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Understanding the Success Factors for Latino Males at Two Community Colleges

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Understanding the Success Factors for Latino Males at Two Community Colleges

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nervous doctoral students. Finally, to the Latino males, I wish you continued determination and success as you prove that yes there are Latino males who can achieve their dreams!

Understanding the Success Factors for Latino Males at Two Community Colleges

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Latino males have one of the lowest college attainment rates among traditional college-aged students. Using a qualitative method, this study examined the experiences of Latino males at a South Central Texas Community College and a North Texas Community College. The proposed study utilized a qualitative design methodology, and a conceptual framework of Critical Theory as a lens to analyze the collected data. The study included, 1) Latino male student focus groups, 2) one-on-one administrator, faculty and staff interviews, 3) document analysis.

The study answered two primary questions focusing on factors that influenced Latino males to attend and persist in community colleges. These firsthand accounts provided useful information for staff and community colleges interested in increasing the number of minority and Latino males in higher education. The study also attempts to advance discussion around the reality of the disappearing of Latino males in higher education. Using critical theory, this proposed research study explored relationships of

factors that may involve inequities and power, and as Willis (2007), explains, a desirable aspect of critical research is to help those without power to acquire it. As such, data analysis is at the center of this study to understand factors associated to Latino male attendance and persistence at their community colleges.

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Chapter One

A review of U.S. Census data clearly shows that the nation's success in reaching its degree completion goals will depend on our ability to accelerate the degree completions rates of Latinos (Santiago, 2009). This is especially urgent for Latino Males who have lagged in college enrollment and graduate rates (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The disappearance of Latino males in secondary and postsecondary levels of education is a growing concern for educators and the Latino community. Failure to educate this growing segment of the U.S. can have severe local and global consequences as well as a significant cultural and social impact, for the labor force and the educational community. Research around this concern has affirmed this argument in different ways validating that social, cultural, and financial barrier contributed to the low numbers of Latino males in higher education. Latino males are "vanishing" from the American education pipeline, a trend that is especially evident at the secondary and postsecondary levels (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 54). Furthermore, low college enrollment rates suggest African American and Latino males are not attaining bachelor's degrees at the same rates as women. Even though, college enrollment for black males increased to 37 % in 2000, women continue to outpace them by a two-to-one margin (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

This study explored the factors that influence Latino males to attend and persist at two colleges, utilizing qualitative and critical theory to analyze questions related to Latino male student success. In addition, this study provides a background on this topic,

followed by problem statement, research questions, methods and significance that lead the heart of Latino males' lack of college attendance and persistence.

Background

Based on literature related to Latinos education, this study contends that there is a demographic swing linked to a persistent and widening gap in public school and college success for Latinos. Acknowledging the Latino demographic trends, it is expected that Latinos will transform our economic indicators into leading production and increased job market. Utilizing trends in literature review, this research highlights the basis and factors contributing to the study of Latino male attendance and persistence in community colleges. According to Cohn, Lopez, and Passel (2011) census data from 2010 reveals that, "Latinos are the largest minority in the nation, and the number of Latino school age children grew by 39% over the decade," (p. 1). Gandara (2010) states that "Latinos are the fastest-growing ethnic group but the most poorly educated,"(p. 24). This suggests that we need a better educated and trained Latino population and workforce; and more needs to be done to encourage and reach minorities, especially Latinos, to attend and succeed in college. This statement is sustained by information disseminated through the American Council on Education (2008) reporting that

the tradition of young adults in the United States attaining higher levels of education from previous generations appears to have stalled, and for far too many people of color, the percentage of young adults with some type of postsecondary degree compared with older adults has actually fallen. (p.1)

Addressing these issues requires research to identify the perceptions contributing or challenging Latino educational attitudes. Exploring the perceived profiles of Latinos and higher education, Santiago (2009) reported a generalization that Latinos do not value education. This misperception is based on the assumption that if Latinos valued education they would not have the lowest educational attainment levels compared to other racial/ethnic groups. However, according to Santiago, (2009) in surveys conducted by the Public Agenda (a non-profit organization engaged in non-partisan research ranging from education to government leadership), higher education was more likely “prized and respected” among Hispanic parents than among other groups in general, and Latino parents believed it was important for their children to get a college education. In another survey conducted by the PEW Hispanic Center during the 2008 presidential campaign, 93 percent of Latino voters rated education as the most important issue of the campaign (Santiago, 2009). Santiago suggested that while some individuals believe that race and ethnicity segregate society, research and unbiased analysis can create a more objective approach to the issues affecting certain student populations.

Even though some individuals also believe that economic issues prevent Latinos from attending colleges, Nunez’ analysis (2010) indicated that Latino students do not necessarily evidence such an approach to selecting college. Her studies found that Latinos, more than any other racial or ethnic group, tend to select schools for which they are academically overqualified, for example selecting a community college over a university. Research also indicates that Latino students select college on the perception of less cost, proximity to home, and campus climate that welcomes students of color

(Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2010, p. 21). Latino students may also model a psychosocial approach; (how individuals relate to themselves and others). Therefore, their sense of college attainment may be based on their family socialization and their schooling experience. Parents of Latino students who never finished public or secondary education may have little to contribute to the educational psychosocial foundation of their child.

In addition to growing demographics and college selection, there exists a larger and widening gender gap in college attainment (Wells, Seifert, Padgett, Park, & Umbach, 2011). According to Wells (2011), this is especially acute among minority groups, with racial/ethnic students and students with lower social class origins experience a larger gender gap than their white peers and peers with higher social class origins. The study continues stating that by 2016 women will comprise 60% of college enrollment.

Problem Statement

In addition to gender enrollment gaps, the challenges associated with Latino male education remain a constant dilemma for community colleges to identify common strategies, practices, and language that adequately address effective solutions to Latino male challenges. A vast number of researchers indicated that a large number in the Latino community are faced with:

- Higher drop-out rates of students from K-12.
- Lower levels of achievement among students enrolled in K-12, as measured by standardized tests and other indicators.
- Lower rates of college matriculation directly from high school.

- Lower probabilities of graduating from college and longer time periods to degree attainment.
- Lower levels of participation in high skill occupations (e.g., information technology), professions that demand more specialization and extensive education (Tornatzky, Pachon, & Torres, 2003; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández).

The issues mentioned above are discouraging and a direct challenge to the community, institutions of higher education and elected officials. These data suggest that it is not enough to craft programming or policy. Educators need to ask “why” educational attainment remains low for Latino males and other students of color. In October 2010, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) adopted *Closing the Gaps (CTG): The Texas Higher Education Plan*. The goal of the plan is to close the educational gaps within Texas by focusing on the critical areas of participation, success, excellence, and research. The plan to graduate 630,000 students by 2015 has enjoyed community, political, business and policy support due to its potential to assist students by increasing graduation and completion rates.

THECB cautioned that there was a looming crisis in higher education in Texas. At present, the proportion of Texans enrolled in higher education is declining. Too few higher education programs are noted for excellence and too few higher education research efforts have reached their full potential. Texas must take bold steps for the future success of its people. The 15-year time frame for Closing the Gaps (2000-2015) is over half completed, yet progress toward achieving a number

of the plan's targets lags the trend line that serves as a benchmark for incremental advancement. Hispanic enrollment increased by almost 33,000 in fall 2010, but the cumulative increase was still well below the target trend line. The associate's degree component was especially strong, as it increased by more than twice any previous increase since 2000. Hispanic students had their biggest increase in the number of undergraduate awards since CTG began, but they and African American students continued to be somewhat below the target trend line (THECB, 2000).

Closing the Gaps 2011 Progress Report

<i>CTG Measure</i>	<i>Progress Relative to Target Trend Line</i>	
	<i>June 2010</i>	<i>June 2011</i>
<i>Participation</i>		
<i>Statewide participation</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>
<i>African American participation</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>
<i>Hispanic participation</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>
<i>White participation</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>
<i>Success: BACs: bachelor's and associate's degrees, and certificates</i>		
<i>Statewide BACs</i>	<i>On Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Above Target</i>
<i>Bachelor's degrees</i>	<i>Somewhat Above Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Above Target</i>
<i>Associate's degrees</i>	<i>Somewhat Above Target</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>
<i>Doctoral degrees</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>
<i>African American BACs</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>
<i>Hispanic BACs</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>
<i>Technology BACs</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>
<i>Allied health and nursing BACs</i>	<i>Somewhat Above Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Above Target</i>
<i>Teachers initially certified</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>
<i>Math and science teachers initially certified</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>
<i>Excellence</i>		
<i>National rankings</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>	<i>Well Below Target</i>
<i>Program recognition</i>	<i>On Target</i>	<i>On Target</i>
<i>Research</i>		
<i>Federal science & engineering R&D obligations</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>	<i>Somewhat Below Target</i>
<i>Public institutions' research expenditures</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>	<i>Well Above Target</i>

Unfortunately, the road to higher education for underserved students is never easy and always unequal. First generation students, households in poverty, students of color – are less likely to plan for, unfamiliar with application process, register in and persevere through postsecondary education. A study conducted by the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) surveyed eighth grade students following up several times including years after high school graduation (Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004, p. 5). The survey results indicated that seventy-three percent of Latinos aspired to postsecondary education, but only 55 percent – a full 20 percent lower than the national average – aspired to earn a bachelor’s degree. The aspirations of Latino students in the U.S. were the lowest of any other group racial in the analysis. A high proportion of Latino and African American students felt they were not qualified for postsecondary education. For Latinos, 59 percent of students were characterized as such, compared to 44 percent of total NELS cohort and 41 percent for white students...only 1 in 4 Latino students were qualified for postsecondary studies. The survey also indicated that 40 percent of the Latino students attended two-year colleges compared to the other students (32.3 percent). Research studies for Latino enrollment must thoroughly investigate the roots of aspiration and results in an-depth, contextual manner.

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to strengthen knowledge about the experiences of Latino males at Texas community colleges, this qualitative study explored the factors that influence Latino males to attend and persist in college. Particular attention was given to those factors believed to influence Latino males with similar characteristics to persist at

community college. Using qualitative methods, such as focus groups, face-to face interviews, and document analysis, the researcher explored how community colleges' practices and other factors impact Latino males' attendance and persistence in college. Further details for this study are provided in the following sections.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following two research questions:

- 1) What factors influenced college attendance of Latino males at two Texas community colleges?
- 2) What factors influenced Latino males to persist at two Texas community colleges?

These questions determined the methods used in the study as well as the type of data collected. It is the hope of the researcher that the subsequent findings drawn from the study contribute to the knowledge base on the factors influencing Latino males to attend and persist in community college.

Methodology

As described in further detail in Chapter Three, this study made use of face-to-face interviews and document analysis to explore community colleges' enrollment and retention of Latino males in community college, as well as other influential factors related to these educational phenomena. Qualitative data analysis focused on experiences of Latino males enrolled at two community colleges.

This dual case study was conducted within the parameters of qualitative research as it intended to study human behavior in context. The researcher has chosen this method as the most suitable approach to faithfully and thoroughly examine the experiences of

Latino males attending community college in Texas. According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods are... “ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing, and analyzing documents” (p. 145). In accordance with Patton’s statement, open-ended interview questions were conducted with this the study at the participant campus. This approach facilitated a naturalistic environment in which staff and students respond in an interactive way. In turn, the collected data produced a higher level of reliability when conducting qualitative research (Guba, 1978). The researcher of this study utilized Initial Coding (also known as Open Coding) to analyze the collected data. This study investigated and interpreted the collective experiences by conducting one-on-one interviews with staff, and administrators from both community colleges and Latino male student focus groups at their institutions. This data was compared and contrasted to discover consistencies and inconsistencies. Such triangulation of data enhanced the reliability of this study as expected within the guidelines of qualitative methodology. The second cycle of data will be analyzed using Axial Coding to reduce the number of initial codes and strategically reorganized the collected data.

Data analysis is both deductive and inductive. In the former case, the researcher endeavored to let the data speak for itself. In the latter case, the researcher aimed to specifically address the research questions. Additionally, critical theory was used to inductively analyze the relationship between community college strategies to engage and retain Latino male students as well as the relationship of other factors impacting Latino male student attendance and persistence in college.

Significance of the Study

This proposed is significant as a contributor to knowledge related to practices of community colleges regarding the involvement of Latino male students and understanding other critical factors influencing their success. Specifically, it provides insights concerning: (a) external factors that impact decision making of Latino males to attend college; (b) the degree to which current community college practices support the retention Latino males in college. This study may also contribute to community college understanding of the college aspirations of Latino males and factors related to college preparation, procedures that hinder fluid high school to college transition, and the college attendance affected by the inclusion parent pre-college planning programs. This research study may also encourage critical pathway cultivating a pipeline of successfully programs facilitating full community and Latino male attendance and persistence from K-16 educational attainment.

Definition of Terms

The following general terms are embedded in the context of this study. Definitions are intended to facilitate accuracy, clarity, and understanding of the concepts, theories, and methods discussed in this research.

Latino or Hispanic refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

Student Success – While there are diverse aspects and measurements of student success, a persistent understanding and in its simplest form “student success” is getting students into and through college degree or certificate (Ewell & Wellman, 2007, p. 2).

Perspective -A way of seeing and, thus, interpreting. It suggests one’s analytical frame never completely mirrors reality; rather, one’s assumptions, values, and theoretical learning mediate the single version of reality that is accessible through a given perspective. Moreover, the term “perspective” also indicates no one purview can ever fully capture the complexity of research phenomena.

Persistence – The words “persistence” and “retention” are often used interchangeably. The National Center for Education Statistics, however, differentiates the terms by using “retention” as an institutional measure and “persistence” as a student measure. Since the focus of this proposed study is the persistence of Latino males the term “persistence” may/will indicate a student who enrolls for two consecutive regular terms (Hagedorn, n.d., p. 6). The embedded terms in the context of this study are intended to facilitate accuracy, clarity, and understanding of the concepts, theories, and methods discussed in this research.

Delimitations

The scope of this study is limited to two Texas community college campuses.

Limitations

Since the study focused on two college campuses, the findings cannot be generalized to all colleges in different settings. Typical of qualitative research, where the purpose is to go in-depth rather than breathe. Studies of this nature are inherently case-dependent and heavily influenced by the context of the participants (Patton, 2002). Therefore, this study is a snapshot of multiple case units with limited stakeholder data. Participants volunteered for the interviews, and consequently, their opinion may or may

not be congruent with perceptions of other stakeholders. Retrospection of each participant during the interviews may weaken the data. There could be other information brought forth that participants may not be able to recall or they may withhold at the time of the interview. However, triangulations of data sources will be treated rigorously to ensure high level of reliability.

A potential bias may exist because the researcher has worked with Latino male students in community colleges in the past. For over 15 years, I have worked in non-traditional community college settings that promote and provide skills to low-income, first-generation students who most often are male and female students of color. The academic success of Latinos motivates the work that I do on their behalf. To provide avenues for access and achievement to student who otherwise would not have been able to succeed in high school and community college has been the work that I have been most proud of. Yet in those 15 or more years, there were other students who were not as successful, mainly Latino and African American male students who had potential, but along the way were sidetracked and never found their way back to education.

However, an intentional and conscious effort to neutralize bias will be at the center of the data collection and analysis process through meditation, reflection, and personal notes, before, during, and after collecting and analyzing data. This approach will help the researcher to maintain neutrality and non-judgmental interaction in order to report the findings in a balanced way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Possibility of data overload and time demands may also constitute limitations for this study.

Assumptions

The researcher of this study entered the field with the assumption that the two community colleges have a strategic approach to support Latino male student retention at their colleges, and these institutions have a record keeping structure for the activities embedded in their Latino male engagement and retention improvement efforts.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher approached this study with a critical theoretical mindset. During the preparation for and execution of this study, the researcher maintained a delicate awareness of setting the stage for a natural responsive environment for the participants, and awareness that potential biases must be intentionally neutralized. The researcher performed constant critical reviews of actions, analysis, interpretations, and preliminary conclusions during the data analyzing process.

Summary

The first chapter provides an introduction to understanding the importance of studying Hispanic male educational attainment using the critical, theory framework. The problem to be investigated, the purpose, questions, methodology, significance, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions had been reviewed. The second chapter of this study provides relevant literature and focuses on Latino males as it relates to attending and staying in college, and theoretical framework. The third chapter presents the research design, study population, data collection procedures and instrumentation, defining the method of analysis the researcher utilized. These three chapters provide the overarching framework for this research.

The fourth chapter will present an analysis and discussion of the data and will begin with consideration of the research questions, participants, and methodology. Direct quotations from participants will be presented to warrant the emerging patterns. This is consistent with Erickson's (1986) recommendation in the use of vignettes to communicate the views of those interviewed. The fourth chapter is divided in three sections: The first section provides an introduction; the second presents the research participants and context; and the third section will report emergent themes gathered from the data.

The fifth chapter will begin with an introduction, discuss the research findings as determined through the lens of critical theory, and follow with the researcher's conclusions and implications for Latino males attending and persisting in community colleges.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to this study's purpose, which will be to investigate the factors influencing Latino male's attendance and persistence in college. Focus is placed on those issues believed to influence or impede Latino males in two community colleges of similar characteristics.

This chapter begins by examining literature pertinent to the concept of Latino male college attainment from different perspectives. It continues with an analysis of Latino males disappearing from college enrollment, parental involvement in college planning for their children, the persistent dropout rate of Latinos, and critical theory that supports the analysis of Latino male issues. This is followed by a summary and a conclusion.

Selection Criteria for Literature Review

Because of the limited literature published on Latino male issues, it was a challenging task to grasp a substantial spectrum of studies related to the issue under investigation. Moreover, there is growing scholarly interest on factors and strategies to address the disappearance of Latino males in college. The following general criterion was used for the selection or inclusion of resources:

1. **Relevance:** This research concentrated on factors that influence or restrict Latino male college enrollment and efforts for college persistence. Therefore, intentional attempts are made to include current sources related to the topic, in order to generate a reliable insight from an open perspective.

2. Focus of research on impact: Sources that reported research on a) disappearing Latino male, b) dropout issue for Latinos c) parental involvement in college planning d) financial concerns. In addition, sources that speak to the notion of educational issues faced by Latinos are included.

3. Scholars in the field: All efforts will be made to include work by recognized scholars in the field of education and Latino males in an attempt to identify and include their contributions.

Latino Male College Attainment

Disappearing of Latino Males in College

A growing concern for researchers, educators and the community is the gradual disappearance of Latino males in secondary and postsecondary levels of education, as depicted in the writings of Saenz & Ponjuan, (2009). Oguntoyinbo, (2009) makes reference to this educational trend as “a silent crisis,” indicating that “Hispanic males are more likely to abandon high school and more likely not to complete college” (p.14). As Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) noted, while there are encouraging signs that Latino males have increased in college enrollment, it has not kept pace with the changing demographic percentages within the Latino community. In relationship to postsecondary education, women have surpassed men in educational expectations in the last thirty years, with even a more pronounced gap among racial or ethnic minority groups, (Wells, Seifert, Padgett, Park, & Umbach, 2011, p. 3). Saenz and Ponjuan continue noting that another disturbing trend is the disparity of college enrollment between Latino males and Latina females. In

the same regard, according to a report in *Pathways to Prevention* (The Latino male dropout crisis, 2007)

as an overall number of Latinas (os) enrolled in college, Latino male enrollment has fallen from 55% of total Latina/o enrollment to 44%. Latinas' access to higher education has consistently improved, while Latino enrollment in post-secondary education has stagnated. The dropout rates, college completion rates, and as a result, future economic and social opportunities have improved for young women and men from every demographic with the exception of Latino males. There are clearly problems. (p. 6)

In his report, Oguntoyinbo (2009) expanded on the subject of male college enrollment gap indicating that of the 1.3 million Latinos enrolled across the nation, 57% are female; which demonstrates a significant difference over Latino males on campuses. Another interesting notation from Oguntoyinbo's statistical analysis revealed that only 4% of the nation's college enrollment is Hispanic males, even though they represent about 8% of the U.S. population.

Social, cultural, and financial barriers appear to have contributed to the low number of Hispanic males in postsecondary education. Barriers such as long standing pressure of machismo and family obligations divert Latino males from enrolling in postsecondary education (Simmons, 2011). Seeking to address this troubling trend on campuses across the nation, (the vanishing males in higher education), the University of Texas at Austin hosted a Latino Male Symposium bringing together policymakers, researchers, faculty, and students to explore the reasons and brainstorm about short- and

long-term solutions to address the problem. Saenz stated that the symposium was used “not only to raise awareness, but to enlist support and advocacy of multiple stakeholders and partners across education and the community.” (Simmons, 2011)

A similar symposium brought local and national experts in the fields of at-risk education, education policy, community outreach, and education research to Arizona State University to address the Latino male dropout crisis. Symposium speaker Yzaguirre underscored the importance of the issue noting that

the young Latino male dropout crisis, if unabated, has the potential to condemn a large segment of the Hispanic community into a permanent underclass. This underclass will exhibit all the pathologies associated with urban decay: a culture where going to juvenile detention or incarceration is merely a rite of passage or a badge of honor, a preponderance of out-of-wedlock births, family disintegration, functional illiteracy, limited job skills, loss of pride and loss of hope (The Latino male dropout crisis, 2007).

The discourse around Latino male involvement in higher education is reinforced on the assertion that data is encouraging, yet concern exist when

in 2005, 51.8 percent of 18 to 19 year old Hispanic males and 57.2 percent of 18 to 19 year-old Hispanic females were still enrolled in some form of schooling – a gap that increases when representing 20 to 21 year olds, a more traditional college-going age group. While the raw number of Hispanic males in higher education might be increasing, they have continually lost ground to Hispanic females in four-year institutions (Simmons, 2011, p. 34).

According to Nora (2007) other factors impacting Latino males in college are family responsibilities and working off campus which can pull students away from full academic and social integration on campus and directly influence their transition and adjustment to college.

According to Kreager and Staff (2008), research indicates that adolescent pressure is positively associated with school achievement and adjustment. In addition, Staff also notes that “subculture theories of juvenile delinquency and school-based ethnographies put forward two important observations: 1.) Disadvantaged boys are often able to gain some forms of peer status through violence and 2.) Membership in violent groups undermines educational attainment,” (p.1).

The writing of Saenz and Ponjuan make reference to social pressures affecting Latino male attendance in college such as family pressures to contribute funds to the household budget, as well as the assumption of traditional gender roles as primary providers. However, it is also noted that

the notion of familismo should not be seen as a negative force working to perpetuate gaps in educational attainment between male and female, indeed scholars have noted that familismo can serve as a strong social network and form of social capital that can facilitate lifelong educational success (Saenz and Ponjuan, 2009, p. 63).

They also noted that another factor associated with Latino male educational challenges is the “overrepresentation in at-risk labels.” The authors also explained that

“boys are twice as likely as girls to be labeled ‘learning disabled,’ and they are seven times more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and they constitute up to 67% of the special education population (P.60)

Saenz and Ponjuan also highlighted observable differences in enrollment rates between male and female students in early childhood education, especially among Latino and Black children; indicating that participation in early childhood education can significantly affect early academic success for students; and by the third grade, a child has established a pattern of learning that shapes the course of his or her entire school career.

As noted increasing college enrollment for Latino males is important. College persistence is vital. To improve Latino Male persistence, the literature suggest improving the campus racial climate, offering culturally appropriate retention/support programming, providing financial aid and on-campus employment opportunities, and adding programs to help students stay connected to family and mentoring (Lee Jr. & Ransom, 2010, p. 64). The suggestions are directly connected to the economic and psychosocial needs of minority students. In order to regain the nation’s once-preeminent international position in the percentage of young adults with postsecondary credentials, we must begin to matriculate and graduate populations of American students who traditionally have been underrepresented at postsecondary level. The educational achievement of young men of color demands significant dialogue; currently, just 26 percent of African Americans, 24 percent of Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, and 18 percent of Hispanic Americans

have at least an associate degree. In addition, in each racial and ethnic group young woman are outperforming young men with respect to attainment of high school, with even more pronounced disparities at the postsecondary level (Lee, 2010). According to Arbona & Nora (2007),

a concern for adequately approaching the complexity of college selection within a diverse population can also be seen in research highlighting college pathway enrollment of Hispanics. Two-year colleges are attractive to many Hispanic students because these institutions offer lower tuition than universities and are typically located near home, not requiring travel or on-campus residence. Findings from this and previous studies suggest that, as they currently operate, community colleges are not likely to be a bridge to four year institutions for Hispanic students who graduate from high school with lower academic achievement and tentative expectations about attaining an undergraduate degree consequently, the rate of student transfer to four-year institutions is relatively low; an estimated 20% to 25% of students who initially enroll in community college transfer to a four-year institution. (p. 265)

At-risk factors increase when Latino students wait longer to enter college studies. Factors such as students working full-time to support their family, postponing completion of high school or GED, and saving for college, are some reasons why Latino students are more likely to be older when entering college (Fry, 2002). Once admitted to college, Latinos are less likely to enroll in full-time coursework (86 %) in comparison to white students (92 %). According to Fry, the decision to enter college part-time has an adverse

effect on Latino degree completion rates; and the U.S. Department of Education considers part time enrollment a definite risk-factor for dropping out before completing a degree.

The disappearing Latino male trend is a complex and multi-layered problem to address. The sense of family responsibility, raising tuition rates, and the constant pressure to enter the labor force pipeline, keep drawing Latino males away from attaining a higher education degree. While there are some positive signs of high school and college completion proportional to demographic predictions, it is important that academic and social support services for minority male students extend from P-K to graduate school. The presence of these support services in place across the academic pipeline can start to ensure that Latino males can dream for a successful college experience.

Dropout Issue

Several researchers revealed that the Latino population is far outpacing any generational gains in educational attainment. For instance, Albert, Ernest, and Rios-Vargas (2011) emphasized that more than half of the growth in the total population between 2000 and 2010 was due to the increase in the Hispanic population. Of this increase, half of the Hispanic population resides in three states: California, Texas, and Florida. They also stressed the significance of statistics from the 2010 Census indicating that 308.7 million people resided in the United States. Of which 50.5 million (or 16 percent) of the population were of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Furthermore, analysis of the demographic growth revealed that Latinos are the youngest population of all racial and ethnic groups (The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute,

2003). Moreover a report from Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators and The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (2003) noted that preparedness for Latino students fails early with limited exposure to English households and they are likely more than others to live in poverty. In the same regard the report indicated that

the early childhood years (0-5) represent a critical period of cognitive, social, and emotional development. An extensive body of research has documented that if a child's environment provides a rich and challenging menu of experiences during this period, the level of readiness for formal schooling will be significantly enhanced. It is also clear that low-income children – Hispanic children among them – do not enter kindergarten with the same toolkit of educational background, are hampered by poor health, and that the contributing factors are systemic (Tornatzky, Pachon, & Torres, 2003, p. 11).

The discussion above shows that complications from exploding demographics, deficiencies in early childhood education, hyper-segregation, dropping out of school, and underutilization of parents may lead many Latino male students from engaging in the American educational system. However, as Fry (2003) explained, “despite a widespread impression that the situation is worsening, the Hispanic high school dropout rate, like the national high school dropout rate, fell during the 1900s,”(p.2).

From a research point of view, it is important to note that dropout rates are tabulated differently throughout the United States. Due to immigration and population growth, a constant issue has been the high school drop-out problem in the Latino community. It is important to note that

dropping out of school greatly diminishes the possibility of Latino males entering higher education. This is especially true for Latino males who are much more likely to drop out of high school than other males. In 2006, 26% of Latino males 18 to 24 were high school dropouts, compared to 6% of white males and 10% of black males. A high drop-out problem for any racial or ethnic group is a negative performance indicator for the community and higher educational systems (*Latino males in higher education*, 2006).

Research indicates a correlation with dropout rate of Latinos and the characteristics of the schools they attend. Interestingly the research of Fry (2005) revealed that educational institutions serving the majority of Latino students are more likely larger than the schools where white and black students attend, they have high student to teacher ratio and have a substantial proportion of students who come from low socio-economic status. While there has not been a voluminous amount of empirical evidence on the effects of school characteristics, “research has suggested that small and moderate size high schools foster more positive social and academic environments than large high schools, especially for economically disadvantaged students,” (p.1). Similarly Lee and Burkham (2003), stated in a recent study that larger high schools are less likely to retain students; have larger dropout rates and based on a study of a nationally representative sample of 190 urban and suburban secondary schools, found that high schools enrolling fewer than 1,500 are often able to retain more students. Lee and Burkham concluded that “results demonstrated that school size is quite important and that

students in medium-sized schools are least likely to drop out,” (p. 376). Fry continues to say that

although teacher’s perception of student behavioral problems is not necessarily related to student performance, teachers in larger schools are more likely to report that their students have problems. The percentage of teachers reporting that student apathy, tardiness, absenteeism, dropping out, alcohol abuse and fighting among their students are “serious” problems in their school increases with high school size. (p.20)

Fry continues his emphasis on the effects of large and small high schools in relationship to dropout rates alluding to data from California, indicating that nearly 40 percent of Hispanics attend large disadvantaged high schools in comparison with 8 percent of whites and 30 percent of blacks (Fry, 2005).

Rodriguez’s data (Rodriguez, 2010, p. 18) provided a snapshot and causes related to one high school in California where out of 1,100 freshmen that entered high school, only 530 students actually walked the stage for graduation four years later. This data shows in this particular case that less than 50 percent of the students completed high school graduation, validated the factual dropout crisis. Rodriguez referred to a statement of a professor who indicated that

at least two decades of dropouts can be explained through two lenses: individual and structural. Individual risk factors include such things as race, one’s economic situation, gender, immigration status and academic achievement. Institutional

factors can include poverty, community characteristics, and family dynamics.

(p.19)

In Rodriguez's view, Latino male's students who living in low socio-economic status, hyper-segregated communities, and come from a single parent household are more likely will attend significantly large high schools in deplorable conditions. Such educational systems are characterized by hiring poorly trained teachers, which combined with the previous factors constitute high risk for student dropout. When students survive these types of obstacles, "they usually test as underprepared for the academic demands of college level courses and programs..." (Roueche & Roueche, 1999, p. 5).

In the same notion of alarming dropout rates, President Obama (The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2011), emphasized that "...when almost 40 percent of our black and Hispanic students failed to graduate high school on time, we know that too many of our schools are failing to offer their students a world-class education," (p.6). According to the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics (2011),

one in five students in the public school system is Latino, yet almost half of Hispanic students never receive their high school diploma. These dropout rates have limited the advancement opportunities of a population that is estimated to become the majority of the nation's labor force in less than 50 years; and Latino students often have less opportunity than their peers to take the challenging curricula, including advance courses in mathematics, Advanced Placement, and

International Baccalaureate courses that are often indicative of college success.

(p.6)

Based on the discussion in this document, efforts from teachers and staff to preempt dropout must focus on relationship building with students. For too long the definition of a good teacher has been narrowed and defined based on assessment results. Valuable to students of color is a close teacher-student relationship where students can speak honestly about deep seated issues. Anti-dropout begins with teachers that recognize the individuality of students, and encourage them to succeed. Therefore, the researcher of this study contends that it is critical that in the process of hiring teachers, educational leaders need to match indicators or characteristics as previously described. According to Carter (2005), leadership in educational institutions goes beyond monitoring curriculum and instruction and assessment results. Leaders should promote, recognize, and support teachers that step outside the traditional role and embrace new approaches to develop student relationships, (Carter, 2005).

Research indicates that a draw for Latino males to enter the job market is the employment and unemployment rate of Latino dropouts. According to Fry (2003)

Latino youth in general tend to be relatively successful in the labor market in comparison to white and black youth. They have higher earnings because they work longer hours. The work orientation of Hispanic youth is also apparent among high school dropouts. Fifty-six percent of Hispanic high school dropouts hold jobs, in comparison to forty-nine percent of white dropouts. Native-born Hispanic high school dropouts are active in the labor market, though to a lesser

extent. Of those who work, nearly 70 percent of native-born Hispanic high school dropouts work fulltime, in comparison to 52 percent of white high school dropouts (p. 10).

In relationship to unemployment rates, Fry (2003) also accentuates the relative success of Latino dropouts in the labor markets compared to other ethnic group dropouts. He underscored statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor showing that unemployment rate for Latino high school dropouts (26 percent) is slightly better compared to unemployment rate for white high school dropout (28 percent). His analysis indicated that Latino youth in the U.S. are more likely to have dropped out of school than other youth. Fry's further insights indicated that in 2000,

21 percent of Hispanic 16-to 19 –year olds were school dropouts, in comparison to 8 percent of white youth and 12 percent of African American youth. For immigrant Latino dropouts the unemployment rate is a considerably different portrait. For foreign-born Latino dropouts who receive some U.S. schooling the unemployment rate is 6.4 percent. For foreign-born Latino dropouts who never attended U.S. schools the unemployment rate is also a comparatively low 8.3 percent. (p.4, 11)

The discussion above highlights the various job distractions for Latino males. A fairly attractive market combined with the need to supplement the family budget, may contribute to the decision of Latino males to postpone or entirely forgo higher education.

The effect of Latino males dropping out from high school are prominent in statistics related to incarceration. According to an article published in the Houston

Chronicle, Latino males also have substantial presence in our nation's prison system. The article indicated that "more than three times as many black people live in prison cells as in college dorms...the ratio is slightly better for Hispanics, 2.7 inmates for every Latino in college housing. The article highlighted a statement from the president and CEO of Urban League indicating that such a phenomenon "is one of the great social and economic tragedies of our time." Interestingly Saenz (2009) indicated that although the rates of Latino males entering the judicial system remain lower than that of Black males, they are approximately four times more likely than White males to be admitted to prison during their lifetime. He further explained that in every race group, young male dropouts are overwhelmingly represented in incarceration rates. In 2009, the *Center for Labor Market Studies* (CLMS) from Northeastern University conducted a statistical analysis that provides evidence to this statement. The analysis reported that high school dropouts are 47 times more likely to commit a crime and be incarcerated than their college educated peers (Sum, Khatiwada, & McLaughlin, 2009). The report quoted remarks from a 2006 Chicago conference on high school dropouts in Illinois, in which former State Senate President, Emil Jones, stated that "dropping out of high school was apprenticeship for prison." This remark holds a level of accuracy reflected in the percentages of incarceration rates for 16 to 24 year old high school dropouts in the U.S. indicating that 6.1% of Hispanic dropouts were incarcerated in juvenile homes, jails, and prisons in 2006-2007 (Sum, Khatiwada, & McLaughlin, 2009). In August 2003, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that if incarceration rates continue at these levels, one in 17 white men (5.9%), one in six Latino men (17%), and one in three African

American men (32%) born in 2001 will serve time in prison at some point in their lifetime. The same study found that 5.6 million Americans are current or former prisoners; 39% of those are African Americans (2,203,000), even though African Americans comprise only 12% of the national population (Ziedenberg & Schiraldi, 2005). Based on the previous discussion the researchers of this study contend that the unequal racial incarceration rates present a dire forecast for Latino males. Population expansion especially the younger percentage of Latinos males suggest the share of Latinos in prisons may grow. This will have a negative impact on college attainment and with criminal record dimmer possibilities for the job market.

Parent College Knowledge

Throughout history the role of families in supporting low-income children to prepare for and gain entrance to college has been of great concern. As opposed to recent research concerning pedagogy, class room size, and impact of lost revenue, the participation of parents in the educational goals of their children has for some time been of interest to researchers, policy architects and educators (Tornatzky, 2003). Recent demographic changes have focused on minority parents role in the precollege planning of Latinos and other underserved communities. A uniform amount of study indicates that Latino males face a mired of factors for educational attainment. A high impact factor for Latino males and

the most important “secret weapon” in helping them overcome low educational attainment is unfortunately underutilized. The integrity, self-reliance, and closeness of the Latino family are among the greatest assets to the problem of

educational improvement. Hard work, self-improvement, and respect for learning are a few of the values that characterize the Hispanic culture. However, too often, these values of the Hispanic family are frustrated or ignored by schools or school systems (2003, p.20).

According to Garcia (2011), several studies reveal heightened parental involvement in schools leads to greater student success, improves academic performance, contributes to higher test scores, promotes positive attitudes toward school, results in higher levels of school work completion, reduces placements in special education, minimizes suspension and dropout rates, and enhances academic perseverance.

Vital to the success of Latino males planning for college is the participation of their parents. For instance, a report presented in the Thomas Rivera Policy Institute (Cutler, Lee, Tornatzky, 2002, p. 1) highlighted a study with information related to what Latino parents need to know, and what they do not know about helping their children plan for college. According to this report,

in order to make a successful transition between high school and college, Latino youth need to move through a number of milestones and prerequisites. Through the high school years, parents need to be actively involved in shepherding their children through the process. However, in order to play a positive role, parents need to know about these milestones and prerequisites, and what actions had to be taken... how, and to what extent, Latino parents acquire knowledge is the focus of the study. (Cutler, Lee, & Tornatzky, 2002, p. 1)

According to the same report a survey given to parents about college knowledge, demonstrated that Latino parents have very limited knowledge related to college attendance. Sixty five percent of the parents missed at least half of the mini test on college knowledge and straightforward information items. There are implications for such lack of knowledge. Cutler, Lee, and Tornatzky noted that there are implications for such lack of knowledge; and unless the knowledge deficits are remediated, their children are likely to miss out one or more crucial steps in getting qualified for college. The authors further emphasized that “this knowledge deficits were significantly more evident among parents with lower incomes and educational backgrounds as well as among first generation immigrants,” (Cutler, Lee, & Tornatzky, 2002, p. 9).

The literature previously discussed that one of the crucial steps many Latino parents have limited or non-existing lack knowledge is finding a way to pay for their children’s college cost. Many low-income parents have incomplete knowledge about cost of different kinds of college, as well as about alternative ways to finance those expenses. They must learn about scholarships, loans, and other forms of financial aid, and they cannot afford to wait until graduation from high school is approaching (Cutler, Lee, & Tornatzky, 2003).

Related to the same notion of parents’ college knowledge, a report profiling students indicated that “ in 2007-2008 50% of Latinos in college had parents with a high school diploma or less compared to 45% for African-Americans and 28% of white students who were first in their family to attend college” (Santiago, n.d., p. 9). Epstein (1991) suggest that schools provide families with information on how to prepare

transitions from pre-school to elementary, elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school. Additional topics for successful parenting might concern family roles and responsibilities in student attendance, college planning, and other topics that are important for student success in school (Epstein, 1991).

A vast number of literature reviews (Epstein, 1991; Garcia, 2011) suggest that parent can highly contribute to the success of their children by participating in school programs, not only at elementary school level but in middle and high school as well. Speaking to this notion is a report from the Journal of Extension (2011) indicating that key factor associated with academic success and dropout prevention is parent involvement and parent academic motivation. Therefore, it is critical that programs be developed that promote these two factors in Latino families (Behnke & Kelly, 2011, p. 2). In addition, Clark and Dorris (2007) suggested that “schools that successfully involve parents in planning their children’s postsecondary education understand that involvement must extend beyond showing up at school functions, or volunteering to help with school-sponsored activities”(p. 44). These authors alluded to a study done in 2004 which recommended that “parents should be involved in course selection, interpretation of test information, college admission discussions, college visits, and financial aid planning” (p.44). Nevertheless, many Latino parents, particularly those of first-generation college students, are unable to have this type of participation in their school activities; resulting in lack of information and limited knowledge about what their children need to prepare for college. Therefore, Latino parents are less likely to help their children select high school courses or discuss college options.

If such is the case, then why do Clark and Dorris (2007) continued building on the notion of the importance of parent knowledge to make informed decisions with their children, indicating that

as students enter the secondary grades, their parents encounter an increasing number of choices regarding their children's education options. Unfortunately, many parents are unaware that curriculum choices made many years before twelfth grade, such as whether students take algebra in middle school or not, have a significant long-term impact on what will be available to their children after graduation. (p. 48)

In addition to college planning family support must continue after a student enrolls in college. Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2011) indicates a clear need for further research on understanding the roles of families on the achievement and persistence patterns of minority students in college. Bringing the focus back to high schools in conversations with school administrators, counselors, and teachers, Zarate (2007), found that "there was a noticeable absence of long term significant or creative parental participation" (p.12); giving the impression that there is "lack of any directed organizational mission or plan to engage parents in a meaningful productive outcome," (p.12). According to Zarate, many times "teachers felt compelled to create program to involve parents resulting in lack of parent input in design and purpose to improve the footprint of parents in strategic planning, vision and preparation for the long term success of their children," (p. 12).

The existing literature on parents and precollege preparation has prompted some to argue that the area of parental college involvement is inherently unequal. Research provided by Tierney (2002) utilizing the analytical tool of social reproduction theory and cultural capital to describe the last generation, argued that inequality occurs because of capitalist structures. Tierney defines cultural capital as “the knowledge that social elites value yet schools do not teach. It is a set of linguistic and cultural competencies that children inherit from their families,” (p.588). Tierney continues by stating that

families are primary producers and reproducers. So if a child is born into poverty, he or she will be unable to acquire the capital to leave poverty. In upper class families, children never question if they are going to college; they only wonder where they will go. In low income families such discussions may never be facilitated. (p.589)

Financial Aid

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2000-2015) report, to help increase participation in higher education for all Texans, the amount of grants and scholarships must be increased. Economically disadvantaged students represent an increasing proportion of the state’s traditional college-age population and should be considered a high priority for gift aid. An unknown number of students never consider higher education because they believe they cannot afford it. College and Universities can attract students who historically have not believed that higher education is within their reach by making certain that education is affordable through financial aid. Colleges and universities should also monitor

the cost of higher education as compared to what a family can pay based upon its income. (p. 18)

Coupled with the economic downturn and higher tuition cost, Latinos are facing a difficult time attaining a college degree. According to Gardner (2005) Latinos face both a state and federal threat when trying to pursue their educational goals. Based on Gardner's point of view this may constitute a roadblock for Latinos to continue in higher education and may have a negative impact on the nation's workforce, considering that they are the youngest, largest, and the fastest growing population in our country (p. 1).

A positive effort for student aid occurred in the State of Texas in 1999 when Texas legislature established the grant TEXAS, Towards Excellence, Access and Success (2010) to provide academically prepared high school graduates with financial need-based assistance to pursue a higher education. Along with completing Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or higher, two eligibility requirements to help poor and underserved students were established: having a financial need (cost of attendance less family contribution greater than zero) and be ranked among the neediest applicants (currently no more than a \$4,000 expected family contribution. The grant was instrumental in helping needy students participate (access) and continue (retention) their educational programs (*Texas grant*, 2010, p. 1).

Before 2003, tuition rates were regulated by the Texas Legislature and generally mandated same charges across the state. In 2004 the 78th Legislature passed HB 3015 allowing governing boards of public universities to determine individually designed tuition rates. To the dismay of students and communities, no upper limits on the amount

universities could charge was set. This included varying amounts for programs, course level, and academic period. Since deregulation from 2003 through 2009, the tuition rates for students taking 15 student contact hours (SCHs) has increased by 72 percent (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010, p. 2).

Based on the information previously discussed a financial note to consider is the different reactions that different groups may have to increases in tuition. In a report investigating these reactions, Chen and Des Jardin (2010) reported that students from low income families are generally more sensitive to changes in tuition than their higher income peers. The report continues by stating that “there are distinctions in student responsiveness that should be considered when conducting further research on college access for racial or ethnic groups,” (p.183). It is important to note that financial assistance is valuable for Latinos living in poverty. Nationally, Latino undergraduates are more likely to apply for financial aid to pay for college (78%) than all undergraduates (74%). In contrast the average federal aid award for Latinos (\$6,067) undergraduates is substantially lower than the average award funds to all undergraduates (\$6,654) including all other racial/ethnic groups (*Applying for Financial Aid*, 2007).

In a financial aid report (Critical Choices, 2011) it was stated that complicating financial aid award issue for Latino students is their growing use of private loans for students in general. Risking defraying the tuition and cost for college by selecting private student loans is the most dangerous option for students and families. Privates loans do not offer fixed rates, meaning that the original loan can grow two or three times by the time a student graduates. These types of loan also restrict repayment plans, loan

forgiveness programs or deferment options. In a report funded by FINRA Investment Education Foundation, which works to provide underserved Americans with knowledge, skills, and tools for financial success throughout life (Critical Choices, 2011) noted comments by financial aid administrators, of the considerable extent to which students and parents seeking private loans are misinformed...and unaware of the risk of private loans. The report also detailed common reasons why students and families apply for private student loans stating parents

- Assume they earn too much to qualify for federal student loans (in fact, there is no income limit)
- Are unaware that federal Parent PLUS loans are available
- Believe the application process for federal loans is too long and complicated
- Think that private loans will be disbursed faster than federal loans
- Do not realize the implications of variable versus fixed interest rates
- Do not want to give their personal information to the government
- Want to stick with banks they already do business with
- Parents will not apply and/or qualify for federal Parent PLUS loans, but students can get other relatives or friends to co-sign a private loan

While there are some glimmers of hope overall financial aid for Latinos is troubling in light of changing requirements for grants, lack of parent “college knowledge” to assist their children when filling out the FAFSA, and the expanding college tuition rates. Latino students can feel overcome with the abundance of

applications, scholarship essays, on-line options, and deadlines. The task can be difficult especially with limited help from parents, and counselors.

Real threats of college and university budget cuts, change in grants from need to merit based, increased tuition, cuts in federal funding, all add up to a dark forecast on minority access to higher education. The effect can ripple throughout the Latino student community causing many to decide between providing for family or going to college. This decision can determine our nation's labor force and global economic standing. Federal and state policy makers seem to have lost sight of the fact that financial aid was originally created to help returning veterans, poor students, mostly minorities and the underserved access to higher education. As the fastest and youngest growing population Latinos will start to see higher education as an unaffordable, unattainable cause. In order for Latinos to gain financial knowledge we must begin with giving parents a better understanding of financial options. Especially finding more programs to help parents fill out Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA), and radically creating venues for FAFSA completion, such as filling out an application as part of graduation requirements. For many Latinos, the perception that college is unaffordable may be one of the biggest barriers for college access.

Latino parents, like all parents are challenged by the need to save and invest for college, but complicating matters is the fact that Latino household incomes and savings levels generally lag behind those of non-Hispanics. According to the U.S. Census Bureau reports that Hispanics have the lowest median earnings of any race (Census U. S., 2005). Addressing these issues and of general financial and investment literacy for Hispanic

families is vital for college access by minorities. Most parents agree that the cost of college is worth it, given the value of a college education. However, for many Hispanic parents investing or saving for college means loss of family income that may not guarantee quick returns or assurance to college admission. The literature mentioned above provides insight on financial award and the impact of college access for Latinos and other minorities. Considering all the aspects previously discussed, it is important to adopt a framework of analysis that will yield valuable insight of the relationship between social barriers and Latino male educational attainment. Critical theory in combination with qualitative research will be utilized as the lens to examine the complexity of factors contributing to low attendance and persistence of Latino males in community college.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory

It is the intention of the researcher of this study to analyze data through a critical theory perspective in order to gain telling insight into how Latino males make the choice about community college attendance and persistence. Within the scope of critical theory framework, the researcher analyzed whether factors such as community college practices to recruit, and retain Latino male students and family support in addition to other factors convey messages that empower Latino males to pursue higher education knowledge.

The origins of critical theory (CT) are traced from the tenets of Marxism in the early 20th century. Yet, CT differs in many aspects from Marxist doctrine in that it is willing to encompass a wide latitude of power relations, inclusive of gender, race, and ethnicity, whereas classical Marxism tended to focus on capitalist-worker relationships and control of the methods of productivity (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). From a

historical perspective, race and gender has important implications for this study; considering that previous literature reviewed spoke to the fact that Latino males are pulled by family responsibilities, and long standing pressures of machismo which divert Latino males from enrolling in postsecondary education. These factors need examination through the lens of critical theory to determine whether or not they place Latino males in a relationship with educational and social domination. Emerging from the Frankfurt School in the 1920s from a group of German-Jewish scholars who attempted to analyze and remedy the ills of society, especially as related to fascism and capitalism, critical theory by nature amplifies the need for critical examination of current philosophies and relationships of dominating and dominated societies. The concept of critical theory could be viewed as growing out of earlier philosophies into the relationship between individuals and organizations. This is the type of relation that is intended to be established through this study between community colleges (organizations) and Latino male students (individuals). Marxism built upon the notion of relationship of critical and reflective examination believing that

individuals cannot gain mastery over their own social interconnection before they have created them. But it is an insipid notion to conceive this *merely objective bond* as a spontaneous, natural attribute inherent in individuals and inseparable from their nature (in antithesis to their conscious knowing and willing). This bond is their product. It is a historic product. It belongs to a specific phase of their development. The alien and independent character in which it presently exist *vis á vis* individuals proves only that the latter are still engaged in the creation of the

conditions of their social life, and that they have not yet begun, on the basis of these conditions, to live it...Universally developed individuals...are no product of nature, but of history (Willis, 1977).

From the beginning critical theory took the idea of self-constitution of society. Habermas (1968) raised the epistemological discussion to a new level by identifying critical knowledge as the based on the principals that differentiated it either from the natural science or the humanities, through its orientation to self-reflection and emancipation.

Through the discourse of this study, the participants' shared experiences related to influences for college enrollment will be at the core of critical analysis. The responses of the participants may reveal whether or not ideological messages from family, peers, and school convey meaning and transmit messages directly or indirectly into factors that support or impede the pursuit of higher education. It is important and helpful to build on the literature mention above when gaining knowledge of critical interaction between cultures. It is the link between culture and power that is important to note (Disla, 2004). Culture, as a set of practices and values, is being produced in a structure of inequitable power relations. This involved the dominate culture categorized and defining the 'colonized' to fit into their vision of society (p.20). Challenging the ideas of research, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) note that critical theory in the form of Neo Marxism and, subsequently, feminism, and race research impact material conditions, social, political, gender, and cultural factors that have foremost control on people's lives (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 9). In 2006, Guiffrida, built upon the notion that some cultural theories

are potentially harmful to minority students because it encouraged their separation from cultural traditions and supportive relationships (Guiffrida, 2006, p. 452). For many years, theorists of critical theory have participated in critical analyses of professionals' work practices attempting to unveil how individuals developed theories to guide their practices, and how individuals adapted these theories to deal with more complex situations in society. For instance, Kramer (1997) investigated professionals' applications in their jobs and characterized conditions (dilemmas) for the full social and academic integration of Hispanic students in college settings. The authors study identified three actions contributing to integration: formal Faculty-student interaction, informal faculty-student interaction, and study behaviors as strong predictors of student integration into college and a strong influence on persistence and academic achievement (Kramer, 1997, p. 9). These factors among others are taken into consideration in this investigation.

Summary

This study focused on factors impacting Latino males' college attendance and college efforts to help Latino males stay in school; utilizing critical theory as the lens to analyze its findings. Critical theory was chosen as the analytical frame considering that such theory identifies a specific organization of people whose needs are not satisfied within the current system, and people who are willing and able to put research findings into practice (Willis et al., 2007, p. 82). These perspectives have not been extensively explored through this particular frame to analyze factor influencing Latino males' attendance and retention in college. This contributes to a systematic approach of analysis underscoring the significant effect within college efforts to recruit and retain Latino

males. These findings are especially important for educational institutions needing to strengthen their programs in their efforts to improve student academic achievement.

Conclusion

The overarching purpose of this treatise is to explore the factors and practices related to Latino males' enrollment & retention in two Texas urban community colleges. Specifically, this attempt (a) undertook an investigation of perceptions Latino males attending low socioeconomic colleges; (b) gained understanding how community colleges will appear when reframed and explored through critical theory; (c) provided an analysis and interpretation of the results of the two campuses that will illuminate the continuity or discontinuity of the theoretical frame applied to this study.

The literature related to different research methods and frames applied to Latino males may suggest a new approach to investigate this little-researched topic. Subsequently, I examine the work of different researchers who studied Latino male and minority issues from different perspectives, mostly from student's point of view. There was a lack of systematic research on Latino male perceptions influencing school attendance. Examining perception is a fundamental step in finding a common understanding regarding what college success may mean to different members of the educational community. The discussion of this literature review emphasized increasing Latino male in college involvement in urban environments requires a great deal of collaboration and communication between the students and school structures.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methods

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods and design used for this qualitative study focused on understanding what factors influence Latino males to attend college and what factors influence Latino males to stay in college.

This study documented the distinctive experiences of the research participants. Participants gave their voice to their “influences in their lives.” Personal accounts of how the participants were able to traverse an educational system that at certain times ignored their educational aptitude, aspirations, influences, and ability to persist in college attainment. In addition, I wanted to understand how the participants’ were influenced to attend college and factors that help them persistence in two Texas community colleges.

The chapter begins with an overview of qualitative research methodology and subsequently provides a rationale for the selection of this particular method to address the research questions that provided a foundation for this study. Within this section, the researcher reviews the strengths and limitations of applying this methodology, followed by delineation of the specific design used and identification of potential outcomes associated with this study. In addition, a description of sample, procedures, and data analysis are provided to address the following two research questions in this study:

- 1) What factors influenced college attendance of Latino males at two Texas community colleges?
- 2) What factors influenced Latino males to persist at two Texas community colleges?

Research Design: Historical Perspective and Rationale

Until the 1970s, the term “qualitative research” was used only to refer to a discipline of Anthropology or Sociology. During the 1970s and 1980s, qualitative research began to be used in other disciplines, becoming a significant type of research in the fields of education studies, social work studies, women’s studies, disability studies, information studies, management studies, nursing service studies, political science, psychology, communication studies, as well as many other fields. In the late 1980s and 1990s, after a spate of criticisms from the quantitative side, new methods of qualitative research evolved to address perceived problems with reliability and imprecise modes of data analysis. In the last thirty years, the acceptance of qualitative research by journal publishers and editors was growing (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This indicated an understanding of the different type of knowledge that emerged from phenomenological inquiry, where quantitative studies cannot address in the same fathomable way because of its different inquiring paradigm (Patton, 1990). According to Patton, the naturalistic nature of qualitative research calls for flexibility; therefore, the researcher entered the inquiring field with a specific, yet flexible, plan.

For the naturalistic inquirer, the design can be given in advance only incompletely; to specify it in detail would place constraints on either antecedent conditions or outputs or both, thereby altering the nature of the inquiry from naturalistic to conventional modes. In the naturalistic inquiry situation, the design emerges as the investigation proceeds; moreover, it is in constant flux as new information is gained and new insights are formed. (Guba, 1978, p. 24)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that in preparing to conduct a qualitative study, the researcher must (a) assume a position that correlates with the characteristics of the naturalistic paradigm; (b) possess the necessary skills to generate the appropriate instrument to collect and interpret data; and (c) develop a research design based on naturalistic inquiry strategies.

According to Willis (2007), the design is a part of the study that refers "...to the researcher's plan of how to proceed. A qualitative researcher is more like the loosely scheduled traveler than the (traveler who makes) detailed plans, with all the stops (including restaurants and routes set in advance" (p. 196). Qualitative researchers assume that reality is built by interactions with their social environment (Merriam, 1998). As Willis (2007) explained,

Qualitative research typically does not operate within strict technical guidelines. The technical criteria are simply not as important as they are in post-positivist research. In their place are general guidelines or family resemblances. Thus, when interpretative qualitative researchers use the term research method, they do not necessarily mean the detailed prescription of the quantitative researchers. (p. 196)

A strong attribute of qualitative research is its richness in descriptions and explanations of processes in naturalistic environments (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These researchers perceive research design as "words especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to the reader, another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner than pages of summarized numbers" (p. 1).

Such stories unfold through the uniqueness of qualitative research design, utilizing different approaches including case studies. This particular approach is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003). It directly involves the researcher in the process of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998; Klein & Myers, 1999; Morse, 1994) while interacting with the individuals being studied in a natural atmosphere.

With that in mind, using qualitative research as a methodological foundation and utilizing critical theory as the primary theoretical lens, the researcher of this study conducted case studies in two community colleges. This multiple case study was conducted within the parameters of critical theory and qualitative research, as it is intended to study human behavior in context, and the examination of educational practices and factors that affect Latino male ability to enroll and persist in higher education. The researcher of this study chose this method as the most suitable approach to provide opportunities for data analysis through a variety of venues with the intent to take a snapshot of Latino male college factors.

Critical theory is one of the conceptual frameworks from research studies that contribute to recognize patterns, practices and policies that exist among educational organizations. An increasing number of education scholars interested in exploring K-12 process are utilizing critical theory along with critical race theory to analyze and improve the educational attainment for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Villenas, and Nebecker, 1998; Solorzano and Delgado, 2001). Such interest has been founded in the belief from critical and social scientist that it is necessary to understand the experiences of real people in

context. Critical theory shares the idea and the methodologies of some interpretive theories, with the difference that critical scholarship interprets the acts and symbols of society in order to understand the way various social groups are oppressed or marginalized. Critical theory embraces the notion that knowledge is transferred in power, meaning that the more knowledge a social group gains, they more empowered they become to integrate themselves into educational, political and social structures. Based on these premises critical theory can unveil educational and social roadblocks that impede Latino male from attending and persisting in college. Therefore, it become suitable for this particular study since the researcher aimed to provide an understanding of the factors affecting Latino male educational attainment.

Qualitative Methodology

Several researchers refer to qualitative methodology as a systematic approach to examine phenomena in depth and detail without predetermined categories or hypotheses. The emphasis is on understanding the phenomena as it exists, and it is often connoted with naturalistic inquiry, inductive, social, and anthropological worldview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998). These researchers concurred that qualitative methods are used to study human behavior and behavior changes, since complex behavior is not well captured by quantitative techniques.

Qualitative methods help researchers study the variations of complex human behavior in context. By connecting quantitative data to behavior using qualitative methods, the researcher can enrich the results with an individual's words and actions. Using system process variables as data, the researcher can use qualitative methods to find patterns. These

results can be hypothesis-generating or they may be used to test hypotheses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba, and Lincoln, 1994).

In qualitative research, the conceptual framework arises from the data rather than from preconceived hypotheses. Qualitative analysis techniques are, therefore, both inductive and interactive (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998). These characteristics were suitable for the intent of this study, as it explored individual's words and actions (influences and factors of Latino male college experiences) inductively and interactively as the researcher entered into the study with no preconceived hypothesis.

Because a qualitative approach had the advantage of allowing for more diversified responses as well as the capacity to adapt to new developments of issues during the research process itself, they add to the suitability of this study, as it approached the participants from the perspective of an open-ended, semi-structured interview frame of inquiry. The researcher selected this particular frame of inquiry because it allows for the respondent to answer questions, which encouraged long personal responses with specific categories, parameters, or prompts. This characteristic is vital to yield reliability in the process of data collection (Merriam, 1998; Willis, 2007).

In Wolf's and Tymitz' (1977) interpretation, qualitative research "attempts to present *'slice-of-life'* episodes documented through natural language representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings are" (p. 16). In agreement with Wolf and Tymitz, in

other to determine understanding the nature of factors affecting Latino males experience in college, a qualitative approach is necessary.

See overview of methodology on p. 51.

Methodology Overview

	<u>Rationale</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Interview of Students	Provides rigor in data collection And interpretation, in-depth data and personal insight into factors and Latino male influences.	Interview questions focused on Latino male factors that influence college attendance, and influences of activities used in the two colleges to help Latino males to stay in school.	Transcriptions were coded to outline viewpoints linked to research questions and framework of Critical Theory.	2 community colleges, staff and at least 19 students in two urban colleges.
Interview of Staff	Provides relevant information related to Latino male recruitment and retention efforts.	Goals and activities focusing on Latino males; and college documentation of activities were be coded to outline convergent and divergent points, and will be linked with types of staff involvement and views expressed in the interviews.	Documents of Latino activities will be coded and aligned strategic plan; then aligned to interview responses.	Total of 2 strategic plans (1 per campus) and a variety of Latino activities and documents from each campus.
Documentation Analysis	To understand intricacy of situational circumstances concerning Latino males attending and staying in college.	Review of campus documentation and approaches' to Latino attendance and retention.	Observations of documentation will be coded and linked with Latino male views expressed in the interview, and Critical Theory.	Staff from 2 campuses will be interviewed and documented.

Adapted from Patton (2002)

Selection of Participants

In accordance with the purpose of the study, the researcher used a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 2002) to select two community colleges in an urban area with significant Latino male student population and including administrators, staff and faculty. The selection of staff and faculty participants was entirely voluntary and up to administrators to determine the participants to be interviewed. Student selection was open to all Latino male students regardless of full or part-time status. Purposeful sampling strategies facilitated a constructive framework to determine whom to interview. Because of the nature of this study, critical case sample strategy was utilized. According to Patton (1990), critical case sampling included individuals of critical significance to the phenomenon of interest. It is essential to carefully define the sample in view of the fact that researchers cannot study every individual. In that regard, Miles and Huberman (1994) clarified: “qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people nested in their context and studied in-depth unlike quantitative researchers who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance” (p. 27).

Research Questions

The following are my research questions for proposed study:

- 1) What factors influence college attendance of Latino males at two Texas community colleges?
- 2) What factors influence Latino males to persist at two Texas community colleges?

Data Collection

According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods are “ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing, and analyzing documents” (p. 145). Accordingly, this study used face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to explore the strategies and approaches that community colleges use to increase Latino male enrollment and their retention in college. Furthermore, this study explored factors that influence Latino male to attend and stay in college. Prior to the data collection process, appropriate approval was obtained including Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and college district research approval protocol.

Interviews

Community college administrator and staff were contacted via email and phone call to invite them to participate in a one-on-one interview for the study. An initial contact meeting was requested and a formal letter of introduction, a copy of the dissertation abstract, a copy of the interview protocols, and any other pertinent information were provided.

Administrators and staff contacted Latino male students to voluntarily participate in study focus groups. Upon initiation of each focus group session, each participant received a copy of the IRB approval letter and consent form to participate in the study, in addition to a copy of the questions addressed during each session. Several, semi-structured, tape-recorded student focus groups (between 60-90 minutes each) were conducted with a minimum of nine participants at their respective community colleges. To allow the findings to emerge from the data and to ensure as much neutrality as possible, two different sets of open-ended interview

questions were developed: one for community college staff and another for Latino male students with the same basic information. In the course of the interviewing process, conversation-style probing questions were used to further explore topics spontaneously (Patton, 1990). In an effort to achieve a more accurate representation of respondents' perspective, informal member checking was utilized throughout the interview process as well. The researcher asked for examples, paraphrased understanding of the interviewee's responses and asked for clarification when needed. This process allowed the researcher the benefit of neutralizing responses that the participant thought the researcher wanted to hear. According to Patton (1990), this approach enables the researcher to verify important information from participant's responses. Patton (1990) further explains that regardless of the quality of the interview, "it all comes to naught if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed" (p. 347). Thus, following the flexible analytic guidelines of interpretivist theory (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990, 2002; Willis, 2007), the researcher listened to all interviews several times, and transcribed them taking into consideration emotions and reactions from the participants while certain topics were be discussed during the interviews.

To address each of the research questions, the following data was be collected:

Research Question	Data Collected
(a) What factors influence Latino male college attendance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers from predetermined face-to-face interviews with semi-structured open questions. • Elaborated feedback from open-ended questions.
(b) What factors influence Latino males staying in college?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers provided during face-to-face interview questions. • College Strategic Plan and Long Range Enrollment and Retention efforts. • Copy of community college documentation (i. e., invitations sent parents for special events, Spanish translated flyers and website, brochures, and any other information available). • College website.

Documents

Following one of several options of data triangulation in data analysis, the researcher examined the Mission Statement, Goals, and long term objectives for each participating college, as important documents to investigate the policy mechanism used to recruit and retain Latino males in each campus. The researcher also examined strategies and approaches used to increase Latino male attendance and retention in college. The researcher examined documentation related to Latino male enrollment and retention by reviewing campus websites, messages to the Latino community and any other written documents providing evidence of Latino Male attendance and retention. These documents revealed important information on community college efforts to reach out, and keep Latino males in college.

Data Analysis

Following the flexible analytic guidelines of interpretivist theory (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002; Willis, 2007), the researcher transcribed the audiotapes and followed the data processing steps outlined by Charmaz (2006), Saldana (2009), and Strauss and Corbin (1998), using open-coding (initial coding) to begin analyzing the collected data, and identified units of information to develop working categories. Initial coding is a first pass through data to identify “meaningful chunks.” This process allowed for adjustments to the interview guide if it is determined that particular questions or the method of inquiry did not elicit sufficiently rich data (Glaser, 1979; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the researcher worked through each of the interview transcripts, these categories were modified. Guba, and Lincoln, (1994) referred to this stage as “saturation of categories.” In initial coding,

the ultimate goal is to achieve saturation “when no new information seems to emerge during coding, that is, when no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions, interactions, or consequences are seen in the data” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p.136). Saldana (2009) and Charmaz (2006) referred to codes as the “bones” that form the “skeleton” of the researcher’s analysis. They perceived core categories as the essence to align and connect everything in research (p. 64). Strauss (1987) expanded on this concept indicated that detailed coding cycle eventually adds more to the analytical process of research.

In accordance with the steps of data processing the researcher continued to the process of Axial Coding; which is a coding method to strategically reassemble unorganized data during the initial process of coding. This method allows interaction between categories and sub-categories according to specific properties and dimensions within the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, Charmaz, 2006). Comparative pattern analysis was used during this process to reveal patterns in the data. After the initial coding the researcher reviewed each transcript to assure inclusion of very important categories making modifications as needed. Key categories generated from Axial Coding were linked to the research questions; to integrate and synthesize all categories and establish relationships between major elements of the study and the data Saldana (2009).

The researcher proceeded with coding and key quotations from the interview transcripts that reflected central categories to include in this study. The data process was finalized with interpretation of data, and drawing conclusions and implications from the results of the analysis.

Data analyses were both explicit and implicit. In the former case, the researcher endeavor to “let the data speak for itself.” In the latter case, the researcher aimed to address implied meaning of the data to answer the research questions. Additionally, the theoretical work of critical approach of critical theory was used to analyze the relationship among factors influencing Latino attendance and retention in colleges. Thus, data analysis focused on understanding both what community colleges are doing and what the students interpret as factors influencing their ability to enroll and stay in college.

Reliability and Validity

The issue of trustworthiness of qualitative research is explicitly addressed in the writings of Lincoln and Guba (1985) providing naturalistic criteria of equal standards as the traditional criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These naturalistic criteria encompass credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility is critically important to the analysis of interview data since truthfulness is assumed in the interviewees’ answers though truthfulness cannot be assured. Patton (1990) explained that generally about half of what interviewees report is probably incorrect to some extent. Thus, interview data needs to be substantiated with other methodological approaches. This leads the researcher to the importance of triangulating data to obtain higher level of credibility; which in this study was achieved through college staff interviews, student interviews, and documentation analysis. Following Patton’s (2002) suggestion, as an additional methodological modification, the researcher used an enhanced form of member checking taking this dialogue-based data generation process one step further by checking for understanding and clarification with the participants (member-

checking strategy) at multiples stages during the interviewing process (Carspecken, 1996). Standard member checking is the process of seeking a one-time “review by inquiring participants” (Patton, 2002, p. 56) as a supplemental verification of the validity of the findings. This process involved asking participants to confirm statements and rephrased answers to be sure the interpretations of the researchers were accurate.

The researcher also took great care to treat each participant as a colleague in the pursuit of improving higher education, not simply as a participant in a study. When one treats research subjects as participants, they tend to act like participants rather than authentic professionals (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Additionally, in the analysis of the interview transcripts, the researcher gave special attention to two concepts that are not frequently considered by researchers: “silence” and “context” as presented most recently by Charmaz (2005-2006). Gilligan first put voice-centered analysis forward in 1982. This analytical technique placed purposeful focus on the literal tone of the participants as well as attention to analogous and figurative comments. It is especially true for those in power, like administrators and staff, that what they do not express with words is often as important as what they do say with their tone of voice (Charmaz, 2005).

The researcher of this study aimed to avoid a simple “question and answer” approach, following the criteria of Weiss (1994). The researcher also gave consideration to achieving overall “data adequacy” (Morse, 1995, p. 147). Though many researchers claim data saturation, this claim is often an exaggeration and “supported” by gathering data that is unnecessary. The sample size in qualitative studies is frequently small. Generalization is

not the goal in most qualitative research; therefore, transferability is hoped- for in this study. Data adequacy was achieved when the data gathered yield only outliers but no new themes. However, participant comments that appear to be outliers will not be completely ignored.

As the final step, the data expert reviewed the coding and findings to reduce potential bias and ensure that the data *speaks* to the findings. To ensure reliability and validity, the researcher coded and analyzed all data using software coding program.

It has been previously discussed that this study was completed in two stages. In the first stage, initial contact was made with the selected colleges through a formal introduction email, and phone calls to coordinate data collection process and interviewing schedule. This was an important stage to establish rapport with the participants of the study and ensure a smooth interactive process. The second stage entailed conducting staff interviews, student interviews, documentation collection-analysis, and transcribing interviews. Synthesizing the findings from the study was the last step of the investigative process.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the design of the research for this study. I started by discussing qualitative research and the rationale used in this study. I continued with delineation of the research design and data analysis, and then addressed the issue of validity and reliability. This study, in a sense, served in the place of bringing together staff from two community colleges and at least 18 students in both campuses, allowing them to discuss and reach conclusions regarding the subject matter explored. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for free expression of professional insights

and perspectives. As the facilitator of this “discussion,” the researcher aimed to allow the data to flow without restraint until the cohesive perspective of the participants formed themselves into independent transferable ideas and approaches to enhance Latino male enrollment and retention in community colleges.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and an analysis of the data collected from oral interviews, college documents, college district, and college websites. The research procedure that provided substantial information and generated significant findings is also presented.

The purpose of the study was to investigate Latino male participation in two Texas community colleges, with particular attention given to the factors and influences contributing to Latino male college attendance and retention. Focus was placed on factors believed to influence Latino males' college efforts in two community colleges of similar characteristics in an urban college districts. The following research questions guided the research process and determined the methods used in the study:

1. What factors influence college attendance of Latino males at two Texas community colleges?
2. What factors influence Latino male retention at two Texas community colleges?

This chapter begins with a description of the college districts from which the information was gathered, followed by an introduction of the community colleges that participated in the study. This will acquaint the reader with the setting of the participants and familiarize the reader with the context of the study. Next, a brief overview of the data collection and data analysis process is presented. Subsequently, each of the two research questions is addressed. Direct and implied responses from students provided the

answers for question one; indicating what they perceive as influences for attending college. Direct findings are those emerging unequivocal as expressed by students throughout focus group interviews. Alternatively, direct findings resulted of deciphered meaning of data within the context of student statements as it relates to their beliefs. In addition, results also represent noticeable patterns of data that developed from interviews through axial coding. Specific and direct findings provided answers to question two mirroring student statements, and existing programs influencing student retention within college strategies. Conclusive and general insights are represented in the final section of this chapter generated from the collected data pertinent to the study.

The College Districts

For the purpose of this study, college districts and colleges will be referred to as Alamo Community College District (D1), and Tarrant College District (D2), and to its two participating college sites as Palo Alto College (C1), and Trinity River College as (C2). Exploration of the college district and college sites documents and website provided a detailed picture of the missions, objectives, beliefs, history, and enrollment data.

D1 is a college district that covers 1,257 square miles (3,255.6 km) of land in one of the largest metropolitan areas in Texas. The first catalog for D1 was published in the summer of 1928 by D1s first campus. It listed seven board members and seven faculties. Mathematics, Education English, Chemistry, economics and business administration, Spanish and history were included in the course offerings. Fifteen courses were taught

that first summer. In 1928-1929 D1 listed the following reasons as a need for junior college:

1. The city is one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the South, needs a public institution offering instruction of college rank to all its citizens on equal terms, and at the lowest possible cost consistent with efficiency.
2. The senior high schools and suburban high schools are now graduating one thousand boys and girls each year. In contrast, current graduation numbers (2010) for one school district alone, was 2, 276.
3. Expenses for room and board are largely eliminated when the student can live at home.
4. Highly trained and experienced instructors with ample scholarship teach courses, and they do not use tutors or graduate assistants to do lectures or grade papers.
5. Individual attention is given to students where the number in each class is small.
6. Honor students continue holding the same status regardless of which senior college or university they enter.
7. Society is more complex than ever before.
8. Boys and girls are graduating from high school at an earlier average age than ever before.

9. Any normal boy or girl with a home worthy of the name, can derive much profit from two years spent under home influences during the period of social immaturity.

Interesting to note that in 1951, 22 years after the creation of D1 the first Hispanic was hired by the college district. Ciro Ramirez, M.A. Peabody College was hired to teach evening classes. In 1952 faculty increased to 54. Ramirez was replaced by Felix H Garcia as a Spanish Teacher. Garcia had a Law degree from Southern Methodist University (Rodriguez, 1996).

D1 Mission

A review of school district documents and websites revealed the school's mission, objectives, values and statistical information. With regard to mission, documents note a picture of a college community that is both proud of its diversity and embraces the success of students. D1 mission statement is to "Empower our Diverse Communities for Success." The colleges within D1 offer associate of art (AA) and associate of science (AS) degrees, certificates and licensures in occupational programs that prepare for jobs, in addition to arts and science courses that transfer to four year institutions, as student pursue baccalaureate degrees (College 1: about the colleges, 2012, p. 1).

Objectives

D1's documents conveyed the belief that the district will be the best in the nation. Their strategic objectives aim to:

- Provide Access to Higher Education - by maintaining and extend an open door and affordable access to quality education.

- Student Support - increase academic support of all students.
- Workforce Development – build a world-class workforce education.
- Capacity to Serve – strengthen the financial, technical and physical capacities of the colleges for first rate student and community services.

Values

D1's value statements were available to the public through its website, asserting several beliefs such as:

Integrity: Have the courage to act ethically, building a culture of trust and respect.

Communication: Engage in open and transparent communication.

Community: Commit to a joyful culture of learning and service.

Academic Freedom: Value creativity, growth and transformation.

History and Statistical Information

During the past thirty years, the college district area has been rapidly transformed from a quiet college district into a bustling county of 1, 679,172 with 48.6% male and 51.4% female (City-Data.com, n.d.). The college district office located in a city with over 1, 290,463 populations in the nation's seventh largest city in the nation. The city is made up of 48.3% male and 51.7% female with unemployment rate of 7.0% compared to state rate of 8.1%.

The education rate for individuals 25 years of age or older in the city is:

- High School or higher – 75%
- Bachelor's degree or higher – 21.6%

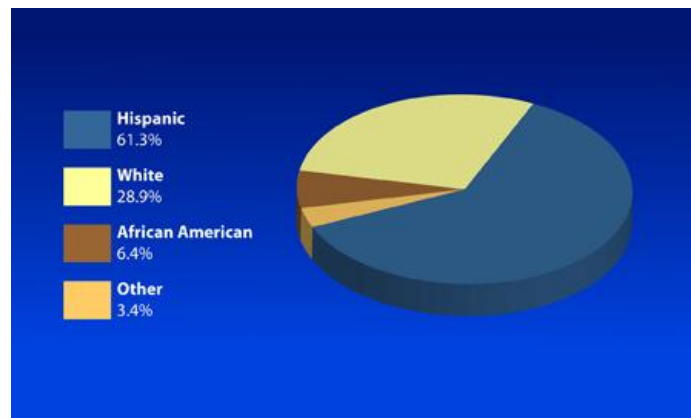
- Graduate or professional – 7.9%

Since 1928, D1 has served the county through student initiatives and support services that help students obtain their educational goals. Funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, all colleges of D1 are participants of “Achieving the Dream: Colleges Count” initiative. Achieving the Dream seeks to increase access and success of low income and students of color, by retaining and graduating students with college degrees and certificates. D2 is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. D1 governance is a nine-member board of trustees elected locally to six-year terms by county voters. The Chancellor, D1’s chief executive officer, guides and implements programs and policies. Student experience highly qualified faculty with graduate degrees committed to creating a learning community for all students. D1 provides a full range of educational services to students that facilitate student success. These include counseling, labs, tutoring, financial aid, disabled student centers, developmental coursework, veteran services, faculty advisement, TRIO programs, First Year Experience retention, and career preparation. D1 also provides continuing education coursework ranging from personal enrichment to General Education Development (GED), and English as Second Language (ESL) completion. Reacting to demographic changes, D1 Chancellor has provided the following support for diversity on district website:

- The colleges strive for an environment that values and affirms the diversity of its students and employees.

- The College District also supports inclusiveness that recognizes, values, and reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.
- Community Value: we are committed to a joyful culture of learning and service where unity in diversity occurs through mutual respect, cooperation, and accessibility.
- The mission of the D1 is to empower our diverse communities for success.

According to the website, these references to diversity are quoted directly from D1 Policies, shared values, and mission statement. The latter two are also included in college district Strategic website statement continues by reinforcing support, and regard diversity as a source of strength that recognizes the students and communities they serve. D1 considers diversity as an essential element of the social, historical, and economic fabric of South Texas. Beginning from 1925 to 2007, a span of 82 years, D1 has expanded to five college sites with a total enrollment of 62, 377 credit and non-credit students. D1 Student demographics are:



College C1

Opened in 1985 after a hard-won battle by parents who wanted a higher education institution on the long-neglected southern sector of the county, College C1 has excelled in preparing first-generation college students to successfully gain employment, or transfer to a four-year institution to earn a bachelor's degree. The first discussion for this college was voiced in the 1974 convention of Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), when member Fernando Rodriguez Jr. introduced a resolution to work toward obtaining a community college for the south side of the city. Gaining support and momentum in November 1982 when community leaders and COPS sought and received endorsement from then gubernatorial candidate Mark White for a college in the south side of the city. District D1 board trustees approved funds to plan and purchase property for the college on February 21, 1983 (C1 College: About Us, n.d.).

Classes began in September 1985 with an attendance of 231 students dispersed in high schools and military installations. C1's current educational outreach extends beyond the physical campus with many courses offered in a variety of off-campus locations. Regardless of sites, C1 maintains close ties to the community and its commitment to their motto "the heart of the community" or "el Corazon de la comunidad," a recognition of the Hispanic heritage that is part of the southern side of the city.

In 1987, the college achieved full accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate level degrees and certificates. In April 17, 2001 C1 College submitted to D1 Board of

Trustees their mission statement. Approved by the board C1, College mission statement reads:

As a public comprehensive community college, C1 College provides exemplary, accessible education and training to a diverse and aspiring community. The College educates, nurtures, and inspires students through a dynamic and supportive learning environment, which promotes the intellectual, cultural, economic, and social life of the community.

Following C1's humble, yet determined beginning, county voters, through a bond issue made possible the construction of a \$13 million campus for 2,500 students. The original complex consisted of 26 classrooms in 11 buildings, including a 15,000-square-foot library. The mission-style campus opened its doors in January 1987. Its physical outline is inspired by 18th century Spanish mission architecture, principally by Mission San José's cupola, façade, and its granary's distinctive cylindrical shape. Adorned tiles embedded in buildings throughout the campus convey and reaffirm the spirit of Spanish Colonial architecture.

Founded on the belief that education is the central element of improving lives, C1 College continues to be an institution of high academic standards. It serves a growing student body with an increasingly diverse curriculum that features two-year course plans in the arts and sciences, as well as many technical occupational and workforce programs. Through C1, students can earn certificates or complete the first two years of a four-year degree plan to transfer to a university. The college is continually receiving accolades from four-year universities commenting on the high

caliber of preparation of the students who transfer. It was the home of the Transfer Center, which was funded by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities as a national model in 1992. C1 was among eight colleges in the nation selected in 1994 for the Cultures of Success study, funded by the Ford Foundation in an effort to determine why the College successfully transferred minority and low-income students.

C1 College is surrounded by the following feeder zip code populations:

Male%	Female%	White%	Hispanic%	Black%
78221- 48.5	51.5	63.1	83.5	0.7
78211- 49.4	50.6	60.1	65.7	0.5
78223- 48.2	51.8	63.7	43.2	4.3
78242- 49.0	51.0	59.2	54.4	4.8
78224- 48.7	51.3	61.5	61.5	0.8
78214- 48.9	51.1	57.0	62.2	0.5
78114- 49.7	50.3	77.0	29.6	1.4
78237- 48.5	51.5	63.5	68.9	2.8
78264- 51.7	48.3	67.5	41.6	1.2
78227- 51.8	48.2	58.9	63.7	7.9

While most zip code areas have large Hispanic percentage, it is interesting to note that females have a percentage edge in eight of ten zip codes (<http://www.brainyzip.com>). Continuing with gender observations, women make up over three-fifths (62 %) of D2 College students. Additionally, and reflective of feeder zip codes, sixty-seven percent of C1 College students in fall 2010 were Hispanic. Reflective of national trends, female

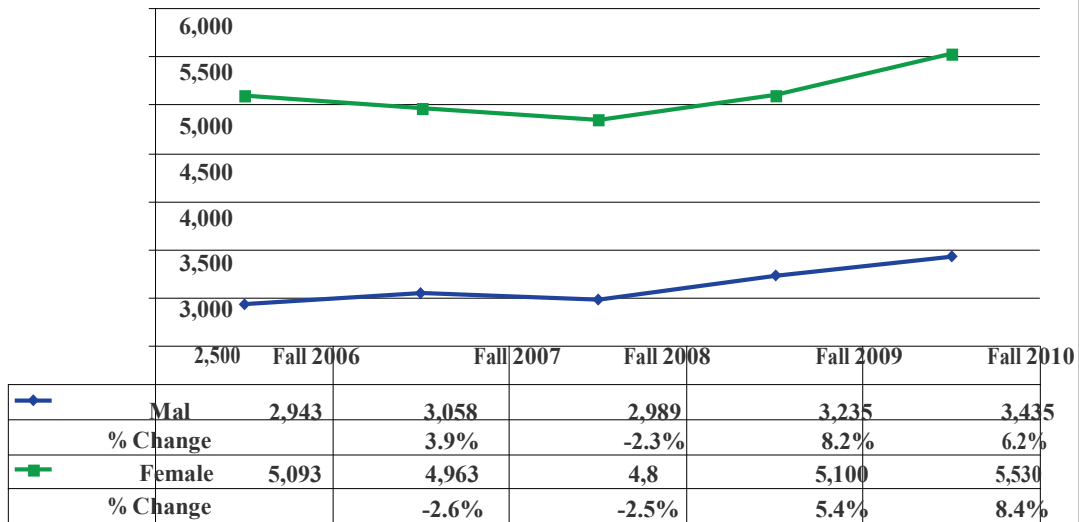
students are outpacing males in C1 College and U.S. community college enrollment. Latino students are the majority student population at C1 College, and by comparison have a double digit percentage of college enrollments at U.S. community colleges (see chart).

	C1 College	US Community College₁
Average Age	24	28
Gender Distribution: Male/Female	38 / 62 %	42 / 58%
Ethnicity	67% Hispanic	16% Hispanic
Full-Time / Part-Time Status	24 / 76%	40 / 60%

Source: American Association of Community Colleges Fast Facts, updated January 2011,

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>.

Fall Enrollment by Gender



Source: Certified CBM001

C1 College assisted 8,965 credit students in fall 2010 semester. The average student age is 24, with over one-half (56 %) of all C1 College students being 21 years of age or younger. In 2009-10, C1 College awarded 1,713 degrees and certificates. This is an increase (83%) from the 934 degrees and certificates awarded in 2008-09.

Interestingly, many of today's college students at C1 may select to work and attend college on part-time basis. Trying to balance this task, less than a fourth (24 %) of C1 College students attended class full-time in the fall 2010. In addition, the trend for more students enrolled part-time at D2 College, has increase since 2006. Research indicates that attending part-time college prolongs degree obtainment, or place student at-risk for dropping out. Fewer than half (46%) of students who enter community colleges with the goal of earning a degree or certificate have obtained that goal, transferred to a

baccalaureate institution, or are still enrolled 6 years later (*American Association of Community College*, 2012, p. 9). Despite part-time attendance and less than a sixth (16 %) of all C1 College students were first time- in-college students; completing 1,713 degrees representing exceptional student commitment to successful goal completion (D1Colleges: District: About the Colleges, 2012).

A review of D1 website, displays a variety of vital financial aid information for students. Statement on the Student Financial Services reads: The D1 Colleges Student Financial Services vision is to be the leader in the delivery of quality comprehensive financial aid programs. Our Mission is insuring access and support for our diverse communities by providing financial resources for student success.

Knowing how to qualify for financial aid is important information for students; especially with the rising cost of tuition and books. D1 website informs students that they must meet the following criteria in order to receive financial aid:

- Be a U.S. Citizen or Eligible Noncitizen – for questions regarding citizenship, click on the following link for the U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services:
<http://www.us.cis.gov/portal/site/uscis>.
- Have a High School Diploma or GED.
- If male 18-25 years of age, be registered with the Selective Service.
- Be enrolled 3 hours (for Pell grant) in college level courses (Continuing Education courses do not qualify) or 6 semester hours for other financial aid programs.
- Not be in default of a Federal Direct Loan or owe a refund of a Federal Grant.

- Have not been convicted for possession or sale of illegal drugs.
- Have established need as determined by the federal need analysis methodology
- Be making Satisfactory Academic Progress according to (SAP) requirements.
- Be in an eligible program of study/major.

Financial aid website also informs students of Hazelwood Veteran Exemption, Texas Public Educational Grants (TPEG), and Texas Educational Opportunity Grant program (TEOP). TPEG and TEOP webpage offer eligibility for non-resident and undocumented student requirements for state aid. Both funding programs comply with Senate Bill (S.B.) 1528, which made residency requirements uniform for all students, regardless of their legal status. In order to qualify for SB 1528, students must meet the following requirements:

1. Have graduated from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in the State of Texas.
2. Have resided in Texas for at least three years as of the date the person graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma.
3. Provide to a college or university an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest opportunity that he or she is eligible to do so.

C1-Financial Aid Awards 2010-2011

Funded Programs	Students Receiving Aid*	Amount Awarded
Federal Pell Grant	5,251	\$18,622,449.00
Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG)	491	\$323,556.00
Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)	956	\$483,912.00
TPEG-LEAP-SLEAP	882	\$521,221.00
Texas-TEOG Grants	644	\$1,098,260.00
		\$21,049,398.00
Federal Work Study	268	\$350,531.00
		\$350,531.00
Federal Stafford Loans	892	\$2,888,635.00
PLUS	2	\$5,500.00
		\$2,894,135.00
Waivers	115	\$120,520.00
Continuing Education	152	\$120,010.00
		\$240,530.00
Scholarships	845	\$527,360.00
Internal	210	\$178,755.00
External	635	\$348,605.00
Total*	6,826	\$24,540,733.00

*Source: Office of Student Financial Services

Financial aid at C1 College is awarded to students through various programs as follows:

Federal Pell Grants – A Federal Pell Grant does not have to be repaid. It is awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelors or professional degree. Pell Grants provide a foundation of financial aid to which other aid may be added.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) – A Federal Supplemental Education opportunity Grant is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need – that is, students with the lowest Expected Family Contribution (EFCs),

and gives priority to students who receive Federal Pell Grants. An SEOG does not have to be repaid.

Texas State Grants (TPEG-SSIG-TTAG) – Texas residency is required and the awards depend upon the availability of funding.

Federal Work Study – Employment opportunities are available for both on-campus and off-campus locations. Approval is required by the Student Financial Service Office.

Federal Stafford Loans – Students and parents may borrow money from banks or credit unions. Federal regulations determine the eligibility criteria. A separate loan application is required. These are loans and must be repaid.

Scholarships – A variety of scholarships are available from both institutional and private sources. Scholarships selection criteria may be based on demonstrated need, academic merit or other specific qualification depending on the funding source.

The President of C1 College has been leading the campus for seven years at the time of this study. Under the Presidents' leadership, C1College has strengthened new academic programs in Administrative Computer Technology, Aviation Management, Criminal Justice, Health Professions, Logistics, Nursing, Teacher Education and Turfgrass & Golf Course Management. C1 College has also gained recognition in their transfer programs. Implemented by Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) as a national model, C1 College has achieved one of the highest transfer rates in the State of Texas for Hispanic students. According to C1 College president, the average transfer rate for Hispanics in Texas is 8.9 percent. At C1 College it is 38 % for Hispanic students.

C1 College has served the area for many years educating generations of students, and it is central to improving the lives for a part of the county that has been long ignored and neglected. Serving as an economic engine for the area, C1 College continues to create partnerships and strategic plans for success for the community as well as students.

College District D2

College district D2 was established by a countywide election on July 31, 1965. Located in North East Texas, D2 first opened in 1967, followed by other campuses opened in 1968, 1976, 1996 and 2009. The latest campus opened to offer Health Care Professions in the fall of 2011. The College District is governed by Board of Trustees consisting of seven-members elected for staggered six-year terms in single member districts.

District D2 Mission Statement is a direct one sentence reading as follows:
“The district provides affordable and open access to quality teaching and learning.”
Looking to implement and clarify its mission statement, college district D2 uses a set of programs, services, and partnerships that include:

- University transfer programs
- Workforce education programs
- Technical programs
- Developmental courses
- Adult literacy courses
- Continuing education and community services
- An extensive curriculum

- A commitment to institutional effectiveness-an ongoing process of self-examination, self-improvement, and an unending pursuit of excellence.

In order to assure future success of students and meet its mission statement, College district D2 has created Vision 2015 Strategic Plan. To guide the Vision plan, D2 goals and strategies support the direction and purpose of the plan. The goals are:

- Support student learning and success through excellence in teaching and learning, support services, flexible instructional delivery systems, student engagement, learning outcomes assessment, and dynamic curricula.
- Ensure affordability, accessibility and diversity reflective of the community.
- Promote institutional effectiveness through continuous improvement, collaboration with and service to the community, employee engagement, professional development and optimal environment conducive to quality teaching and learning.

With student success as a centerpiece, D2 has joined Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count. With support from The Meadows Foundation, D2 joined 26 other community colleges as new members dedicated to identifying strategies for improvement student success, closing achievement gaps, and increasing retention, persistence, and completion rates. Conceived in 2004 by Lumina Foundation for Education, and seven national partner organizations, Achieving the Dream is focused on creating a "culture of evidence" in which data collection and analysis drive efforts to identify problems that prevent students from succeeding, particularly low-income students and students of color, and develop programs to help them stay in school and

graduate. Achieving the Dream's network now includes more than 130 institutions in 24 states and the District of Columbia, reaching more than one million students.

D2 has five campuses throughout in the northeast area of Texas Hurst. College C2 opened in 2009, and is one of the newest campuses in the downtown city area. In addition to five campus sites, D2 operates other sites, and several learning centers.

Reflective of many urban higher education institutions, College district D2 service area population is diverse and one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country (City-Data.com, n.d.). D2 is part of a historically western yet growing area with modern offices and technology companies. College district D2 diversity, and C2 gender population, and feeder zip code can be seen in the flowing charts:

Diversity of Student Population		
Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
White	24568	55.4%
African American	7154	16.1%
Hispanic	9125	20.6%
Asian	2753	6.2%
American Indian	201	0.5%
International	451	1.0%
No Data	103	0.2%
TOTAL	44355	100.0%
Source: TCCD 2009FL Statistical Handbook		

C2 College by Gender

Race	Gender	Total
Latino	Male	507
Latina	Female	912

*Source: D2 2012 SP Statistical Handbook

C2 Students by Feeder Zip Codes

Zip Code	C2 College Students, SP	Total
76133	291	1512
76123	222	1176
76116	333	1132
76110	268	794
76114	239	691
76107	283	635
76133	291	1512
76106	187	919
76112	211	945

*Source: D2 2012 SP Statistical Handbook

College district D2 offers four types of degrees, Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Arts in Teaching, and Associate of Applied Science, in addition to certificates of completion and several continuing education programs. D2 also offers programs that cover more than 80 technical and transfer areas. D2 maintains a student-faculty ratio of 26:1, employing approximately 1,900 full-time employees, and more than 650 full-time, and 1,200 adjunct faculty. During fall 2011, D2 enrolled 50,062 and spring 2012, 46,204 total students were enrolled for coursework. Distance learning saw enrollment of 11,179 credit coursework student. The average age of students is 26.0 years and a gender ratio of 59.0% females and 41.0% males (D1 Colleges: District: About the Colleges, 2012).

College C2

C2 is one of the newest campuses in D2. Opened in 2009, C2 is geographically located in a position to create partnerships or collaborations with medical careers and companies. C2 College offers degrees of Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Science (A.S.), Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) and Workforce Certifications. The

extended C1 East Campus for Health Care Professionals opened in 2011 with an enrollment of 700, students offering nursing and several Allied Health programs. For the spring 2012 semester, the three year old C1 College enrolled 7,297 students; which included 3,133 FTEs (full-time enrolled). This represents a 1, 942 increases over spring 2011.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis for this study began as the researcher reviewed the data. A mixture of notions and initial premises emerged as documentation gathering occurred. These notions and premises were identified during transcription and coding. As the data review and coding progressed, these notions transformed into different insights, which served as initial coding in later stages of data analysis. Data for this study consisted of interview transcripts of college administrators, staff, currently enrolled Latino males, and documents gathered from college districts Institutional Research Office, and college district websites. Data analysis was initiated following descriptive approach of interviews. This approach is congruent with Patton's (1990) statement "the discipline and rigor of qualitative analysis depends on presenting solid descriptive data, what is often called 'thick description,' in such a way that others reading the results can understand" (p.375).

Two coding systems were used to analyze the data. The first system used was open coding as described in Chapter Three, and it was used to organize the data initially into general categories that allowed the researcher to become more aware of the need for more structured strategies in order to make a direct connection to the research questions;

which lead to utilizing a second strategy. Following Strauss' and Corbin's (1990) approach to data analysis, the researcher used axial coding, and the constant comparative method, each of which are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. These processes generated the categories and the themes detailed in this chapter, addressing the two research questions.

Direct and Indirect Results

This chapter describes direct and indirect points of view of college administrators and staff engaged in interventions that they have identified as Latino male initiatives, to reach their goals of improving attendance and persistence for Latino males. The researcher also introduces the reader to Latino male influences that impact their attendance and persistence in college. The researcher also aims to communicate to the reader, institutional strategies that may impact Latino male success in higher education. In this section the researcher discusses the direct and indirect findings as they relate to factors that influence Latino male college success.

What Factors Influence College Attendance of Latino males at two Texas

Community Colleges: Research Question One

The direct and indirect findings emerging from the data expressed by interviewees, referenced influences related to Latino male attendance in college; which provided answers to the first research question of this study: "What factors influence college attendance of Latino males at two Texas community colleges?"

Seeking neutrality and openness to this question, participants were prompted to freely state their personal beliefs and points of view related to Latino male college

attendance in college in the most natural manner, providing as much time as needed to answer each question.

While participants expressed their beliefs about Latino male college success briefly and confidently with statements such as “important” and “critical” at different stages of the interview, their responses became repetitive at times. Points of views were carefully stated, from different perspectives. Participants points of view related to this question can be categorized in four themes: 1) early Latino male recruitment, 2) family influence on College attendance, 3) making a connection with staff and advisors, 4) Latino male programs.

Early Latino Males Recruitment

While recruiting students early may not suggest anything new to individuals in higher education, nor to individuals familiar with recruitment research, it is also not surprising that administrators and staff participating in the study again and again expressed their belief that recruiting Latino males early is vital if colleges seek to improve college attendance and persistence of Latino males. Early Latino male recruitment became one of the themes that emerged from the collected data as a key approach for Latino male college attendance. Dialogue through this theme revealed how institutions strategize and utilized staffing in activities devised to define, support, and implement their Latino male early recruitment goals.

Administrators and staff were explicit in what they have done to cultivate a culture that sends a clear message of how important Latino male participation is to their college. The president of C2 indicated that she has established a culture where Latino

male recruitment and success is seen as a “campus wide effort,” indicating collaboration with staff, current and new faculty, administrators, and the community they serve to achieve desired Latino male recruitment goals. Expanding on the meaning of “Campus wide effort,” the following listing describes the C2 and D2 early recruitment efforts:

1. Making sure that all new faculty and staff understand the demographics of the campus, the community served, and that working at C2 means changing the college-going culture in the surrounding areas.
2. Establishing a meaningful connection between student and faculty, advisors, and their support systems, especially making a connection with their discipline (major); meaning faculty find creative ways to engage students for success in the coursework and continuing to the next sequence of class in their major.
3. Getting district’s and Chancellor’s recognition of the issue of the lack of Latino males in college and garnishing support for new initiatives.
4. Emphasizing early Latino male recruitment during administrative strategic planning.
5. Creating seven college hallmarks as lynchpins of philosophy for the campus which include: committing to student success, service and community outreach, interdisciplinary collaboration, to clear and open communication, personal and professional growth, and multicultural confidence and language acquisition.

6. Inviting public school officials, chamber of commerce and community stakeholders on campus as guest, and build collaborations for Latino male college participation.
 7. Preparing institutional strategies to assist students that don't see themselves as learners or leaders.
 8. Hiring diverse administrators, faculty and staff to make connections with students of a diverse community.
 9. Promoting college-going culture in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.
 10. Recognizing the importance of family ties and creating programs that include family in college programs and planning.
 11. Developing and setting up databases for tracking outreach of Latino students, and analyzing enrollment patterns, and understanding college barriers for students.
- This compendium of efforts and expressions found in interview data, revealed a belief in open

By administrators and staff related to Latino males issue. The campus community (faculty & Staff) made direct comments on the impact of the Latino male initiative across the board. Administrator C1 stated that they are doing “a whole heck of a lot more” than they did when he was a student. He further stated that “there’s a lot more college access. There’s...a stronger bridge between our college and local high schools.” A staff member at C1 expressed early recruitment in this way:

Oh, we are doing a number of things. We have, um, recruitment in high schools.

The College district has a program called College Connection, where they go and

make presentations at the high school and help them do the application. Staff has been advising at the high school. For the new students coming in, certainly offering dual credit class also helps. We have, you know campus...high schools, and middle schools are certainly welcome to visit, even elementary to get them as young as possible to plant those college ideas.

These approaches were apparent throughout the collected data. Administrators, faculty, staff at C1 and C2 are committed, focused, trained and willing to address the Latino male issue in higher education. Despite language and cultural differences, these institutions developed strategies such as using technology for translation, hiring bilingual staff, and marketing brochures in multiple languages. Another administrator commented on the role of staff:

We felt like we had to get our feet underneath us to open doors and so forth but one of the things that we knew and you see it when you walk in this building how incredible, I mean, it's gorgeous, but it's also, when your across the river and you're looking at it, it can be intimidating, it looks cold, it's big glass, it's steel, you know, it may not esthetically be the most inviting place. So, we really believe that we need to overcome some of that with the human element and what we do very intentionally and deliberately to create that access and sense of belonging for our young Latino men, especially , a sense of belonging but also that personal validation; the fact that they feel like, they (the college)know who I am, this is a welcoming place to me, they respect me, they want to help me to be successful, you know, some of that self-image that they don't necessarily have for themselves

that we hope to provide for them through leadership, or sports, or peer groups, those kind of things.

The institutional strategies for early Latino male student recruitment are certainly a positive step towards college attendance. Some Latino male students have a different experience with college recruitment. For instance, a Latino male student at C2 shared his viewpoint in agreement with another participant as follows:

I agree with that. To expand on that, there was not, I mean, I went to a fairly affluent high school and there was not really a large university presence there from the local colleges, and the community colleges, from any college. And if there were, I certainly wasn't aware of it, as far as advisors and people to come and give that direction to know what it takes to go to school. I certainly didn't get any of that while I was at a school in high school. It was kind of my own. Once I graduated it was figure it out on your own or maybe have the benefit of family that's gone through it. But I didn't have schools coming to my high school. They might do that now but they didn't or I wasn't aware of it when I was in high school.

For another Latino male student, recruitment strategies to increase college attendance in this particular population means having bilingual outreach documents available to assist individuals and create a welcoming environment. As the quote below indicates, Latino males may feel less intimidated if this documentation were available:

"I can't speak to the availability of bilingual documents or anything like that because fortunately I read English. So I don't have to look for those but I would

assume they had them. I've honestly not checked into that but if they didn't, that would obviously be a problem that could be intimidating."

Family Influence on College Attendance

Family influence on College attendance by Latino males was a common thread during interview responses. This thread referred to the influences of family on their college decisions, attitudes, perceptions and support. A common statement among Latino males was related to the struggles of their families and the inspiration to succeed from their families' experiences, as indirectly stated in the following quote:

Well... my problem with my parents, just only my mom. My dad will, I can't say nothing bad about him because I don't hate him or nothing, we just whatever happened, happened, whatever, you know? They play a little part of me, my mom she wants me to come and make something of my life. My family, like my kids and my wife, they also, well my wife then told me why don't you go to college and do something. That's why I'm here also.

In the same regard the following statements illustrate similar observations from, *C1 Student*,

I have some family that supports me going to college. But a lot of them they say, like, I don't want to say low standards, but they just think if you get your associate that's fine. You just need to be done with it and get to work, not waste your time going to school like eight years just to get your master's. Some even think that's just a waste. It's too much school.

C2 Student,

Something I am remembering now, pretty much like a flashback from probably three years ago. When I lived in California, I had this uncle that I didn't really get along with; now he had...He's an engineer at a nuclear power plant, so pretty high up. But I didn't really like the way he underestimated me, like saying to underestimate me, but when I noticed when he talked to my cousins, the ones that were about to go to school and they were females, he would always talk to them and say, so what college are you going to go and what school? Like being proud, but when he would look at me, he would say, what you should do is join the military so you can become a man. That's when I really told him, that's none of your business. I said, I would go in the military but once I have a bachelor's degree as a contract employee, but I told him, I didn't like how you underestimate me.

C2 Student,

My aunt, when I was younger, I was having trouble in high school and she was living with us and she said, Mary, that's my mom, what's the point of him finishing high school for? They're just going to work at factories anyway, referring to me and my brother.

These statements confirm family college influence as an important factor for Latino males. More and more Latino students and parents are making the correlation between college rewards and the transformation to live a different life than their parents endured. The following quotes are evidences of this notion:

C2 Student,

I feel a lot of support from my parents directly. My dad always said, it doesn't matter if, as much as a job sounds tempting right out of high school, he said, of course it's good to have a part-time if you want to have money to buy stuff that you want, but school is more important in the long run. And I guess, he's using my brother as an example, because he went to college right out of high school and well, he's doing good and that's what...and also my brother was a good role model for me. First generation in our family right there.

C1 Student,

Yeah, 'cause my father he didn't, he didn't graduate high school, and he's working construction. And, um, we're struggling financially. And he's always told me to graduate, and go to college and be somebody so you can have better than what he did. And so you can have... some financial support for when you do have a family. And teach your kids what you grow up is, "finish high school, and go to college, and be successful.

C1 Student,

Academic success here at PAC, and uh, means to me a great deal. Primarily because I come from a family history, a family background with no college education so, in other words, I'm pursuing it as a first-timer. Seeing myself as a , the gateway to open myself up for future generations in my family.

Interestingly the following statement from a staff member speaks to the same notion:

C1 Staff,

I think that, um...uh, in promoting the family, I think that's probably one of the strongest existing tools that we can resort to very quickly because a lot of students, especially our young Latino males, come from a strong kind of Hispanic family, for the most part.

Making a Connection with Staff and Advisors

Significant statements from administrators and faculty indicate that there is a strong belief in open communication to keep students informed and engaging them in various ways that support student access to staff. According to administrators, "there are many opportunities and programs that facilitate student's participation in college services and instructional success." As an example, both colleges indicated having diverse faculty and staff actively involved in outreach; making a connection to Latino males at their middle and high schools and talking to them about college and about career paths. One interviewed administrator made the following comment:

If they hit hard times or they run into some other obstacles or some things that are conflicting with relationships, and other things, they're more likely to pass it up, unless we can put a role model, attach somebody, such as myself or other people there with them. But that's so small. We need to find, we need to think smarter about how to reach a larger population.

In connection with previous statement, a student commented:

My experiences dealing with the different administrative offices whether it is the registrar's office or financial aid office, or even down in the cafeteria, the staff here seems to be trained better. If they're not trained better, certainly they execute

better. So, maybe it's because the staff here is newer or went through some more recent intensive training than some other campuses.

While administrators and faculty believe they are making progress toward connecting with Latino males some faculty see this going in the opposite directions. As noted in the next quote from a faculty member,

You know, I...um, I think we're probably moving away from helping Latino males versus moving towards it. I'm not really sure that the current direction in which education is moving, unless it's being down by specific org...specific individuals within the classroom or an individual that feels that that's something that may perhaps...a grant or something. I don't think that the current movement of education is lending itself toward...um, toward Hispanic persistence, um, persistence for Hispanic male. So I don't know what we're doing, but I know that the kinds of things that we're doing versus, you know, in the education system, in the community college system, perhaps, maybe when the university system is not...because it's more of a system where it's a box-cart system, where it's all based on outcomes and those kinds of individuals circumstances really don't factor into the advising or the helping those individuals remain in college. So I don't know what it is that we're doing, probably less than what we used to be doing, but I know that the kind of the wave that education is moving is probably moving us away from the Latino males.

Even though perspectives differ for levels of contact and communication with faculty and advisors, student feel a concern for the lack of information and advising,

especially career advising. An example is the comments by one student expressing his unease,

‘Cause like a lot of professions you hear, "Oh you gotta go to college be successful in life," but no one says what pays good. I mean now you could, you know, a Bachelor's in Psychology and you're still only a school counselor, you know what I mean? You're making not that much, I'm guessing. They don't really tell you, like, "Ok, what would you like to do?" Like, I don't know. I think it would be better if they gave us examples for like, like I was saying, lots of people, like, I didn't even know what I wanted to do for a long time. And if they would've like given me examples, like, "Oh, you need to be doing this. Not just the job title, but the description of the job title." That way I could get more of a good idea on what's good, and then like, oh you can make about \$80,000 a year doing this, or \$70,000, \$50,000...I mean, it's just, I never knew what pays good and how long, how hard is the road to get there.

Numerous college completion researchers indicate that advising is a vital component of student success especially for minority students. This research provides significant insights from its participants regarding a connection between advisors and students to achieve their educational goals; as one Latino male student commented, “so, finally I went back to college, the counselor was nice enough to tell me that all I need is seven more classes to get an associate degree. And I said, wow, is that it?”

In contrast to Latino males, some college staff perception that female Latinas as more active in seeking connections and understanding the value of college. This perception is expressed by the following staff comment:

No, no. The Latinas, I mean, my little girls, they're very...I just enjoy working with them because they have so much energy, and they're driven. I always look at those young females that I have, specifically, that already have children at home. They tend to kind of see that as an additional responsibility, but it's also kind of a motivator. Is that they kind of understand why they're doing what they're doing. Uh, because they're kind of constantly reminded that there's a bigger picture, or something else for them in this world. And they kind of have that constant motivation at home.

Expanding on connections with Latino males, some staff and faculty believe a different academic approach is needed for underprepared Latino male students.

Articulated in the following statement, a staff member believes,

If they don't make it out of development scale, um, they...there's no way they're going to go on. And we have found, and this is kind of just a personal note, is that most of the instructors who come in who are new to our institution end up being adjunct instructors in the evening. I think we need to take our best instructors and put them into developmental coursework, and make them teach developmental so that we can get these students to college level coursework. But I mean, if we can kind of start changing the method or the way we deliver our instruction to make our classes more engaging, to kind of introduce a little bit more service learning.

Get students involved as independent learners in the classroom. I think that that would kind of be more helpful to students and get them to kind of start feeling success earlier on. As opposed to, bringing them now, they're going into developmental coursework, and then being very easily discouraged.

In the previous statements, making successful connections vary by using academic approaches, college philosophy, and personal student contact with campus services and staff. In a different perspective, one faculty members believes that students' demanding lives may hinder the important college connection,

Well, some of what I was talking about. Relationships that they get into...too young where they have girlfriends and children or rising children. Uh, I have...I've had some students who were like 19 years old and they've already got two and three children. It's like that's...that's going to be really tough for them. And, you know, having to work, people in their families are saying, you don't need to go to college. Or that they don't actively support them, like they still want them to do all this stuff they've always had to do and take care of their needs, and they're not allowing the extra time it really takes to be a success in school. So those are some of things I see working against their success.

Another key connection highlighted throughout the collection of data is the student-faculty relationship. For instance, during the interviews several students gave indication of agreement when one of the students made the following statement: "but I know all my professors, for most part, know all their students' names, I think they do a

good job of building rapport. It certainly benefits the students. I think the communication is pretty good.”

Knowing student perspectives about the staff-faculty relationship is important. Findings may indicate that administrators, faculty, and staff are slowly becoming aware of the needs of Latino males in the classroom. One student discusses his interactions in the following manner,

I interact with my professors like if I would do any adult, with anyone in authority, someone with knowledge. I look like them as the key to my successful drive. I don't look at them like they're above and beyond. I would talk to them like any human being. If I have a question, that's what they're there for. They're there to answer my question. If I feel stuck in any particular, uh, time in my class or time in my semester, I can refer to them as my resource. And I look at most of my professors that way. Any instructor, professor, uh, uh, junior instruction, uh, coordinator, they are my, my resource. They are my key. I can open them up if I have a question.

Evidence of these strategic connections were also found through different sources of communication in both colleges websites and printed materials (flyers, brochures, pamphlets etc.), providing information and access to services, staff and advisement in different ways including orientation programs, admission days, and campus visits. Some information is provided was English and Spanish and some colleges and professors' websites offered more information and activities.

Latino Male Programs

Emphasizing the need to coordinate programming strategies is vital for Latino male student success. It may be accurate to say that some colleges are trying to adapt their programs to meet the needs of the Latino population and help them succeed. Therefore, their Latino male programs and practices became a reflection of how *important and effective* colleges recognize Latino males to be, that institutions of higher education perception of programs are mostly associated with generic practices that assist all students as one-size-fits-all when it comes to college attendance and persistence.

Implementing activities to address both academic and students services needs of Latino males, may decrease dropping out of college and reduce the Latino male gap in college attendance. A positive start to Latino male programming may be a multi-collaborative approach to male success. Furthermore, community, parents, college, and business partnerships can produce a broader awareness and programming for Latino male college success. However, majority of the participants emphasized the need *to increase* programming as “*very important*” for the academic success and awareness of Latino males disappearing from higher education. Programs that directly or indirectly impact college success for Latino males are at this time rudimentary and a degree of awareness is indicated in the following statement from an administrator:

I have to confess that I hadn't paid attention to that issue (Latino males) until about four years ago. The people in the educational press, the world begin to say, what's happening to the boys? The male issue is on the radar for the college district because we have closing the gap commitments in the state.

Some college faculties made reference to higher level decisions and the impact on Latino male college programming. Directly addressing this issue a faculty member explained:

In higher education field because as the movement of education, the direction that it's taking at the federal level, at the state, and then...it trickling down to the colleges, then so be it, so we move also. You know, we are also impacted by that, so um, the kinds of decisions that are made at the federal and state level and then it trickle down to us, and so things that are happening, and if they are happening, because the accountability system is so great that we really aren't in a position to look specifically at Latino males. The accountability for persistence and retention and that kind of thing doesn't lend itself to focus in on Latino males at the community college.

Undaunted by legislation, programming continues with innovation and research. One program is proposed by a faculty member to an administrator as follows:

...and I proposed to my Chair to say if we maybe we can have a class exclusively for males, ok? Exclusively for males, ok? And see what are the kinds of things perhaps based on existing research that is out there, and I teach the first year experience courses, ok? And so that's the best time to address those issues. See what the research says and then approach the classroom from that perspective. So I know what I can do in my class, in my department...and I think that if we are going to move in this direction, um, you know, without additional resources, you know, maybe that's something that other departments perhaps can do.

Awareness of what Latino male issue is, and developing programs to address this issue is a work in progress. Responses to interview questions revealed that not everyone gave enough attention to focus on Latino Males. For instance, this statement elaborated by a staff member, “I don’t see particular, like steps just for Latino male population. I think just for our younger graduating students we take some steps, but I don’t think there are some specific steps they take just for Latino males.”

Specific steps to help Latino males are still not a reality at the two participating institutions. This is to say that the Latino male issue may not yet reach in some cases, important levels of concern for colleges. While levels of awareness are building, administrators, staff and students acknowledged that traditional measure of specific programs for Latino male completion and graduation may not accurately reflect the work done by the two colleges. The following statement is indicative of staff beliefs in one of the participating colleges:

Um, so I mean I think we can...we can start doing that, but there’s a lot that I think needs to be change, and I think that we need to identify these young males and start creating kind of more, more of a support system. I mean, track some indicators. I mean at-risk indicators and share that information, if it’s already on the K-12 side. If we already Know, they had...they’re a teen parent. They graduated with a lower, lower level or 25 percent, you know why wouldn’t we go ahead and track those students specifically? Or why wouldn’t we have the case manager here that could maybe create a support system around those students to

maybe get them at least to an associate's degree. Uh, but, it's kind of like all the information is kind of stops at one place and we have to start once again.

The statement above may suggest that Latino male programming at college level is inadequate or minimal. Some students implied reactions to creating such interventions focused on Latino male support. The next quote presented by a student below implies hazards for special or specific programming. The student stated:

I think it's touchy...to me it's kinda touchy in a sense that it could, and not to open up a different can of worms, but it could be...perceived as a reverse racism, or why do they get special attention? You know, why are they pushing their education? And, it's just, some...some people go that route, and it's like, well, what can...what can you do besides singling out a group because of their ethnicity and say, 'It's not so much that we don't care about you, but we need to focus on this group.' And I can't...I can't think of anything that wouldn't get...flirt with that line.

In a different perspective the student point of view suggest a lack of response or limited involvement by staff to help Latino male students succeed in college. His statement infers his feelings of detachment from the institution, a sense of going at it alone and that the institution does not have a mechanism to detect if he continues college or not. The student also seems to confirm a similar sentiment from another Latino male. The student commented:

I have to agree...agree with him it's pretty much on me. It's not necessarily that they're really trying to push us all and say, you know, "Stick around with us.

We're gonna offer this and that. "It's pretty much I come here or not, I mean it's up...you're the one who's going to make the effort to come to class.

It's...honestly, well...I haven't seen any active people to keep people to continue their education.

The articulation of "*doing it on your own*" perception repeated at both colleges.

The lack of programming targeting Latino males can manifest apprehension and concern for success, possibly accelerating drop-out. Coupled with a lack of college knowledge in the family, a Latino male may also experience isolation, unable to discover any institutional change or family support for his sub-group. Dedicated to his educational goal and ignoring the lack of support, share the following observation,

"Well, it's not quite a sprint. Going to college is not a sprint at all. It takes long-term dedication and some stick-to-it-ness to continue to go back to it even when it's mundane, even when it is brow beating to continue to get up every day and keep going and keep going and keep going. When the bar is set low, in your family or in your culture, I think a lot of people lose that get up and do it. It's not expected. Maybe they've got that mindset. I was doing this for myself but nobody is expecting me to do this, why am I getting up and doing it for myself? When I can just fall back into the norm of the rest of the family or the rest of the neighborhood or whatever"

Another student acknowledged that programming is present and helpful for students. Indicating approval for different approaches to Latino male programs for assistance:

“I know there is a program, or some sort of, just, some sort of funds helping us. That’s real, or REALL. I forgot what they stand for, but it’s helping us be more tactile, more hands-on with everything, not just book. I know some like will do terrible on the test, but they’ll do great like hands-on, working on anything, anything. Just pretty much getting the hands-on experience, just better education for them. That’s a pretty good program that I see.”

With common enthusiasm, several staff from both institutions provided comments regarding successful programming they have created, leading to increased student participation at their colleges. One staff for example, described one of the activities:

Fifteen of our students went to hear Vicente Fox at a leadership event, at no charge and he came into...tell me man, this was unreal for me! You should have heard what the students were saying to be able to be there with a world leader and now that we’re going to be invited back to listen to some others like the Prime Minister of Canada, who’ll be coming in to [inaudible] but that we have seats reserved for us to give those students experiences. Then, president asked me if I was going to be ok today during the sessions. I go, not a problem. I picked up the phone and called some of my buddies here and we got this covered. That’s how it works.

What Factors Influence Latino Males to Persist At Two Texas Community

Colleges:

Research Question Two

The second question of this study: “What factors influence Latino males to persist

at two Texas Community Colleges?” was answered through the outcome outlined in this section. Dialog in the following section reveals how colleges, administrators, faculty, staff, and family influence Latino male persistence in college. The themes developed from the data coding and categorization of the direct and indirect factors influencing persistence of Latino males in two community colleges, were expressed in the participants’ responses. The three main themes are 1) family support, 2) institutional strategies, and 3) Latino males drive and motivation to achieve college goals

These themes are reflective of influences directly and indirectly related to Latino male persistence in community college as depicted by respondents and disclosed through other sources used in the triangulation process.

Family Support

In this theme, family support refers to the support that Latino males received from their families while attaining college. Throughout the interviews, family support was a significant factor for college persistence as expressed by Latino males participating in this study. Equally significant was the limited or absence of knowledge about college that according to participants, their parents have. While lack of college experience in their parents was a concern, their hardships and labors motivated some Latino males to persist in college. The statements below are evidence of various influences that students and staff identified throughout the interviews. When students were asked about family support, this student stated:

I think family plays a huge part for my... 'cause like, it's like I want to say, yeah they're supportive, but then there's always that one family member who's like all

the way there for you, always supporting everything you could ever like want, and like my dad. My dad's my main support, and uh, I've lived with him all my life, and it just makes me want to try harder when everybody tells me that (inaudible), you're doing a really good job and to see me succeed, and it'll be someone who actually does matter. That makes me want to try harder. Keep going to school.

Another student responded:

I guess the definition of support when you're thinking family...um... they're always gonna be there, regardless. Regardless if they can't help you, they're always gonna be there to, you know, still push you to say, you know, "I know you can still figure it out. I know you can still get through this." Uh...there's not hinge in your way that's gonna be able to stop you...if it's gonna take a little bit more studying, they're gonna be there and support you and tell you, "Hey, just push in that extra mile because if you push in that extra mile, you're going to succeed...probably more than anybody else in your other class might. I mean, you may not be completely successful, but you don't want to be the one that never succeeded...and your family will always be there to give you that support.

In similar ways, the student below expressed the value of family support regardless of knowledge,

My family plays a huge role, not necessarily to provide me with the resources and personal experiences that they endured during their college 'cause they hadn't had any college education, but supportive because they know that I'm driven. So they'll support me with that backbone. They're my backbone to pursue something

that they don't know anything about. It's a door that hasn't been open, and they're encouraging me to open that door. And what's on the other side, uh, is for me to find out. It's how determined I am to open those, that road.

Another student expressed his point of view from a different perspective:

Obstacles that I face as a Hispanic male is that I feel that the more education I receive, the better employment I get, but in, in that sense I wouldn't want to leave my family behind. Progress in society more than others and feel like, Ok, I'm an outcast. I mean I earn more. I have more education than them. So they're going to view me as, Oh, you're not part of this family-oriented that we were, you know, raised, as, as children to know. That's the just one of the obstacles I found a challenge.

In the same way, the next quote refers to family support with the perspective of financial contribution,

My family's never been like literally came out to me, you know, and spoke to me to encourage me to go to college. I guess it was unsaid. They already knew I was going to go, um, but I know I wouldn't be here without them 'cause my financial aid didn't kick in on time so they paid for, for it right there. And then just last week the battery to my car went dead and then the injector clip went out so I had to get it towed, and I didn't have the money so my parents paid for it. And they allowed me to pay them back as slowly as I can, I mean, there's so many times that, just, I needed someone to help me out and they were there.

The next of set quotes denote a different type of family support (emotional,

financial, etc.) in addition to what has been previously described:

As far as it goes for me, my family, the way they assist me is that if I know that schooling gets too tough, I know that maybe I might feel secluded from everyone, and I'm all alone doing this, and I can't refer to anybody besides my professors, which aren't my family. Since they know me well, they know where I come from, you know, they've been around since I was a kid. They've seen my struggle. They've seen my weak points. They've seen my strong points. They support me as far as...where I'm getting to...the word love, but you know I mean as, as being a family. Saying you know what, we are you. We are representation of you. So if you feel you're not, like you're doing it alone, and you have no one, we are here for you. We might not be able to provide you with the academic, uh, resources, but we are here if you need to talk to....more like a counselor. And instead of a school, but they are a counselor from any aspect of your life.

Continuing with family financial support, two students commented:

Student 1-This is Richard, um, I guess to me, my point of view, my family kinda stands on the supportive side - financially, and, uh, I guess mentally, to stay in school and to study. Do something with my life, other than just waste it. I guess, just being supportive inside.

Student 2-The biggest obstacle for me was, was not so much PAC because of financial aid, but trying to understand that if I ever want to get anywhere else, like for what I want to do, I wanted to get a higher degree, a higher education. And financially that was my big obstacle, trying to understand where, where I'm gonna

get the money to be able to transfer to a good university. Uh, other than that, I guess the only other obstacle to me would just be, um, being the first out of my family to actually go and receive a degree, and being a very, I guess, successful in life.

The notion of family support for Latino males in college presents a different perspective from faculty point of view as follows:

Faculty 1 - I think there's a conflicting role. On the one hand, I think that families want their sons, their Latino sons to go to college, and on the other hand, I think that there's a perception of them being the provider, the caretaker, the one that...the breadwinner, that kind of a thing. So I think that there's some conflicting roles. There's nothing greater than whenever a family brings in a Latino male to come to school 'cause you know that student will...that the chances are greatly increased of that student succeeding. Very seldom do you see that, very seldom do you see the families come, uh, to the campus, uh, you know with their students. We have to pull them in, ok? We have to pull them in. So I think it's a conflicting role, but I think whenever there is family support there. Whenever we can explain the benefits of education, I think that there's tremendous support there.

Faculty 2 - Well, you know, you find both kinds. And this is coming directly from what students have shared with me. There are parents that they say that from the time they were little, they promoted education. And many of them say...'cause in my classes, the first thing I have them do is talk about...matter fact, I have them

make a card where they have to put pictures representing motivations for coming to college. And so, being the first one in their family to graduate, proving people wrong that says you can't do it, so see there's that other side.

As previously mentioned, some Latino male students gain motivation to persist in college as they see the struggles, hardships and labors in their families who never attended college. This is evident in the following statements:

Student 1 - Yeah, 'cause, uh, my father he didn't, he didn't graduate high school, and he's working construction. And, um, we're...we're struggling financially. And he's always told me to graduate, and go to college and be somebody so you can have better than what he did. And so you can have some...financial support for when you do have a family. And teach your kids what you grow up is, finish high school, and go to college, and be successful.

Student 2 – I know some families it's like, parental role is kind of the only example they give their kids is all you got waiting for you is that shovel that I'm using right now. They don't take, you know...they don't give their kids hopes and dreams for a better future. It's just like this is what's waiting for you, and we're never going to do any better than this so just get used to it.

Student 3 - Academic success here, and uh, means to me a great deal. Primarily because I come from a family history, a family background with no college education so, in other words, I'm pursuing it as a first-timer. Seeing myself as a, uh, the gateway to open myself up for future generations in my family.

Institutional Strategies

Previously discussed findings indicated that family support is an important factor for Latino males, especially for college persistence. With this indication noted, in this section the researcher brings to discussion additional data related to institutional strategies and factors that influence Latino male persistence in college. The impact these strategies will have on student persistence is of vital concern for college administrators, faculty, and staff as expressed in the course of the interview process. For example one staff member stated,

You know, we do a lot of things. We try to...I think whenever we bring the students in; we try to make things more familial. We try to...you know, really work with the parents. We know the parents play an integral part in the students' registration and enrollment, and consequently, the retention, um, the persistence. So we work a lot with the folks. I think that's one of the big things that we do.

Other administrators expanded in the same concept highlighting the importance of including external partnerships as follows:

Administrator 1 - So, we tend to focus in (CC1). So, it doesn't mean we internalize, we look outward, but we look to those community partners. We look to our school districts that we serve in the area. We look to Big Brothers Big Sisters. We look to Habitat for Humanity. We look to the YWCA or the YMCA. We look to those groups but it's all within our county. And so, what it would take is some visionaries. I personally believe they have to be in a leadership capacity.

Administrator 2 - We call that the star strategy class and every one of you if you know that, then other things in this class are going to connect. That tells the

students that it's not beyond their reach. It tells the students what to look for and they leave thinking, I think I can do this. So, we have to continually remind faculty to have students learn something every single day that makes sense for them. And what I think happens for students, male and female, young and old, is they sign up for classes because they know that it's important to be in school if they know it's important to be in school. And then they never feel that anything that they hear connects to what they're trying to do, or connects to the goals of the course. So in education, we have to know our students. We have to know ourselves. And we have to find ways to connect all of that. And that's a hard thing in a classroom. What do you teach?

As in the previous statement, classroom strategies are referenced as positive for student success. The next statement is related to successful persistence and the development of students in and outside the classroom. The administrator commented, Service learning is helping us. We've got a really wonderful service learning office led by Serafin Garcia and Laura Escamilla. And we're putting students into classes where they have opportunities to have service as a way to experience the theory of the class. And our persistence rates are higher in service learning than they are in other classes. Now, I don't know if we've broken that down by demographics but pretend that this number is right. From fall 2010 to fall 2011, the first time in college rate of return for the whole district might have been 50% at our campus, the first time college students who took service learning classes in the fall returned at 90%. Now, it's a very small number but it's enough to make us

think that the more we can put service into our classes, see and that's the fifth connection, that connects to the community, if you can get all of that working, they'll come back.

While institutions are becoming aware of the Latino male gap in college persistence and implementing strategies, Latino male students are keenly aware of the changes and environment as they enter colleges to obtain an education. Students commented on the need to address the changes for Latino male success, as stated in the next remarks,

Student 1 - I know when I went to school 20 years ago they had actual catalogues and they had, when I was looking online to see what degrees you all offered here, to me it just wasn't a user friendly website. I kind of liked the hand pamphlets. Even though I went to another college and got my associate's degree there and they had books, I mean pamphlets on what degrees you get. Here, I think everything's online. To me it's kind of a little discouraging. I kind of just can't see a degree...I just don't like the way it's set up.

Student 2 - And when you're walking in, especially if you're a first generation student walking to a college of any sort, it's intimidating as it is to walk through the door. So, all the warm fuzzies you can provide obviously can make it easier for somebody to do it rather than getting eight steps inside the door and throwing their hands up, making a U-turn and walking out.

Along with institutional strategies, Latino male students are aware of the need to implement their own personal strategies as they seek to succeed in college. The

acknowledgement of strategies and initiatives used by colleges, and utilizing them, denotes Latino male achievement progress. In this statement a Latino male student added,

Like most things in life, a lot of the situation is going to be what you make of it. So, I mean, pull your boots up and jump in and then that will certainly work to your advantage. As far as the school, all the labs and the learning centers that they they've got are definitely very helpful. And it's kind of the same scale as the classes where you can actually get to know the people that are there. You're not just a face in a crowd. The school also did service learning projects. They even mandated it in some of the classes. That was two semesters ago. I haven't seen it since. But as far as to be successful from transfer standpoint, they did service learning and it was required in two of the classes that I took. It was required. And what it was was to help enhance your student resume for when you transfer. It was actually a graded exercise in two of my classes that you had to participate in some type of community development project. Like I went out with a bunch of people and we picked up trash along the riverbanks to help clean up. I also went out on weekends and painted a house for Habitat for Humanity and things like that. And it was all organized through the school, or at least made available through the school to help with the student resume when it was time to transfer to make you a more appealing student when you go to a four-year university. So, I thought that was a great project that they had here. Again, that was two semesters ago. I haven't seen them do it again, maybe they are. At least none of my classes have required it anymore.

Some impressions of Latino males is the reluctance to seek help or un-manly to do so. Administrators and staff are starting to acknowledge this behavior when offering services and trying to engage Latino male students. This awareness could strategically address such an obstacle to persistence for Latino males. An administrator shared the following approach:

I think that initially whenever we have our students come, uh, very few of them are....feel comfortable asking for help, and I think that has...as college professionals we need to let them to know that it's OK to seek help, to ask for help, and to receive help. It's OK that...because they feel that there's a belief of machismo, that maybe perhaps asking for help may be perceived as a sign of weakness, and so therefore, and they don't want to be....they don't want to be act like they're stupid or don't know, and so they don't ask for help. I think that they tend to sit more...maybe just males in general, maybe further back in the classroom, ok? So I think that it's OK to try to work with them such that to let them know that help it is available, that it's OK that help is available....and that it's not...that not everyone is going to know all the resources or all the things to be successful, you know... that things are learned and by learning you can become successful...so I guess to let them know that it's OK to ask for assistance, ok? And maybe pull them out of that...make them feel comfortable in this environment.

Latino Males Drive and Motivation to Achieve College Goals

As the educational gap of Latino males increases, it is imperative that colleges

understand the motivation for Latino males to enter and persist in college. This section details motivators for Latino males and their drive to persist and succeed in college. Several responses in this study provided evidence of Latino male students with long-term goals, commitment to persevere, aware of the future, and students that are fortified by the experiences of parents with little or no college education. The following quotes indicate factors influencing Latino male student to persist in college:

Student 1 - Success, for me, and I'm sure a lot others takes dedication, determination. You gotta be goal-driven. You gotta have something you're striving for. Now if success, if success itself is your driving force, then whatever you field you choose... whichever course of study you choose, you have to be determined. Your future status, your children's status, and just be driven and focused on that.

Student 2 - I think just the pressure of being like a first-generation college student in my family, I think a drive towards doing it. I'm not, but I'm not just, I mean, that's never in my mind when I think about college, it's just what I want to do. So I just think about what I want to do, how to get there. This is one step that I need to get to my goal to success. And the challenge for that is just making the time, if you got bills to pay, or working. Like, to me, I see it as, you have mandatory meetings at work, you have class at the same time; I'm not going to make it to the mandatory meeting. I'm gonna be at school because, to me, it's school first 'cause I'm not gonna be stuck at a low wage job. School's gonna get me higher than that. That's the way I see it.

Student 3 - I guess one thing that the college is influencing in me staying here is showing me what I'm studying for and what I could be doing, but nonetheless, right now I'm enrolled as a Performing Arts student, but what I actually planning to do...I'm going to change my major, and uh, I'm actually going to work my way up to get a PhD in Psychology. And I have a minor in music education, and a lot of people, a lot of people would tell me that I'm really good, I guess, at speaking, but to me, I've always wanted to help people. And to me, knowing that I can get the education to do that, not just for the money, but I would really want to pursue my education in order to help people, those people out. I see so many people that have either mental issues or home issues, personal issues, sometimes I wish I could just go out and help 'em out. And knowing this struggle, I want to be one of those people that can, can help them find through their struggle and help 'em succeed, and maybe even help other people that I meet that have issues and pursuing their education, too. Some, something like that...but, yeah.

Student 4 - ...like said, it's not necessarily been a push in the general direction, but it's more of a "yeah boy, Glad you did it." that type of deal. I mean it's a positive outlook on it, but there's not "Hey, you need to go to class or Hey, you need to, you know..." It's more of a, "I'm glad your' taking advantage of this, and you're doing what you need to do."

Some staff acknowledged the need for Latino male students to be motivated; however, the motivation is placed solely on the students; as one of the interviewees stated, "they (Latino male students) would need help, but I think they (students) can also

start promoting more of a message from within that, you know, if you (students) are a young male that we need you to graduate." and

I guess trying, trying to live a little bit better. And don't try to follow the same foot steps into that life, not going to school, and just have to work for the rest of your life. Try something better so you can achieve a lot and be successful.

As noted earlier, Latino male students indicated a concern for the future *with and without* education. Interestingly, their concern included their friends and their future without education. This reveals long-term thoughts by Latino males and awareness that persisting in college will directly impact them and others. Students responded to persistence by saying,

Student 1 - Most of my friends are from...that I had in high school were Latino, and, uh, most of them are now going to college, um, without even working so the way I look at it, like, I don't want to be like them. Just being bums, doing drugs, and having five kegs. I want to be somebody in life, and seeing those people, um, just motivate me more to be successful in life and graduating and earning a degree.

Student 2 – I think like internal motivation. That's what kept me going here. I thought about my future and what I want to do, and I cannot achieve any of that without a college education or a Bachelor's degree. So my internal motivation is I want my Master's degree in Criminal Justice. Join the Air Force. Be there for a good eight years and become a federal officer, and that's what's keeping me going in school. I believe all that's keeping me academically well here at college.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration the collection of data previously presented, the direct and indirect findings related to question one created some surprises. One surprise is the lack of awareness that colleges and staff demonstrated regarding the Latino male student college gap. Another finding is lack of consistency in addressing this Latino male issue. While C2 College has quickly obtained college district support for Latino male programming, C1 College staff and faculty noted a movement possible in the opposite direction, away from Latino male programming. Interestingly, all respondents expressed concern for the undeniable decrease of Latino males from college enrollment. Based on the data presented in this chapter, it is imperative to increase the awareness in administrators and staff regarding factors affecting Latino male college attendance and persistence. The current college culture is an indicator that colleges need to re-focus on this sub-group and the holistic psychology involved in college attendance and persistence. As stated earlier, Latino males know the struggle of parents with little or no education, and they are aware of whether or not a college environment is welcoming to them. Taken into a larger context, motivation for college persistence of Latino males involves their family, college strategies, parenting, and faculty and staff among other factors.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion, and Implications

Introduction

This chapter provides a re-statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, and discussion of findings. The discussion is organized by the major themes emerging from interviews; which is the primary sources of data, as reported in chapter four. This study was guided by two primary questions, analyzed through the lens Critical Theory (Willis, 1997). Critical theory was chosen because of its analytical approach to the relationship between individuals and social beliefs; which may directly and indirectly influence Latino male attendance and persistence in college. This chapter concludes with recommendations to improve community college's practices, and additional research needed to advance the literature to advance Latino male in higher education.

The central function of this study was to explore the influences and factors related to Latino males' attendance and persistence in two Texas community colleges. Throughout this research, Latino male responses related to factors that influenced their college attendance and persistence were carefully examined. Specifically, this study undertook an investigation of perceptions of a sample of Latino males currently attending two colleges. It was also intended to analyze how community colleges will appear when framed and explored through critical theory, and provide an interpretation of results. The chapter concludes with implications for practices and implications for further research related to this study.

Re-Statement of Problem

It has been established in the first two chapters of this study, that research related to Latino male is limited in the following areas: 1) program availability specifically designed to attract and retain Latino males in college 2) community college initiatives that involve parents and Latino male role models in educational activities to support Latino males in college. Even though a vast number of studies related to minorities in higher education have been conducted, Latino males have been overlooked in the realm of higher education until recently. Few studies have used Latino males as their primary focus. The limited information on Latino males' influences to attend and persist in college, appears particularly troublesome when one considers the significant amount of literature emphasizing the need to increase college graduation rates. This lack of information related to Latino male represents a significant research void regarding minorities' attendance and retention in college. As a result, the research, literature, and programs concerned with Latino males reflect a traditionally conceptualized discourse. This traditional approach has created the misconception that Latino males are not committed to educational attainment. Utilizing this traditional conceptualization not only creates institutional barriers to approach Latino males, but also deters colleges from implementing innovative programming and strategies to address this particular population, and reduce the achievement gap. As noted, increasing college enrollment for Latino males is important. College persistence is vital for this particular population. To support Latino male persistence, the literature suggest improving the campus diversity, offering culturally appropriate retention and programming, providing financial aid and

on-campus employment opportunities, and adding programs that would help students stay connected to family and mentoring (Lee Jr. & Ransom, 2010, p. 64). I contend that Latino male's college attendance and persistence should be comprehensively researched, analyzed from the perspectives of universities and community colleges, and through underutilized theoretical frames to better understand this important aspect of educational discourse.

All efforts to understand the factors associated to the disappearing of Latino males in higher education should continue being carefully examined. As Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) noted, while there are encouraging signs that Latino males have increased in college enrollment, it has not kept pace with the changing demographic percentages within the Latino community. In spite of various initiatives to incorporate minorities in college success in current educational policies and practices, the issue of Latino male vanishing from college is not addressed. The factors affecting attendance and persistence of Latino males in college encompass multiple viewpoints and approaches. For some, it is a representation of low achievers and drop-outs in the educational system. For others, it represents an opportunity to explore new creative options to address this social and educational dilemma. Regardless of points of views, current analysis shows that Latino males are disappearing from higher education, unable to fully integrate themselves into social and academic college settings. As Nora (2007) stated, "other factors impacting Latino males in college are family responsibilities and working off-campus; which can detour students from full academic and social integration on campus, and directly influence their transition and adjustment to college."

As stated in chapter two, there is a growing concern for researchers, educators, and the community regarding the gradual disappearance of Latino males in secondary and postsecondary levels of education; as described in the writings of Saenz & Ponjuan (2009). In the same notion, Oguntoyinbo (2009) refers to this educational trend as “a silent crisis,” indicating that “Hispanic males are more likely to abandon high school and more likely not to complete college” (p.14). Evidence of these statements were found in the responses of several participants in this study; indicating that the percentage of Latino males attending and persisting in college is lower, compared with Latina females.

Re-Statement of Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was explored the factors that influence Latino males to attend and persist in college. Particular attention was given to those factors believed to influence Latino males with similar characteristics to persist at community college. Finally, this study reviewed whether or not direct or indirect messages from family and college staff convey factors that support or impede attendance and persistence of Latino males in higher education.

Research Questions

The following two primary questions guided this particular study:

1. What factors influence college attendance of Latino males at two Texas community colleges?
2. What factors influence Latino male persistence at two Texas community colleges?

The collected data and methods used in the study were determined by the questions above. Prior to collecting data, the researcher expected to contribute to the

existing literature regarding Latino males in college, and demonstrate the significance of research on the factors affecting their attendance and persistence in community college.

Methodology

In order to collect and report data, the researcher of this study used qualitative methodology. The research took place at two urban community colleges in Texas from February to July 2012. Focus groups and Individual interviews were used as the main data gathering tool (Patton, 1990) upon identification of target administrators, staff, and students. A total of 4 administrators, two staff, and four focus groups of at least ten students in each group were conducted in this study. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and examined through “narrative analysis” and “categorization” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). Trustworthiness (validity) was insured through triangulation of methods. In addition to interviews, documents and information found on colleges’ website were analyzed. Validity was tested by independent analysis, and finally the researcher compared such analyses for the purpose of agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Analysis of Findings

The participants of this study self-identified as administrators, faculty, staff and Latino male students; and their conscious efforts to acknowledge their perspectives as suggested by the data, should not be presumed to represent the perspectives of all administrators, staff, and Latino males students in Texas community colleges, or in the United States in general. These analyses are limited to the data derived from this particular study sample, and are not intended to present a new theory. Rather, this study is a reflection of the nature of case study methodology; which calls for a naturalistic and

interpretivist approach to the subject of Latino males in higher education.

The critical theory from Willis (1997) was used as the theoretical framework to analyze the data emerging from this study. The use of critical theory was intended to establish relationships between institutions (community colleges) and individuals (Latino males) as they relate to the issue of attendance and persistence in college.

The analysis of the collected data in this study is presented according to the major themes that emerged from the data, in relation with critical theory. The following four sections correspond to each of the major identified themes: 1) early Latino male recruitment, 2) family influence on Latino male college attendance, 3) making a connection with staff and advisors, 4) Latino male programs.

Early Latino Male Recruitment

Noting the lack of research addressing the issue of Latino male attendance in higher education, and in order to address the early Latino male recruitment, administrators and staff in community colleges are venturing into data-dry strategies. The embryonic Latino male recruitment effort will require increased college and public school partnerships, if both institutions are committed to resolving the Latino male crisis. The partnerships will require stronger collaboration and team efforts beginning as early as Pre-K. In a report from the Caucus of State Legislators and The Tomás Riviera Policy Institute (2003) noted that preparedness for Latino students fails early, with limited exposure to English-speaking households, and they are more likely to live in poverty. In the same regard the report indicated that

the early childhood years (0-5) represent a critical period of cognitive, social, and emotional development. An extensive body of research has documented that if a child's environment provides a rich and challenging menu of experiences during this period, the level of readiness for formal schooling will be significantly enhanced. It is also clear that low-income children (Hispanic children among them) do not enter kindergarten with the same toolkit of educational background; and they are hampered by poor health, and other factors (Tornatzky, Pachon, & Torres, 2003, p. 11).

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, researchers and educators emphasized the importance of minority children participating in early childhood. Latino children not participating in early childhood program are less likely to enter elementary school with the necessary academic preparation needed to succeed in middle and high school; which in turn prepares them for entering college. This study finds that in addition to early childhood participation, there are other factors that directly or indirectly affect Latino male attendance in college. For instance, the majority of students participating in this study alluded to family and friends influences and self-motivation, as factors that led them to attend college. Interestingly, none of the students made reference to high school counselors or college recruiters influencing their decision to attend college. This finding holds to be true as far as the lack of recruiting information for Latino males observed in both participating colleges' website (i.e., Latino male mentoring, scholarships, bilingual information for admission and registration, etc.). Even though administrators' and staff's responses alluded to recruitment and outreach strategies for Latino males, no evidence

was found in college recruitment materials of both participating community colleges. Based on the premises of critical theory, this dilemma requires remedial actions that would empower staff to refocus in the dynamics of recruitment with an *inclusive* approach to the Latino male population. It is the notion of critical theory that “individuals can not gain mastery over their own *social interconnection* before they have created them,” (Willis, 1997). Therefore, the researcher contends that college’s efforts to recruit Latino males have to be *specific* and *intentional*. The expectation of recruiting Latino males utilizing the traditional college recruitment strategies is unrealistic to some extent, considering that a vast majority of Latino parents and students do not visit with college recruiters, due to the intimidation of language barriers and other social factors. Therefore, the researcher recommends recruiting-staff’s participation in diversity training, displaying bilingual recruiting information, and employing Spanish-speaking recruiters.

Family Influence on Latino Male College Attendance

Even though there is a limited literature related to Latino males’ college attendance, numerous researchers emphasized the importance of family support to obtain educational goals (Garcia, 2011; Tornatzky, 2003; Cutler, Lee, Tornatzky, 2002; Epstein, 1991). This notion was evident throughout the literature review in chapter two and through the discourse of interviews conducted for this study. According to Tornatzky (2003), recent demographic changes have focused on minority parents’ role in the pre-college planning of Latinos and other underserved communities. The author further asserts that

the most important “secret weapon” in helping them overcome low educational attainment is unfortunately underutilized. The integrity, self-reliance, and closeness of the Latino family are among the greatest assets to the problem of educational improvement. Hard work, self-improvement, and respect for learning are a few of the values that characterize the Hispanic culture. However, too often, these values of the Hispanic family are frustrated or ignored by schools or school systems (2003, p.20).

The findings of this study reflected a correlation to these statements as administrators and staff from both participating colleges admitted that they are not reaching out to Latino parents, as part of their strategies for Latino male college attendance. Further review of documentation and information available in the participating colleges’ website provided no indication of outreach for parents related to Latino male college attendance initiatives. Responses from the majority of interviewed students revealed the importance of family influence in making decisions to attend college. Some students stated that parents supported their decision to attend college regardless of their parent’s college knowledge; while others noted that seeing the struggles of their parents provided motivation to attend college. Several students credited their fathers as sources of encouragement and inspiration to attend college. Based on some of the staff’s responses, all efforts to attract Latino male students seem to be internal and sporadic as evident in the following response: “I think whenever we bring the students in; we try to make things more familial.” There is evidence of staff’s and

administrators' awareness related to the importance of planning parent involvement for Latino male; as a staff member explains

I think that, um...uh, in promoting the family, I think that's probably one of the strongest existing tools that we could resort to very quickly because a lot of our students, specifically our young Latino males, come from a strong kind of Hispanic family, for the most part.

However, there seems to be a no formal plans from the colleges or from the districts to take ownership of the need to approach families' involvement to influence Latino male's decision to attend college.

By application of the critical theory framework, there is a need for institutional philosophies to be re-examined and identify specific ways to establish a relationship with Latino parents; capitalizing on their family values to influence their children for college attendance. On the basis of these findings, and understanding the critical role of family on Latino males' college attendance decisions, the researcher contends that community college's personnel perceived family influences merely as rhetoric, as opposed to the strongest tool that needs to be strategized within initiatives of the institution. The absence of *intentional* Latino family planning is the result of *undefined* plan of action regarding Latino male attendance in college. The researcher recommends implementing Latino family outreach activities such as admission days, orientation and partnership with high schools for Latino male college preparation, etc.

Making Connection with Staff and Advisors

The notion of establishing positive relationships to achieve organizational goals continues to be explored in the field of educational research. It continues to be an important and challenging aspect of human interaction requiring strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to make meaningful connections with others. Establishing this connection is especially essential for Latino male students, staff and advisors. According to Carter (2005), leadership in educational institutions goes “beyond monitoring curriculum and instruction, and assessment results”. Leaders should promote, recognize, and support teachers that step outside the traditional role and embrace new approaches to develop student relationships, (Carter, 2005). These characteristics are always appreciated by students in general. Latino males in particular, expressed appreciation of the benefits of making a connection with staff to ensure their success, as observed in the following statement:

I'll literally be outside of her office waiting for her to show up. And when she opens her office she lets me go camp in the back of her office and sit there and do work all afternoon until she leaves. So, that's certainly an advantage to being in a community college versus a large university.

The fact that a student feels comfortable sitting in his professor's office working for hours, exemplifies a well-established connection that contributes to this particular student commitment to succeed in college. Unlike the misconception that Latino male students do not communicate openly to seek help, the majority of Latino males

participating in this study expressed a desire to speak with faculty and staff. As the example below illustrates:

I interact with my professors like if I would do any adult, with anyone in authority, someone with knowledge. I look like them as the key to my successful drive. I don't look at them like they're above and beyond. I would talk to them like any human being. If I have a question, that's what they're there for. They're there to answer my question. If I feel stuck in any particular, uh, time in my class or time in my semester, I can refer to them as my resource. And I look at most of my professors that way. Any instructor, professor, uh, uh, junior instruction, uh, coordinator, they are my, my resource. They are my key. I can open them up if I have a question.

Another example of appreciation of staff accessibility for Latino male students is expressed by a student in the following comment:

They're much more accessible. 'Cause I mean for the most part, um, in other universities you'll have big classes with auditorium size, and they'll never learn your name. By the end of it, if they know three or five...that's too many. And here's it's much smaller, much more compact so it's easier to get a hold of them. You're able to ask questions, and overall there just much more accessible.

It is assumed that students have knowledge of faculty's and staff's office hours. From staff's and administrators' perspective, as an approach to facilitate consultation and advising services, it is assumed that students will make the time and effort to utilize these opportunities. However, Latino male students are stretched by so many personal

responsibilities that seeking these services can become difficult. Therefore, creating a connection with staff and advisors is not always feasible for many Latino male students.

As an advisor noted in the following statement:

In an ideal world, I think small classes where they are really able to engage one-on-one more...where they're able to interface with staff here and faculty here more one-on-one because it's that connection with an individual I think that has the greatest power, as well as, you know, continued resources to help them find jobs, to help them learn about the opportunities out there. Because they're so time-stretched, they're often not able to take advantage of a lot of the opportunities we do have. Either they don't know about it, or they...because we have a lot of students, they come into school and I mean, it's like they get out at 12 and they gotta be at work at 12:15, and it's amazing how they're so sandwiched, their lives are. And so in an ideal world, I guess, I guess it's really ideal they'd have enough money that they didn't have to work. They could just be like an old-fashion, traditional student that's supported.

Considering the findings of this study, the researcher contends that there is a need to establish a direct connection between faculty, staff, advisors, and Latino male students that would result in students' academic achievement; which in turn would increase levels of persistence in college. Therefore the researcher recommends a continued effort from faculty, staff and advisors to provide one-on-one opportunities of interaction with Latino male students, and develop internal and external relationships with the Latino community to increase Latino male college attendance.

Latino Male Programs

The literature review of this study indicated a shortage of research addressing the educational phenomena of Latino male vanishing from college. Therefore, the notion of Latino male programs is rising as a new concept to address the educational gap of Latino males in higher education. It was until recently that a few scholars' research was dedicated to discuss this social educational phenomena. As depicted in the writings of Saenz and Ponjuan (2009), a growing concern for researchers, educators, and the community is the gradual disappearance of Latino males in secondary and post-secondary levels of education. Currently, few universities had made efforts to raise awareness of the issue of the disappearance of Latino males in higher education; hosting programs such as Project M.A.L.E.S (Mentoring to Achieve Educational Success), and the Latino Male Symposium at the University of Texas at Austin. The symposium focused on the educational attainment of Latinos; while the Project Males focuses on mentoring Latino males across the educational pipeline (The University of Texas News, 2012).

Most recent literature has been speaking to the concept of programming for Latino students beginning as early as elementary, middle, and high school. For instance, Epstein (1991), and Garcia (2011) suggested that parents can highly contribute to the success of their children by participating in school programs, not only at elementary school level, but in middle and high school as well. In the same regard, a report from the Journal of Extension (2011) indicated that key factors associated with academic success and dropout prevention are parent involvement and parent academic motivation.

Therefore, it is critical to develop programs that promote these two factors in Latino families (Behnke & Kelly, 2011, p. 2) in higher education.

Clark and Dorris (2007) elevated the importance of Latino male programs to the next level, indicating that “parents should be involved in course-selection, interpretation of test information, college-admission discussions, college visits, and financial aid planning” (p.44). Collected data in this study did not reflect any indication of these suggested approaches; which is evident in the next statements: “from what I've seen so far, no. Um, there hasn't been any program that I've seen that specifically target Hispanic males or Latino males.” “I don't see particular, like, steps just for the Latino male population. I think just for our younger graduating students we take some steps, but I don't think there are some specific steps they take just for Latino males.”

However, data collected from one of the community colleges indicated some promising steps for Latino male programming, as stated below:

(Student's name omitted) is actually leading our Hispanic initiatives for males, for our male mentoring program. So, we're going to model some of the things that we're doing well with that community (Latino students) but he's also, we're trying, and he's writing it up so it's very research-based. And this is actually, we talked about, this opportunity to visit with you all, is just paramount for that, you know, literature review is part of that process, but anyway, he's working on. So, for this coming fall, fall 2012, that's when we're going to be launching that initiative, which will be cross-divisional with faculty and staff and so forth.

Another participating staff made reference to K-12 partnership with high schools that have a high representation of Latino students, as a reach-out effort to Latinos in general,

How are we going to partner with our K-12? We currently have adopted, we go through our adopted school programs and we're partnered with Nash Elementary, which is about 95% Hispanic. We do so much right through service and through-out community engagement and we're working with them and bringing them on campus and doing all the things.

The discussion above suggests that outreach programming at community colleges continue operating with historical models; which does not address the needs of changing demographics such as the Latino population. The principals of critical theory indicate that *universally developed individuals* are no product of nature, but of history (Willis, 1997). Therefore, the current dissonance between community college programming and the Latino male college attendance is the result of historical structures that has overlooked the social interconnection of Latino males in higher education.

Based on the findings previously discussed, the researcher suggests that community college administrators and staff develop programs that will facilitate college admission discussions; and workshops of financial planning with Latino parents, Latino male students, and the community to support transition from high school to college level attendance.

Family Support

As established in chapter two, there is a clear need for further research on understanding the role of families related to the achievement and persistence of minority students in college. In addition to college planning, Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2011) indicated that “family support must continue after a student enrolls in college”.

According to these authors, one of the challenges Latino male students face is working to support the family, and gaining family support to persist in college. The example below represents the *balancing struggle* that Latino male students face:

I kind of agree with that. My father he works every day and everyday he sees me going to college he wants me to finish college but at the same time he wants me to work. He wants me to do both. And sometimes I have discussions with him because of that.

Some parents who work in *labor-intensive jobs* understand the value of education, and the need to support their sons and daughters to persist in college, as a student noted below:

Well, my parents and my stepmom are supportive because they want me to have a better life because they work in labor and they want me to have a better life to not settle, to get a better life, to have a better paying job because I see them as always very tired and they're very supportive and they want me to finish. And every time, like I'm stressed out and I want to give up, they tell me don't give up. It will be worth it in the long run.

Regarding the findings that family support plays an important role in Latino male persistence in college, all participants were in agreement. However, in chapter four I shared several quotes expressing concern about the multiple roles that Latino male students play within their family. For example, a student stated:

I think there's a conflicting role. On the one hand, I think that families want their sons, their Latino sons to go to college, and on the other hand, I think that there's a perception of them being the provider, the caretaker, the one that...the breadwinner, that kind of a thing. So I think that there are some conflicting roles. There's nothing greater than whenever a family brings in a Latino male to come to school 'cause you know that student will...that the chances are greatly increased of that student succeeding. Very seldom do you see that, very seldom do you see the families come, uh, to the campus, uh, you know with their students. We have to pull them in, ok? We have to pull them in. So I think it's a conflicting role, but I think whenever there is family support there. Whenever we can explain the benefits of education, I think that there's tremendous support there.

Another example of conflicting roles is expressed by another student as follows: the biggest challenge I had was, um, my father was pretty much, ever since I was age three, he had to go out of state. Find a job. Support his family, of course. But afterward, I pretty much the...uh, role as man of the house. So I had to take that, that role in my household so, but then again, I mean, for the most part, I have a really small family. It wasn't necessarily one of the biggest challenges. It was a bit of a challenge, but family really does help.

Considering the varied responses of the participants, family support for Latino male students is evident. Nevertheless, some parents do not have college experience; which prevents them from fully integrating in the planning for Latino male attendance and persistence in college. This statement is supported by the next quote:

My family's very supportive in the best way they know how. I'm the first person in my family that's ever gone to college so, they don't really know what's it all about. But they've always got the '*That a boy*' whenever I see them. But that's basically the extent of their support

Data collection for this study revealed that there was no documentation on college's website, brochures, flyers or any electronic or printed material detailing college partnerships with parents. Through the lens of critical theory, the absence of partnerships with Latino parents constitutes a disempowerment for Latino male support; which in turn creates an additional at-risk factor for Latino male college drop-out. Furthermore, such disconnection prevents generations of Latino males from fully integrating into the educational system in higher education; increasing the gap between Latino male and female educational achievement. Therefore, the researcher recommends increasing *parent presence* in higher education through structures such as administrator-parent advisory boards, parent-professor organizations much like public schools PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization), parent orientation events, Latino male support workshops conducted by colleges, etc.

Institutional Strategies

The theme of institutional strategies emerged in this study as a result of close

examination of collected data, revealing the beginning of community college's strategies for Latino male college success. Previous discussion in chapter two denoted a traditional approach to strategize student's success in institutions of higher education, with some modifications to reach male African-American students, and some consideration for transferability to approach Latino male students. As an administrator noted, they are considering replicating a very successful black male student-group model that started with 30 young men, and have support from people in the community. They have assigned mentors to each of the African-American students and give them opportunities to talk, and spend a few hours with them daily. The same model was under consideration to strategize support for Latino male students.

Evidently, some community colleges are starting to re-think institutional strategies in relationship to the challenge of retaining Latino male students, with academic success. An increasing awareness in administrators, faculty, and staff related to the need of *re-focusing strategies* aligned to specific goals or "hallmarks," was highlighted among several interviewees' responses, shared in chapter four. As previously mentioned, organizational strategies have become a *campus-team-effort* with different approaches in mind, as some of the college's administrators shared during the interviews. Many of the participants welcomed the conversation regarding institutional strategies to approach Latino male student attendance and persistence in college, indicating their commitment to student success, service, and reaching out to the community. An indication of such commitment is the emphasis on multicultural confidence and language acquisition, interdisciplinary collaborations, clear and open communication, personal and

professional growth, and wellness. Recent awareness in educational organizations regarding the vanishing of Latino males in college has translated into adoption of new initiatives such as, *Achieving the Dream*, which addresses the challenge to increase the success of low income students and students of color to close the achievement gap. The identified outcomes of *Achieving the Dream* had been aligned to the strategic plan in both colleges participating in this study. The expected outcomes are: a) Successful completion of remedial courses and progression to college-level courses, b) Enrollment and successful completion of college level “gatekeeper” courses, c) Productive grades [C or higher] in all courses, d) Semester to semester persistence, and e) Graduation, (*Achieving the Dream*, n.d.).

Both college districts share some common goals, intended to provide college accessibility, affordability, and diversity reflective of the community. Each college approached the same goal with similar strategies, intended to improve support for students at school districts that have high percentage of Latino population. For example District 1 implements P-16 partnerships to reach their student support goals, while District 2 maximizes a seamless program (College Connection) intended to facilitate transition from high school to college, as part of their strategic approach to provide student support. Both initiatives (P-16 and College Connection) aim to provide strategic collaboration between schools districts and community colleges, to ensure student success in higher education. Even though these initiatives are not specifically designed to target Latino male students, they provide recruitment benefits for minority male and female college attainment as required in the statewide initiative for closing the gaps (*Goals and Targets*

for 2000-2015, 2000). In addition, one of the colleges initiated a child-care scholarship program as a strategy to support students who need child-care assistance; therefore, addressing one of the family factors that according to Nora (2007) “can pull students away from full academic and social integration on campus, and directly influence their transition and adjustment to college.” Both colleges provide evening course program to address the need of flexible schedules for non-traditional students. More than one student credited evening classes as a major factor for college attendance and persistence; as a student indicated, “if it wasn’t for night classes, I wouldn’t be here”.

In general, the researcher perceived that most Latino male students participating in this study worked full or part-time jobs, and even though there was no indication of students giving up their degree goals, working and attending college part time is a factor that according to Fry (2002) “has an adverse effect on Latino degree completion rates.” Most administrators and staff participating in this study were strategizing initiatives to recruit and retain minority students (including Latino males) by creating programs as previously discussed. Further efforts had been made to provide weekend advising and counseling services, and extended tutorial and lab schedules from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays; expecting to improve academic support for students’ success. Several students noted their appreciation of extended hours and weekend schedules, indicating that such services had been helpful for their academic success. Overall, these strategies work (at different levels) to encourage students to stay in college. However, the strategic approach for Latino male persistence is still a new concept that administrators and staff are beginning to explore, as most administrators and staff noted. One participant

expanded comments to say that one of the most difficult things is retention and graduation of Latino males because regardless of how far they (administrators and staff) try and all things they do, “for some reason Latino male students don’t commit and stay on track... they just *fizzle out*”.

Interestingly, another staff participant noted that the concern of Latino Males retention was “just coming up” to them. They (staff) don’t see Latino males graduating, so “the focus is on trying to recruit them (Latino males) as well. The participant further stated that they were trying to shift a little bit more of their attention, “but I don’t think there’s anything that we do specifically to create a support system for that population”.

From the Latino male participants’ perspective, there was a perception of “being in your own”, without specific guidance and support from college staff. A vast majority of students acknowledged agreement with the following comment from one of the students:

It's not necessarily that they're really trying to push us all and say, you know, 'Stick around with us. We're gonna offer this and that'. It's pretty much I can come here or not, I mean, it's up...you're the one who's going to make the effort to come to class...honestly,..I haven't really seen any active people to keep people to continue their education.

This suggests that Latino male retention have been overlooked, and institutions of higher education need to strategize an *intentional* balanced approach to recruitment and retention, specific to Latino males. Therefore, the researcher concurs with the findings of Kramer (1997), and Lee Jr. and Ranson (2010), recommending more formal and informal

faculty-student interaction, improving the campus racial climate, offering culturally appropriate *retention-support* programming, providing financial aid support (including workshops in school districts), providing on-campus employment opportunities, adding programs to help students stay connected to family, and providing mentoring initiatives. The implementation of these strategies is a strong predictor of student integration into college, and strongly influence persistence and academic achievement for Latino males.

Critical Theory Data Analysis

As outlined in chapter two, critical theory is concerned with structures of power and ideological authority. At its core, critical theory challenges common beliefs and ideas that favor one group over another. Society holds certain beliefs about females and males, poor and rich, white and black, and about superiority among groups. Some individuals believe that men and women are not equal, that the poor are less powerful than the rich, and that people of color are inferior to white people. Such beliefs have been commonly accepted in society. Critical theory asserts that individuals are influenced by these ideas and beliefs; and even social institutions like family and school accept these conceptions. Therefore, this analysis examined how these ideas may have influenced the decision of the participants in this study to attend and persist in college. Within the premises of critical theory, this study addressed whether the participants accepted or challenged commonly held ideas that Latino males are not committed or do not value education. In addition, this study examined whether or not social and institutional barriers had limited Latino male educational attainment. The fact that students participating in this study were pursuing education defies the negative

perceptions regarding Latino males not valuing education. All participating students directly challenged some of these misconceptions. They, as Simmons, (2011) stated, endure long standing pressures such as family responsibilities, and working while attending college. These Latino male students accepted their roles as family protectors and providers, and bravely added the heavy load and responsibilities of acquiring an education. These students were investing their time and energy in college, with the goal of succeeding in life and having a better future. Finally, students participating in this study rejected the idea of dropping out of college; juxtaposing the idea that Latino males are not committed to education. In addition, family responsibilities and struggles for some students proved to be a factor that fortified their college enrollment and persistence decision. For some of them, their pursuit of a college education was further motivated by the negative perception that Latino males are content with joining the workforce rather than attending college. The Latino male participants in this study demonstrated great devotion in pursuing a college education. Even though they embraced the ideological supremacy of individuals in authority, they exhibited excellent use of individual power to resist commonly accepted stereotypes of Latino males, and rejected the notion of being a drop-out. They were committed to use the power of education in order to create change in their lives and in society. Furthermore, the support of parents was critical in instilling ideas and values about the worth of a college education, and how education can help in attaining a better future for them and their family.

Research Implications

The results of this study lead to significant implications. First, the study verified research on parent and family influence, and its impact on the educational actions of men of color. Participants in this study were inspired by their parents to succeed in their educational goals. In spite of parents' educational and financial limitations, parents were very much involved in the decisions that students made to attend and persist in college; providing their support with encouragement and praising student's efforts to persist in college. They strongly believed in their son's capabilities to achieve their education and career goals and improve their socio economic status. However, as previously mentioned in the literature review, the construct of family support is often unclearly defined, and consistently addressed in terms of the dominating *middle and upper class' social values* (Garcia, 2011). Parent involvement must be recognized within the research literature to address *non-dominant class* definitions of parental support. As noted in the study of Garcia (2011), it is time to recognize parental support in parents' terms, which is not necessarily demonstrated by visiting colleges or saving for college expenses. The absence of the recommended type of involvement does not mean that parents are unsupportive of their children's educational goals. As many Latino male students stated, the support of their families come to them in different ways regardless of their families' limitations. Therefore, theories related to *parent influences* must include a wider range of activities that acknowledge cultural aspects; which may impact how parents demonstrate support for their children's education. Furthermore, identifying strategies that can better support

the work of *parents and schools* may enable these students to achieve their educational goals.

The second implication from the findings of this study is that Latino males need gender and race role models that may have a positive impact in Latino male college enrollment decisions. Aside from the positive support provided by some of the participants' fathers, Latino male students were also aware of the negative images most often associated with men of color. The low number of positive role models within the Latino population, and the lack of diversity in colleges motivated many of the participants of this study to succeed in college. Also, Latino males were motivated by the social, academic, and financial rewards of achieving a college degree; which indicates their desire to be socially and economically empowered. All efforts to better understand these negative influences associated with men of color, would assist in developing programming and strategies to impact Latino male college attainment.

The third implication of this study is the role that mentors play in college attendance and persistence for Latino males. The fact that several participants acknowledged seeking help with their male peers indicated that there is a need for strategizing Latino male mentoring programs. More research on Latino male mentoring is needed due to the alarming concern regarding Latino males' academic achievement. As several participants in this study stated, they often feel frustrated with the school work, and whenever possible they seek support through their peers.

The fourth implication of this study is the important role that financial aid plays in Latino male college attendance, and their decision to take full or part-time load while

attending college. Even though this study did not focus on financial aid, Latino students clearly expressed their financial struggles; and several participants expressed concerns of having to choose between paying for college or taking care of the needs of their families. For that reason, many of them decide to take full-time jobs and deal with college as best as they can. Financial aid (including scholarships) has a direct impact in Latino males' decision to attend and persist in college; and because of its importance, financial aid was part of the literature discussion in this study. Therefore, further research focusing on increasing access to financial aid and scholarships that are *need-based* (as opposed to merit-based) is needed.

Implications for Practice

Higher education institutions and educational organizations in general, must value the role that parents and families play in the lives of Latino male students. The efforts of Latino male parents and family are relatively isolated from educational systems. Because of the private parent-child relationship and the school-student relationship, parents and schools are frequently on opposite ends, although they work toward the same goals. Educational entities need to value parent's efforts at home as they try to help their children in the best way they can. Strong partnerships between parents and colleges need to be developed in order to support each other in their mission to encourage their student to pursue a postsecondary education. Even though college enrollment has been rising over the past decade, there are still many first generation Latino students whose parents did not attend college, or probable did not graduate from high school. These parents need training to develop college knowledge such as

information about high school course-selection that transfers to higher education institutions, and the meaning of grade point averages. Parents should have up to date information about educational and graduation requirements, and the steps of the college application and financial aid process. Knowledgeable parents are better prepared to understand the implications of their child's academic performance, and the need to continue encouraging and motivating their children.

This study demonstrated that community colleges can be more proactive to enroll and retain Latino male students, if administrators and staff re-focus their strategic approach to college attendance and persistence programming. They need to explore new ideas to make connections with the Latino male students, and develop effective relationships that would yield higher level of Latino male attendance and retention. Finally, academic advisors also play an important role in students' college application process, and exploring career choices. Many students indicated their desire to receive career counseling related to workforce trends and career income information. Many times academic advisors experience high workloads that do not allow them to effectively support these students. Therefore, efforts should be made to assign an adequate workload for academic advisors, so students can receive the guidance that they need. Additionally, strategies such as exploration of college search, degree plans, career choices, and small group advisement, or one-on-one support as students complete each step of the college process is recommended for students' success in college.

Policy Applications

The findings of this study also highlight policy implication for college access, and transition from high school. A particular concern for institutions of education is the funding levels for schools. Educational institutions are the primary vehicle for students to acquire the necessary skills needed at the college and employment level. Therefore, adequate funding for education must be increased to train teachers and administrators to adequately prepare students and meet the demands for the jobs of the future. In addition, early college planning and financial aid counseling activities need to be implemented as part of the internal policy and practice at colleges and universities. Furthermore, additional funding is needed for agencies and programs such as TRIO, which mission is to assist first-generation and low-income students pursue a post-secondary education. Finally, colleges need to be more affordable. Based on this study, the skyrocketing costs of tuition are factors limiting potential Latino male enrollment at secondary institutions.

Limitations of the Study

This study represents a small sample of Latino male students, administrators, and staff of two Texas community colleges. As such, the findings of this study may not be applicable to all colleges and universities nationwide. This study sought to achieve a high quality of research through the application of qualitative research strategies, as outlined in chapter three. However, as with many qualitative studies, there were limitations to the findings. Because participating students were Latino males, this study was conducted with a small sub-group of respondents, and narrowed to two institutions of higher education. In addition, this study focused specifically on currently

enrolled Latino male students only. The purposeful sample limited the number of potential participants who satisfied the selection criteria. Moreover, the recruitment of participants yielded a limited representation of the student body at the two colleges.

Future Research

The findings of this study suggest the following areas for future research:

- Continue exploring Latino male factors affecting attendance and persistence in higher education, and examining how the factors analyzed in this study may impact other Latino male's decisions to attend and persistence in college.
- A comparison cohort of enrolled and not enrolled Latino males could yield additional data about the impact of these factors on individual student's decisions.
- Conducting further research on the intersection of gender and race as it relates to Latino males could be useful in understanding college enrollment and persistence decisions of these students.
- Additional research could explore how parents, schools, and peers support student's plans for post-secondary enrollment and persistence in college.

Conclusion

The benefit of a college education for individual and society is widely acknowledged. Most individuals obtaining college-level degree enjoy the benefits of a better quality of life and more employment opportunities. This qualitative study was conducted to provide insight into the factors that influence Latino males' attendance and persistence in college. Particular attention was given to practices from college

administrators and staff to provide access and services that will increase Latino male attendance and persistence in college.

The findings of this study suggest that community college's administrators and staff would benefit from re-focusing recruitment and persistence strategies based on research and data analysis. Acknowledging the general findings previously discussed, the researcher concluded that college's administrators and staff should develop strategic plans to capitalize in the family values of Latino males in order to increase educational success rates for this particular population. This study has demonstrated the value of *dialog-based* research, from which the critical findings of this study emerged. The researcher concluded that there is great value in the combination of qualitative research methods and a critical theoretical frame, to address the endless exploration of institutional and social factors affecting the educational phenomena of Latino male vanishing from college. Limited college participation of Latino males has a negative impact in social and economic structures; producing hyper-segregation, and higher levels of poverty. According to Lee Jr. and Ransom (2010), Latino males have 18% college attainment compared to other men of color, African-Americans 26%, and Native-Americans 24%. Furthermore, in 2006, 26% of Latino males (18 to 24 years old) were high school dropouts, compared to six percent of white males and 10% of black males (*Latino males in higher education, 2006*).

As numbers in Latino populations continue to increase, the demographic profile of the United States will inevitably change; making Latinos the youngest population of all racial and ethnic groups (The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, 2003). Regrettably, the

disappearing of Latino males in higher education and lack of academic achievement for the Latino population in general, will have devastating consequences of productivity and economic progression for both individuals and society. Latino males must be prepared to enter the new knowledge-based economy by obtaining higher levels of education and training. The economic future and leadership of this country is intrinsically dependent on educated and innovative individuals that would find solutions to the problems of the U.S. and the international community.

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