resistant) Latino males utilize to facilitate their achievement.

In Whose Culture has Capital, Yosso (2005) notes that the six forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static. For example, community cultural wealth is fostered through a dynamic process whereby one form of capital may be sustained by other forms of capital. According to Yosso, “Aspirations are developed within social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice (consejos) that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions” (p. 77). Although similar patterns were observed in this study, the reports offered by Latino male achievers draw attention to additional relationships between these forms of capital and their conceptualizations of achievement. Furthermore, the experiences of Latino male achievers also extend how particular forms of capital are conceptualized within Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework.

As it pertained to their conceptualizations of achievement, Latino male achievers indicated that their aspirations were nurtured by messages they received from their parents. This is consistent with Yosso’s (2005) articulation of the relationship between aspirational capital and linguistic capital; however, participants also noted that their access to Latino social networks was influenced by their ability to communicate in Spanish. Thus, the ability to nurture social capital
within the Latino community was dependent on linguistic capital. Although Yosso asserts that different forms of capital may ‘sustain’ other forms of capital, in this instance, linguistic capital appears to ‘trump’ the acquisition of social capital. Future studies that are guided by Yosso’s framework should examine whether similar patterns emerge among Latinos or other multilingual, marginalized populations. Furthermore, researchers should critically examine the extent to which other forms of capital work in unison.

Although Yosso characterizes communities of color as a “marginalized” population, the findings of this study raise interesting questions related to the extent to which all Latinos are indeed marginalized and utilize alternative forms of capital to overcome oppression. When examining the aspirations of Latino male achievers, one might conclude that participants possessed and utilized aspirational capital to facilitate their achievement. However, the manner in which Yosso (2005) conceptualizes aspirational capital suggests that second-generation Latino college students who are raised in middle-class homes may possess the resources to attain their educational goals. This raises several important implications related to the use of community cultural wealth in future studies involving Latinos or other racial/ethnic minority students. As it pertains to socioeconomic status, researchers who utilize this framework should consider whether to focus exclusively on low-income minority students. This is not intended to suggest that middle- to upper-class Latino students do not possess aspirational capital; however, the reports offered by several participants raise questions about whether their aspirations were influenced by this particular form of capital. Similarly, researchers should consider how other social identities based on race/ethnicity, immigration status, and generational status might complicate or extend how aspirational capital is conceptualized.
The manner in which Yosso (2005, 2006) conceptualizes navigational capital also presumes that the knowledge, skills, and resources Latino students utilize to maneuver through social institutions enhances subsequent functioning. However, the remarks offered by a few participants related to the notion of ‘passing’ suggest that students may adopt strategies that are not productive. This raises the question of whether ‘passing’ should be considered a form of navigational capital. Studies on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals indicate that passing is a strategy members of the LGBT community utilize to forge social network and navigate hostile climates in the workplace (Berger, 1992; Johnson, 2002; Tuttle, 2010). While these practices can facilitate navigation through hostile environments, they may also have an adverse effect on Latinos and other marginalized student populations. Again, future studies that employ this framework should explore how navigational capital manifests within other communities.

Despite the fact that only two participants discussed issues related to their religious and spiritual practices, Harper (2003) found that Black achievers attributed their success to “God.” While participants’ religious practices and spiritual beliefs were not central to this investigation, the reports offered by these students suggest that extending Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework to include spiritual capital could yield new insights regarding the manner in which marginalized communities overcome various forms of oppression. Scholars contend that attending to the religious and spiritual needs of students can enhance their postsecondary educational experience (Constantine, Wilton, Gainor, & Lewis, 2002; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Love & Talbot, 1999).

**Implications for Practice**
The reports offered by Latino male achievers in this study offer new insights regarding how students conceptualized and demonstrated their achievement. While participants acknowledged that doing well academically was important, Latino male achievers also emphasized the importance of being the best, being involved, and being well-rounded. The following recommendations are based on participants’ conceptualizations of achievement and intended to support institutions committed to the recruitment, retention, and achievement of Latina/o students within higher education.

**Recruiting Latino Male Students.** Although research indicates that Latino males are least likely to matriculate and graduate from college (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009, 2011), the reports offered by participants draw attention to several promising practices that can increase the representation of Latino males at postsecondary institutions.

**Involvement in college preparatory programs.** Most participants reported that they were involved in programs that provided them with support at critical junctures in the educational pipeline. For example, six participants indicated that they were selected to participate in college preparatory programs prior to entering middle school. In addition to providing students with information related to college, several participants indicated that participating in Prep for Prep, New Jersey SEEDS, and the Oliver Scholars Program facilitated their access to prestigious high schools that provided them with the preparation needed to make the academic and social transition to college.

More than half the participants reported that they participated in a summer bridge program at Private University. In particular, PU’s Preparation Program provided Latino males with an opportunity to forge connections with other racial/ethnic minority students and allowed to gain a sense of the academic demands prior to their first year of college. Quaye (2009) notes
that bridge programs enable students to navigate the campus environment with other racial/ethnic minority students who share their academic goals. Engaging faculty, senior-level administrators, and professionals in the planning and implementation of these programs is essential to their success (Miller, 2005; Miller, et al., 2005).

*Enhancing college admissions processes.* Increasing the representation of racial/ethnic minority students at predominantly White institutions may require that admissions offices enhance their selection processes to account for the unique skills, knowledge, and abilities Latino students bring with them to college. Although affirmative action policies have contributed to the increased representation of racial/ethnic minority students on many college campuses, the use of race-sensitive admissions processes continues to be a highly-contested issue within higher education (Allen, 2005; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Ibarra, 2001). Unfortunately, the use of race-sensitive admissions processes has also contributed to the perception that Latinas/os and other underrepresented student populations do not deserve admission to highly-selective institutions. This was certainly reflective of participants’ experiences at Private University.

Institutions committed to addressing this issue should reconsider how notions of ‘merit’ are factored into admissions processes. Rather than relying solely on traditional measures of achievement (i.e., grades, standardized test scores, etc.), admissions officers might consider including additional measures to determine the award of merit-based financial aid. For example, the Posse Foundations partners with numerous institutions to identify underrepresented students with ‘extraordinary academic and leadership potential’ who might get missed using traditional admissions criteria. While Latino male achievers possessed academic profiles that were on par with many of the peers on campus, their involvement beyond the classroom would likely have distinguished them as students who were deserving of a Posse scholarship.
Retaining Latino Male Collegians. Research indicates that “cultural agents” (i.e., faculty and peers) play an important role in racial/ethnic minority students’ persistence (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Although most participants did not establish meaningful connections with faculty on campus, they spoke extensively about the relationships they established with peers through Latino-based student organizations. These latter groups are often referred to as collective cultural agents which provide “conduits for socialization . . . and a venue in which students can maintain and express a sense of racial/ethnic identity on campus into the larger campus” (Museus & Quaye, 2009, p. 72). Participants who were involved in Latino-based student organizations indicated that their peers provided them with instrumental support and emotional support; however, most students did not derive similar support from faculty or administrators on campus.

Support Latino-based student organizations. Participants were involved in a variety of Latino-based student organizations that catered to their diverse interests including dance troupes, cultural groups, and political organizations. It should be noted that Latino males attributed their involvement in these co-curricular activities to older peers who “reached out” to them when they arrived at Private University. Researchers have observed similar patterns among African American collegians and note that these organizations serve as important venues for students to exercise their leadership abilities (Harper, 2003, 2006, 2008; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Collectively, these findings suggest that Latino males would be well-served if professional staff supported the efforts of students involved in Latino-based student organizations.

Establish student-faculty/administrator programs. Mentors can play an important in facilitating racial/ethnic minority students’ academic and social transition to campus (Freeman, 1999; Griffin, Pérez II, Holmes, & Mayo, 2010; Morales, 2008c). As previously mentioned, most participants did not have significant contact with faculty or administrators at Private University.
Latino male achievers who did have faculty or administrative mentors indicated that these relationships enhanced their collegiate experience. In developing these programs, several participants indicated that institutions should make a concerted effort to recruit racial/ethnic minority faculty and administrators to serve as mentors.

**Supporting Latino Male Achievement.** Participants did not base their achievement solely on their academic performance. Instead, Latino male achievers believed it was important to be the best, be involved, and be well-rounded. Faculty members and administrators can facilitate student achievement by assisting students with articulating their goals and engaging them in educationally purposeful curricular and co-curricular activities.

**Articulating goals.** Latino male achievers believed it was important to set high standards to achieve their educational aspirations. It should be noted that these aspirations were nurtured by their parents through *cuentos* [stories] which reinforced the importance of *being the best.* Building on the critiques of Tinto’s work (Braxton, 2000; Kuh & Love, 2000), Museus and Quaye (2009) assert that cultural agents should emphasize educational achievement and validate students’ cultural background. As it pertains to the articulation of goals, faculty members and administrators should not only encourage high academic achievement, but also recognize the need to identify goals that are aligned with the values students’ placed on serving their families, peers, and community.

**Engaging in purposeful activities.** Research indicates that collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs is essential to student success in college (Kuh et al., 2005b). Participants were involved in a range of meaningful activities including undergraduate research, internships, and student organizations. Latino male achievers in this study perceived that these experiences allowed them to make the most of college and presented them with opportunities to
serve others. However, more of these experiences could have been structured to provide participants with opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with faculty members and administrators. In particular, service-learning initiatives and residential learning communities have tremendous potential to support the engagement of Latino males on campus as well as in the community. Additionally, these initiatives provide students with the opportunity to engage faculty in informal dialogue outside of the classroom (Felten & Clayton, 2010).
Conclusion

Research indicates that Latino males are least likely to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and graduate from a four-year institution in comparison to most racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. (Fry, 2002; Ryu, 2008; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011; Swail, et al., 2004; Swail, et al., 2005b). While the aforementioned studies offer numerous explanations regarding the underrepresentation of Latinas/os within higher education, they fail to account for the experiences of Latino males who defy the odds and excel academically at postsecondary institutions. The reports offered by Logradores [Latino male achievers] in this study draw attention to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources students utilized to facilitate their achievement at one of the most selective universities in the United States. While Latino males expressed pride in their academic accomplishments, they did not base their success solely on traditional measures of achievement (i.e., grades). Rather, they emphasized the importance of being the best, making the most of college, and being well-rounded individuals who contributed positively to society. Their stories provide hope and inspiration to other Latino students, their families, and educators who are committed to ensuring that Latinas/os achieve equitable educational outcomes in the United States.
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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE FORM

Please note that an electronic version of this document can be accessed online at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NM6LZZM.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please specify your CURRENT contact information below (i.e., campus address).

1) Name: _____
2) Address: _____
3) Email Address: _____
4) Phone Number: _____

Please specify your PERMANENT contact information below (i.e., home address).

5) Address: _____
6) Email Address: _____
7) Phone Number: _____

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

8) What is your age? _____

9) What is your sexual identity? Response NOT required.
   - Bisexual
   - Gay
   - Heterosexual
   - Questioning
   - Other (please specify)

10) What is your ethnic background? Mark all that apply.
    - Argentinean
    - Bolivian
    - Chilean
    - Columbian
    - Costa Rican
☐ Cuban
☐ Dominican
☐ Ecuadoran
☐ Guatemalan
☐ Honduran
☐ Mexican
☐ Nicaraguan
☐ Panamanian
☐ Paraguayan
☐ Peruvian
☐ Puerto Rican
☐ Salvadoran
☐ Uruguayan
☐ Venezuelan
☐ Other (please specify)

11) Please rate your proficiency with speaking in Spanish:
   ☐ Not proficient
   ☐ Somewhat proficient
   ☐ Moderately proficient
   ☐ Proficient

12) Please rate your proficiency with writing in Spanish:
   ☐ Not proficient
   ☐ Somewhat proficient
   ☐ Moderately proficient
   ☐ Proficient

13) Please rate your proficiency with reading in Spanish:
   ☐ Not proficient
   ☐ Somewhat proficient
   ☐ Moderately proficient
   ☐ Proficient

14) Please rate your proficiency with speaking in English:
   ☐ Not proficient
   ☐ Somewhat proficient
   ☐ Moderately proficient
   ☐ Proficient

15) Please rate your proficiency with writing in English:
   ☐ Not proficient
   ☐ Somewhat proficient
   ☐ Moderately proficient
   ☐ Proficient
16) Please rate your proficiency with *reading* in English:
- [ ] Not proficient
- [ ] Somewhat proficient
- [ ] Moderately proficient
- [ ] Proficient

**FAMILY BACKGROUND**

17) I was raised by:
- [ ] Both of my birth parents
- [ ] One of my birth parents
- [ ] Extended family member(s) (i.e., grandparent, uncle, etc.)
- [ ] Guardian(s)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

18) What is the highest level of education completed by your parent(s) or guardian(s)?

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<tr>
<th>Father or Guardian #1</th>
<th>Mother or Guardian #2</th>
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<tr>
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<td>[ ] Not Applicable or Unknown</td>
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<td>[ ] Elementary school</td>
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<td>[ ] Middle school</td>
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<td>[ ] Some high school</td>
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<td>[ ] High school diploma or G.E.D.</td>
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<td>[ ] Some college</td>
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<td>[ ] Business/technical certificate</td>
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<td>[ ] Associates degree</td>
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<td>[ ] Some graduate school</td>
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<td>[ ] Master’s degree</td>
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<td>[ ] Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)</td>
<td>[ ] Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ ] Professional degree (i.e. MBA, JD, etc.)</td>
<td>[ ] Professional degree (i.e. MBA, JD, etc.)</td>
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</table>

19) What is your best estimate of your parents’ or total household income?
- [ ] Under $10,000
- [ ] $10,000 - $19,999
- [ ] $20,000 - $29,999
- [ ] $30,000 - $39,999
- [ ] $40,000 - $49,999
- [ ] $50,000 - $59,999
- [ ] $60,000 - $69,999
- [ ] $70,000 - $79,999
- [ ] $80,000 - $89,999
- [ ] $90,000 - $99,999
- [ ] Over $100,000
20) If your MOTHER / GUARDIAN is currently employed, what is their job title (e.g., teacher, lawyer, etc.) and where do they work (e.g., elementary school, hospital, etc.)? Please leave question blank, if not applicable. _____

21) If your FATHER / GUARDIAN is currently employed, what is their job title (e.g., teacher, lawyer, etc.) and where do they work (e.g., elementary school, hospital, etc.)? Please leave question blank, if not applicable. _____

22) How many siblings do you have?
   __ Brother(s)
   __ Sister(s)
   __ Stepbrother(s)
   __ Stepsister(s)

23) Please indicate how many of your siblings completed:
   __ Elementary school
   __ Middle school
   __ Some high school
   __ High school diploma or G.E.D.
   __ Some college
   __ Business/technical certificate
   __ Associates degree
   __ Bachelor’s degree
   __ Some graduate school
   __ Master’s degree
   __ Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)
   __ Professional degree (i.e. MBA, JD, etc.)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND – HIGH SCHOOL

24) I graduated from a:
   □ Public high school
   □ Private high school
   □ Home-School
   □ Other (please specify)

25) Using the classifications below, please estimate the racial/ethnic composition of your high school. Example: African American = 30%, Asian American = 20%, Hispanic = 40%, White = 10%. The percentages you note below should total to 100%. You may SKIP THIS QUESTION if you did not attend high school, cannot recall, or do not know this information.
   □ African American
   □ Asian American / Pacific Islander
   □ Hispanic / Latino / Chicano
   □ Native American / American Indian
   □ White
26) What was your cumulative grade point average (GPA) in high school?
   □ A+ (> 4.00)
   □ A (3.84 – 4.00)
   □ A- (3.50 – 3.83)
   □ B+ (3.17 – 3.49)
   □ B (2.84 – 3.16)
   □ B- (2.50 – 2.83)
   □ C+ (2.17 – 2.49)
   □ C (1.84 – 2.16)
   □ C- (1.50 – 1.83)
   □ D+ or below (< 1.50)
   □ Not applicable (high school did not give grades)

27) Please indicate the approximate number of college Advance Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses you completed during high school.
   □ 0
   □ 1 – 2
   □ 3 – 4
   □ 5 – 6
   □ 7 – 8
   □ 9 – 10
   □ 11+
   □ Not applicable (high school did not offer AP or IB courses)

28) How satisfied were you with the quality of TEACHING at your high school?
   □ Not satisfied
   □ Somewhat satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Very satisfied
   □ Not applicable (high school did not have teachers)

29) How satisfied were you with the quality of ACADEMIC COUNSELING at your high school?
   □ Not satisfied
   □ Somewhat satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Very satisfied
   □ Not applicable (high school did not have academic counselors)

30) How satisfied were you with the availability of COLLEGE-RELATED INFORMATION at your high school?
   □ Not satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Very satisfied
☐ Not applicable (high school did not provide college-related information)

31) Where did you get most of your information about college? Mark all that apply.
☐ Parents
☐ Siblings
☐ Other family members
☐ Peers
☐ Teachers
☐ Counselors
☐ Internet
☐ Other (please specify)

32) Please indicate the scores you earned on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). You may SKIP THIS QUESTION if you did not take the SAT, cannot recall, or do not know this information.
☐ Math section: _____
☐ Writing section (i.e., Essay): _____
☐ Writing section (i.e., Multiple Choice): _____

33) Please indicate the scores you earned on the American College Testing (ACT) examination. You may SKIP THIS QUESTION if you did not take the ACT examination, cannot recall, or do not know this information.
☐ English section: _____
☐ Mathematics section: _____
☐ Reading section: _____
☐ Science section: _____
☐ Optional Writing Test: _____
☐ Composite Score: _____

34) How many of your closest friends attended college?
☐ None
☐ Less than half
☐ About half
☐ More than half
☐ All

35) Overall, how well did your high school or home-schooling experience prepare you academically for college?
☐ Not at all
☐ Not very well
☐ Somewhat
☐ Fairly well
☐ Extremely well
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND – COLLEGE

36) Please indicate the institution you attend:

37) Please indicate the academic college(s) you are enrolled in: Mark all that apply.
   □ Agricultural Sciences
   □ Arts and Architecture
   □ Business
   □ Communication(s)
   □ Dental Medicine
   □ Earth & Mineral Sciences
   □ Education
   □ Engineering (and Applied Science)
   □ Health & Human Development
   □ Honors College
   □ Information Sciences & Technology
   □ International Affairs
   □ Law
   □ Liberal Arts (or Arts & Sciences)
   □ Medicine
   □ Nursing
   □ Science
   □ Social Policy & Practice
   □ Veterinary Medicine
   □ Other (please specify)

38) What is/are your academic major(s)? Example: 1) Engineering, 2) Chicano/Latino Studies, 3) Education ______

39) What is/are your academic minor(s)? Example: 1) Women Studies, 2) Chemistry, 3) Political Science ______

40) What is your current cumulative grade point average (GPA)? ______

41) What is your class standing?
   □ Junior
   □ Senior

42) On average, how many hours do you spend studying (i.e., reading, writing, preparing assignments, etc.) per week during the academic year?
   □ 0-5
   □ 6-10
   □ 11-15
   □ 16-20
43) Where do you work during the academic year?
   - On Campus
   - Off Campus
   - Both
   - Not Applicable

44) Is federal work-study part of your financial aid package?
   - Yes
   - No

45) On average, how many hours are you employed (i.e., work for pay) per week during the academic year?
   - 0-5
   - 6-10
   - 11-15
   - 16-20
   - 21-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-35
   - 36-40
   - 41-45
   - 46+

46) Please list any fellowships, scholarships, and/or grants you have been awarded during college? Be sure to indicate the amount of each award. Example: 1) Hispanic Scholarship Fund = $5000.00, 2) University Fellowship = $40,000, 3) Church Scholarship = $1000.00.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Fellowship, Scholarship, or Grant</th>
<th>Amount of Award</th>
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47) Please list any student organizations you have been involved with since entering college (e.g., student government association, fraternities, cultural organizations, religious groups, sports/intramurals, community service group, etc.). List the organization’s name, leadership role or position held, hours committed per week, and when you were involved (i.e., semesters
or years). Example: 1) Latino Student Association, General Member, 1 hour per week, 2009 - 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization (please specify name)</th>
<th>Leadership Position (if appropriate)</th>
<th>Hours (per week)</th>
<th>When? (semester(s) you were involved)</th>
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EDUCATIONAL & PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS

48) Please indicate the highest degree you planned to obtain before attending college:
- ☐ High school diploma or G.E.D.
- ☐ Business/technical certificate
- ☐ Associates degree
- ☐ Bachelor’s degree
- ☐ Master’s degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)
- ☐ Professional degree (M.B.A., J.D., etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

49) Please indicate the highest degree you plan to obtain after attending college:
- ☐ Bachelor’s degree
- ☐ Master’s degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)
- ☐ Professional degree (M.B.A., J.D., etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

50) After graduating from college, I plan to:
- ☐ Continue my education
- ☐ Work for a non-profit organization (i.e., school, community organization, etc.)
- ☐ Work for a for-profit organization (i.e., business, corporation, etc.)
- ☐ Work for the state or federal government
- ☐ Be self-employed
- ☐ Other (please specify)
Letter to Faculty, Administrators, and Staff

Dear [Insert Name],

I hope this e-mail finds you doing well.

My name is David Pérez II, Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education at the Pennsylvania State University, and I am conducting research on Latino male achievers (i.e., students who excel academically) at predominantly White universities.

The goals of this study are to (1) learn about the academic and social experiences of Latino male achievers, (2) identify factors that may hinder the academic achievement of Latino males, (3) ascertain how Latino achievers overcome obstacles they encounter in college, and (4) understand how Latino males conceptualize their academic achievement.

Latino males who participate in this study will be asked to meet with me for a 2 – 3 hour confidential interview. Additionally, participants will be asked to complete a brief demographic survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NM6LZZM and will also be asked to provide verification of their grade point average by submitting a degree audit or academic transcript.

To participate in this research project, Latino males must:

1. Be born in the United States
2. Be traditional age college students (i.e., 18 – 25 years of age)
3. Be enrolled full-time in college (i.e., completing 12 or more academic credit hours)
4. Entered as freshmen at this institution (i.e., did not transfer from another campus, college, or university)
5. Have junior or senior class-standing (i.e., earned 59 or more academic credit hours)
6. Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher

I would highly encourage you to nominate Latino males to participate in this research project. Their participation can help Latino males at the [Institution] as well as Latina/o students attending postsecondary institutions across the United States. If you have additional questions, please contact me via e-mail at perez@psu.edu or call (917) 684-6571.

Sincerely,

David Pérez II
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education
The Pennsylvania State University
Letter to Undergraduate Students and Organizations

Distinguished Members of [Insert Student Club/Organization],

I hope this e-mail finds you doing well.

My name is David Pérez II, Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education at the Pennsylvania State University, and I am conducting research on Latino male achievers (i.e., students who excel academically) at predominantly White universities.

The goals of this study are to (1) learn about the academic and social experiences of Latino male achievers, (2) identify factors that may hinder the academic achievement of Latino males, (3) ascertain how Latino achievers overcome obstacles they encounter in college, and (4) understand how Latino males conceptualize their academic achievement.

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To participate in this research project, Latino males must:

1. Be born in the United States
2. Be traditional age college students (i.e., under 24 years of age)
3. Be enrolled full-time in college (i.e., completing 12 or more academic credit hours)
4. Entered as freshmen at this institution (i.e., did not transfer from another campus, college, or university)
5. Have junior or senior class-standng (i.e., earned 59 or more academic credit hours)
6. Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher

I would highly encourage you to nominate Latino males to participate in this research project. Their participation can help Latino males at the [Institution] as well as Latina/o students attending postsecondary institutions across the United States. If you have additional questions, please contact me via e-mail at perez@psu.edu or call (917) 684-6571.

I look forward to your response. Thank you!

Sincerely,

David Pérez II
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education
The Pennsylvania State University
Letter to Participants

[Student Name],

I hope this e-mail finds you doing well.

Congratulations! You have been nominated by [Nominator’s Name], [Nominator’s Title], to participate in a research project focused on Latino male achievers (i.e., students who excel academically) at predominantly White universities.

The goals of this study are to (1) learn about the academic and social experiences of Latino male achievers, (2) identify factors that may hinder the academic achievement of Latino males, (3) ascertain how Latino achievers overcome obstacles they encounter in college, and (4) understand how Latino males conceptualize their academic achievement.

Latino males who participate in this study will be asked to meet with me for a 2 – 3 hour confidential interview. Additionally, participants will be asked to complete a brief demographic survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NM6LZZM and will also be asked to provide verification of their grade point average by submitting a degree audit or academic transcript.

To participate in this research project, Latino males must:

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6. Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher

I would highly encourage you to participate in this research project. Your participation can help Latino males at the [Institution] as well as Latina/o students attending postsecondary institutions across the United States. If you have additional questions, please contact me via e-mail at perez@psu.edu or call (917) 684-6571.

I look forward to your response. Thank you!

Sincerely,

David Pérez II
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education
The Pennsylvania State University
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Los Logradores: Understanding the Role of Resiliency and Community Cultural Wealth in the Experiences of Latino Male Achievers at Predominantly White Institutions

Principal Investigator: David Pérez II
Higher Education
400 Rackley Building
University Park, PA 16803
(917) 684-6571
perez@psu.edu

Advisor: Kimberly A. Griffin, Ph.D.
Higher Education
400 Rackley Building
University Park, PA 16803
(814) 863-5553
kag32@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to learn about the academic and social experiences of Latino male achievers (LMA) at the Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pennsylvania. In particular, this study seeks to identify the challenges LMA encounter during college and understand how they overcome these obstacles. Finally, this research will be used to identify strategies to support LMA college students at predominantly White colleges and universities.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately 2 – 3 hours. This interview will be digitally recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you can choose not to participate in this study. Participation in the interview will serve as your consent and I will provide you with a hard-copy of the Informed Consent Form for your records. In addition, you will be asked to complete a Participant Profile Form via survey monkey that captures basic background information. Finally, you will be asked to provide a copy of your transcript to verify your cumulative grade point average as well as a degree audit to assess your academic progress.

3. Duration/Time: As indicated earlier, this interview will take approximately 2 – 3 minutes to complete. You may be asked to participate in a brief follow-up interview to clarify and/or elaborate on anything unclear in the recorded interview. Based on your availability, this follow-up interview may occur via phone or in person.

4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The data collected, including audio recordings, from this pilot study will be stored and secured on my password-protected computer at home. These files will all be destroyed by May 31, 2021. Only Dr. Kimberly A. Griffin, my Faculty Advisor, and I will have access to these files. If
data is used for a publication or presentation, no personally identifiable information will be shared. In addition, all your information will be stored separately from the interview transcripts. You will be given a pseudonym (i.e. nickname) to be used when publishing any data.

5. **Right to Ask Questions:** If you have questions about this research at any point, please contact me via e-mail at perez@psu.edu or call (917) 684-6571. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you should contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. As noted above, your participation in the interview implies your consent to participate in this research. Please keep this form for your records.
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Review Consent Form

Introduction

“[Student name], I appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to talk with me about your experience at [institution]. As you already know, I am conducting a study on Latino male achievers at two predominantly White institutions (PWI). Over the next two to three hours, I will ask you a range of questions related to your educational background, goals and expectations, transition to college, race and gender-related experiences, and academic achievement. My hope is not only to identify potential barriers that Latinos encounter at PWIs, but to understand factors that contribute positively to the academic achievement of Latino males. Do you have any questions regarding this process?”

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. When did you start thinking about attending college? Probe about “whom” or “what” influenced their decision, either positively or negatively, to attend college.

3. What factors influenced your decision to attend [institution]?

4. Think about your closest friends in high school. Where are they now? Probe about Latino friends, if appropriate.

5. Think about your peers in high school. Where are they now? Probe about Latino peers, if appropriate.

6. Prior to attending college, can you talk to me about the educational goals you hoped to accomplish? Follow-up: To what extent have you been able to accomplish these goals? Probe about personal goals, if appropriate.

7. As you reflect on your college goals, can you recall any times when you thought you might not achieve your goals? Follow-up: How were you able to stay motivated to achieve these goals?

8. Prior to attending [institution], what did you expect college to be like? Follow-up: What influences, either positive or negative, contributed to the development of these expectations?

9. Has your experience at [institution] met your initial expectations about college? Please explain.

Collegiate Experiences
“I would like to shift focus and ask you a few questions related to your academic and social experiences at [institution].”

10. What is it like for you to be a college student at [institution]? Follow-up: Do you think your experience is typical of other Latinas/os? Probe about being a Latino and/or being a Latino male college student.

11. Talk to me about your academic transition at [institution]. During your first year of college, was there anything that contributed either positively or negatively to your academic transition? Probe about sophomore, junior, and senior years.

12. Talk to me about your social transition at [institution]. During your first year of college, was there anything that contributed either positively or negatively to your social transition? Probe about sophomore, junior, and senior years.

13. Do you think you have been effective in balancing academic, social, and other commitments? Please explain. Follow-up: How did you learn to do this?

14. In your demographic profile form, you noted that you were involved in __________. Probe about why they became involved in mainstream versus special interest groups and differences in their experiences, if appropriate.

15. What skills, knowledge, abilities or resources have you made use of to navigate college and to excel academically? Be sure to probe about where they derived navigational capital from as well as other forms of capital.

16. To what extent has your proficiency with communicating in English and Spanish contributed positively or negatively to your experience at [institution]? Probe about code switching, if appropriate.

17. When you think about the people who have supported you during college, who are those people? What have they done to be supportive? Probe about family members, peers, faculty/administrators, and community members.

Academic Achievement

“Shifting focus again, I would like to explore factors that have contributed to your success at [institution] as well as how you conceptualize your academic achievement.”

18. What words would you use to describe yourself as a student? Please explain.

19. Can you recall any messages (i.e., stories [cuentos], proverbs [dichos], etc.) you have received from your parent(s)/guardian(s) or other people (i.e., educators, peers, etc.) about the importance of doing well in college? Probe about the source, content, and influence of these messages.
20. As you reflect on your time at [institution], what accomplishments are you most proud of? *Probe about “what” or “why” there are significant about these accomplishments.*

21. What opportunities have you been afforded (or have you taken advantage of) as a result of your academic achievement? *Probe about the extent to which these opportunities were presented to them or sought out independently.*

22. Can you associate any negative consequences with your academic achievement? *Probe about interactions with Latino and non-Latino peers, faculty, and staff/administrators.*

23. Have Latino students at [institution] been supportive of your academic achievement? If so, how have you gained their support? If not, why do you think they have been unsupportive? *Probe about support from Latino males.*

24. Some guys would probably suggest that “being smart” and “earning good grades” isn’t very masculine. How would you respond to that?

25. If a professor or administrator at [institution] were writing a letter of recommendation on your behalf, what would they say about you? *Probe about their interactions and relationship with professors/administrators.*

26. You were identified as a research participant for this study because of your academic achievement. What do you attribute your academic success at [institution] to?

27. We have spoken extensively about your academic achievement at [institution]. Tell me how you define academic success in college.

**Race, Gender, and Resilience**

“I would like to shift focus one last time and ask a few questions related to race and gender as well as your interactions with faculty, staff/administrators, and other students at [institution].”

28. People assume that students who have a history of academic achievement in school do not require support in college. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.

29. Talk to me about your interactions with males at [institution]. *Probe about the frequency, duration, and context (i.e., what they do) of these interactions with peers, faculty, and staff. Be sure to inquire specifically about Latino females.*

30. Talk to me about any male role models you have. *Probe about their relationships, interactions, and lessons learned.*

31. Talk to me about your interactions with females at [institution]. *Probe about the frequency, duration, and context (i.e., what they do) of these interactions with peers, faculty, and staff. Be sure to inquire specifically about Latino females.*
32. Talk to me about any female role models you have. *Probe about their relationships, interactions, and lessons learned.*

33. Are there any expectations of you by your parent(s)/guardian(s) or other people (i.e., educators, peers, etc.) because of your gender? **Follow-up:** If so, how have these expectations helped or hindered you at [institution]? *Probe about both positive and negative influences.*

34. What stereotypes exist about Latina/o students at [institution]? *Probe about whether stereotypes are the same for Latinos and Latinas.*

35. Can you talk to me about a time when you have either witnessed or personally experienced prejudice, discrimination, or oppression at [institution]? **Follow-up:** How did you respond? How did this affect your academic achievement? *Probe about additional experiences.*

36. Have you encountered any other challenges at [institution]? Please explain. **Follow-up:** How have you been able to overcome these challenges?

**Closing Questions**

"*Before we conclude this interview, I would like to ask you several brief questions.*"

37. If you could go back in time, what would you change about your experience at [institution]?

38. What advice would you offer to administrators and/or professors at [institution] to support the academic achievement of Latino males?

39. Based on our conversation, is there anything you would like to elaborate on or add that I did not ask you about?

**Concluding Comments**

- Thank you!
- Confirm receipt of documentation
  - Participant Profile Form
  - Transcript
  - Degree Audit
- Forward transcribed interview and summary
- Potential follow-up interview
DAVID PÉREZ II
Center for the Study of Higher Education
The Pennsylvania State University • 400 Rackley Building • University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-2690 • perez@psu.edu

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University – University Park, PA
Doctor of Philosophy, Higher Education, August 2012

SELECTED RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Principal Investigator
November 2010 - Present
Los Logradores: Understanding the role of community cultural wealth in the experiences of Latino male achievers at a selective predominantly white institution
- Chaired by Dr. Kimberly A. Griffin, Associate Professor of Education and Research Associate of the Center for the Study of Higher Education
- Recipient of the Alumni Association Dissertation Award by the Pennsylvania State University
- Awarded $3,500 research grant by the NASPA Foundation

Graduate Research Assistant
May 2008 – May 2009
Center for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) – The Pennsylvania State University
- Assisted Dr. Patrick T. Terenzini, Distinguished Professor and Senior Scientist, and Dr. Lisa R. Lattuca, Associate Professor and Senior Research Associate of the CSHE, with the Engineering of 2020 Studies
- Collaborated on two studies funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) that explore undergraduate engineering education and the engineering professional pipeline

SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant
Spring 2010
College Student Affairs Program – The Pennsylvania State University
- Served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for CSA 503: College Student Development
- Assisted with the development of course syllabus, assignments, and grading rubrics

Teaching Assistant
Fall 2009
College Student Affairs Program – The Pennsylvania State University
- Served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for CSA 597: Social Justice Issues in Higher Education
- Facilitated weekly experiential activities to assist graduate students with the application of theory

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

