# LATINO MALES IN THE BORDERLAND: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSFER FROM THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO THE UNIVERSITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

Latino students often embark on their post-secondary educational journey at a community college due to cost, proximity to family, and open access policies. The current literature on Latina/o community college students has primarily focused on a deficit view of the educational aspirations and educational completion of this population. The current rapid and expected growth of the Latina/o population requires a call to action to identify the capital and supports employed by these students to navigate their journey to eventual transfer to the University in the Southwest region of the United States. Guided by Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework, my dissertation examined the educational experiences of five Latino male students at a Southwest Community College. Latina/o students highlighted the challenges that they encountered, resources available to overcome these challenges, and their resiliency. The findings are indicative of the presence and utilization of aspirational, navigational and resilience capital driven by self-determination.

Keywords: Case study, Latino male students, community college, university transfer

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## Introduction

According to the Pew Research Center (2016), approximately 55.3 million Hispanics live in the United States (U.S.) and represent approximately 17.3% of the total U.S. population. People of Hispanic origin, which the U.S. government defines as, "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census, 2010), are the nation's largest ethnic minority. While many Hispanics were born in the U.S. or have become U.S citizens, approximately 13.2% of Hispanic immigrants currently reside in the U.S. (McCabe & Meissner, 2010). Nearly a quarter of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. are school-aged children. It is therefore important to expand the topic of Hispanic educational success to also include the unique needs of immigrant students. The terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably in this dissertation as they are in much of the literature.

In 2010, 23.2% of elementary and high school students were Hispanic; during the same year, however, only 6.2% of college students were Hispanic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2012). Researchers have attributed the discrepancy between K-12 and college representation to the large number of young children in the recent wave of Latino immigration who face barriers related to learning a new language, lack of cultural understanding or awareness on behalf of educational institutions and lack of support for the family (Suarez-Orozco, 2009). However, researchers have refuted such deficit-perspectives and have also raised concern about whether negative K-12 educational experiences hinder college bound aspirations among Hispanic students (Benner & Graham, 2011). This issue is especially salient in the state of Arizona being that "the population is comprised of a larger proportion of Hispanics and American Indians in comparison to the country as a whole and is becoming increasingly Hispanic, especially among younger age cohorts, where, as of 2014, Hispanics comprised the largest group of students enrolled in pre-K through 12 classrooms" (Milem et al., 2016, p. 6)

While a great deal of research regarding state testing, parental involvement, instruction, social behaviors, and attitudes toward school has been conducted on the K-12 experience of Latinos, less research is available about their college going experiences. According to the National Council of La Raza (2007), Hispanic students are less likely than their non-Hispanic peers to complete high school. Among minority males, only 43% of Black and 48% of Hispanic male students graduate from high school while dropout rates are highest among recent Hispanic immigrants. While more Latino students are taking AP exams—which is an important step toward college bound success—Latino students are, as a whole, scoring lower than a decade ago (Hart et al., 2012). AP exams are scored on a five-point scale, with 1 representing "no recommendation" for college credit and 5 representing "extremely well qualified." During the past decade, White students' average score has remained flat while the average score of Latino students has dropped. Hart et al. (2012) stated that the decrease in Hispanic success on AP exams might be due, in part, to the sharp increase in the number of test-takers. A decade ago, only the highest achieving students took AP courses, while today a far wider range of students do so. As stated by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy (2012) at Arizona State University, "Arizona has been successful at encouraging more Latinos to participate in AP classes, but scores – and the chance of getting college credit – have fallen" (p. 24).

Over the past two decades, college admission eligibility, in regard to racial and ethnic patterns, have remained relatively stable. Hart et al. (2012) found that there has been little to no change in the rate of White students outnumbering Latinos when meeting qualifications for admission to Arizona public universities. Between 1989 and 2006, Latino eligibility rates hovered between 30% and 40%, while the rates for the state's total population of students were between 40% and 50%. The difference between Latino and Whites is even wider, with White

students eligible at rates upwards of 60% (Hart et al., 2012). Furthermore, in 2009, 350,425 students were enrolled in Arizona's public community colleges and universities but only 20% of these post-secondary students were Latino, a rate that was disproportionate to high school trends where 33% of Arizona's college-age population was Latino, and more than 30% of Latino high school students were eligible for university study (Arizona State University, Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2012).

**Hispanic Trends in Higher Education**

Within the higher education scholarship, a large body of extant literature centers on the experiences of students in four-year university settings, but little attention has been paid to students in community colleges (Tovar, 2015). The lack of focus on community college success is a challenge for supporting Hispanic students since they are enrolled at higher rates in community college than both Whites and African Americans (Kurlaender, 2006, p. 10). However, many Hispanic students are unsuccessful in community college. As described by Tovar (2015), many Hispanic community college students do not graduate with an associate degree and/or transfer to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree. Thus, community college is often the first and only step to higher education for many Latinos.

Researchers have described the institutional context of higher education as a microcosm of social, economic and political forces that in turn, shape educational programs and practices (Nevarez & Rico, 2007). Given that much of what occurs on college campuses is a reflection of the outside world, it should come as no surprise that intentional value-based practices to promote diversity and equitable post-secondary access and retention of Latino males is necessary to improve their representation in colleges and universities. Throughout the educational pipeline in the U.S., Latino men lag behind their White and Asian male peers as well as their Latina peers

(Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). Thus, as described by Figueroa, Perez and Vega (2016), Latino males face a unique cultural experience at the juxtaposition of gender, race, and ethnicity that warrants further investigation.

Given that most jobs in the U.S. require a college education, any progress Latinos make within the educational system, especially college completion, will lend a substantial boost to the U.S. economy. The Morrison Institute for Public Policy (2012) found an $8,000 per year earning difference between individuals in Arizona whose highest level of education was high school graduate versus some postsecondary education. The same study found that workers with a bachelor's degree could expect to earn nearly twice as much workers who have not earned beyond a high school diploma. This is key for Latino males as they are often expected to become wage earners at a young age and to contribute to the family (Padilla, 2007).

From an economic perspective, limited college degree attainment among Latino males could manifest in a curtailment of the U.S. skilled labor force as well as a decrease in U.S. labor productivity (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2003). This especially impacts the economic health of the Latino community where among many Latino households, males are considered the head of the household and are thus expected to work for the economic well-being of the entire family (Padilla, 2007). As described by Sáenz, Ponjuán, and Figueroa (2015), "For immigrant Latino males, the expectation to work, contribute to the family, and assume a traditional gender role often supersede their desire to attain a higher education" (p. 16). Many academic researchers link a population's educational attainment to its economic stability and prosperity, from increased home ownership rates to decreased incarceration rates (Deil-Amen & Deluca, 2010). Thus, limited degree attainment among Latino males is a serious issue that likely impacts the entire Latino community.

As reported by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (2009), there is a dire need among educational leaders to develop a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of ethnic and racial minority students as well as pathways to academic success that will promote a positive educational environment for diverse students. Specific to Latino males, researchers have begun to coin the term, "the vanishing Latino male" (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2010) to bring attention to the growing gap between Latina women and Latino males in college attendance and degree attainment. Given the limited number of Latino males attaining a bachelor's degree, Sáenz and Ponjuán argue that educational leaders must identify factors that contribute to: (a) Latino male academic success at community college, where many begin their educational journeys, as well as (b) success transfer to four-year universities.

While Latino students make up a significant portion of the K-12 student body in southeastern Arizona, there is limited research that specifically focuses on factors that contribute to academic success within post-secondary education for this community. The southeastern Arizona context is an important snapshot of current U.S. socio-historical factors that impact Latino educational outcomes. Specifically, the recent passage of discriminatory state policy against immigrants as well as ethnic minorities - Senate Bill 1070 - also known as the "show your papers law," allows law enforcement officials to inquire about people's immigration status as they are enforcing other laws such as stopping an individual for speeding. It has been controversial and created a perception of fear. Such policy has negatively impacted the Latino community by creating a sense of fear through treatment as "other" which contributes to lack of self-efficacy thereby contributing to an overall climate of xenophobia for Latino students in Arizona. In this study, I aimed to identify the strengths that Latino male students employed in their progression through the educational system from the community college to the university,

in light of the threatening sociopolitical climate in Arizona schools (Campbell & Horowitz, 2016). I utilize the term sociopolitical to refer to an amalgamation of social and political factors. In the next section, I situate the study within some broader national discourses, initiatives, and ongoing concerns regarding men of color, the socio-political context, and the school to prison pipeline.

**National Attention on Men of Color in Education**

In February of 2014, President Barrack Obama launched the "My Brother's Keeper Initiative" (White House, 2014) to bring the issue of low rates of minority male degree completion to the forefront of national attention and policy. Critique and discussion of the issues directly impacting minority males has focused on the school to prison pipeline, overrepresentation in special education, as well as overrepresentation in school disciplinary enforcement. As noted by Sáenz and Ponjuán (2016), "this initiative has brought together public and private organizations, school districts, city leaders, community activists, scholars, students and families and philanthropic organizations that have pledged a long-term commitment" (p. 2) to ameliorate this issue.

The lack of reliable data on Latino males further hampers the evolution of a research agenda to improve educational outcomes for this group. As reported by Sáenz and Ponjuán (2011), "Few national data sources allow for a comprehensive analysis of Latino males' educational pathways, a glaring research need that must be addressed" (p. 6). While several recent studies, which I discuss later in this dissertation, focus on the topic of Latino educational outcomes, these studies rarely attend to the community college experience. Thus, Latino males and their success in community colleges is an emerging but understudied area in the field of education. More specifically, there is an absence of research on factors that contribute to

successful transfer from the community college to the university among Latino males—an imperative that must be addressed to improve higher education completion for this community.

**Socio-Political and Economic Barriers**

The criminalization of people with either or both immigrant and minority statuses have been normalized in American society, as evidenced by recent policy enactment in the state of Arizona (Alvarado, 2010). Magaña (2013) astutely summarized the challenges faced by many immigrants and Latinos when faced with negative political sentiment when he writes, "Social constructions fluctuate with the sentiment of the times and targets groups with little political power based on inability to vote resulting in them often being scapegoated" (p. 151). As it relates to education, Latina/o students are attending school with this backdrop of disenfranchisement, thus resulting in perceived and real discrimination, lower grades, decreased school attachment and acculturative stress (Orozco & Lopez, 2015). Kozol (1991) exposed America's public school systems' divergent extremes of wealth, opportunity, and segregation that form structural barriers that discourage the academic success of poor and minority youth (as cited in Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009).

Scholars have documented instances of student resistance to unjust educational contexts. For example, Cabrera, Meza, Romero and Rodriguez (2013) described the resistance enacted by students in response to anti-immigrant policies. In 2012, the Tucson Unified School District eradicated Mexican American Studies from its curriculum based on a law passed by the Arizona State Legislature. Proponents of the legislation argued that the classes promoted racism and classism toward Anglos, advocated ethnic solidarity, and suggested the overthrow of the government. Consequently, impacted students organized and planned walk-outs to exercise their right to protest this injustice. As described by Cabrera et al. (2013), "student organizers led the

creation of an autonomous, community based educational space to allow young people to engage in political analysis, self-reflection, and strategic organizing" by creating an independent school as a form of student transformative resistance (p. 7). While students made critical strides toward their educational rights, mainstream media and institutional agents downplayed the students' resistance efforts by attributing their actions to the undue influence of adults, thereby discrediting the students' act of resistance and cry for educational reform.

Research has shown that socio-political tensions lead to challenging educational contexts for underrepresented students (Orozco & Lopez, 2015), including Latino males who have disproportionate underrepresentation in colleges and universities while at the same time overrepresentation in the criminal justice system (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). Thus, educational researchers must focus their efforts on improving the educational success and degree attainment of Latino males—their educational and professional success is intricately linked with the prosperity and well-being of the larger Latina/o community.

**School-to-Prison Pipeline**

"The "school-to-prison pipeline" refers to the policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children (defined as those with a history of abuse, neglect, poverty or learning disabilities), (Wald & Losen, 2003) out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (2008), this pipeline reflects the prioritization of "incarceration over education". Overrepresentation in the school discipline pipeline is an issue that must be taken into account when examining the experiences and trajectories of minority males in education (Wald & Losen, 2003). Skiba et al. (2011) posited that at the elementary and middle school levels, African American and Latino students are disproportionately given referrals that pull them out of the classroom and onto the

radars of school officials. Factors that lead toward these referrals involve tardiness/truancy, noncompliance, and general disruption. An important distinction to note is that many of these referrals begin at the elementary level for African American students and the middle school level for Latino students (Skiba et al., 2011). Furthermore, Skiba et al. (2011) found disparate outcomes based on referrals for students of Color versus White students, with students of Color being more likely to receive graver consequences when committing the same infractions as their White peers. This issue is important because it directly impacts Latino males and often creates a negative path that begins early in their schooling years. This issue becomes an impediment to their educational success and contributes to the "vanishing Latino male" phenomenon (Sáenz and Ponjuán, 2009).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to sample a group of five Latino male students at a community college in Arizona; the school is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS). Namely, data was collected to identify and analyze the supports (e.g. facilitative, socio-emotional, academic, etc.) that participants reported as contributors to their educational journey in the transfer process from the community college to a state university in Arizona. I relied on Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth to understand how Latino males have capitalized on supports via a qualitative case study research methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In doing so, I gathered data about the experiences of Latino students in the transfer process with a specific focus on the supports identified by these students that aided them in their transfer success. The overarching mission of this study was to integrate identified supports into the educational processes/programs at the community college (site of data collection) as a way to support other Latino male students in successfully transitioning to four-year universities.

A secondary goal of this study was to examine the experiences of Latino men in college who were pursuing higher education within a socio-political context that was strife with anti-immigrant and anti-Latino male sentiment. Attention to the socio-political context of Arizona that Latino students face is important because it allows for the identification of strengths employed by students, including student activism, as well as other discreet and/or overt forms of resistance. Finally, exploration of these strengths allow for the identification of an emerging form of capital that Latino students employ to negotiate and challenge their educational contexts.

**Significance of the Study**

This study fills a significant void in the higher education research literature by providing a narrative of the experiences of Latino male community college students and the factors contributing to their success in the transfer process to a four-year university. The findings of this study can be utilized to assist in the overall improvement of the educational system for Latino men, thereby improving better access to social and economic mobility for the larger Latino community. As a community college administrator, I am keenly aware of the lack of available data that can be used to improve practices and policies that impact transfer rates of Latino male college students from community college to university. Thus, this research will provide data to inform the formation and/or change of policies and programs that will support this population, with the added ability to analyze the impact of a heated socio-political backdrop impacting students' educational and career aspirations. Other faculty and administrators may benefit from reading this research in that the findings may provide data that may be transferable to the specific student population of Latino males enrolled at their respective institutions. As the Latino population continues to grow, it is necessary to facilitate the engagement and successful college

degree completion of these students. The impact to the family and overall society will enable us to move forward as a nation and prosperous country.

**Research Question**

According to Laden (2001; as cited in Nunez, Sparks and Hernandez, 2011), community colleges appeal to Latino students for several reasons. First, community colleges are often closer to students' homes, which is important for many Latino students because of the close ties to their family, a cultural norm that is common among many Latinos in the U.S. Second, community colleges offer lower tuition and fees than four-year universities and are therefore particularly appealing due to the financial needs of Latino students who are often concerned about how they will fund their education. Cohen and Brower (2008) found that Latinos are less likely to rely on student loans and instead turn to employment while in college to pay for their tuition, which is an impediment to retention in college. Thus, many Latino students pursue their education at community colleges since they often provide the most accessible entry point for earning a college degree.

In this study, based at a Southwestern Arizona HSI-designated community college, I focused on identifying factors that attributed to academic success of Latino men, as measured by their transfer from the community college to a bachelor's degree granting university. The study's research questions were:

1. What inspires Latino male students to complete an associate degree at their community college, and make the effort to transfer to the university?

2. What programs and/or services are identified by students as helpful in supporting their transfer from the community college to the university?
3. What roles do educational leaders (defined as staff, faculty members and administrators) at the sending (community college) and receiving (university) institutions play in students' decisions and/or processes in the transfer process?

**Researcher Positionality**

I approached this research study as a native born Latina administrator of Mexican descent in Southeastern Arizona, where I am employed at a community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In order for a post-secondary institution to receive this designation by the federal government, 25% of the student population must identify as Hispanic or Latino. The HSI designation allows the institution to apply for federal grant funds to support instruction and capacity building. As an educational administrator, some of my previous work responsibilities included working with Latino male community college students in need of direct intervention. As a member of the Latino community, one of my foci is to understand and support Latino students as they progress on their educational journey. I hypothesize that different forms of capital (Yosso, 2005) in the lives of Latino male students in community college, such as cultural capital (i.e., education, language), social capital (i.e., social networks, connections) and economic capital (i.e., money and other material possessions) may inform the creative ways in which students negotiate challenging educational contexts. The overarching goal of this study is to enhance the educational prospects of Latino males, which can improve the financial standing and power of the larger Latino community in Arizona.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this section, I examine the extant literature about men of color, specifically African American and Latino males, and their experiences in the educational system. I then delve into the issues pertaining to Latino male students and their educational experiences. In order to comprehend the educational trajectory of Latino males, I discuss the social developments that have impacted this group, such as the role of gender, stereotype threat, and campus climate.

## Historical Trends in Education Research on Men of Color

Since there is a more substantial body of literature about the educational experiences and outcomes of African American males as compared to other ethnic groups, it is imperative to review this literature since it sets the tone for understanding the challenging juxtaposition faced by many men of color at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender stereotype (College Board, 2010). In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the United States shifted from a primarily agricultural economy to one founded on industry and manufacturing. The United States fought in two world wars that had significant effects on the two largest ethnic/racial groups: Hispanics and African Americans. Verdugo (2006) states:

> For Hispanics, the two world wars and the economic restructuring of the U.S. economy led to three phenomena that shaped their educational experiences: urbanization, immigration, and the emergence of Hispanic leadership in the fight for civil rights. Hispanics challenged school segregation, just as black civil rights activists were doing. One of the cases—Mendez v. Westminister 1945—involved Hispanic parents seeking entrance for their child into an all-white public school, and it paved the way for the Supreme Court's historic Brown v. Board decision in 1954. (p. 15)

The legal case of Brown vs. the Board of Education was the stimulus that allowed African Americans to attend predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Hall and Rowan (2001) posited that several ongoing issues hindered African American males' progress through the American educational system, primarily racism and socioeconomic challenges. African American males often have disproportionately high rates of suspension and expulsion, (Monroe, 2005) overrepresentation in special education classes and underrepresentation in enrollment in Advanced Placement classes as compared to other races.

In the mid-1980s, education researchers, advocates, and policy analysts began calling attention to the social, economic, health, and educational crises facing African American males in the U.S., using crisis terminology to bring attention to the complex challenges faced by these men, including terms such as: "endangered species," "at risk," "marginal," caught in an "epidemic of failure", and victims of "institutional decimation" (Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008). Research has demonstrated that the educational experiences of African American males impede secondary education completion therefore resulting in high rates of unemployment, inferior employment prospects, low wages, poor health, and increased risk of direct involvement with the criminal justice system (Hale, 2001; Majors & Billson, 1992, Harvey, 2008; Levin et al., 2007). In her book, We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, hooks (2004) notes:

> Literacy skills are not taught to [African American] males. Educational systems fail to impart or inspire learning in African American males of all ages. . . . Many African American males graduate from high schools reading and writing on a third or fourth grade level. (pp. 40-41)

Despite decades of attention, there have been few, if any, adequate solutions offered for the academic achievement gap between Black students and White students. Harper and Harris

(2012) asserted that "Two-thirds of black undergraduate men who start at public colleges and universities do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in U.S. higher education" (p. 1). The issues that preceded the Brown decision, the Civil Rights Act and the civil rights movement, still exist today. The racial inequality in the educational system and society continues to directly impact the experience of African American males. Extant research on the issue of the academic achievement gap between African American students and White students has failed to bring about significant change and progress. Members of low status social groups continue to exhibit lower levels of academic and intellectual achievement impacting test scores, grades, secondary school completion, and postsecondary completion when compared to members of dominant social groups. Race and social class conjoined with individual and family resources, school quality, and social capital, continue to impact the opportunity for educational advancement for African American males.

The educational experience of Latino and African American students are often conflated in educational research focused on minority, gender related research and are often compared in relation to performance rankings based on educational metrics such as secondary and post-secondary completion. Noguera and Hurtado (2012) noted that the logic for this pairing is the similarity in "disadvantages in educational settings—more likely to be suspended/expelled, to be placed in special education, or drop out," and as a result, "the experiences of Latino men are [rendered] less visible than those of Blacks" (p. 5). This creates a tension which fails to illuminate the school experiences of Latino males by taking into account the culture and history of each group (MacDonald et al., 2007; Noguera & Hurtado, 2012).

The current research literature on Latino men's experiences in higher education places a great deal of focus on the values and behaviors that men deploy in relation to family (Ojeda &

Castillo, 2016 as cited in Sáenz, Ponjuán and Figueroa, year). In the next section, I will review the importance of family in Latino culture vis-à-vis familismo, a cultural value that has proven to be consistent across many Latinos in the U.S. and around the world (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2011). The goal of this section is to examine the role that family, in relation to values and behavior, plays in the educational experience of Latino males.

**The Latino Family and Familismo**

Familismo has been described as commitment to inclusiveness, participation, and a strong bond in nuclear and extended family networks (Marsiglia, Booth, Baldwin & Ayers, 2013). According to Marin's (1987) research, three basic dimensions of familismo are often endorsed by Latina/os: familial obligations, perceived support from the family, and family as referents. The concept of family as referents involves the strong identification and attachment to immediate and extended family.

The value of familismo encompasses strong feelings of loyalty, responsibility, and solidarity within the Latino family unit (Sabogal et. al. 1987). Previous research on the education of Latino students has found that parents value and significantly contribute to their children's education (Auerbach, 2007; Delgado-Bernal, 2002). Latino families highly value being members of a family and community which often results in higher levels of interdependence, reciprocity, mutual empathy, trust, and a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others within their circle or group (Marín & Triandis, 1985 as cited in Marín & Marín, 1991). This diverts from the "individualistic, competitive, achievement-oriented cultures of the nonminority groups in the United States" (Marín & Marín, 1991, p. 11). This may help explain why Latina/o students are more likely than their non-Latina/o counterparts to contend with the familial expectations of attending a postsecondary institution that is more affordable or closer to home so that they might

continue to actively participate in and contribute to family life, as well as rely on family for emotional guidance and support (Tornatzky, Lee, Mejía, & Tarant, 2003 as cited in Martinez, 2013).

**Research Linking Familismo and Educational Outcomes**

According to Sáenz and Ponjuán (2009), many young Latino males are expected to be family oriented, strong, brave, hardworking, and family contributors. Even as gender roles within the Latino culture are constantly changing, the patriarchal norms remain prominent in the everyday lives of many young Latinos (citation). The cultural value of familismo, which involves strong feelings of loyalty and commitment within the Latino family unit, has been found to be a motivational factor for Latino male college students. For example, scholars have found that Latinos consider education as a pathway towards financial stability, not only for themselves, but for their families as well (Schwartz, Donovan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009).

Familismo sets a foundation for self -worth and identity in the development of Mexican American youth (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006). Assisting the family may be a motivator for them to achieve academic goals and be successful in school (Ojeda, Navarro, & Morales, 2011). In a study of 181 Mexican American adolescents (51% young women) who attended high school in a midsized South Texas city, Niemeyer, Wong and Westerhaus (2009) found that the value of familismo was positively correlated to academic outcomes for Latino high school students which included higher class attendance and greater academic effort. Similarly, in another study with urban Latino 12$^{th}$ grade students, the values of familismo related to less truancy and more effort placed on academics (Esparza & Sanchez, 2008). In a qualitative study examining the role familismo played in 20 Latina/o high school seniors' college choices, findings highlighted several ways students negotiated the options of attending a university close to home to benefit

from familial support and/or financially contribute to the family; leaving the region for college in order to ensure a "better life" for themselves and their families; compromising by leaving the region for college in order to ensure a "better life"; or compromising by beginning at a regional institution and later transferring to another university (Martinez, 2013).

**Masculinity and Male Gender Roles among Latino Men**

Latino men often enter educational contexts having to navigate negative stereotypes about their academic potential as men of color (Cerezo, et al. 2012). As described by Mirandé (1997) as cited in Ojeda and Liang (2014), "One stereotype for which Mexican Americans must contend is that of the machista (i.e., a man who adheres to machismo)" (p. 297). As discussed by Ojeda and Liang, this stereotype reduces society's interpretation of Mexican American men and their masculinity to a negative, one-dimensional characterization of them as uneducated, lazy, aggressive, alcohol abusing, and/or gang involved. Thus, related to educational outcomes, others in the school context—teachers, counselors, administrators—are primed to minimize and ignore the rich contributions and positive qualities of Mexican American men. As a result, many Mexican American men are directed toward futures away from higher education, a direction consistent with common negative stereotypes about them (Cerezo, et al. 2012).

Stereotypes about the ways men are supposed to behave in society are commonplace in U.S. culture. Levant stated that, "In the United States, notions of traditional or hegemonic masculinity are often centered on physical strength, success, power, and competition, aggression, and avoidance of appearing feminine (as cited in Liang et al., p. 201). Furthermore, Wood, Harris, and White (2015) stated: "At early ages, boys are taught to express themselves as being tough, aggressive, unemotional and through other behaviors that are socially constructed as masculine" (p. 6). These expectations are often reinforced through male peer groups who

encourage the demonstration of physicality, heterosexism, and circumvention of anything that may be interpreted as feminine (Connell, 1996). Furthermore, educational leaders may also indirectly perpetuate these stereotypes in the academic setting through their expectations of learning activities and practices that maintain cultural beliefs about masculinity and gender (Lu & Wong, 2014). These practices create barriers for young men to pursue various directions in education and career.

Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, and Rodriguez (2013) examined the effect of masculinity constructs on the experiences of Latino men in Texas community colleges. Their work underscores the complexity of the gendered and racialized experiences of Latino males in higher education. One significant finding was that the pressure to achieve social status among Latino men was linked to a preoccupation with working to support their families. Thus, employment was a cultural marker of manhood, which was strengthened by the intersecting notions of machismo (male pride) and caballerismo (family-centered). The challenge with this pressure facing Latino men is that values around work and earning income to support one's family is often in conflict with men's ability to successfully pursue higher education (Cerezo et al., 2012). This is especially the case for young men who must negotiate financial needs of their family while pursuing college—the payoff of degree completion is not immediate.

Countering simplistic arguments that characterize Latino men as machista, Arciniega et al. (2008) introduced caballerismo to the research literature as the positive counterpart to machismo. Caballerismo is defined by characteristics of masculinity that include emotional responsiveness, honor, caretaking, and providing for one's family (Arciniega et al., 2008). Furthermore, Arciniega et al. (2008) stated that Mexican American men are more likely to incorporate positive aspects to the ways they practice masculinity and male gender roles, such as

honor, respect, dignity, and familismo, and that these values are incorporated into their behaviors and roles as men. Thus, it may be the case that many Latino men rely on caballerismo to drive their interactions with education systems though few researchers have explored this phenomenon. In this study, I looked for the presence of caballerismo in the way Latino males navigated the choices they made while pursuing a higher education.

**Campus Climate and Stereotype Threat**

Recent research on the experiences of Students of Color in higher education focuses on their socio-emotional experiences in relation to their racial and ethnic identities. In this section, I introduce the concept of campus climate and stereotype threat, two areas of scholarship that illuminate the challenges faced by Latino men in college settings.

The experiences of Latina/o students in higher education are impacted by a number of factors, one of which is campus climate. Campus racial climate is a concept used to describe the overall racial environment of a university; how members of the campus perceive the overall campus with respect to the treatment and affirmation of different racial groups on campus. Several theoretical models of campus racial climate have been developed in the higher education research literature. Hurtado and Ponjuán (2005) developed a model that identified the influencing factors on campus racial climate: (a) historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of groups, (b) numerical representation of diverse people, (c) nature of interactions among diverse groups, and (d) individual perceptions of campus climate.

Racial experiences on a college or university campus can negatively impact Students of Color based on their perception and understanding of these experiences Explicit discriminatory behavior to clandestine acts or communication, such as racial microaggressions, which involve,

"incessant, subtle, yet stunning racial assaults" (Yosso et al., 2009) by individuals at the institution can negatively impact students. Racial microaggressions often create doubt for the student in regard to belonging in an institution of higher education. This can also transcend to the perceived academic and intellectual capability as viewed by others.

Mendez and Cabrera (2015) conducted a study with 18 Latino male and female students at the University of Arizona in order to discern how anti-Latino/a Arizona policies impacted campus racial climate for these students. Participants were asked to describe how they experienced the campus racial climate focusing on the perceptual and behavioral dimensions of climate specific to Senate Bill 1070 which requires law enforcement officials to determine the legal status of an individual and House Bill 2281 which prohibits Ethnic Studies in K-12 education in Arizona. The findings resulted in two primary findings: (a) racial tension, stress, and fear; and (b) political awareness leading to engagement and activism. Students struggled to find a balance between being politically active and engaging in their coursework. There was a definite increase in the perception of a hostile racial climate on campus which can impact students' persistence and college completion.

Furthermore, Cuellar and Johnson-Ahorlu (2016) examined student perceptions of the campus racial climate at a community college designated as an HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution). A parallel mixed methods design was utilized and students that identified as Asian, Latino and White participated in the study. The findings indicated that Latina/o students reported less discrimination and bias on the survey and were apt to share more in-depth perceptions (both positive and negative) of the campus climate when they participated in a focus group. This may indicate that Latino students find strength in groups when being afforded the opportunity to work with peers.

Another concept reviewed in the extant literature to illuminate the experiences of underrepresented students in college is “stereotype threat”, developed by Steele (2009) to explain the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype (p. 3). Steele (1997) posits “Stereotype threat, is a situational threat--a threat in the air--that, in general form, can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists (e.g., skateboarders, older adults, White men, gang members)” (p. 614). Negative stereotypes that may be applicable to specific groups instill a sense of fear in being defined by that stereotype and has the potential for creating a self-threatening situation.

Research carried out by Steele resulted in the identification of four patterns of findings in regard to stereotype threat and its impact on individuals. The first pattern explained how incidents tied to a sense of social identity impact the choices individuals make in their life, such as career and their social network. In one example, Steele provided the example of a white sprinter at the Olympic trials having to overcome expectations tied to his social identity in competing against other Black sprinters that would not necessarily have the same concern. Due to assumptions that Black athletes are more athletically inclined, the white sprinter was viewed as being inferior. The second pattern was threat identity, and has the potential to foster social problems for an individual that can range from racial, social class, and gender achievement gaps. For example, students taking an academic test where there could be a perception of lack of ability due to race, often performed poorly even when it was a subject they had excelled at previously. Thirdly, Steele identified the presence of physiological and psychological responses that result in impairment to human functioning as a result of the threat. This can appear as students feeling unable to function in a social situation such as speaking with others that they feel

may be making a stereotype judgement on them as an individual. Lastly, Steele encouraged practices that could be utilized to lessen stereotype threat in one's life, which included the way schools and educators approach testing situations (Steele, 2009). Some of these approaches included optimistic teacher-student relationships, challenging over remediation, and stressing the expandability of intelligence in believing that all students can learn.

As described by Steele (2009), stereotype threat can present itself in the lives of African American males when there is a distinct focus on their race in the academic context (an experience much less pronounced for other students of a different race in the same context), which then directly impacts their emotional experiences and academic performance. For underrepresented students in college, not caring about their academic performance reduces the ability that stereotype threat has on negatively impacting their self-esteem. Empirically substantiating his theory, Steele and his colleagues (2009) found that the most achievement-oriented students—those that were also the most skilled, motivated, and confident—were the most impaired by stereotype threat. Academically strong students are especially concerned that stereotype threat will confirm that they are not, in fact, academically strong.

**Latino Men and Higher Education**

The College Board Advocacy and Policy Center identified six pathways available to minority males in their life paths (Lee & Ransom, 2011): (a) enrollment in two-year colleges or vocational schools, (b) enrollment in four-year universities, (c), enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces, (d) employment in the U.S. workforce, (e) unemployment, (f) incarceration in state or federal prisons, or in local jails, and untimely death due to other circumstances.

Educational attainment for Men of Color is often the key to prosperity and opportunity for them and their families (Ballon, 2015; Saenz, Ponjuán & Figueroa, 2016). A major challenge therefore exists when Latino and African American males are overwhelmingly enrolled in community colleges as their principal pathway into postsecondary education since "success rates for these men are low, with only 12% and 14.6% of Black and Latino men graduating in three years, respectively (Digest of Education Statistics, 2010 as cited in Harris and Wood, 2014; p. 23). With respect to pursuing higher education, African American and Latino males often emerge from lower social class backgrounds, are at higher risk for dropping out of high school as compared to their White and Asian peers, and are more likely to come from families where they may be the first to venture into the higher education realm (Strayhorn, 2010; Pérez, 2014, 2016, 2017). Thus, Latino and African American males face a myriad of challenges in their pursuit of higher education. Furthermore, as noted by Reyes and Nakagawa (2010) as cited by Cerezo, et al. (2012), "some young people, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Latino males, are trapped in a cycle of prison, poverty and disadvantage" (p. 244).

Related to the link between a student's social context prior to college and their ability to succeed in college, Pino, Martinez-Ramos and Smith (2012) conducted a qualitative study at two institutions located in Texas with the goal of creating a psychometric instrument to measure the concept of college academic ethic. The authors posited that the most important factor in determining college students' academic success, regardless of ethnicity, was the quality of the high school curriculum they received prior to initiating college. As described by the authors, students who had an academic ethic in high school performed better than students who did not have an ethic, and were also able to retain these habits when approaching their college studies (p. 20). Focusing on the educational experience of Latino males in the K-12 system is vital to

creating the expectation and value of educational success in order to create a strong academic ethic to empower these students to maneuver through the community college and eventually the university.

Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) examined the internal resilience practices used by Students of Color in the higher education realm. Namely, the authors focused on the theoretical framework of "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) to challenge existing models commonly relied upon by education researchers to examine low college completion rates among Latinos. "Funds of knowledge" is defined as the existing resources, knowledge, and skills embedded in students and their families, a concept that depicts Latino students from a positive lens rather than a deficit one. The funds of knowledge that students bring to their educational experience may serve as the blueprint for identifying supportive services and programs to help these students succeed in education.

Rios–Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) stated that, "Despite efforts to increase college access, college enrollment and completion, rates remain stratified by socioeconomic status and by race and ethnicity" (p. 2). Specifically, Rios–Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) noted that an impediment to the existing literature on Students' of Color transition to college is that researchers have focused on the identification of "models" that have been developed by non-minority researchers. Thus, common models for student success are grounded in what White researchers have deemed as helpful and/or necessary for Students of Color. A result of an outsider perspective is that much of the existing literature on minority students' transition to college is linear and does not reflect the circuitous pathways of many Latino students. The authors suggested that research should focus specifically on the needs of Students of Color (as Students of Color identify them), and how to address these needs in order to support these students' educational advancement.

Although Students of Color often face systemic challenges in higher education, students have also historically resisted oppressive academic conditions. Speaking to the unique practices deployed by Students of Color in higher education, Theoharis (2008) used a case study approach to examine the forms of resistance that male students of Color practiced in a secondary education setting. He defined the term *resistance* as "all the barriers, countervailing pressures, tensions, and realities that detract from leading to the creation of a more equitable and just school" (p. 304). Furthermore, Theoharis found that resistance came from the school/community, staff attitudes and beliefs, and insular/privileged parental expectations that hindered the support of students in higher education.

**The Transfer Process**

There are four primary reasons why students enroll at two-year institutions at disproportionately higher rates than at universities (Fry, 2002). The examination of community college level trends is important because community colleges serve as the entry point to higher education for most Latina/os in the U.S., although rates of associate degree completion and transfer to four-year universities remain dismal (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). With respect to why students choose community colleges, Fry (2002) noted that the primary reason is that cost of tuition is generally more affordable, therefore providing easier access to higher education. Second, community colleges typically offer flexible, full and part-time scheduling of classes in order to support students that may be working and juggling family and work responsibilities. Third, community colleges offer academic paths through associate degrees or certificates that may lead directly into the workforce providing an opportunity for employment. Lastly, many schools have transfer agreements with universities that allow students to complete an associate degree and then transfer to complete the bachelor's degree, (Sáenz, Lu, Bukoski & Rodriguez,

2013). Together, these factors contribute to the attractiveness of community colleges for many Latino students. In the next sections, I will review the path that students embark upon moving from high school to community college.

**High School to Community College.** There is a growing body of literature addressing the transfer experience of Latino students from high school to college and university (Gandara, Larson, Mehan & Rumberger, 2010). Among these studies, researchers have uncovered a variety of issues affecting Latino students' transition from high school to college including: attitudes about coursework, motivation to study, satisfaction with classes, involvement in social and extracurricular activities, interpersonal relationships, satisfaction with the social environment, personal and emotional health, familismo, acculturation, and a sense of belonging and fitting into the college environment (Yun & Moreno, 2006). As noted by Rendón (1993), the transition from high school to the community college can be a daunting process for many Latino students:

> The community college is a critical institution for students of color. It is not only a place to learn; it is a place that matters. It matters because the community college represents hope, opportunity, and for many minority and majority students, one last chance to succeed (p. 12).

As noted by Gandara (2010), many Latino students emerge from the K-12 system having attended schools that were racially segregated and financially under resourced, thus leaving few to no opportunities for students to interact with the dominant culture present in college and university settings. In other words, this lack of exposure is critical in that Latino students are often not shown the norms and expectations for social life and order that define higher education institutions. Gandara (2010) researched dropout prevention and college going programs for

Latina/o high school students on the West Coast region of the United States and found that the following practices were helpful to student's academic success:

> Providing at least one key person responsible for connecting and knowing the student, structuring a supportive peer group, providing access to strong curriculum that leads to college preparation, attending to students' cultural backgrounds, and showing students how they can finance their education, which included providing scholarships when possible (p. 28).

As demonstrated by Gandara's research, Latina/o students often require a tiered approach of support services to foster academic success; these practices may also be applicable in the community college setting.

Ornelas and Solorzano (2004) focused on the transfer conditions of Latina/o community college students in California. The research design was a case study of a single California community college that serves a predominantly Latina/o student body. In-depth interviews and focus groups were the primary methods used in data collection. The study was guided by the following questions: (a) what are the resources for academic motivation and potential barriers that inform the transfer function and process for Latina/o community college students and (b) what are the essential elements required for instituting a community college transfer culture?

Based on a sample of 191 students, the community college was the entry point to higher education for many Latina/o students, with 32 out of every 100 students beginning their journey at the community college. Also, in the fall of 2000, this institution enrolled 20,000 students yet only 667 Latino/a students transferred to the university from community college. Ornelas and Solorzano (2004) identified four sets of recommendations for supporting Latino students'

success in higher education. First, at the outset, the administration must be committed to the transfer function of the college. Secondly, counselors/advisors need to provide students with the necessary transfer information. Third, students must have regular contact with faculty and fourth, students must actively participate in their education. These recommendations are important because these supports and relationships housed within the university are key to Latino students successfully completing degree programs.

**Community College to Four-year University.**

The transition from a community college to a university can be a daunting process for Students of Color. Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solorzano (2011) examined the transfer process from community college to public selective four-year colleges among students of Color in California. The authors utilized the theoretical perspective of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998) to identify *transfer* as a "dual commitment between both the sending and receiving institution" and the conceptual framework of a "transfer receptive culture as an institutional commitment by a four-year college or university to provide the support needed for students to transfer successfully" (Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004, p. 8). These descriptions are important because Latino students may be successful in navigating the community college but if the same support is not offered or valued at the university then successful completion of the baccalaureate degree may be jeopardized.

Jain et al. (2011) identified five elements of a transfer culture and suggested that they occur as pre-transfer and post-transfer. Pre-transfer elements provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students. The post-transfer elements include offering financial and academic support through distinct opportunities, acknowledging the lived

experiences that students bring to campus, and creating an appropriate and organic framework from which to evaluate and improve transfer receptive programs. As Jain et al. (2011) described, the elements of a transfer culture are important to point out because awareness of these supports need to be implemented in order to foster success for these students.

Gard, Paton and Gosselin (2012) examined the perception of transfer success factors identified by a cohort of 14 students transferring from the community college to the university. "The transfer process included areas such as academic advisement, admissions, transfer evaluation, communication, financial aid, academic preparation, and psychosocial factors" (p. 835). There were three factors that were identified as impediments to a successful transfer experience: (a) the quality of academic advisement, (b) access to financial aid, and (c) social and cultural issues.

Similarly, Ellis (2012) studied the attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge acquisition by 72 successful community college transfer students who attended various community colleges across the country. The findings demonstrated that students identified themselves as the biggest motivator for wanting to transfer to the university. They also expressed a lack of advising in regard to the transfer process at both the community college and the university, as well as loss of credit upon transfer. Learning from the experiences of other community college transfer students may be beneficial in addressing these issues from an institutional perspective in order to support student success.

**Latino Men and the Community College Experience**

As documented in the research literature, many Latino men in college are first-generation college students from families of lower socioeconomic status (Cerezo et al., 2012). In the last

decade, there has been a focus at the Presidential, national, and Arizona state levels to address the issues impacting Latino males in college since their lack of educational advancement has become a concern as the population in these groups is growing yet their educational attainment has remained stagnant or declined. In the next section, I review reports and initiatives that have been recently developed to improve Latino men's higher education outcomes.

Here, I would suggest that you write an introductory paragraph that mays out the reports and initiatives that you will discuss. This will provide a much needed transition here.

The Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3) is a project of San Diego State University's Interwork Institute. The goal of the project is to partner with community colleges across the U.S. to enhance access, achievement, and success among minority male community college students. M2C3's research and practice agenda prioritizes men who have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved in postsecondary education. As a result of the work of M2C3, the National Consortium on College Men of Color, whose goal is to support the capacity of community colleges to enhance outcomes for men of color, was launched in spring of 2015. Several community colleges have programs, initiatives, or general efforts designed to enhance outcomes for historically underrepresented and underserved men, particularly men of Color. However, only 17% of Black and 15% of Latino men earned a certificate, degree, or transfer from a community college to a four-year institution within six years of when they began study. Since minority male degree attainment remains dismal, NCCMC serves as a resource for community colleges that are interested in sharing their efforts and learning about new strategies for enhancing the success of men of Color.

It is important to point out the work of M2C3 because it focuses on how to approach teaching men of color in the community college so that they will be successful and persist to degree completion. Faculty leaders who were part of M2C3 described challenges faced by men of Color in the community college that included external barriers such as transportation, racial-gender stereotypes, male gender role socialization, and being underprepared academically. The M2C3 research team utilized the Socio-Ecological Outcomes model (Wood, Harris & White, 2015) to guide the conceptualization of factors influencing men of Color in higher education.

Project MALES (Mentoring to Achieve Latino Education Success) is another great example of a research study conducted "to address the issue of the "vanishing" Latino male in higher education. Project MALES, launched at the University of Texas at Austin, addresses the educational attainment and persistence issues facing young men of color" (University of Texas at Austin, 2016). Project Males was started in 2010 and was funded through institutional, local, and national monies used to create a support network for Latino male students at the university. The primary foci of the program were mentoring, service, and community learning opportunities. The outcomes of the ongoing project reveal near-peer and intergenerational mentoring help to support leveraging social capital for Latino males.

In another large-scale effort to improve educational outcomes for men of Color, seven research centers from top universities in the U.S. co-released a policy report titled, Advancing the Success of Boys and Men of Color in Education: Recommendations for Policymakers (2015). The report, drawing from the national momentum of My Brother's Keeper, the Obama administration's initiative to improve social and educational outcomes for boys and men of Color, encourages policymakers to remedy systemic challenges facing these males from

preschool to doctoral education. Recommendations from the report include requiring all institutions to implement an institutional-level Early Alert System, mandating that institutions conduct a self-study of student experiences and outcomes with data disaggregated by race within gender, and requiring federally designated minority-serving institutions to include, "Serving Historically Underserved Students" in their Strategic Plan with stated Student Success goals.

**Role of Leadership in Latino Male Student Success**

The cultural norms that once served as the foundation of educational systems now require assessment and evolvement to better reflect the needs of today's students. As stated by Gandara and Hopkins (2010), "Today, U.S. public schools serve a very different population than they did during the 1960's when 80% of students were White. Today, they are barely more than 50%, and they are a minority of students in all of the nation's largest urban districts" (p. 8). Thus, advocacy and support by educational leaders is an integral part of both examining and augmenting policies and practices to better enhance opportunities for academic success among Latino males.

Leadership plays a key role in the arena of higher education. While there is much research on educational leadership in the K-12 setting, and much of it is applicable to the community college setting, there remains a dire need to examine the role of leadership in the transition from community college to four-year universities for underrepresent students (Ellis, 2013; Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004). Furthermore, Stanton-Salazar (1997; 2001) stated that institutional agents are critical for the academic success of ethnic minority and low-income students. Thus, the role of institutional agents in community colleges is an important area of scholarship—these agents are in a position to transmit knowledge and resources that are particularly characteristic of the social networks and social ties of the middle and upper classes (as cited in Besimon, 2007).

Educational researchers and other scholars have argued that there is a cultural incongruence between the white, middle class norms of schools, as evidenced in school structures, policies and practices, and the cultures of students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds (Reitzug & Peck, 2011). Thus, educational leaders are instrumental in shifting university culture to support the needs and lived experiences of diverse students. As posited by Shields (2005):

> It is the essential work of the educational leader to create learning contexts or communities in which social, political and cultural capital is enhanced in such a way as to provide equity for opportunity for students as they take their place as contributing members of society. (p. 572)

Thus, educational leaders are often the vehicle by which students gain capital.

An important element of leadership is social identity. As noted by Santamaria (2014), "evidence [suggests] that educational leaders who are also members of historically underserved groups in the United States may practice educational leadership through different filters of experience than their mainstream peers, rendering their leadership practice qualitatively different" (, p. 349). The conceptualization of leadership is strongly tied to one's social and cultural identity in the U.S because it is directly correlated to the experiences of the individual and often results in a different conception of leadership.

Related to the topic of social identity, Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, and McClain (2007) found that representation of Latino faculty members on a college campus had a positive impact on Latino student success when measured in grades and course completion. As stated by the authors:

> The presence of Latino faculty on campus may increase the availability of role models for students and foster a sense of belonging and social integration among students. Therefore availability of, and contact with, Latino faculty may be more important than previously thought…as the numbers of Latino students and faculty on campus increase to a critical mass, academic success increases as well. (p. 89)

These findings are important when considering the experience of Latino men in higher education since they often identify with someone who looks like them and may have similar life experiences (citation). Support systems that include Latino faculty are an integral part of student success as the faculty are commonly the educational agents that interact with the students on a regular basis during the semester.

Hagedorn et al.'s findings (2007) mirrored the opinions of other researchers (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Gandara, 1995; Perez Huber, Huidor, Malagon, Sanchez, & Solórzano, 2006) who stated that role modeling and mentorship are critical factors in the college careers and experiences of Latino students. As a result, efforts to improve academic outcomes among Latino men in college must also include the importance of representation, thereby advocating for increased hiring and retention of Latinos in educational leadership positions.

**Faculty.** Senior executive leadership must make concerted efforts to employ, support, and foster the professional development of Latino faculty in order to enact institutional and systemic change in community college settings. These efforts can empower Latino faculty to stay current and effective in their faculty responsibilities, which will in turn benefit Latino students by further increasing learning opportunities and increasing students' capital to become successful in college. Latino faculty success is intertwined with Latino student success—efforts to improve

the success of Latino males in the post-secondary milieu must also account for meeting the needs of the Latino faculty who play a key role in Latino college men's educational experiences.

Bernal (2002) conducted a mixed-methods analysis of the experience of faculty of Color in academia. Two themes emerged from the data and included: (a) Latino faculty, in connection to their cultural upbringing and worldview, often question the dominant claims of objectivity, meritocracy, and individuality in United States society, and (b) Latino faculty members often affirm the experiential knowledge students bring from their home communities as valid knowledge to be used in higher education. Bernal's findings are important because this work emphasizes the concept of having faculty of color in higher education who can support and serve as informal mentors and/or role models for Latino male students.

**Addressing the Transfer Needs of Latino Men**

While the intent to transfer to a four-year university is evident among most Latino community college students, less than a quarter of all Latino/a students who begin their educational experience at a community college successfully transfer to a four-year institution and/or earn a bachelor's degree (Fry, 2004). Thus, community colleges should not solely focus on enrolling Latino students; rather, the real focus should be on completion of an associate degree as well as transferring Latino students to four-year universities with the goal of bachelor's degree attainment.

Alexander et al. (2007) found that Latino community college students are "less likely than their White counterparts...to complete an associate degree, transfer to a 4-year institution, and - among those who do transfer - obtain a bachelor's degree" (as cited in Crisp & Nora, 2010). These data highlight the need for educational leaders to build capacity with policy creation and

programs as well as provide leadership that demonstrates the value of acknowledging and incorporating community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and funds of knowledge (Gonzales, Moll & Amanti, 2005) that Latino students bring to their education. By centralizing these pieces, educational leaders stand a far better chance of witnessing Latino student success (Serrata, year, as cited in Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2016).

Student affairs and enrollment management professionals are uniquely positioned to have a positive impact on Latino males' access and success. Namely, student affairs staff serve as a bridge to and from universities and community colleges as enrollment and completion services are often housed within their division (Sáenz and Ponjuán, 2016). For example, Excelencia in Education (2008) recently released "Accelerating Latino Student Success at Texas Border Institutions: Possibilities and Challenges" where they examined enrollment and graduation trends at eight Texas institutions, including four community colleges. The report highlighted promising programs and strategies for serving Latino students and also offered policy recommendations for improving the success rates of Latino students in Texas that included an early alert system, First and Second year experience programs and learning communities.

In conclusion, to support the academic success of Latino college men, it is imperative that senior college administrators recognize the importance of building a strong foundation for these students, which includes supporting the professional development of the next wave of Latino leaders and faculty members who serve as a lifeline for Latino students. As stated by Arciniega (2012), increased representation of Latino educational leaders and faculty members is key for inclusion of diverse perspectives on college policy and practices that are better able to reflect and meet the needs of today's ever increasingly diverse student body. Furthermore, specific examination of practices employed by educational leaders to support the academic outcomes of

Latino males is vital for improving their overall community college experience and eventual success.

## Theoretical Framework

The culmination of the current dissertation study—from questions guiding the interview protocol to data analysis and interpretation—are greatly informed by a two theoretical models: Cultural Capital and Community Cultural Wealth. In this section, I provide the context for the lens I am employing to inform the study.

### Cultural Capital

Cultural Capital is a framework developed by Bourdieu (1986) to describe the association between academic achievement and students' access to information critical to their college success. Bourdieu noted that students' access to critical academic information and resources tied to educational success typically emanate from their home communities—these resources are tied to students' social class background.

While Bourdieu's (1986) framework has been helpful for acknowledging the challenges faced by White low-income students, scholars have noted that it does not acknowledge the existence of other forms of capital that may be derived from an individual's cultural experiences and background. Thus, Bourdieu's framework does not adequately assess the capital that Students of Color, specifically Latino males, already possess in support of their college success. Pérez (2016) noted:

> While Bourdieu (1977) sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, researchers have used this theory to assert that racial/ethnic minority

> students do not possess the cultural capital that is valued by their privileged White counterparts and needed to succeed in school. (p. 749)

Traditionally, academic issues impacting Students of Color have been studied using a deficit lens. However, this trend has changed in recent past. As described by Luna and Martinez (2013):

> A new line of research looks at Latino students who, despite economic, political, and structural challenges, are high academic achievers. A look at these studies offer new insights into the role of Latino culture on educational experiences and the ways students develop culturally based survival strategies. (p. 3)

This trend toward a cultural strength model is important because it acknowledges the strengths and assets that Latino/a students possess and utilize to navigate their educational experiences.

Consistent with the trend toward adopting culturally-based survival strategies when examining Latino student success (Luna & Martinez, 2013), Gonzales, Moll and Amanti (2005) introduced the concept of "funds of knowledge" to describe the belief that "people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them knowledge" (p. x). In an empirical investigation of this theory, Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, (2005) sampled several student learners while relying on classroom teachers to gather data, to ascertain the types of knowledge put into practice during classroom teaching. The findings revealed that people use various resources in order to maneuver through life's challenges.

Building on the concept of "funds of knowledge", Yosso (2005) developed the concept of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to shift:

> away from a deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged. (p. 1)

This framework focuses on the strengths that students of Color possess and utilize and thus, is a useful assets-based framework that can inform the ways we view Latino males who seek to transfer from the community college to the university.

The CCW framework (Yosso, 2005) is comprised of six distinct but interrelated forms of capital that include aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. These six forms of capital are interrelated and as such, each form provides the foundation for implementation of another form. The first form, *aspirational capital*:

> refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This resilience is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances. (p. 77)

This is the idea of achieving for the benefit of the family and the community. Aspiration and opportunity for education and employment that will provide a better way of life and is usually influenced by parental or authoritative figures.

The second form is *linguistic capital*, which "includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language or style" (Faulstich Orellano, 2003 as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 78). One example of linguistic capital is knowledge and history that is often transferred from one generation to another through the use of stories and sayings, which often help preserve a sense of kinship. Culturally, stories are passed down from

one generation to another with a moral at the center of the storytelling. Similarly, bilingual students are able to apply their dual language knowledge to their learning experiences and are at an advantage because they are interpreting information in two languages. Instead of being viewed as having a deficit, this skill can help students better navigate different arenas.

The third form is *familial capital*, which refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002). This form of cultural wealth "involves a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). As further described by Yosso (2005), familial capital extends to a commitment beyond the immediate family to include extended family as a community. Thus, this extended network of family and friends serve as an additional "safety net and substantial aid in time of crisis…these exchanges take a variety of forms: labor services, access to information or resources (including help in finding jobs or housing or dealing with government agencies or other institutions" (Vellez-Ibanez, Greenberg, 2005, p. 58).

The fourth form is *social capital*, which can be understood as networks of people and community resources. These peer and social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate society's institutions (Gilbert, 1982; Stanton-Salazar, 2001 as cited in Yosso, 2005; p. 79). Social capital is often created through the network of familial capital. It is through the commitment to community that people are able to gain experiences and knowledge to navigate through their environment. Closely tied to social capital is the fifth form, *navigational capital*, which refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. "Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with

Communities of Color in mind" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Often, students utilize a combination of their familial, social and aspirational capital to navigate through social institutions.

Lastly, the sixth form is *resistant capital*, which refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality (Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1994; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by Communities of Color (Deloria, 1969 as cited in Yosso, 2005). I relied on Yosso's CWW to analyze this study's data with the goal of illuminating mechanisms by which Latino men are successful in their post-secondary goals. These forms of capital build on one another and are often what provide the foundational support for Latino men to succeed in higher education, specifically when responding to microaggressions and other forms of oppression in an already unfamiliar educational setting as many of these students are first generation students and are learning how to maneuver in the higher education realm. This is significant because this can create a pathway to success for other Latino men.

In an empirical investigation of CCW (Yosso, 2005), Hurtado (2003) conducted a qualitative study that employed Chicana feminism as the theoretical framework. She examined the life narratives of Chicana females in higher education, particularly examining Chicanas' experiences with patriarchy and gender beliefs, as well as their negotiation of family and societal norms. Participants were challenged by meeting the responsibilities of their families and the demands placed on them in the public sphere. In addition, Hurtado's findings built on Yosso's (2005) work by demonstrating that Chicanas relied on various forms of capital to successfully navigate their professional worlds.

Consistent with Hurtado's (2003) findings, Orellana (2003) conducted a qualitative study using survey and observational data to examine Latino children's contributions to households in a Mexican immigrant community. The findings revealed that children in these households provided essential help to their families, including translating, interpreting, and caring for siblings. These actions and activities provided opportunities for further learning and development for these youth, skills that are often ignored by scholars and educational leaders who do not recognize the cultural wealth that emanates from Latino families and communities.

In conclusion, I relied on the construct of community cultural wealth that includes aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital when analyzing and interpreting the findings of the current study. The overarching goal of this study was to reveal the ways Latino men rely on family, cultural values, and support systems to become successful in the transfer process from community colleges to four-year universities.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Research Methods and Design

I utilized a hybrid approach of case study and phenomenology to examine Latino males' experiences in the community college through a Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) theoretical framework. I used a qualitative study design, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data source and observations and document data as supporting sources.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated: "Phenomenology is distinct from other qualitative approaches in that researchers seek to understand and describe the lived experiences of research participants". In this study, I employed phenomenology to examine the specific familial, cultural

and institutional supports that Latino male college students utilized to navigate their educational career from the point of transfer from community college to university.

As part of my phenomenological approach, I also employed case study as couched in a constructivist paradigm (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. This paradigm "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 22). This research approach allowed me to closely interact with the participants while maintaining the focus on the participants' experiences. This approach is particularly useful for the current study where I, the researcher, am a Latina administrator at the site of the study. Thus, it was important for me to recognize how my positionality, which I discussed in my introductory chapter, was related to the phenomenon under examination in this study.

Yin (2003) posited that a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

Merriam (2009) states "unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in case study." (p. 42). In line with Merriam's description of case study, I relied upon interviews with students and educational leaders, observations of classes and advising sessions, and review of archival data. Each of these data sources was used to arrive at an understanding of the transfer process.

## Research Question

In this study, based in a Southwestern Arizona community college, I define academic success as transfer from the community college to a four-year university. In line with this definition of academic success, I utilized a phenomenological case study approach to identify factors that have contributed to a successful transfer process for Latino males. I asked broadly: What support or capital do Latino Male students utilize in completing an associate degree at the community college and transferring to the university? Furthermore, what roles do educational leaders, defined as faculty members and administrators at the sending and receiving institutions, play in students' desire to transfer? And finally, what programs or services do students identify as helpful for supporting their transfer motivations and behaviors?

## Significance of the Study

This dissertation provides a narrative of the experiences of Latino male community college students and the factors contributing to their success. This study yielded vital data about the identification and utilization of practices or policies that deter or sustain the transfer process of Latino male college students. The study findings can be utilized to assist in the overall improvement of the educational system, which can in turn improve the academic and economic opportunities for Latina/o communities and families. As a community college administrator, this research may provide data to inform the formation or change of policies and programs that will support this population in university transition specific to the geographic location of this community college. Other faculty or administrators may benefit from reading this research in that the findings may provide data that may be transferable to the specific student population of Latino males enrolled at their respective institutions. There is a large body of knowledge focused

on the crisis of the vanishing Latino male in the higher education pipeline. This work will contribute to the larger framework by providing data focused on the community college to university Latino male experience—an experience uniquely impacted by the geographic setting and state policies of Arizona where this community college is located.

## Method

In this section, I will describe the site for data collection, the participants who comprised the sample, as well as the procedures involved in completing this project. I used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study. Furthermore, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Arizona, and at the site, to complete this study.

### Site Description

I chose Southwest College as the first site for this research study because of its designation as a Hispanic-Serving institution (HSI) located in the Southwestern part of the United States, approximately 70 miles from the U.S.-Mexican border. The school has been in existence for 60 years and was initially opened as a Learning Center in the city. Data was collected from Spring 2015 through Fall 2015.

Southwest College is located in the same city as State University, a large research institution that is predominantly White (approximately 65%). I selected State University as the second site for this study because the four-year college going culture of the city where data were collected uniquely impacted the focus of the current study—exploring transfer trends and behaviors of Latino men from Southwest College to four-year universities. Below are the background characteristics of the 2015-2016 incoming class at Southwest College. These data were gathered from the office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness (2015). I selected student participants solely from Southwest College and educational leader participants

from Southwest College and State University. The setting for the current study was at a Hispanic serving community college located in Southeastern Arizona. At this site, Latina/o students' socio-cultural position is closely linked to the academic policies and practices that have impacted their educational opportunities.

## Participants

### Southwest Campus Demographics

As of the fall 2015 semester, Southwest College had a student body totaling 23,570. The total annualized (FTSE) Full Time Student Enrollment in Fall 2015 at the Census Date was 6,739.3. Students' demographics were as follows: 51.7% female and 48.3 male; 68.1% part-time students taking less than 12 credit hours; 40.9% White, Non-Hispanic, 43.2% Hispanic/Latino; and 15.9% other; 22.2% of students were traditionally aged when they began at Southwest College (i.e. 18 to 19 years old).

### Student Participants

A total of five student participants completed the interview for this study which was representative of approximately 25% of Latino male students enrolled in the course. Students' ages ranged from 22 to 29 and each participant self-identified as a Latino male. The following students were selected based on the status of being enrolled in their final semester prior to matriculation from the community college to the university. The following brief biographies describe the participants at the beginning of the study.

**Rene** was a 25-year old student who was born and raised in Mexico. He was an international student and the first in his immediate family to pursue a degree. He was majoring in

engineering and had been at Southwest College for five semesters when he completed the interview. He was in good academic standing with a 3.1 GPA.

**Mateo** was a 25-year old Columbian student who was born and raised in Columbia and came to the United States when he was 12 years old. He was the first in his immediate family to pursue a college degree. He also served in the United States Air Force and was using the G.I. Bill to pay for his education. He was majoring in engineering and had been at Southwest College for four semesters when he completed the interview. He was in good academic standing with a 3.0 GPA.

**Raul** was a 29-year old Mexican-American student. Members of his immediate family earned a degree at Southwest College. He was a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and was using the G.I. Bill to pay for his education. He was an undecided major at the time of the interview. He had been at Southwest College for five semesters when he completed the interview. He was in good academic standing with a 3.2 GPA.

**Jesus** was a 22-year old Mexican-American student. His sister earned a bachelor's degree. He was majoring in Psychology and had been at Southwest College for four semesters when he completed the interview. He was in good academic standing with a 2.8 GPA.

**Alex** was a 22-year old Mexican-American student. He was the first in his family to pursue a bachelor's degree. He was majoring in Engineering and had been at Southwest College for six semesters when he completed the interview. He was in good academic standing with a 3.1 GPA.

## Educational Leader Participants

There were three leader participants in the study, two from Southwest College and one from State University. I decided to interview the chosen educational leaders because of their

professional roles which involved implementation of policy and practice at their respective institutions. Participants included: (1) a Mexican-American male faculty-counselor, in his fifties, (2) a Mexican-American male in a position of director, in his fifties, and (3) a Caucasian female in the role of faculty-counselor, in her forties. The educational leaders' experiences spanned from eight to 25 years of service at their respective institutions.

### Southwest College Participants

**Martin** was an educational leader in the role of Faculty Counselor at Southwest College. He self-identified as a Mexican-American male and had worked at the institution in a faculty role for 16 years.

**Jane** was an educational leader at Southwest College. She was Caucasian and has been employed at Southwest College in a faculty role for 3 years.

### State University Participant

**Adan** was an educational leader that oversaw Transfer Programs at State University. He was Mexican-American and had worked at the institution for 23 years. He had been in his director role for the last three years.

## Procedures

Glesne (2011) proposed that three data-gathering techniques are preferred in qualitative inquiry: observation, interviewing, and document collection. Each of these techniques guided the research design of the present study.

### Recruitment

For the student sample, participants were asked to self-identify with respect to ethnicity and gender to ascertain whether they met the inclusion criteria for this study. Once IRB clearance was attained, I conducted in-person recruitment by visiting the course, "Student Success 200" at

Southwest Community College during the spring and fall 2015 semesters. Student Success 200 was a capstone course responsible for facilitating the transfer process from Southwest Community College to State University. During my class visits, I shared the intent of my study and answered questions about the handling of data. Once students showed interest in my study, I provided additional information via email that included my contact information as well as the summary of the study. After students contacted me via email and it was clear that they met the inclusion criteria, I then scheduled a time to meet with them on campus to conduct the interview.

For the educational leader sample, participant leaders were identified through their involvement with the course, Student Success 200. They each played a role in teaching or presenting in the class and were therefore approached about being a part of the study. They were all eager to provide their insight and experience in working with Latino males both at the community college and at the state university.

**Data Collection via In-Person Interviews**

I utilized a semi-structured interview protocol for both the student and educational leader interviews. Interviews were conducted on site and in-person for the student interviews and in-person and via phone for the educators. I audio recorded and transcribed the interviews. I verified the quality of transcriptions through comparison of the transcription completed through a third party.

Interviews were also conducted with educational leaders on site at the sending institution and the receiving institution. The topics I pursued in the interview for the students included: first generation identification, familial support for academics, identification of guidance provided by agents on behalf of the institution, financial support, academic preparedness and external

challenges. I inquired about these topics in order to assess the supports and/or impediments to the participants' acclimation and persistence in pursuit of a higher education. These factors directly relate to the research focus of the present study as these factors help illuminate students' experiences within the community college setting (see Appendix A and Appendix B).

**Student Interviews**. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five Latino male community college students who were in their last semester at Southwest College and who were intending to transfer to State University. The student interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes each. Each interview consisted of approximately 11 questions that centered on capturing the educational experience of each student as well as the source of academic motivation for each student. Students were also asked to identify the supports within and outside of their academic institution that impacted their educational journey.

**Educational Leader Interviews.** Three educator-leaders were interviewed as part of the study. Each of the three interviews was approximately an hour long and consisted of approximately 10 questions. Participants were selected in relation to their work responsibilities that included leading, teaching, and/or presenting in Student Success 200.

**Case Study: Participants' Backgrounds**

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of Southwest Community College Participants (N=8)*

| Participant | Category | Years (site) | Gender | Race/Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty (Martin) | Counselor | 16 years | Male | Latino (N/A) |
| Faculty (Jane) | Counselor | 3 years | Female | Caucasian(N/A) |
| Senior Dir (Adan) | Administrator | 23 years | Male | Latino(N/A) |
| Student 1 (Rene) | Transfer | 2 years | Male | Colombian |
| Student 2 (Mateo) | Transfer | 3 years | Male | Mexican |
| Student 3 (Raul) | Transfer | 2 years | Male | Mexican-American |
| Student 4 (Jesus) | Transfer | 4 years | Male | Mexican-American |
| Student 5 (Alex) | Transfer | 3 years | Male | Mexican-American |

**Observations**.

I conducted three participant observations at Southwest College (two times) and State University (one time). Observations occurred in the classroom as well as in advising sessions in order to observe the interactions that occurred within these sessions as well as to identify topics of discussion that were addressed. In each instance, I arrived prior to the students to observe educational leaders' work actions prior to the beginning of their work tasks. I also stayed after the formal ending of each campus activity to again observe any interactions that occurred among students and/or among students and educational leaders. The observations yielded evidence of supportive interactions/communication among the students. They often asked about how they

were doing and how their classes were going. They also appeared to provide a trusting type of referral system between them in which they discussed the faculty teaching their other courses and if they recommended taking the course with that faculty member. Finally, documents from the institution that captured the supports offered to transfer students were also gathered.

**Field Observations**

First hand observation of the experience of students was vital to the data collection for this study. During field observations, I acted as an observer of the participants. I conducted eight observations of the students in their learning environments to get an inside perspective of the experience of Latino male students at Southwest College. Student Success 200 was offered during the fall and spring semesters and throughout the course, class meetings alternated between Southwest College and State University to help students acclimate to the receiving institution setting.

As Maxwell (2012) stated, "the researcher is the research instrument in a qualitative study, and your eyes and ears are the tools you use to gather information and to make sense of what is going on" (p. 88). In reality, researchers are rarely total participants or total observers. Rather, there is often a mixture of these roles (Merriam, 2009). I sat in the class and observed the students' interactions with each other and with institutional agents from both institutions. In my field notes, I also observed instruction and curricular materials in order to understand the support and information that was being given to students.

**Document Data Collection**. I collected archival data throughout the duration of this study. I identified the data during the interviews; participants described factors that have impeded or supported them in their goal of successfully completing coursework at the

community college. These data were comprised of college information and resources related to student demographics, program of study, and funding sources that included Veteran Benefits, scholarships, and Financial Aid. I collected electronic artifacts at Southwest College. These included the course syllabus (Student Success 200), students' power point presentations that were completed for the final course project (Student Success 200), and program of study plan for the first two semesters at State University. I also collected electronic artifacts from the receiving institution (State University). These included brochures and handouts identifying the services and learning supports available to transfer students.

**Data Analysis**

This study was designed to examine the single phenomenon (the case) of the transfer-going process of Latino men from Southwest College to State University. Case study is a research method used to investigate an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures that involve inductive and deductive analysis that uncover themes based on lived experiences.

The five research design components that were of particular importance to the present study were: (a) questions, (b) propositions (if any), (c) unit(s) of analysis, (d) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria used to interpreting the findings (Yin, 2009). Using these five components, I analyzed the data as I collected it. As Merriam (2009) noted, at the outset of a qualitative study, the investigator knows what the problem is and has selected a purposeful sample to collect data to address the problem. The final product is then shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. I used these steps since having a general strategy, like the one presented by Merriam, is key for analyzing the data while reducing potential analytic difficulties.

I transcribed and read the interview transcripts, then re-listened to the interview audio file. As Merriam (2009) noted, self-transcribing of the interviews provides an opportunity for the researcher to generate insights and hunches about what is occurring in the data. I used these strategies and tools to develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships. The constant comparative method (Merriam) involves comparisons being "constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated" (p. 200). Next, I coded the data and engaged in thematic analyses (Maxwell, 2013). As part of data analysis, category construction is the first step in the process whereby the researcher is noting, commenting, observing and querying in the margins of the data sources. Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation (Maxwell, 2013).

### Researcher Positionality

I approached this work as a Latina female administrator employed at a community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Arizona. I am a fourth generation Mexican-American female born and raised in a border town in Texas. I am the first person in both my immediate and extended family to pursue a doctoral degree. My family has always highly valued and supported education, an ideal that has been passed down from generation to generation. My work experience in education commenced in K-12 where I taught sixth grade for three years at an elementary school in the second largest school district in the predominantly Hispanic Texas border city where I was born and raised. Due to employment opportunities, I then moved to Arizona.

The context of the state of Arizona presented some very concerning and large challenges when it came to education. I personally witnessed the disparity in the educational system as well as the anti-immigrant, anti-People of Color sentiment that has existed and unfortunately flourished over the last few years. I briefly worked for the largest school district in the city where I currently reside, but found that the challenges I faced every day catapulted me to seek out opportunities in higher education to exert my own agency in the day-to-day workings of the educational system. I was then afforded the opportunity to work in several roles, both staff and faculty, at a community college in Southeastern Arizona. Through personal experience as well as through the various roles I've held in education, I've witnessed the inequity and deficit lens that is often utilized when looking at Latino students. As a Latina, one of my foci is to understand and support Latino students on their educational journey.

In the next two chapters, I present the participants' overall challenges followed by data that reveals the ways in which the participants relied on familial support and institutional support to navigate their college experiences. I draw on Yosso's (2005) notion of community cultural wealth to analyze these support systems.

# Chapter 4: Familial Support

In this chapter, I begin by addressing the overall challenges that the participants faced. I then present data that illustrates participants' reliance on familial support, using a combination of familial capital and aspirational capital, to address these challenges.

## Challenges

The interview responses revealed that these participants navigated a number of challenges in the pursuit of their education. Some of their common challenges included: financial barriers, academic preparedness, and negotiating multiple responsibilities. Although each participant faced challenges, they were able to find ways to address them in order to complete their associate degree. **Rene** commented "Yeah, the financial stuff like mortgage and bills. All of that stuff is a challenge". For **Mateo,** becoming acclimated to the cultural differences on campus was a challenge. He shared:

> Mm-hmm, I believe the cultural gap that is between the … well there were 100% Mexican and it's way back in the south. Although there's a lot of Hispanic heritage here, it was very hard to make the transition, to talk to people. I didn't know a lot of people speak Spanish, so I was trying to come to them with my broken English so it was hard. Then they behaved differently, the cultural thing it's different. I come here and then I expect for them to behave some way, but they do it differently. It was a challenge of course and then going to school, trying to get a job, it was great.

**Raul's** major challenge was the rigor of academic courses. Students often require remedial courses in order to be able to enroll in college level courses. This is another reason why students often begin their education at the community college. They do not meet the academic

requirements to be accepted into the university and do not want to take on additional debt for coursework that will not be applicable to their degree.

> I remember I was kind of intimidated. I wrote a lot. I didn't finish my Gen Ed. That's because I'd begun ... I had to start with some remedial classes. That's what I was trying to say, finish my Gen Ed. I just thought since there was too many classes before I got my two associate's, am I ever going to finish? One time I left, and I returned. It was possible, but it was a difficult challenge for me, the academic route, particularly in math and some writing classes. Not that that was impossible to complete, but the amount of work, I didn't think I was going to complete all that. One time I had to do three MLA papers. I remember during summer school, not self-paced classes, they usually wanted ... One time one week they wanted seven chapters done, then I had to take a quiz, two of them just in one week.

**Alex** shared:

> That's a harder question. Well, at least starting off financially, community college is relatively cheap compared to most colleges and universities. Since the beginning, I've been able to get scholarships and I've been constantly applying. The whole reason why I volunteer is because there's service-based scholarships. Everything just comes in line with itself. But I think one of the biggest struggles, I guess, that's been a constant since I've come here, is probably getting study groups together and then also ... Well, not so much now but for a while, just getting instructors involved.

Alex revealed that financial concerns were yet another reason why students may often begin their educational career at the community colleges. The open access policies as well as the lower cost per credit or course remained a source of opportunity for these students to enter higher education.

**Alex** continued:

> Just outside of class, if we ever needed help. Sometimes instructors wouldn't host office hours because they're adjunct, so almost all the teachers were pretty much adjunct. They were just never around because they had other jobs to commit to, as well. But now, the classes that I'm taking, they're not adjunct faculty anymore. Some of them even from 9 PM to like midnight, they're at the West Campus. They're there to help students. I'll go in and use my teachers. [inaudible 00:10:22] Just having things like that available, but for a while, it was one of my problems. But once you fall behind, catching up is really difficult. If you don't have a study group, you're kind of there on your own just because the tutors only help for the lower-level stuff. They can't really help with everything. It's just really, really hard to catch back up.

Latino men faced financial challenges due to their need to work and earn an income to contribute to the family and not become a financial burden while trying to pursue higher education (Cerezo et al., 2012). Although the eventual completion of a degree would positively contribute to the overall well-being of Latino males and their families, it remained a commitment of time, sacrifice and dedication in order to bring this to fruition.

**Jesus** shared the issues he faced as a student:

> I was depressed for a while, I still struggle with it. That’s a big thing, that's a big thing to overcome. I think that’s been my hardest thing to overcome and to top it all up, I’m injury prone, I’m sickly. I’ve had appendicitis. All in college mind you you’ve had appendicitis, I’ve had knee surgery, I had an inflamed nerve in my back. It’s just piling on to top off them the mental illness, I guess you can say. That’s been a struggle I guess as far as turmoil, I mean every family has turmoil. I’ve had a hard, if I'd say so I’m able

> to deal with turmoil but personal turmoil is difficult I've found. That's been my hardest thing to overcome.

Jesus discussed the issues he had to deal with related to mental health and physical well-being. The struggles and responsibilities related to familial expectations and gender expectations within the Latino family unit are aspects that can be studied further in order to understand the impact of stress, related to challenges this group of students face.

As evidenced by the data, familial and institutional supports provided a positive foundation for students as they encountered challenges in the pursuit of their education. Self-determination and academic motivation emanating from sacrifices made by their parents or families and a desire to contribute to their economic and social well- being are also demonstrated in their responses. Identifying the supports that Latino males utilize throughout their journey in higher education is important to the research. Acknowledging and including involvement of these supports may provide an even stronger foundation for Latino male students to be successful on the path to completion of a bachelor's degree.

In the next section, I present data that illustrates the ways in which participants utilized familial support through a combination of familial capital and aspirational capital to overcome the obstacles they faced as community college students.

## Familial Capital and Aspirational Capital

Each participant identified familial capital and aspirational capital as keys to their academic success. Specifically, participants described: (a) the tangible sacrifices made by their parents to support their educational journey; (b) the emotional supports gained via parental role modeling, particularly how parents persevered during challenging times in their lives; and (c)

how this familial support nurtured their aspirational capital, or their hopes and dreams for the future.

**Raul**, a veteran of the Marine Corps, described how his family, specifically his mother and brothers, served as a foundation in his pursuit higher education. Although his mother maintained a busy work schedule, she provided encouragement and facilitative support when possible. Two of his brothers earned associate degrees from the community college Raul attended, so he utilized their experiences as navigational capital on his own journey at the institution.

> Family's played an important role in support. My mother works and she has monitored my classes. Me transferring, she won't be there (at the University), but in any way, shape, or form they say that if they can, don't hesitate to call, any help, you just will, just do better. They gave me my compliments. They know I care about education. Before I went to the military, I was here. I decided to help my country, then return. They knew since I returned that I really cared about it and wanted it (my education) more than anything in the world.

Similar to Raul, another participant, **Rene**, described how his parents provided emotional support while maintaining a heavy work life. Rene was originally from Columbia and came to the United States at the age of 13:

> Since they, (my parents) got here they have been working really hard. Two, three jobs sometimes. So their mindset is, if you go to school you won't have to live the same life that they have. Since always, they encouraged college. My dad encouraged military, so I did both. I'm the first ... I'm the only son to my mom and dad. I'm the only son. I in fact graduated in 2008 and I went to college for two years, until 2010. In 2010 I joined the

> Air-force and I did four years with them. I did some school with them, and then last March I decided to get out and go back to school.

The commitment to family, strong work ethic and sacrifices made by their parents were all motivating forces for participants' pursuit and completion of their educations. Researchers have identified that overall, Latinos view educational attainment as an opportunity to becoming financially stable which will benefit the family unit and the individual (Schwartz, Donovan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009). **Rene** found that by heeding his father's advice, he would be able to improve his status in life and not have to work as hard as his parents to be financially self-sufficient and/or to support a family. He also felt that by being the only son, as well as the first born, he had a responsibility to follow through and try to be successful based on the expectations his parents placed on him.

**Mateo**, a 25 year old Mexican student, also expressed how family encouragement was paramount in his higher education experiences. Mateo discussed how emotional encouragement from his parents was a motivational force in his academic journey.

> Definitely my parents. Since the beginning they've always been there and they will always be. I give thanks to God because they are my main motivation. I know there's people who their parents don't support them. I will say to them that it doesn't matter, do it for yourself, find some motivation, talk to people. For me it was my parents definitely.

**Mateo** also stated how his parents commonly shared their belief that the attainment of a degree was a tangible goal that could be used an asset throughout Mateo's life. Contributing and assisting the family was a source of duty and pride that spurred them to move forward and be successful in school (Ojeda, Navarro, & Morales, 2011). Students recognized and were appreciative of the support that their families and parents provided

> to them. No, I think they've always been there for me. They've always taught me to go to school; they've always taught me to be prepared for whatever happened. You're always going to have that degree that you can use as a backup for whatever happens. Yeah, they've been showing me that that's the right way to go.

Mateo highlighted how family members encouraged the attainment of a college degree as a long-term, sustainable goal. **Jesus**, a 22 year old student who grew up with his younger/older sister in a single mother household, noted how his sister and mother provided constant encouragement, particularly with earning good grades and pursuing higher education.

> My mom said, "Coming out of high school you have two options. You can get a job or you can get your degree." That was kind of a weighted question, but all my life she's been very hard on the idea that you need a degree to succeed in life in this day and age. That's her main regret is not getting a degree and so she says, "You need to get a degree." I think my sister and my mom because it was our story for a long time, so they helped me out. They pushed me when I didn't want to be pushed. If I got a C in a class, they'd be like, "Why did you get a C, you can do better. Come on, you know you can do better." If I flunked a test they would say, "Why did you flunk that? You can do it." They just pushed me constantly.

He also shared:

> It's a tie but I mean they're both, my mom and my sister both have given me a substantial amount of information on how to navigate life. My mom has been strong when there's no reason for her to be strong. She had every right to give up but she didn't. She'd always say, "Borrow from Peter to pay Paul." [In terms of what I've learned] I think my mom for life skills, she's had a tough life, so she knows the laws of life and she knows how to get

out of them. I think my sister for academically, she loves school so any chance to help me with it, she takes it.

Jesus relied on his family for diverse emotional supports. Jesus learned "life skills" from his mother to navigate challenging times, which Jesus notes as helpful in his navigation of higher education. Jesus' example illustrates one of the characteristics of Latino families valuing family and community which often results in interdependence, trust, and a willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the other (Marín & Triandis, 1985 as cited in Marín & Marín, 1991*).* **Alex**, a 22 year old student who came from a family of five children, also identified family as the primary motivational factor for him to attend college.

I think my mother specifically. She just really pushed us. To her, college wasn't really an option for us. We're going to do it whether we liked it or not. It was just being exposed to that but also I had older siblings who went through college before me. Just coming home, they would be coming home and they'd be doing homework, even though they graduated high school. Just being exposed to that type of stuff, it just really got my mindset ready for college after high school.

**Interviewer**: You mentioned your mom, as far as her supporting you. Was it just setting the expectation that you all would go to college?

**Alex**: Ever since we were small, she really set the bar high up there, like As ... Bs were not acceptable. I had to get nothing but As. She was always constantly on us and if we had an issue with the teacher, it's like, "You're there to learn. You're not there to get along with the teacher." She's just always been really, really strict but in a good way, I guess. After being around that for several years, it just really ...keeps me going.

Alex noted how his mother clearly articulated the expectation that he would earn good grades and pursue higher education. Furthermore, he highlighted how constant encouragement from his mother helped him engage in consistent college-level academic performance. Participant responses demonstrate how Caballerismo, which is defined by characteristics of masculinity that include emotional responsiveness, honor, caretaking, and providing for one's family, (Arciniega et al., 2008), may also contribute to students' desire to successfully complete their education. In their responses, students demonstrated how they valued and respected their families in a way that drove them to be ambitious and contribute in their roles as men.

## Aspirational Capital

The participants described their aspirational capital, or their hopes and dreams, as motivated by self-determination - an internal drive to pursue college fueled by a responsibility to their family and community. Particularly, the men in this study reported a deep-rooted motivation to make their parents proud and to contribute to the economic and social well-being of their family. Although the concept of self-determination evokes an intrapersonal process, for the participants in this study, familism (Knight et. al, 2009) was a driving force in participants' academic aspirations. Familism was linked to a sense that attainment of a higher education degree would balance out parents' sacrifice of arduous work to support students' readiness for college.

**Rene** shared where his academic aspirations emanated from:

> I think my parents. Even though they are not very economically successful, they have gone beyond their limits to support me in like basically every decision I have taken. When I got here, my dad used to work from 5 in the morning until like 12 at night. We

> didn't have a car, so he would have to walk like miles. He used to go get a bus. I think he's my role model. I want him to be proud.

Rene noted the major sacrifices his father made in time and energy to provide economic stability for the family, which allowed him to pursue education. In a similar vein, **Mateo** shared the following regarding his aspirational goals:

> I would say, be better as a person, help the community is another. I don't want to have a job that keeps me at an office 24/7, 365 days a year, so give to the community. Also I guess to be grateful … I don't know if that's one of the reasons but I want to be here doing something for myself, I want to be someone, I want to give back.

Although Mateo did not discuss a desire to reciprocate the efforts put forth by his family, he spoke to a larger communal responsibility. His self-determination in the academic realm was driven by a commitment to contribute to the betterment of his community. In the next two examples **Jesus**, described how his self-determination was rooted in a responsibility to his family as well as the belief that the attainment of a degree is a stable, tangible achievement that cannot be taken away, particularly for economically under resourced individuals. This commitment echoes the tenets of resistance capital, which has its foundations in the experiences of communities of color in securing equal rights and collective freedom.

> It's kind of my goal I guess, to be able to have what I'd call that 'prestige' behind my name that I have a degree and blah, blah, blah. Like I said, none of my extended family really has that. It's like me and my sister and my cousin, that's all. My other cousin got associates here actually this past semester. All the bachelors and so forth, so I don't know, it's kind of personally driving myself to realize because I'm not going to lie this

> past semester, I didn't want to go to school. I was tired and I'm drained but I'm hoping this winter is going to help me get back in transferring. Yeah, I'm just kind of pushing myself because I'm seeing my sister and I'm seeing my mom and how much they've invested in me in trying to get that education and I'm trying to push myself.

**Jesus** also shared:

> There's many avenues but to get to where I want to get to and to rise above, I don't want to say rise above my family but again to be able to have that and it's funny because my Instructor, he says, "You can be poor, you can have no food, you can have no money, but you still have that degree." That's still yours and again he was a big influence.

**Jesus** indicated how the attainment of a college degree allows one to "rise above" by having lifelong goals that improves one's life, regardless of the hardships he/she faces. **Alex** described how his self-determination in pursuing higher education was connected to a commitment to supporting his community, particularly those in need, a value shaped by his own family.

> I think most of it is just knowing what it's like to struggle, I guess. It's hard to see people. I can't just turn my back on them. You do your best to just help out where you can, but growing up again with my family, that's just something that we've always done. Any time we saw someone in need, you just helped them out wherever you can. You do within your means, but I just have never been able to say no to someone if they ask for help. Just help them.

Alex showcased how his academic aspirations are intricately linked with a desire to live out his values—a commitment to supporting one's family and community. **Raul** shared how his self-determination in the academic realm was driven by a desire to support his future family and to be financially stable.

> Three things. I would like to have a big family, a wife and three or four kids. I would like to make a lot of money in my occupation, my career. I would like to travel the world, or at least see something different in life, and maybe return back to the military or live in Florida.

It is important to note that **Raul's** desire to "at least see something different in life" reflected the belief that the attainment of a higher education degree was connected to his immediate social and economic mobility and that of his immediate family. He also noted how he would consider returning to the military, a profession connected to a larger commitment to serving one's country. In many Latino families, males are considered the head of the household and the expectation that they will work for the economic well-being of the entire family (Padilla, 2007) is a key part of their gender role and identity. This is evidenced in the responses provided by Raul and several of the other participants.

Participants clearly stated how their academic success was dependent on the familial and institutional supports available to them pre-college and in the college context. An especially interesting element of this support was that students' cultural backgrounds, as Latino men in a politically-charged Arizona climate, shaped an aspirational self-determination approach to college—a value grounded in their desire to better position themselves to contribute to the economic and social health of their communities via attainment of a college degree.

In the next section, I present data that illustrates how institutional support played a major role in student success. Specifically, I identify the ways in which participants utilized a combination of social capital, navigational capital and resistance capital to succeed in their academic environment.

## Chapter 5: Institutional Support

In addition to family support, many of the students identified institutional support as an integral part of their college success. This institutional support was captured by a combination of students' social capital, navigational capital and resistance capital. Social capital is a form of capital that Yosso (2005) defines as students' "peers and other social contacts" and emphasizes how students utilize these contacts to gain access to college and navigate other social institutions. Navigational capital refers to students' skills and abilities to navigate "social institutions," including educational spaces. Yosso (2005) further explains that students' navigational capital empowers them to maneuver within unsupportive or hostile environments. Resistance capital has its foundations in the experiences of communities of color in securing equal rights and collective freedom. According to Yosso (2005), the sources of this form of capital come from parents, community members and an historical legacy of engaging in social justice.

**Resistance Capital and Social Capital**

A portion of the interview protocol called for students to identify, if relevant, an individual program or process that provided support or guidance as they progressed through their educational journey. Each of the students was able to identify at least one individual that played an instrumental, supportive role in their higher education journey. In this way, students leveraged their oftentimes newly developed social capital to access university resources.

Three of the five students identified an advisor/counselor who served an integral part of their support system. **Mateo** described the benefits he received as an engineering student.

> Definitely, Abraham, I believe he's a counselor for engineering at my campus. He's very good, he's a very smart guy and he is supportive. I mean I was struggling with my classes and then he was like, "You know what? That's part of college, everyone is struggling

> with a job, school, family, girlfriend, whatever it is. This is your growing years, this is what is going to make you whatever you're going to be like in 20 years."
>
> He was like, "Don't give up; there's a lot of people who are struggling. You just have to focus, try to focus and this is the class you're going to take, this is …" He made my life way easier, "Take these classes, don't overload, be smart about it." He's the one who's been helping me a lot.
>
> I've been here for four years, so it's been a great experience, I love the classes here. I love the way that they focus on … classes are small overall, so they enhance knowledge to this small amount of people, right? It's better; I think it's very good, quite a good class system with good information.

This is an example of the critical role that educational leaders play in the education of students. Educational leaders in a variety of roles, helped to develop students' social capital. Mentorship and guidance and role-modeling can provide the foundation for academic success for these students by fostering a sense of belonging, integrating and acclimating into the higher education arena (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Gandara, 1995; Perez Huber, Huidor, Malagon, Sanchez, & Solórzano, 2006); and by fostering resistant capital in students that they can utilize when they find themselves in challenging situations.

**Mateo** stated how his engineering advisor normalized the struggles he faced in college and helped him recognize that he had the resilience to persevere. It is important to note that **Mateo** then extended the positive feelings associated with the support he received from his advisor to other positive resources available to him on his college campus. The resistant capital that students utilized through the funds of knowledge that they brought to their educational experience provided a foundation for them overcome the barriers they faced. Theoharis (2008)

defined the term *resistance* as “all the barriers, countervailing pressures, tensions, and realities that detract from leading to the creation of a more equitable and just school” (p. 304). The notion that the student was able to view these challenges as a “normal” part of life and one that other students also encountered also helped students feel capable and confident in moving forward in this new educational arena. These examples demonstrate the resilience capital that they possess in overcoming challenges.

In another example, **Rene** shared how his advisor in financial aid was immensely helpful in guiding him with locating resources to attain economic support. **Rene** mentioned how the institutional support from his counselor was useful and effective.

> Yeah it's straightforward. They tell you what you need. Basically, "Hey, you need this, this, this, and that." Then you just go and find it. The advisors are there to guide you, not to do everything for you. So if you told me, "Hey, go get taxes from 2013," it's my job to go get them, it's not hard.

**Rene** also shared that his counselor was the one that he went to as he maneuvered through various demands as a college student. Educational leaders play an integral in students’ success. Their responsiveness, empathy and support provide a cornerstone of support for student success, helping students to fortify their navigational capital.

> Yeah. Especially my counselor, he's very helpful. He's always there, like you email them and then right back within a few minutes you get an email back. And whenever I ask a question they don't have the answer they usually, "Hey I don't have the answer. Give me a few minutes, I figure it out, or I will point you to someone that you can talk to." They've been pretty good.

**Raul** spoke to the effective counseling available to him on campus as well as the timeliness with which he received support from his counselor. In another example, **Raul** touched on a similar experience in his Student Success class.

> My professor, was very helpful…I asked her repetitive questions, because I was scared and sometimes I forgot, completing certain things on how to continue my applications, on getting my website account, on paying my tuition bill. I was intimidated. I'm still nervous about attending university. I will, but I was kind of intimidated now and it's different. Their institute is not here like the community college. It is different. The teacher knows you're needing, and whatever I needed to know, awaiting news and emails from the University, etc., etc. My teacher helping me out a lot, truly a great leader, professor.

For **Jesus**, the professor mentioned above helped him access various academic resources and demands and eventually helped him decide upon a change of major. He felt that the professor was able to relate to him and he appreciated the time that the instructor took to get to know him as an individual. This speaks to the need identified in the literature for increased representation of Latino educational leaders and faculty members that are able to support, mentor and guide our Latino students toward success in higher education (Arciniega, 2012). The familiarity of seeing and working with someone that looked like the students was another component of creating a sense of belonging and developing relationships with institutional agents. It also speaks to the importance of resistance capital as his professor modeled his engagement in social justice by mentoring him and, in this way, continued the legacy of Latino academic success.

> I took sociology before because I guess my major was sociology and I talk a lot after class with my professors to kind of get that networking going. I was talking to my sociology teacher and I was trying to pick his brain on why he chose it. I then I was like,

> "Okay, that sounds kind of cool." I was in set and then developmental psychology with Professor Mr. George. He was a big influence as why I switched over, because I was still very hesitant. I talked to him and I was like, "Can we just have a conversation with me to try to see what you think I should be going into?" We talked for maybe about 30 minutes to an hour. Afterwards he was like, "You're definitely psychology." He was like, "All the answers you said were all psychology." He was a big help in my process in deciding, because I was still undecided in sociology and psychology in a couple years in that college. He big time helped me out .

**Jesus** noted how the professor listened attentively to better understand the interests and skills he brought to campus as a college student. Based on that conversation, the professor offered advising support that was instrumental to Jesus's academic journey. This example illustrates how educational leaders can greatly impact the academic success of ethnic minority and low-income students (Stanton-Salazar 1997; 2001). Since Latino students often begin their higher education journey at the community college, it is vital that educational leaders understand and reflect this population in an effort to help students transfer to and graduate from a four-year university.

Although more specific to academic support in the way of homework assistance, **Alex** described how another professor on his campus was available via open office hours, which helped him complete necessary assignments. He noted how this support was especially useful, given his demanding academic course load as a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) major.

> In STEM, you don't really go to the library for stuff but the tutoring center, I probably put in about 20 hours each week just going to the tutoring center, just getting homework done. That's something I definitely took advantage of. There's also other instructors who

> would host hours. They would sit outside of their office and any student that had questions, they can come by and they can just sit down and do homework. Once they had a question, you'd just ask them. But there were other things that they were offering at the West Campus, other than the tutoring center itself.

**Navigational Capital**

In this section, I review two facets of navigational capital, a term that was coined by Yosso (2005) to describe maneuvering through social institutions, that were discussed by the Latino men who comprised the sample for this study: (a) resources gained via a Capstone Course and (b) supports provided to students from educational leaders. In each of these realms, there was a positive impact on student success based on student narratives. Resources and curricular learning opportunities are important as these are reflective of institutional supports that can be replicated and institutionalized to possibly assist other Latino males at both community colleges and universities.

**Rene** spoke to challenges he faced upon entering college with respect to not knowing how to approach and navigate campus demands:

> At the beginning it was very challenging because I didn't know how to approach people, I was very shy. I was on my own all the time, I was trying to figure out Math or Physics or whatever it is on my own. I didn't look for help. There's a lot of tutors out there, they're very good, all of them are very good, but I was just shy, I was shy to talk to them.

It is important to note that Rene attempted to achieve academically without campus resources. Espinoza (2015) noted that Latino males are hesitant to seek out campus resources for fear that such action would speak to their lack of fit to be in college. Rene expressed how he felt "shy" to ask for help because he had not yet learned how to ask for support, thus speaking to a lack of

capital to navigate university demands. With that said, he also noted how Student Success 200 provided him with knowledge about resources as well as facilitated his skills to capitalize on those resources.

> I think the whole class it's 100% beneficial for you. Because they teach you about career decision, they help you to make a transition smoothly. One of the best things is that you can choose classes with the juniors. You don't have to wait as a freshman because that's what happens if you transferred to the University as a sophomore. You're going to have to wait. You can enroll to classes as a junior, you talk about jobs, you can talk about resume, everything. Alfredo told me," If you take this class you're going to be ready to make a transition to University. You're going to have a good professional resume, you're going to have internship opportunities, everything." I think the Student Success 200 class should be a requirement for sure because it's an amazing class for sure.

**Alex** discussed the benefits of having a college preparatory course as a means of gaining career counseling as well as access to the wide range of academic supports needed to successfully transfer from community college to a four-year university. A key element of the course was that it helped uncover resources not known to the student prior to enrollment—resources that he, and other first generation college students, may not have known to ask for or access without a course specifically designed to alert him of those resources.

Another important feature of the Student Success 200 course was the immediate access it provided to resources outside of the academic realm. **Raul** recounted how his instructor went as far as to devote class time to ensuring students knew how to cover the financial expectations of the university, making note of how those expectations differed from students' community college experience. Thus, the course was specifically geared toward a smooth transfer process.

> She [the instructor] found me some extra credit. I received a total of about 90 points. I have an A in the class. I asked her repetitive questions, because I was scared and sometimes I forgot, completing certain things on how to continue my applications, on getting my website account, on paying my tuition bill. I was intimidated. I'm still nervous about attending university. I will, but I was kind of intimidated now and different. Their institute is not Pima. It is different. It didn't have the rep about that. The teacher knows you're needing, and whatever I needed to know, awaiting news and emails from the University, etc., etc. My teacher helping me out a lot. A great leader, professor.

He also shared:

> The best and helpful part [of Student Success 200] I would say is all in one. I loved going to the university and traveling around the campus. I knew what it was, the repetition of it, and it was a distance to travel, but nothing made me more prepared for that than the guidance of the students, the scheduling of our classes, taking classes over there, touring on foot, their staff teaching classes in some of their classrooms, how to use their websites. Then, also more information about some employees in particular. I didn't forget about them. I remember we had to go to one particular spot. I would call it their urgent care. I had to get a shot, and I had to turn in my record there. They told us information, for example about the gym. Any day that I went to university, anybody involved, I would like to think that's what helped me. That was the best and most helpful part.

**Raul** highlighted the instructor's ability to cover a wide range of campus resources that made him feel more prepared and welcome on campus. These initiatives were immensely helpful toward his sense of belonging on campus. Raul discussed the importance of utilizing these students' experiences and forms of capital to inform the formation and/or change of policies and

programs meant to support them. Further, it is important to note the fact that Latinos are more likely to begin their education at the community college since they are less likely to rely on student loans and instead turn to employment to self-fund their education (Cohen and Brower 2008). In another example of available campus resources, **Alex** spoke of the regular support he received from an academic counselor during each semester at this community college.

> The first semester I came to Southwest College after I graduated high school, I had my advisor at the South Peak Campus. He was good and he pretty much got me involved with clubs. He was the one who showed me around, showed me what resources are available at Southwest College. He also pretty much made my schedule from my first semester all the way until I graduated. He pretty much had everything planned out. Every time, say, a class doesn't turn out well, he laid out my options. He's like, "Well, you can't transfer over to the University if you have anything lower than a B in calculus or anything lower than a B in writing." He really helped me understand what the expectations were for the University. He really helped out a lot.

**Alex** explained the campus supports he received regarding academic standards, particularly as they ensured he remain competitive for transferring to his university of choice. **Alex** also shared his experience with a campus community resource that was immensely helpful.

> Yeah, but the program Job Pathways, they will pay for your books. But I was just really reluctant about asking them for stuff, just because I don't feel like I'm in as much need as other students. They do give me one gas card every week for 15 dollars, but if I do need something or if I were to lose a book or something, which I haven't yet, but I would probably go to them to ask if they could just help.

Altogether, students revealed the importance of relying on systemic, established campus resources for aiding in their academic endeavors. Namely, participants mentioned how campus personnel—from advisors to professors—provided them with knowledge and skills that facilitated their readiness for college and competitiveness as transfer students to a four-year university. These supports are critical to educational retention and completion and often the path to opportunity and future prosperity for Men of Color (Ballon, 2015; Sáenz, Ponjuán & Figueroa, 2016).

**Role of Educational Leaders**

In this section, I share data from the educational leader participants. The overarching goal of this section was to highlight leaders' perceptions of students' experiences and needs, and how they understood their role in supporting academic success among Latino college men. One of the educational leaders, **Martin**, who had worked at Southwest College for 16 years as a counselor, said:

> When I began working in the position that I'm in, I started here at the El Rio Campus, but the following year I moved to Desert View campus, and Desert View campus, as you know, is located in the Southwest part of town, and actually I was raised in that area, so I got to work with a lot of the young guys coming out of high school, Hispanic males coming out of high school. I had the opportunity to encourage them and help them do what they needed to do, you know. Academic planning, career exploration and those type of things. One other thing that was pretty interesting is that I met with quite a few young guys, Hispanic males that would come in and they didn't know what was happening because they weren't motivated to do anything. They didn't want to do anything. They didn't have any passion for anything. As we talked several times they would come in

> during the semester or during the year, we would discover that they were actually suffering from depression. In our culture, being a guy and having depression doesn't seem to go well together. I'd tell them to go and talk to their parents, talk to a doctor, and some of them did and would come back and let me know that things were a little better for them. Anyways, I thought that was pretty interesting in that they had the opportunity to open up to another guy, a Hispanic, you know, that I wasn't there to judge them or anything, but it was pretty interesting to think about that.

**Martin** shared how his presence on campus as a Latino male staff member was instrumental in supporting the unique needs of Latino men on campus. Namely, **Martin** discussed how men struggled with naming the ways they experienced stress and challenges to their mental health—the lack of acknowledgement was tied to the intersection of masculinity and Latino identity. This is an interesting finding as we see it identified by both one of the student participants as well as one of the educational leaders.

**Adan**, a director at the University, shared his perspective on the role of being an educational leader working with minority students:

> When I began as an admissions counselor at the University, in fact, it actually goes back to my time as an undergraduate at the University that I had the opportunity to work in the office admissions, and in the unit that was called Minority Student Improvement. In that particular role, I was called a phony. I did phone recruitment, on behalf of the University. That's one of those things that's general within admissions and in student affairs.
>
> None of us, necessarily, wake up in the 1st grade saying, "Hey. We're going to be admissions counselors one day." I got the bug, in the sense that, reaching out making the cull calls to rural minority students back then. It made a big difference because over time,

> you develop relationships with those students and their parents on the phone. Then, as a result of that connection, was able then to come back and then begin professionally working as an admissions counselor, still within minority student recruitment at that time.

He also referred to the challenges that Latino men who transfer to a four-year university from a community college face during their time at the university. The responses from the educational leaders demonstrate how they utilized their "Funds of knowledge" which is defined as the existing resources, knowledge, and skills embedded in students and their families, (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), in helping and supporting students maneuver through the institution. The funds of knowledge that students bring to their educational experiences may serve as blueprints for identifying supportive services and programs to help them succeed in education.

> I would say the cost, the social transition, and academic preparation are often times going to be some of the bigger factors that would influence the student going to the community college first on their way to the University. I think, for all of us that identify (as Latino), that for us, it's always about trying to pay it forward and always being there for the future "us" that's out there and helping those students feel engaged in that particular way. I think that, more than anything, me as a first-generation individual, that it's always been just about, what were the expectations my parents set for me?

**Adan** spoke to the unique demands placed on Latino men, particularly the pressures to contribute to one's community while also meeting the high expectations placed on them by family to succeed.

Similarly, **Jane** had extensive experience working with Latino males. She had been employed as a Counselor at Southwest College for three years and shared some of her experiences:

> I think that if they [Latino male students] could connect with someone and build a relationship with someone, whether it be the TRiO person or a counselor who conducts the new student orientation, or an advisor they sit down and talk to about classes. If they feel that this person understands and will listen to them and give them good advice, then they start to trust that person. I think trust is a big part. If they can start trusting people and building a relationship, then they're overcoming the challenge of going out and asking for help. They will come back and ask us for more help and guidance.

**Jane** talked about the need for students to identify with someone they felt they could trust. Based on a variety of factors such as gender expectations and the fact that many of these students were first generation, it was common for students to hesitate to ask for help or assistance when trying to navigate through the educational system. For some students, forming a supportive relationship at the community college was often a primary source of encouragement and support:

> One of the most highlighted external challenges [students share] would be finances. Them having to either support their family or live on their own. They're not able to come to school full time. Or if they are coming to school full time, they're also working many, many hours. That's probably the highest level of challenge for students in community college. If they have to work so much, then that reduces their time that they can spend on classes. They may be part time and then it's spreading out how long it will take to complete. We'll lose a lot of students because it's taking so long. They're not seeing immediate benefits to them going to college.

Participants discussed how they utilized social capital, navigational capital and resistance capital in learning how to maneuver through the higher education setting. Educational leaders, identified as a faculty member, counselor or advisor, also played an integral role in supporting

students toward completion and transfer. Educational leaders also shared their perspectives on the challenges, barriers and supports that students utilize and how they each approach the work they do in order to help these students be successful.

Altogether, participants noted the critical role that campus supports, particularly advisors and professors, played in their academic success. From the participants showcased in this section, it appears that availability and attentive listening, especially given the unique needs that Latino men present as college students, were the most important facets of institutional support.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

This study was motivated by the students with whom I have worked with as an academic advisor, counselor and faculty member. At the onset of this study, I sought to identify and acknowledge the various forms of capital and support that played a key role in the educational trajectory of my students—factors enabled them to attend community college and successfully transfer to a four-year university. Thus, my goal was to collect and share data that could help replicate supportive environments for other students in need. Following a careful examination of the literature, I ascertained that I also leveraged various forms of capital in the role of an institutional agent and as a graduate student, which enabled me to be a positive asset to students' academic endeavors. These aspects of my experience were integrated into the final version of this dissertation.

The findings of this study suggest that the factors that contributed to participants' educational achievement included both external forms of support as well as internal drive, often in relation to external forms of support. Together, these factors provided students with the resources and motivational behaviors needed to accomplish their academic goals. Upon closer examination, it became clear to me that familial and institutional relationships emerged as the most prominent factors imparting access to various forms of capital for participants—capital that was critical to their academic success. These relationships empowered students to maneuver, transition and adapt to higher education, thus resulting in academic achievement.

The educational and gainful employment outlook for Latino males is in jeopardy. Sáenz and Ponjuán (2009) raised awareness of this issue in their work "The Vanishing Latino Male". Noguera, Hurtado, and Fergus (2012) held a similar perspective on the lived experiences of this

population noting that the issues faced by this population are not accounted for in policy and research therefore perpetuating the disenfranchisement and needs of this invisible population. A principal goal of this study was to acknowledge and value the voices of Latino male students in order to glean the forms of capital and support they utilized in their educational pursuits. Qualitative case study methods were employed because an integral part of the research was to discover and illuminate the issues therefore finding meaning in the lived experiences of the participants.

In this discussion chapter, I revisit Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Framework to explore how the conceptualization of cultural wealth may differ in relation to gender roles for Latino males. In this final chapter, I briefly discuss the case study. I also summarize the findings from chapters four and five as well as theoretical implications for educational leaders based on the data from the present study. Lastly, I provide recommendations for policy and practice as well as areas for future research.

## Summary of Study

The United States is expected to become majority Latino, thus changing the demographics of important major systems in our country, like higher education. In response to this change, I set out to better understand the lived experiences of Latino male community college students transferring to a four-year University. I chose this sample since the overwhelming majority of Latino students begin higher education in community colleges (Murphy & Murphy, 2017), coupled with the dire statistics indicating that the majority of these students do not go on to four-year universities to attain a bachelor's degree (Crisp & Nuñez, 2014)—an accomplishment that has been found to be linked to greater financial security in

adulthood (Perna, Finney, & Callan, 2014). Thus, data that help illuminate factors that contribute to academic success of Latino students, particularly with the transfer process from community college to four-year university, is incredibly important for meeting the shifting needs of U.S. college students.

I conducted a case study at a community college in the Southwest region of the U.S. The case study included in-depth interviews with five Latino male student participants and three educational leaders. Students were involved in a Student Success course intended to support their successful transfer to a four-year university. Participation in the present study was the first time participants had been asked to share their story and experiences as Latino men in college, so the qualitative interview process was new to them. In order to establish rapport and trust with participants, I reiterated the importance of their narratives and experiences to the body of research focused on Latino males and how educational leaders needed to learn from them as a means to improve support efforts. The interview provided an opportunity for participants to feel comfortable, which was critical since they were sharing personal experiences with me as the interviewer. The data that were generated were based on the following central research questions of this study:

1. What aspirations do Latino male students have to complete an associate degree at their community college and from there, transfer to a four-year university?

2. What programs and/or services do students identify as helpful for supporting their transfer from the community college to a four-year university?

3 What roles do educational leaders (defined as staff, faculty members and administrators) at the sending (community college) and receiving (university) institutions play in students' decisions and/or processes in the transfer process?

My research questions emerged from an assessment of the extant literature focused on Latina/o students in higher education as well as enrollment and completion trends of this group. The research indicated that there was a difference between Latino males and Latina females with respect to successful completion of retention and degree completion. This is how the decision to illuminate the educational experiences of Latino males emerged.

The first chapter of this dissertation set the stage for the demographic shift in the U.S. where in Latinos are becoming the largest racial minority group. This demographic shift, coupled with the anti-immigrant sociopolitical context in the U.S., and particularly, the state of Arizona, raises concerns about the ways major systems like education, employment, health, the economy and society at large are responding to the growing number of Latinos. In chapter one, I described the particular issues facing the larger Latino community and how these challenges trickled down to higher education contexts. Specifically, I discussed trends such as how Latino students primarily enroll at the community college due to low cost of tuition, open access to courses, and proximity of the campus to one's family (Gandara, Larson, Mehan & Rumberger, 2010).

In the second chapter, I examined the literature in regards to men of color, specifically African American and Latino males, and their experiences in educational systems. This included delving into the issues pertaining to Latino male students and social factors that have impacted this group, such as restricting gender roles, stereotype threat, and campus climate, and how these factors have shaped men's experiences in educational institutions. I explored the values of

familismo and caballerismo and how these cultural frameworks play a role in men's academic motivation. I also reviewed common trajectories of Latino male students in the educational system and the deficit lens that is often utilized as an explanation of the outcomes for Latino students; my goal was to debunk the deficit lens and to instead illuminate the ways Latino men showcase resilience during their academic journeys. Lastly, I discussed Yosso's (2005) concept of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to shift:

> away from a deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged. (p. 1)

This framework focuses on the strengths that students of Color possess and utilize and thus, is a useful assets-based framework that can inform the ways we view Latino males who seek to transfer from the community college to the university.

In the third chapter, I explained the theoretical framework and methodology guiding the case study that yielded the data on the five Latino male students at Southwest College. I also explained the sources of data used to answer the research questions outlined at the beginning of the study. In the fourth chapter, I discussed participants' responses to the central research questions of the present case study, which was to identify in a broad sense, what aspires Latino male students to complete an associate degree at their community college and from there, make the effort to transfer to a four-year university? I shared the external factors as well as the internal, intrapersonal factors that impacted men's academic motivations. In the fifth chapter, I discussed

the navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) participants' utilized and developed that in turn provided access to information and resources that were critical to their academic success.

In the next section, I provide greater detail of the findings and also situate them within trends in the research literature.

## Summary of Findings

The central research question of this case study was, where do Latino male college students garner academic motivation to complete an associate degree and transfer to a four-year university? Secondly, with a more specific focus on support factors, "what programs and/or services do students perceive as helpful in supporting their transfer from the community college to a four-year university? Thirdly, what roles do educational leaders (defined as staff, faculty members and administrators) at the sending (community college) and receiving (university) institutions play in students' decisions and/or processes in the transfer process? Together, these research questions drove my dissertation project—a qualitative case study that set out to collect data on Latino men's academic motivations, supports and/or hindrances in the attainment of an associate degree and transfer to a four-year university, and the role of educational leaders in men's higher education journeys.

The first research question centered on Latino males' internal drive to pursue higher education. Most participants reported that their aspiration to complete an associate degree and transfer to a four-year university was driven by the responsibilities they carried as men in their family. Specifically, participants described how their parents made significant sacrifices to support participants' future educational and career goals by working several jobs that required

manual labor and long hours; these jobs are what provided participants with higher education opportunities. Thus, their drive was in direct relation to the supports they received from their families—supports that were difficult for their parents to provide given the challenging work environments parents had to endure.

Another important element in participants' academic motivation was the belief that a college degree would allow them to assert their own personal agency—having better control over their economic and social futures, including providing and protecting their future nuclear families. Although participants were single and thus spoke in hypotheticals, their academic motivation was driven by the desire to be a breadwinner and thus, ideal male partner to a future romantic partner. Men did not speak directly to the shaping of their belief system but their aspirations are consistent with gender or familial expectations of many Latino men (Marsiglia, Booth, Baldwin, Ayers 2013). I hypothesized that cultural pressures to serve as bread winners within their families and communities prompted several participants' disclosure of financial challenges in their pursuit of higher education. Future researchers should explore this area of cultural experience as it relates to male gender roles among Latino college students.

With respect to factors that positively contributed to men's academic experiences, participants highlighted the critical role of familial and institutional supports. The second research question focused on what programs and/or services students identified as helpful in supporting their transfer from Southwest College to State University. Participants identified staff, counselors and faculty members as sources of support to them. They felt the relationships they had with these individuals provided access to information and resources that enabled them to successfully maneuver through the educational system. Students also identified the capstone

course, Student Success 200, and the staff and faculty associated with that course, as key sources of support and guidance throughout the transfer process. They shared that the course meeting locations, which alternated between Southwest College and State University, as well as the interactions they had with the college and university representatives, helped them to maneuver back and forth between the two institutions. This enabled them to familiarize themselves with the processes and policies of the receiving institution. Finally, all participants reported a positive experience while attending Southwest College, which helped make the transfer process more accessible.

The final research question driving this dissertation study explored the roles that educational leaders (defined as staff, faculty members and administrators) at the sending (community college) and receiving (university) institutions played in students' decisions and/or processes in the transfer process. Based on their personal narratives, I was able to derive some common sources of inspiration that propelled these students to persist even in the face of serious challenges they encountered. A common characteristic among all participants was their high aspirations which aided them in keeping their focus on transferring to a four-year institution and obtaining a bachelor's degree. Participants' high aspirations highlight previous research supporting the high aspirations of Latina/o student at two-year institutions (Sanchez, 2012).

Participants identified parental or familial influence as a source of inspiration in pursuing their education. The majority of participants stated that their parents' educational levels varied from an elementary school level to completion of high school, which prompted parents' values and encouragement for their sons to pursue and complete a college education. Participants reported that making their parents proud was often the motivator in achieving an educational feat

that had not been afforded to their parents. Not consistent with previous research (Benner & Graham, 2011), participants identified finances and time management as challenges to their academic demands but none of identified stereotypes, challenges they dealt with in the K-12 system, being underprepared academically, campus climate, being a first-generation college student, or their Latino identity. It is hard to know what contributed to this lack of finding but I hypothesize that students face these barriers on a regular basis such that identifying and acknowledging the challenges they have encountered gives power and voice to those challenges, all of which participants are not able to change. Another potential contributing factor in this lack of acknowledgement could be attributed to cultural Latino male gender expectations of being strong and not complaining about challenges or life circumstances, thus not giving voice to environmental challenges.

## Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework that guided this case study was Yosso's (2005) framework of Community Cultural Wealth. Community Cultural Wealth rests on the premise that students possess and rely upon capital—defined as the "knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (p. 69). According to Yosso, various forms of capital are garnered from students' familial and communal experiences as students of color in the U.S. that in turn support a student's educational journey. For the specific purposes of this dissertation project, I collected data via observations and interviews with students and educational leaders to learn about the forms of capital used to support Latino men's completion of the associate degree and successful transition to a four-year university. As guided by the Community Cultural Wealth framework, I was particularly

interested in the supports (personnel), programs and policies that promoted participants' academic success.

The Community Cultural Wealth Framework (Yosso, 2005) positively contributes to the body of literature focusing on Latino/a students in that it examines their experiences from a strengths-based perspective. Yosso's framework consists of six distinct but interrelated forms of capital that include: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. Based on Yosso's (2005) theoretical framework, all of the identified forms of capital that they utilized in persisting at Southwest College and transferring to State University were evident in the student narratives. Furthermore, the five participants shared experiences that were not fully captured by Yosso's framework. For example, some of these students discussed the critical role of religion as serving as a source of strength in persevering in higher education. A couple other participants were veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and had purposefully joined the military to have access to the funding to pursue their education. This could be attributed to the use of navigational capital but their feedback could also indicate a positive view of serving in the military in service to country.

Another important finding is that participants' engagement with educational leaders provided access to important information and resources so they could maximize their full potential as students at Southwest College. The participants were successful because they were able to navigate through a variety of challenges via their relationships with key, critical personnel on campus. Calcagno et al. (2008) found a similar trend in their data in regard to institutional characteristics such as the role of college staff and community college student success for students.

This dissertation extends existing literature by lending attention to the unique academic experiences of Latino men in community colleges. Consistent with Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model, I set out to identify the supports and aspirations participants relied upon when transferring from the community college to the university. Although small in scale, this study's findings highlight the need for educational leaders to consider men's experiences by adopting a comprehensive perspective of student experience and success.

Findings also identified the career and educational aspirations of Latino male students and how social and economic mobility for oneself, immediate family and community are connected to cultural expectations placed on them in relation to race, immigration and gender. Findings suggest the importance of intentionally cultivating an environment that fosters relationship building and engagement between students, staff, faculty, and administrators. These factors were critical in the educational journeys of Latino college men.

## Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Over the past two decades, college admission eligibility, in regard to racial and ethnic patterns, have remained relatively stable. Hart et al. (2012) found that there has been little to no change in the rate of White students outnumbering Latinos when meeting qualifications for admission to Arizona public universities. Between 1989 and 2006, Latino eligibility rates hovered between 30% and 40%, while the rates for the state's total population of students were between 40% and 50%. The difference between Latino and Whites is even wider, with White students' eligibility at rates upwards of 60% (Hart et al., 2012). Furthermore, in 2009, 350,425 students were enrolled in Arizona's public community colleges and universities but only 20% of these post-secondary students were Latino, a rate that was disproportionate to high school trends where 33%

of Arizona's college-age population was Latino, and more than 30% of Latino high school students were eligible for university study (Arizona State University, Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2012).

Community colleges will continue to be the entry point for many Latino students seeking a college education. This study contributed to the existing literature of Latina/o students by focusing on participants that have been successful at the community college and were in the process of moving on to the university. Based on data from the present dissertation study, future researchers should explore how financial constraints and alternative forms of funding in the form of grants impact student success. Specifically, researchers should examine whether there is a correlation between financial support and student success; such an examination could be of great benefit for access and retention at both colleges and universities.

In the remainder of this section, I provide recommendations for faculty, administrators, parents, and new students who are committed to supporting Latino men in college. These recommendations were derived from participants' responses. Through their lived experiences, participants identified the sources of support and challenges that they faced in pursuit of their college degrees.

**Faculty and Staff**

Participants held faculty members and staff in high regard at both Southwest College and State University. They stated that faculty and staff were both approachable and supportive when students sought out help. In order to facilitate this level of support, faculty and staff need to maintain their high level of visibility and approachability when working with students. Participants

also appreciated the availability of staff and faculty. Faculty and staff need to continue to provide opportunities to engage with students and might benefit more from utilizing technology for this purpose.

In addition, the participants emphasized their appreciation of the willingness of faculty and staff to seek out others or additional information that would help students receive timely and accurate answers to their questions. When instructional or service issues or barriers emerged for students, they felt that instructors and staff were willing to facilitate the conversation and provide support rather than being dismissive. They also spoke highly of counselors and their commitment to understand them and their educational and life aspirations. As a result, Counselors need to promote job shadowing and internship opportunities among Latina/o students in order to help students solidify their degree program sooner than later.

**Administrators**

Based on the study findings, administrators need to be mindful of the unintended consequences of campus policies such as hours of operation and resources available to students. One of the biggest challenges for participants is financial resources. Administrators need to find creative ways to promote scholarship opportunities or grant funding to help provide more opportunities for Latino students. The participants underscored the importance of having administrators advocate on their behalf. Participants were readily able to reference administrators that ensure the success of Latina/o students.

Further, participants noted the value of being able to interact with a diverse workforce at both institutions. In order to support diversity, selection committees must promote and actively

recruit a diverse administrative, faculty and student affairs staff that mirror the diverse make-up of the student population at Southwest College. As the research posits, minority students often identify with an individual that looks like them as they often turn to those individuals as informal mentors.

**Parents**

Participants shared the sacrifices their parents had made by working in labor intensive jobs and sometimes having to work several jobs in order to provide a better life for their children. Parents highly valued education and the opportunity of being able to get a college degree. These types of conversations need to continue to occur within the family unit so that children are aware and understand the importance of a college education. Parents were extremely supportive of the students going to school. A few students expressed the challenges of explaining the type of commitment needed to dedicate to school. Institutions could be more effective at providing information to parents and families so that the entire family unit can be brought in to the conversation of student success. Academic options should be shared with both the student and the parent in order for them to be informed and serve as a support and advocate during the academic journey.

Financial challenges were identified by the majority of participants. Parents need to be informed of how financial aid in the form of grants, loans and payment plans and scholarships can serve as a support to their student. This information should be available in both English and Spanish so parents can participate and understand the financial options available to support their student throughout their college education.

### New Students

Participants identified the value of utilizing academic and student support services. This type of involvement allowed them to become familiar with the different resources available to students. They also expressed how beneficial having regular meetings with academic advisors were to them. New students could benefit in order to obtain direction or information and will help them stay on track and moving forward in making progress toward completion or transfer.

## Recommendations for Future Research and Methodological Implications

Future research needs to examine how students' educational experiences vary depending on participants' level of interaction with peers, faculty, and administrators. The degree of challenges that students face in the process of transferring from the community college to the university is also another area of future focus. Yosso's (2005) CCW framework provides a good foundation for examining these issue but could also be critiqued to include additional forms of capital currently missing from the framework. Researchers could also follow students over time from point of initial enrollment to point of transfer or completion to explore how Latina/o students acclimate and evolve over time. Finally, researchers need to explore the resiliency of Latina/o students that successfully complete a degree or transferred to the university. Furthering the research agenda focused on documenting the transition from the community college to the university for Latino students upon transfer could also be beneficial to the larger body of research focused on Latino students. Finally, focusing on Latina/o students that achieve their academic goals could also provide a wealth of information for educational leaders and institutions.

## Conclusion

The research findings, which were founded on the research questions from the study, were outlined in this chapter. Additionally, brief discussion on Yosso's (2005) theoretical framework of Community Cultural Wealth and how it may have different implications and application for Latino students based on their gender and cultural family expectations was also addressed. The five Latino Male participants communicated similar aspirations, challenges and support systems. Participants shared that their parents served as a strong source of inspiration on their journey to transfer to the university and complete a bachelor's degree. The last section of this chapter, included a list of recommendations for future policies, practice and research applicable to faculty, administrators, parents, and Latino male students that are new to higher education. I concluded this chapter by identifying future areas of research focused on Latino male students. This is imperative as our Latino population continues to grow and the number of Latino males completing college degrees continues to be a concern based on the current dismal rate of completion.

Having the opportunity to study and evaluate the experience of Latino male students is an exciting challenge. In the next few decades, Latinos will become the largest ethnic group in the U.S., which requires a call to action in a number of important arenas, including education. In response to this need, I hope to create programs and fortify supports that facilitate the success of Latino students in higher education, particularly improving the transfer rate from community college to university. Student affairs leaders are in a unique position to support these students since the process of being admitted to the community college, and the final goal of graduation with an associate and bachelor's degree, all fall within the mission of our work. It is therefore

imperative that community colleges connect with these students, support them in their continuation of their education, and help them reach their personal and professional goals.

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