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Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students:

Four-Year Hispanic-Serving Institutions

by

Freddie Sánchez

Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University

2020

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Freddie Sánchez as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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Abstract

Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students:

Four-Year Hispanic-Serving Institutions

by

Freddie Sánchez

Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University: 2020

This qualitative dissertation explores factors that contribute to first-generation Latino male retention and graduation at California State Universities (CSU) that are also designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI). This study is informed by the main research question: How do Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth for their retention while enrolled at southern California CSUs designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions? Utilizing Yosso (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model as the Theoretical framework guiding the research study, the study explores how participants used the various forms of capital: Aspirational, Familial, Linguistic, Navigational, Resistant and Social to successfully graduate. A phenomenological design was used in the study. Individual interviews, questionnaires and a photo elicitation process were part of the data collection design.

This dissertation expands on Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model. Findings include additional forms of capital that supported students through graduation: *Valor* (courage), Spiritual/Religious Capital and *Ser Servicial* (compassion to serve & give back). Implications for research, theory and practice are presented in this study with a focus on how four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions in southern California can increase the retention and subsequent graduation of Latino males.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The success of Latino males pursuing higher education is often overshadowed by the low numbers of Latino males who complete their degrees (Sáenz, Ponjuán & López Figueroa, 2016). One of my research participants said it best, “*Remember you’re a seed but through the concrete we’ve grown*”. As X, one of my subjects, shared, Latino males have the capacity to overcome complex barriers even those that seem to be made out of concrete in order to complete their degree. Latino males have the ability to grow, flourish and ultimately pave a path to their own degree completion regardless of obstacles. This study identifies how 14 first-generation Latino males were able to successfully graduate from two four-year southern California, Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Latinxs in the United States represent the largest minority group in the country and are estimated to represent 29% of the total national population by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). In 2016, Latinxs represented 18% of the U.S population. Although Latinxs are the largest underrepresented group in the United States, they trail in baccalaureate-degree attainment in comparison with other racial groups (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Mendez, Bonner, Mendez-Negrete and Palmer, 2015). Nationally, graduation rates of all racial groups have been on the rise since 2000, however in 2018, Latinxs between the ages of 25-29 still had a lower bachelor’s degree attainment rate than most ethnic and racial groups at only 20.1%. Asians had an attainment rate of 70.5 % compared to whites whose rate was 43.5%. Black attainment rate was 22.6% and American Indian/Alaska Native degree attainment was 15.5 % (US Department of Education, 2019b). I use the term “white” with a lower-case *w* throughout this dissertation to reference the white racial group. Many scholars including, Garcia (2019) take this approach, as she states, it

“decenter whiteness in my writing and research. I capitalize all other racial/ethnic groups as a way to center racially minoritized groups” (p. 139), I am following this model.

As noted in a Policy Brief detailing the equity gap of Latinx individuals in California, “we must make a collective, statewide commitment to eliminating the growing equity gap that threatens California’s Latina/o population” (Pérez Huber, Vélez, Solórzano, 2014). Although Huber et al. (2014) identify the equity gap among Latinxs completing degrees at lower rates than their white peers in California, nationally Latino males also have lower degree attainment rates than their female counterpart. In 2018, it was estimated 18.4% of Latino males between the age of 25 and 29 completed an Associates or Baccalaureate degree, compared to 23.2% of Latinas; and only 3.1% of all Latino males have a master’s degree or higher (US Department of Education, 2019b).

Due to the importance of ensuring Latino male success, this study examines factors that might positively influence the academic achievement of Latino male college students. Since the largest population of Latinxs reside in California (home to 26% of Latinxs), with the majority residing in southern California (Bustamante & Flores, 2019), and because it is estimated 66% of Latinx undergraduates are enrolled in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Excelencia in Education, 2018a), this research study is focused on two southern California State Universities designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

The disruption of deficit narratives can be accomplished by integrating anti-deficit scholarship, that advances policy, research and practice to support Latinx students (Perez, García-Lois, Arámbula Ballysingh and Martínez (2018). Following Pérez et al. (2018) paradigm, instead of focusing on a deficit model describing why Latino males are not academically successful and concerns that they do not possess successful educational skills, the focus of this

dissertation is on positive influences and attributes Latino males possess to be successful. Student success is defined in various ways: measures of academic achievement, desired personal outcomes, enrollment, and persistence in higher education and/or college degree attainment (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006). For the purpose of this study, student success is defined as Latino males who completed a baccalaureate degree from four-year granting institutions. Although Latinxs are entering post-secondary education institutions at higher rates (McFarland, Hussar, Wang, Zhang, Wang, Rathbun, Barner, Forrest Cataldi & Bullock Mann, 2018; Mendez et al., 2015; Torres, Hernández & Martinez, 2019), the number of Latino male graduates has not risen in proportion to the increased number enrolled (Mendez et al., 2015; Santiago & Galdeano, 2014; Yosso, 2006). There is a national imperative to understand how to best support Latino male students in order facilitate the completion of their four-year degrees (Sáenz et al., 2016). In this study, I examine factors beyond enrollment numbers and focus on the importance of retention and graduation.

Enrolling Latino male students into the higher education pipeline is one part of the process; a more challenging component and the basis for this research is to identify factors that lead to Latino male student persistence to graduation (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Mendez et al., 2015; Sáenz et al., 2016). The need to support and motivate Latino male students so they complete baccalaureate degree programs are important for income mobility (Torres et al., 2019). Chapa and De La Rosa (2006) assert the educational and economic levels of the entire United States population will be negatively impacted if degree attainment for Latinxs does not increase. College graduates on average earn approximately 75% higher pay annually compared to someone with a high school degree (Abel & Deitz, 2019) and 84 percent more in their working lives than individuals who only possess a high school diploma (Carnevale, Rose & Cheah, 2011).

Thus, earning an undergraduate degree is an important factor for economic prosperity and mobility (Carnavale et al., 2011; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Torres et al., 2019). California is currently the fifth-largest economy in the world. To maintain this ranking by 2030, the Latinx-equity gap must close and 60% of California's adult population must earn a college degree (Bates, Bell & Sisqueiros, 2018).

This phenomenological, qualitative dissertation examines how Latino male graduates experienced college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from the California State University system, where in 2017-2018, 21 out of the 23 campuses were designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HACU, 2019). Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) enroll and subsequently graduate the largest percentage of Latinx students in higher education (Santiago & Soliz, 2012b). In 2017-2018, Hispanic-Serving Institutions represented 17% of all postsecondary education institutions. California is home to the largest concentration of Hispanic-Serving Institutions than other states in the country, housing 176 institutions (Excelencia in Education, 2019). The increase number of HSIs in California and the increase in Latino males attending these institutions, provides an opportunity to examine the experiences of Latino males completing their degrees at these institutions.

Significance of the Study

The disproportionate number of Latino males earning college degrees compared to their female counterparts is concerning for scholars in higher education and the Latinx community. It is also true that the likelihood for Latinx students completing an undergraduate degree after enrolling in college, falls below their white and economically advantaged counterparts (Perna & Finney, 2014). Latino males also have lower-degree attainment than males from other racial communities. As of 2018, nationally, their male counterparts in other racial communities had

higher rates of degree attainment: Asian (69.6%), white (38.8%), African American (18.7%) compared to 18.4% of Latino males (US Department of Education, 2019b).

An extensive body of literature discusses the academic success factors for Latinx students (Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Crisp, Taggart & Nora, 2015; Gándara, 1995; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Hernandez, 2000; Huerta & Fishman, 2014; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuán, 2005; Nora, 1987; Nuñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers & Vazquez, 2013; Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009; Perez & Taylor, 2015; Rendón, Nora & Kanagala, 2015; Sáenz et al., 2016; Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005). There is also research identifying factors for Latinx-student success when enrolled at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Cuellar, 2015; Garcia, 2012, 2018, 2019; Laden, Hagedorn & Perrakis, 2008; Mendez et al., 2015; Musoba & Krichevskiy, 2013; Rendón et al., 2015). There are a number of dissertations identifying factors for Latino male student success in higher education at four-year institutions, however peer-reviewed articles and other publications discussing Latino-male student success at four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions is limited (Laden et al., 2008).

There is need for research exploring persistence factors that lead to graduation for ethnically diverse students, including Latino males (Crisp et al., 2015). With rapidly changing Latinx demographics and more access opportunities for students to seek higher education, it is important to understand persistence factors for Latino males (Crisp et al., 2015; Laden et al., 2008). In addition, no publication could be located discussing Latino-male student success at 4-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions, specifically focusing on southern California, where Latinx are the largest racial ethnic group. Arbona and Nora (2007) suggest, a stronger emphasis is needed on four-year Latinx students since research has shown Latinx students are more likely to earn bachelor's degrees if they enroll in 4-year institutions. Thus, this research study, will

positively contribute to the literature about the Latino male experience of southern California CSUs, designated as Hispanic-Serving institutions.

This study provides insights for administrators, support-services departments, faculty and staff, to inform policy that is aimed at increasing the academic retention and graduation of Latino males at four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions, specifically in California where the study was conducted. Research on Latino males traditionally focuses on factors contributing to low college enrollment, high attrition rates and low completion rates in higher education (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Noguera, Hurtado & Fergus, 2012; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2008). However, the findings of this study could inform higher education administrators and campus-policy makers about how to design and develop policies and programs that are guided by a belief in utilizing the strengths of Latino males' community cultural wealth at Hispanic-Serving Institutions. This research contributes to the literature by identifying factors that support and advance the retention and graduation of Latino males of California State University (CSU) campuses designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Theoretical Rationale

Researchers looking at retention factors in higher education for Latinx students have widely used Tinto's Student Departure Theory. As noted by Crisp et al. (2015), there has been an "overreliance of Tinto's model" (p. 261) to explain Latinx students' academic outcomes. The theory has also been criticized by several scholars, including Tierney (1992), where he argued Tinto "misinterpreted the anthropological notions of ritual, and in doing so has created a theoretical construct with practical implications that hold potentially harmful consequences for racial and ethnic minorities" (p. 603). Tinto's model implies that for racial and ethnic-minority students to persist in college, they must acculturate to socially integrate into the university

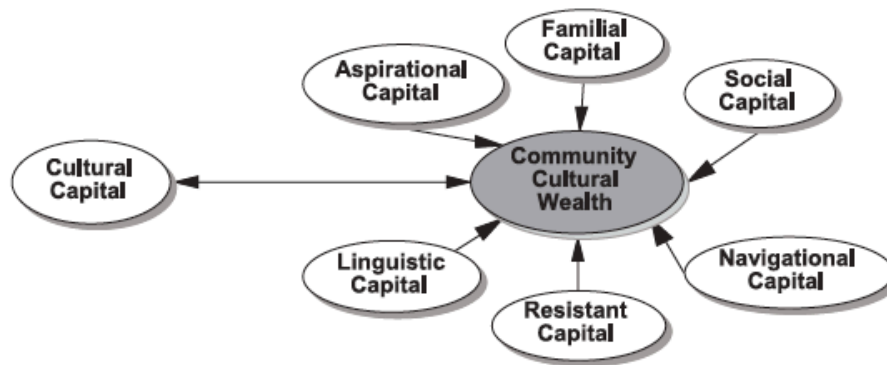
(Gonzalez, 2000; Oseguera et al., 2009). Other research argues the model is not inclusive of ethnic minorities and fails to account for positive attributes students bring to the college campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Metz, 2004; Torres, 2006; Torres et al., 2019; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014; Yosso, 2005). Tinto (1993) acknowledged and updated his previous model to include African American, low-income, adult and transfer students by including interventions and policies supporting these various groups. Crisp et al. (2015) suggest new research should consider the cultural capital of Latinx students in their framework. Thus, this research study uses Yosso's (2005) theoretical framework that is culturally inclusive and considers various forms of assets Latino male students bring to the institution (see Figure 1.1).

The Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model is grounded in a Critical Race Theory framework as a critique of Cultural and Social capital. The model utilizes a framework recognizing Latinx students' ability to transfer the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired at home into the academic environment (Yosso, 2005). Yosso argues, "the main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower People of Color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities" (p. 82).

The use of this theoretical framework opposes the deficit-based definitions of cultural capital that often devalues the experiences of people of color, including Latinx students. This framework provides an asset-based perspective that Latinx students, including male students, have assets and tools needed to successfully navigate academia, thus it is an important model to use as the guiding framework for this study.

Figure 1.1

Cultural Wealth Model adopted from Yosso (2005).



The Community Cultural Wealth Model includes six forms of capital, here's a description for each:

- ***aspirational*** is "...the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78);
- ***familial*** engages "a commitment to community well being and expands the concept of family to include more broad understanding of kinship" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79);
- ***navigational*** are the "...skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (Yosso 2005, p. 80);
- ***linguistic*** refers to the "...intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78);
- ***social*** can be seen as "networks of people and community resources" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79);
- ***resistant*** are the "...knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

Research Questions

1. How do Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth for their retention while enrolled at southern California CSUs designated as HSIs?
2. What factors contribute to Latino male students' graduation from public 4-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions in California?
3. What other factors outside of the Community Cultural Wealth model do Latino male students identify as part of their success while in college?

Definition of Terms

The following terminology contextualizes and creates shared understanding of the operational definitions throughout the study:

- **AB 540:** In 2001, California declared long-term residents of California (regardless of their citizenship status) qualified to pay “in-state” fees at California public colleges and universities. Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540) was enacted in 2002 and allows individuals who attended high school in California for 3 or more years and graduated or received an equivalent certification, could pay California in-state tuition (Abrego, 2008).
- **Attrition:** Attrition is the diminution in numbers of students resulting from lower student retention (Hagedorn, 2006). Attrition is a rate factor that impacts the institution and not at an individual level.
- **AVID:** AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a non-profit organization focused on changing lives by helping schools shift to more equitable, student-centered approaches. “AVID is implemented in more than 7,000 schools in 47 states across the U.S., plus schools in Department of Defense Education, Canada, and Australia. AVID impacts more than 2 million students in grades K–12 and 62 postsecondary institutions” (avid.org)

- ***Baccalaureate Degree:*** A baccalaureate degree also known as a bachelor’s degree refers to a student completing their program of study from a 4-year institution.
- ***Cal Grant:*** A California grant administered through the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) provided to eligible students who meet financial and academic qualifications. To qualify, the student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) (California Student Aid Commission).
- ***DACA:*** Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), is a United States immigration policy by the Obama administration in 2012. “DACA provides eligible youth the ability to gain a work permit and to defer deportation for a consecutive two-year period” (Muñoz, 2015, p. 5).
- ***Deficit Thinking:*** “Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child’s education. These racialized assumptions about communities of Color most often lead schools to default to the banking method of education critiqued by Paulo Freire (1973)” (Yosso, 2005, p. 75).
- ***First Generation College Student:*** For purposes of this paper, first-generation college student is characterized as students whose parents did not enroll in college or whose parents attended college but did not graduate (Núñez, 2011; Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis & Ruder, 2006).
- ***Habitus:*** Habitus refers to institutionalized norms (i.e., cultural, language, or behaviors) that constitute the daily experiences of a particular community. These norms reflect the

cultural and social capital that dominant classes use to accumulate economic capital.

Bourdieu's work highlights how institutions, such as higher education serves as a linchpin between individuals' everyday experiences and ideologies they draw upon and reproduce upon others (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977).

- **Latchkey Kid:** A latchkey kid is a child who is often left home with no parental supervision because parents are working. It also refers to children who take care of younger siblings while parents are working.
- **Latinx:** Salinas and Lozano (2017) state the term Latinx is an “inclusive term recognizing the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype” of individuals who traditionally were defined under the term Latinos but felt excluded. For purposes of this dissertation I use the term Latino (to describe males), Latinas (to describe females) or Latinx (plural when gender is not specific) instead of using the term Hispanic. As stated by Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove and Hernandez (2007, p. 36), “*Hispanic* and *Latino/a* are controversial pan-ethnic terms used to categorize millions of people of varied racial, ethnic, national, and cultural heritages”. Latinx is a term that is currently used by “Latinx-defined scholars of higher education in an effort to more broadly encompass and reflect the demands of our current socio-political context” (Arámbula Ballysingh, Zerquera, Turner, & Sáenz, 2017, P.9).
- **Pell Grant:** “The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain postbaccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education. Students may use their grants at any one of approximately 5,400 participating postsecondary institutions” (US Department of Education). Traditionally, a student receiving a Pell Grant is accounted for by the institution as low-income.

- ***Student Persistence and Retention:*** Student persistence is defined as the continual enrollment of students in a degree program leading toward the completion of the program; being awarded a college degree in the student's field of study. Persistence and retention are terms used interchangeably in research. However, The National Center for Educational Statistics differentiates these terms by stating that persistence refers to the student's will to continue with their education and retention outlines what institutions are doing to retain a student from dropping out; "students persist and institutions retain" (Hagedorn, 2006).
- ***Upward Bound:*** "Upward Bound serves: high school students from low-income families; and high school students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education" (US Department of Education, 2020).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation includes five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction and defines the purpose and overview of the research questions guiding this study. The second chapter includes relevant literature and research that address Latino male experiences at four-year institutions. Chapter two also include a discussion of the historical context of Hispanic-Serving Institutions and the California State University system. It also highlights research on the Community Cultural Wealth theoretical framework used as the theoretical model for the study. The last component of chapter two discusses persistence literature about Latino males. In chapter three, the methodology of the study is discussed. This chapter also describes the epistemological framework, theoretical perspective and my positionality within the study. Chapter four highlights

the findings as they relate to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model and describes additional forms of assets that emerged from the study: Spiritual capital, *Valor* and *Ser Servicial*. Chapter five summarizes the findings in the study and provides implications for research, theory, and practice. The final chapter also addresses limitations in the study and outlines recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of literature associated with Latinx-student success. The chapter also includes background information on Latinx students in higher education, specifically focusing on the Latino male experience. A section of the chapter provides information about the California State University system, outlining Latinx-student equity gaps. Lastly, this chapter concludes with an explanation on how Critical Race Theory and Cultural Capital theory grounds Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth theoretical framework, the theoretical model guiding this study.

Background

Latinxs are the fastest growing historically underrepresented group in the United States. Between 1990 and 2016, the Latinx population more than doubled from 22.6 to 57.8 million (Musu-Gillette, de Brey, McFarland, Hussar, Sonnenberg & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2017). Researchers estimate that in 2016, Latinxs represented 18% of the total population, making Latinxs the largest ethnic-minority group in the United States (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). In California, Latinxs (Hispanics term used in report and referenced in Figure 2.1 below) represented 39% of the total population in 2016 with over 15 million Latinxs living in the state, making it the largest group of Californians.

Figure 2.1

Projections of California Population (2016 – 2060)

	2016		2036		2060	
Total population	39,354,432	100%	45,807,050	100%	51,056,510	100%
Non-Hispanic						
White	15,147,499	38%	15,863,204	35%	15,792,622	31%
Black	2,260,738	6%	2,628,340	6%	2,847,709	6%
American Indian/Alaska Native	165,633	<1%	176,608	<1%	167,582	<1%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	5,302,598	13%	5,864,385	13%	6,081,859	12%
Multiracial (2+ of the above)	1,065,236	3%	1,778,219	4%	2,862,227	6%
Hispanic	15,412,728	39%	19,496,294	43%	23,304,511	46%

Note. Figure is adapted from press release (Department of Finance, 2017) on March 8, 2017: Department of finance release new state population projections. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

As seen in Figure 2.1, by 2060, nearly 46% of California residents are anticipated to be Latinxs.

The change in California demographics, specifically referring to the growth of the Latinx population and the widening gap between Latinxs and the next largest racial group (white at 31%), allows for a reassessment on the way student services and institutions of higher education support and educate Latinxs through college completion. Although the Latinx population is on the rise and more Latinx students are pursuing higher education, there are still equity gaps in the achievement of Latinx students from college enrollment, college retention through college graduation.

College Student Success

College student success and persistence literature has been widely researched by scholars for decades. Metz (2004) suggests the changing dynamic in American higher education allowed researchers (Astin, 1970; Bean, 1980; Nora, 1990; Rendon & Nora, 1994; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Tierney, 1992; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1997) to examine previous research on persistence. In discussing student success, Kuh et al. (2006) consider many attributes as part of student success, including degree attainment. They also state, there are a number of other educational success outcomes that provide benefits to individuals and society. They argue that not all outcomes of success are determined by retention and graduation; additional outcomes not directly related to retention and persistence include: becoming proficient in “writing, speaking, critical thinking, scientific literacy, quantitative skills and more highly developed levels of personal functioning represented by self-awareness, confidence, self-worth, social competence, and sense of purpose” (Kuh et al., 2006, p.10). Similarly, Pérez, Ahslee, Do, Karikari, & Sim

(2017) state traditional measures of success prioritize grades and graduation rates in higher education. They argue, “these measures of student success fail to account for institutional factors that result in less favorable educational outcomes among minoritized students” (Pérez et al., 2017, p. 21). Garcia (2019) poses that institutional agents, scholars, and others should revisit the way student success is viewed, specifically focusing on the effectiveness of institutions who serve Latinx students and reevaluate how they measure student success.

Student success can be identified as much more than receiving a degree; it should acknowledge the experiences of historically underrepresented students, including Latinx students. Models on student retention (Tinto, 1997; Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2009) suggest student engagement and involvement on campus contribute to student success. These studies often fail to account the impact of various activities and experiences on different student populations, including historically underrepresented students (Bensimon, 2007), this would include Latinx students. Over the last couple of decades, higher education scholars have argued student success should represent more than graduation rates, specifically for historically underrepresented students (Cuellar, 2015; Garcia, 2019; Malcom, Bensimon & Dávila, 2010; Torres & Hernández, 2007).

An increase of culturally responsive models continue to emerge accounting assets students already possess before entering higher education institution. Cuellar (2015) states universities should continue to provide opportunities that encourage student success for Latinx students by developing educational environments centering around the experiences of Latinx students from college entry through graduation. This environment with an intentional focus is what Garcia (2017b) identifies as “Latinx-enhancing”, where institutions recognize and provide culturally engaging environments for Latinx students. Research also suggest students of color,

including Latinx student succeed when they feel a sense of belonging on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuán, 2005), thus creating these types of experiences for Latinx students are important to cultivate positive feelings that enhance student success. Not addressing campus climate concerns, impacts the Latinx student experience, as found by Cabrera & Nora (1994), Latinx students generally perceive the campus climate to be more hostile than their white peers.

Latinxs in Higher Education

As a historically underrepresented group, Latinxs continue to be impacted by an educational system with exclusionary practices. MacDonald (2004) asserts that in early U.S History dating back to early 1500s, access to education for Latinxs was determined by race, ethnicity, skin color, and national origin. There is minimal documentation about Latinx students in higher education prior to World War II, however as noted by Garcia (2018), access to postsecondary education was limited due to racial segregation in K-12 education, racist systemic practices and white dominance.

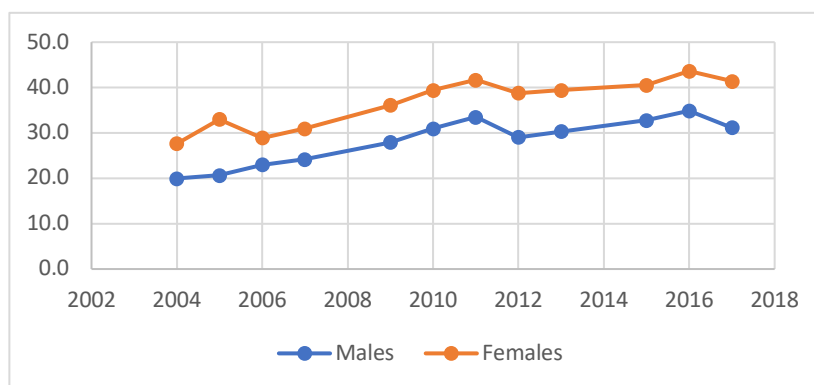
Despite racist practices and lack of opportunity for members of the Latinx community, Latinxs have pursued higher education for centuries. Tudico (2010) traces the Mexican and Mexican American experience in California's higher education system between the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) through 1945, the end of World War II. He identifies evidence of Mexican and children of Mexican landowners (*Californios*) attending catholic colleges, the University of California, Berkeley and several southern California colleges and universities. A long history of activism was traced through the Mexican American Movement (MAM), whose members represent the beginning of higher education participation in California prior to War World II. Members of MAM were students from institutions predominately located

in Southern California (Tudico, 2010). More noticeable, according to MacDonald, Botti and Clark (2007), beginning with the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the 1960's Civil Rights Movement, the Latinx community fought for an opportunity to access higher education. This long history of exclusion to a system that was created to support white-elite males, continues to diversify with the increase of students of color attending these institutions, yet "...whiteness continues to be valued, even at racially minoritized institutions such as HSIs..." (Garcia, 2019, p.11).

Current research and trends over the last ten years continue to show an increase of Latinx students graduating from high school, resulting in higher number of students pursuing higher education (US Census Bureau, 2019). In the latest statistical data available on college enrollment by the National Center for Education Statistics', *Digest in Education Statistics*, in 2017 there were 32.6% Latinx students between the of 18 and 24 enrolled in college (two-year & four-year colleges and universities). The Figure 2.2 below, shows the upward trend in college enrollment for Latinx students disaggregated by gender.

Figure 2.2

Percentage of Latinx student from 18- 24 years of age enrolled in college by gender type.



Note. Data provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS). See Digest of Education Statistics 2018, table 302.60.

In 2016, there was a peak of Latinx student enrollment, almost 45% of Latinas between 18 and 24 attended a higher education institution. That same year was significant for Latino males, as they also had the most college participation ever seen before, with almost 35% of Latino males pursuing higher education. There has been an increase of over 10% in the college participation rate for Latinx students over the last 10 year. It is anticipated this numbers will continue to grow as more students are graduating from high school and attending higher education institutions.

As Rodriguez (2015) argues, there is a shift in the national discussion regarding access in higher education for Latinx student. She argues the discussion has shifted from barriers to access higher education, into conversations about equitable access to all institutions, including the most selective, which most HSIs are not (Garcia, 2019). Research shows Latinx students, when controlling for demographic, academic, and high school characteristics, undermatch at a higher rate than students from other races and ethnicities (Kurleander, 2006; Roderick, Coca, Nagaoka, 2011; Rodriguez, 2015). Undermatch is usually defined as “occurring when a student’s academic credentials permit them access to a college or university that is more selective than the postsecondary alternative they actually choose” (Smith, Pender & Howell, 2012, p. 247).

The majority of Hispanic-Serving Institutions are considered to be less selective two and four-year colleges and universities, enrolling more than 60% of the Latinx students attending higher education. Although Latinx students are graduating from high school, at a higher rate than a decade ago, they are attending less selective institutions, while having the academic understanding needed to be admitted to more selective campuses. The concern regarding this phenomenon, is that students who enroll and attend less selective institutions due to undermatching, are less likely to complete their degree in four to six years compared to students

who matched and attended a college meeting their academic qualifications (Bowen, Chingos, McPherson & Tobin, 2009; Kang & García Torres, 2019).

There is also a body of literature stating Latinx students are more likely to begin their postsecondary career at a community college (Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Solorzano et al., 2005) and are less likely to transfer to a 4-year institution compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Fry, 2004; Solorzano et al., 2005). When Latinx students begin their baccalaureate degrees at a 2-year institution, this choice significantly reduces the likelihood of their completion of a bachelor's degree (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Latinx students are also more likely to enroll as part-time students, which has shown to demonstrate lower success rates (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Fry, 2004). Adding to this notion, Malcom-Piqueux et al. (2013) posits Latinx students tend to stay close to home, and this choice may explain why a higher percentage of Latinxs are concentrated at the community college and attend less selective campuses that attract students from local service area, even while having an academic record qualifying them to attend more selective institutions.

The majority of Latinx students who enroll at the community college intend to transfer to a four-year university and earn an undergraduate degree or higher (Crisp & Nora, 2010). However, research studies have found only 10 to 14 percent of Latino students enrolled at the community college successfully transfer to a four-year institution to complete their degree (Fry, 2004; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). Even with a 52% increase in Latinx-baccalaureate degree attainment from 2010-2016, Latinxs students still trail in degree completion in comparison to other ethnic groups (Excellencies in Education, 2018a). Some scholars refer to this disparity as “the Latino educational crisis” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Latinx students are vulnerable and historically underrepresented in higher education settings. Latinx students have been “perceived as problematic or dysfunctional because many live-in poverty, attend poorly resourced schools, and are the first in their families to attend college” (Rendón et al., 2015, p. 92). Research has also shown for decades that negative institutional campus climate toward diversity and inclusion directly influences persistence and completion rates for Latinxs. In addition, students often lack sense of belonging on campus (Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1996; Smith, 2009). However, research has found that positive relationships with family (*familismo*) and peers, contribute to a positive campus climate for Latinx students (Ojeda & Castillo, 2016; Sáenz, García-Louis, Peterson Drake & Guida, 2017; Torres & Hernández, 2007; Yosso, 2006). Thus, when campuses take into account the positive attributes of Latinx students and create climates to Latinx student success, gains are experienced for this population (Garcia, 2017a).

Financial burden and affordability are also issues known to impact the retention of first-generation Latinx students. As found in Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella and Nora (1996), first-generation college students are more likely to be Latinxs and from a lower social economic status (SES). Being of a lower SES hinders students’ attitudes about pursuing higher education. These differences influence first-generation Latinx students to enroll in college, their decisions of where they are interested in attending, but most importantly their academic persistence. The effects of finances for Latinx students, both indirect and direct, influences their ability to persist and navigate their own academic journey. (Hernandez, 2000; Núñez, et al., 2013). According to Crisp and Nora (2010) lack of financial aid and student employment, including working extensive hours affect student persistence and hinders their retention at the institution. Financial obligations and employment opportunities also hinder success for Latino males (Abrica &

Martinez, 2016; Sáenz, Lu, Bukoski & Rodriguez, 2013). Sáenz et al. (2013) further note how employment hindered Latino male retention and a reason why they did not complete school.

It is also important to acknowledge the diversity of the Latinx population in the context of which Latinxs are pursuing higher education. To get a clearer understanding of who encompasses the Latinx ethnic racial group, in 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) classified Hispanic individuals (terminology used in this research paper is Latinx) in the United States as people who had cultural origins from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, South and Central America. Some researchers use the terms Latino and Hispanic interchangeably to represent people in the United States from Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean (De Luca & Escoto, 2012; Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). Latinxs may come from one of 25 Spanish-speaking countries, making Latinxs extremely diverse and often have various dialects (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). As Torres et al. (2019) notes, “the diversity among Latinos is vast and something most educators are unaware of and are struggling to understand and apply to their interactions with Latinos” (p. 9).

During the last U.S. Census (2010), a research brief produced by Ogunwole, Drewery and Rios-Vargas (2012) highlighted the disparity of bachelor’s degree attainment among Latinxs over the age of 25. The report shares almost half (49.7%) of Venezuelans over the age of 25 residing in the US hold a bachelor’s degree, making them the Latinx ethnic group with the highest degree attainment. Salvadoran, Guatemalan and Mexican are the three Latinx ethnic groups with the lowest degree attainment of individuals over the age of 25, 7.8%, 8.7% and 9.1%, respectively. As noted by Torres et. al. (2019), one must acknowledge and understand the various reasons why different Latinx ethnic groups immigrated to the United States, which has the ability to impact their college degree attainment rate. It is also important to acknowledge

what Welland & Ribner (2008) state, there is no culture that is homogeneous that a set of beliefs and behaviors can be applicable to the entire Latinx population. Although this dissertation does not focus on inner Latinx-ethnic group equity gaps, it is important to highlight that Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Mexicans comprise the largest Latin- ethnic groups in southern California, which is where this study took place, and representative of the participant demographics in this study.

Latino Males in Higher Education

As a community, Latinxs are underperforming compared to their peers of other ethnic groups, even of most significance, Latino males have a wider equity gap than their female counterparts (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2008; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2011). Sáenz and Ponjuán (2008) argue Latino males are “vanishing” from the higher education pipeline and not keeping pace in higher education compared to other males. This disparity in education poses a “national imperative” to focus on ensuring the success of Latino males. Closing the gender gap in educational attainment between Latino males and females is imperative because it can impact the labor force as well as labor productivity and could create economic and social consequence for the nation’s future (Sáenz et al., 2016).

It is well documented Latino males are diminishing from the higher education pipeline and underperforming compared to their female counterparts (Sáenz et al., 2016). In 2016-2017, 716,780 Latinx students received a degree or certificate at a postsecondary institution in the United States. More than half, 375,260 (52%) received a degree from a four-year institution (public or private) (NCES, 2018). It is estimated that of all Latinx students who received a degree or certificate in the US in 2017, 39% of Latino males received a certificate or degrees compared to 61% of their Latina counterparts (NCES, 2018). “Latino male students face unique

challenges to excelling in higher education, and this problem is exacerbated by the lack of awareness, infrastructure, and resources to address the issue at critical points in the education pipeline” (Sáenz, Rodriguez, Pritchett, Estrada & Garbee, 2016, p. 177). Other prominent source of research looks at the lack of opportunities or preparation of Latino male students (Solórzano et al., 2005; Fischer, 2007). For example, Latino males are often over-identified as at-risk because of their racial and ethnic background (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2008). In a study, Martínez & Huerta (2020) describe how a Latino male participant identified the college-going culture at his high school to only be for a selected few who were promising scholars, other “general” students had less resources to successfully succeed. Other students were labeled to not be college material and hindered their own expectations to aspire to go to college (Martínez & Huerta, 2020). Similarly, Solórzano et al. (2005) found educational structures hindered Latino males’ educational success, a small percentage completed high school and even fewer enrolled in four-year institutions. In comparison to most racial and ethnic groups, Latino males are more likely to drop out of high school, pursue employment instead of educational opportunities, and leave college before graduating (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2008).

Researchers also must not overlook the large number of Latino males who are not able to pursue higher education due to a judicial system that impacts the lives of People of Color (Rios, 2011; Rios & Rodriguez, 2012). Some scholars have expressed concerns about the over incarceration of males of color, including Latino males (Rios, 2009, 2011). Latino males are the second-largest ethnic group incarcerated, following African American males (Sáenz et al., 2016). This poses negative consequences in their pursuit of higher education. Rios and Rodriguez (2012) note that many “...young, able-bodied, working-class men (and, increasingly women) of color experience abandonment that eventually leads many into a draconian punitive system of

racialized social control” (p.243). Rios (2011) states criminologist Geoff Ward “defines racialized social control as the regulation and repression of a population based on its race. Ward argues that social control becomes a negotiated racial order. In other words, the primary way by which racialized populations are regulated is through punitive social control, which in turn establishes social control” (p.30).

In California, the prison-industrial complex has incarcerated large number of working class, Black and Brown men (Rios & Rodriguez, 2012). Although the incarceration rates have declined over the last few years, it is estimated that in 2016, the incarceration for Latino males in California was 1,028 per 100,000 males, the second highest incarcerated population – African American/Black males account for 29% of the overall male inmates in California (Lofstrom, Harris & Marin, 2020). This over incarceration of Latino males who are disproportionately targeted and prosecuted for criminal offenses, represent a larger portion of the states’ prison population. Rios (2011) argues punitive methods of policing are responsible for the incarceration pipeline; many of his participants were cycled into the system for “little shit” and ultimately compounded into larger offences. Understanding the concerns impacting Latino males and significant roadblocks towards earning a college education; it is our responsibility as educators, researchers and scholars to support the success of Latino males when they enroll in our institutions, most likely through a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Lastly, and of significance, is the impact of Latino male masculinity and gender roles on persistence. Masculinity is defined as “a cultural construction, rather than a psychological (or biological) based characteristic” (Pleck, Sonestien & Ku, 1993, p.14). Harris, Wood & Newman (2015) argue masculinity must be considered when understanding the implication of persistence for males of color, which include Latino males. They suggest male “gender role socialization is a

contributing factor in patterns of underachievement for men, in general, and men of color, in particular” (Harris et al., 2015, p. 63). For many first-generation Latino males whose parents migrated to the United States assume traditional gender roles; males are family oriented, strong, brave, hardworking and family contributors (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2008). Unfortunately, for many Latino subgroup, including Mexican American males, negative perceptions of masculinity, known as *machismo*, impacts their perception of manhood. *Machismo* can be identified as hypermasculinity through stoicism, aggression, sexism, and even heavy drinking (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank & Tracey, 2008). O’Neil (1981) theorized men resolve gender-related conflict by behaving in hypermasculine ways to prove they are real men.

López Figueroa, Pérez and Vega (2016) suggest Latino males must conceptualize masculinity by first removing themselves from low expectations and negative portrayal of being a man. In their Grounded theory study, López Figueroa et al. (2016) used a subsample with 27 first-generation (college-going or college-bound), low-income, Mexican males and found that for the college-going Latino males, they had to balance what it meant to “be the ‘man of the house’ in a family-oriented culture and how to be academically successful in a very individualistic setting” (p. 67). Understanding that Latino males can navigate various forms of masculinity, Arciniega et al. (2008) defines an asset-based form of masculinity as *caballerismo* or masculine chivalry, a male who can be nurturing and family centered. Their study found Mexican American males who were *caballeros* spoke Spanish at home, had greater ethnic identity and were accepting of other ethnic groups. Similarly, Estrada and Jimenez (2018) found *caballerismo* produced a stronger sense of connection with others at school, which as noted before, when students feel connected to a college campus and have a higher sense of belonging, they are more

likely to be retained. Despite the various forms of masculinities explored by Latino males, they have the ability to tap into positive masculinity traits as found in *caballerismo*.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

The Higher Education Act Amendment of 1984 provided grant funds for institutions with high enrollment of Latinx students. However, Hispanic-Serving Institutions (I) did not become federally recognized until the Higher Education Act of 1992 (Valdez, 2015). According to the U.S. Department of Education, a university is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution when applications are submitted by the institution to receive Title V funding, between 1992 and 1998 (prior to the reauthorization of Higher Education Act of 1998), HSI funding was provided under Title III. Title V funding expands the “educational opportunities for, and improve the attainment of Hispanic Students” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a). An institution of higher education is eligible for Title V funding and classified as a Hispanic-Serving Institution if the student enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students is at least 25% Hispanic students and at least 50% of students are low-income. Hispanic-Serving Institutions currently enroll almost half of all Latinx undergraduates (Garcia, 2017a; *Excellencies in Education*, 2019b). There are demographic trends suggesting that the number of HSIs will continue to increase disproportionately enrolling more Latinx students (Arámbula Ballysingh et al., 2017).

As more Latinxs students enter higher education institutions, the percentage of eligible HSIs increases (Laden, 2004; Garcia, 2017b; Gasman, 2008). Arámbula Ballysingh and her colleagues (2017) state HSIs are a key access points for Latinx students who are low-income and first-generation. Most Hispanic-Serving Institutions are two-year community college and technical schools. The impact of HSIs is greater in scope than just serving Latinx students, a large number of other historically underrepresented students attend these institutions. Unlike

other minority-serving institutions classified based on their mission to serve a specific population (e.g. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Women Colleges and Tribal Colleges), HSIs are classified solely on the basis of high enrollment of Latino students and half of the student body is low-income (Nuñez, Hurtado & Calderón Galdeano, 2015).

Scholars argue HSIs should be considered Hispanic enrolling instead of serving institutions (Contreras, Malcom & Bensimon, 2008; Garcia, 2017b; Gasman, 2008). Special-purpose institutions/minority-serving institutions are mission driven and have an institutional ethos where faculty, staff and administration convey a belief in students' ability to succeed and excel, regardless of their background (Smith, 2009). Some researchers believe that Hispanic-Serving Institutions lack the resources needed to support Latinx students (Contreras et al. 2008, Garcia, 2018). However, Hurtado, González & Calderón Galdeano (2015) believe many institutional agents at HSIs assist students toward degree completion even when funding is limited and diverted because of other institutional priorities.

The HSI designation was created with the intention of improving college graduation rates among Latinx students and other underrepresented groups (Ledesma & Burciaga, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2019a). However, there is still an equity gap visibly present in the completion rates among Latinx students in higher education, including those attending HSIs. Garcia (2017a) produced a typology creating measures of HSIs servingness (see Figure 2.3), looking at what HSI institutions are doing to serve Latinx students and removing the focus on students at the individual level. Garcia (2017a) argues in her two-dimensional framework the various ways of Latinx servingness of these campuses. Garcia posits a campus that is Latinx-Serving, is producing favorable organizational outcomes for Latinx students and the culture reflects the Latinxs students they serve.

Figure 2.3

Typology of Hispanic-Serving Institution organizational identities adopted from Garcia (2017a).

Organizational Outcomes for Latinxs	High	Latinx- Producing	Latinx-Serving
	Low	Latinx-Enrolling	Latinx-Enhancing
		Low	High
Organizational Culture Reflects Latinx			

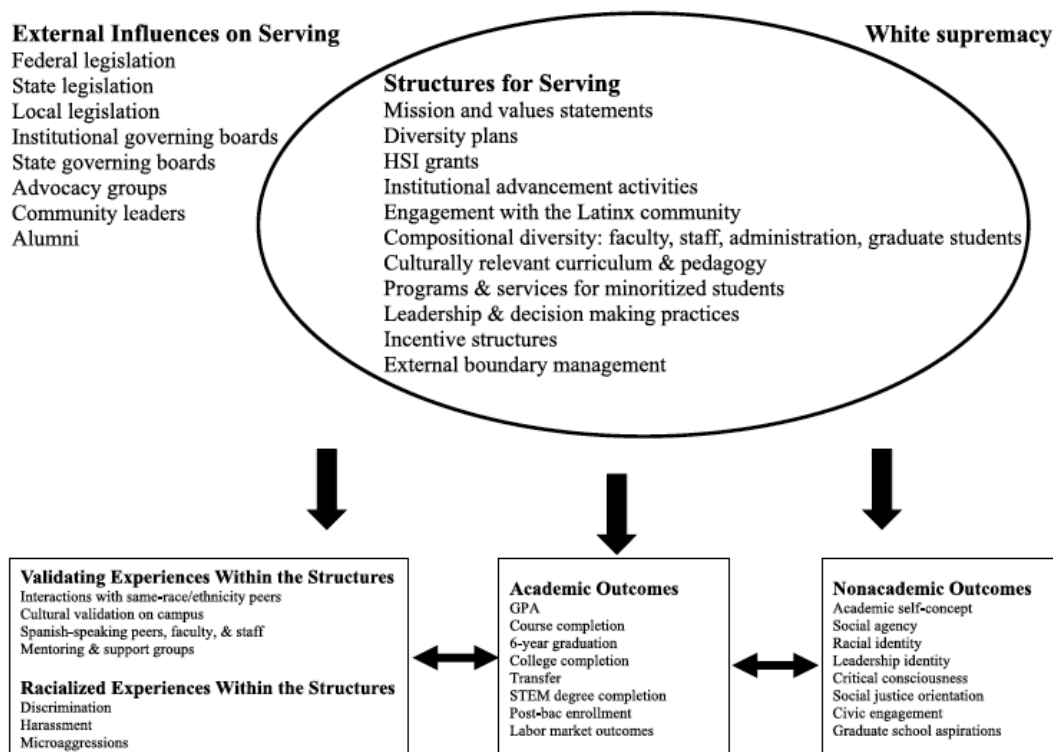
As scholars have argued, there is a large number of HSIs that find themselves in the Latinx-Enrolling quadrant, where there are low campus outcomes for Latinx students and low importance on the culture of the Latinx students they serve. A campus that is producing an institutional climate that is supportive of Latinx students' identities enhances the experiences of Latinx students and increase a sense of belonging on campus which has been shown to retain and graduate Latinx students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Smith, 2009).

More recently, Garcia, Nuñez and Sansone (2019), conducted a systemic review of literature to understand how HSIs' levels of servingness is conceptualized in research. Their exhaustive research produced a multidimensional conceptual framework on HSI Servingness (see Figure 2.4). As mentioned earlier, some scholars argue Latinx student success is not always dependent on academic outcomes. As noted in Garcia et al. (2019) multidimensional framework, HSI effectiveness also fosters nonacademic outcomes, validating experiences within structures embedded in the institution and racialized experiences. The university could also include culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy (Pang, 2018). The framework acknowledges that HSIs are influenced by outside factors that also contribute to their effectiveness, Garcia et al. (2019) identify this idea as "external influences on serving". This includes local advocacy groups, community leaders, and university alumni. All of these folks can play an effective role in serving Latinx students. Ultimately, they acknowledge that white supremacy is a final outside layer of influence in HSIs. Garcia et al. (2019) identify and call-out white supremacy as a way to

show that systems of oppression have an effect on the effectiveness to serve Latinx students at HSIs.

Figure 2.4

Multidimensional Conceptual Framework of Servingness in HSIs adopted from Garcia et al. (2019).



Garcia (2016, 2017b) argues HSIs are redefining what it means to serve historically underrepresented students, and furthers this argument in her book, *Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges & Universities*, “HSIs are undervalued as a result of being compared to white normative standards for postsecondary institutions...all institutions of higher education are valued and gain status based on indicators of prestige and effectiveness that are grounded in whiteness” (p. 3). With the high concentration of Latinx students at many non-selective institutions, HSIs will need to redefine what it means to serve Latinx students, most visibly identified in the Garcia et al. (2019) multidimensional conceptual framework for

servingness in HSIs.

The California State University

In 1960, California developed a master plan for how public higher education would be structured – The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education. The plan established a broad framework for higher education with three public higher education segments creating their own structure and responsibilities. The plan created three systems: California Community Colleges, California States Universities (CSU) and University of California (UC) and also acknowledged the need for independent and private colleges.

The CSU's primary mission is to provide undergraduate and graduate education through the master's degree, including professional and teacher education. Senate Bill (SB) 724 (2006) authorized CSU to award the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in educational leadership. It also offers the Doctor of Nursing practice and Doctor of Physical Therapy programs at numerous campuses. The Doctor of Philosophy is also offered through joint partnerships with other public and private universities in California (CSU, 2020).

With the growing diversity of California and increase emphasis on accessibility and degree completion, the systems have shifted to meet the demand of the state. In 1960, California demographics were not what they are now. The Master Plan was designed to provide traditional education to traditional students, not intentionally focused on the diversity visibly present in the state (OPR, 2018). The California State University system is made up of 23 campuses across the state, educating over 484,000 students yearly. It is the nation's largest four-year public university system, and also one of the most diverse in the country; 50% of the student body self-identify as members of an ethnic underrepresented group. Forty percent of students are Latinx and one third of enrolled undergraduate students are first-generation college students. More than 80% of

students receive financial aid, with 49% being recipients of a Pell Grant, a need-based grant offered to low-income students (CSU Dashboards, 2020).

In 2016, due to low performance in retention and academic completion, the CSU created the Graduation Initiative 2025 aimed at increasing degree-completion rates and eliminating equity gaps in academic completion. Equity gaps for Latinx students exist compared to other ethnic groups in the system. In the most recent data (CSU Dashboard, 2020), the 2012 first-time freshmen cohort's four and six-year graduation rates for all students were 20.7% and 61.2% respectively. Latinx students' graduation rates were even lower at 14.4% for four-years and 56.3% in six-years. Comparing Latinx students by gender, Latino males' graduation rate is lower than their female counterparts at 11% for four-years compared to 16.6% and 51.1% compared to 59.6% in six-years. Overall, Latino males are graduating from California State Universities at lower rates than their peers, which is consistent with literature about Latino males in education, they have lower graduation rates across the nation.

Theoretical Models

This study utilizes Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model (2005) as the theoretical framework guiding this research. The Community Cultural Wealth model stems from two theoretical constructs, Critical Race Theory and Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital. Yosso (2005) argues that Bourdieu's Cultural Capital theory perpetuates the notion that communities of color lack cultural capital or have less capital than "wealthier individuals". Yosso (2005) challenges the deficit-oriented discourse that plagues Latino males in higher education, providing a critical analysis on ways people of color have historically been marginalized by an educational system created to support white wealthier and privileged individuals. This chapter briefly discusses Critical Race Theory and Cultural Capital theory to

provide context on both models. A major portion of the chapter will focus primarily on Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework and its relationship to positive influences of Latino males in higher education.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines and challenges the way in which race and racism impacts social structures, systemic practices and discourse (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). CRT was developed in legal studies and later applied in education to address similar concerns of educational inequities. CRT stems from the work of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado and other legal scholars of color who's work continues to deconstruct systemic oppressive structures caused by social injustices, discrimination, and racial oppression in U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

It is well documented that CRT began as a of movement in 1981 when Harvard Law School students boycotted and protested when professor Derrick Bell left from Harvard to the University of Oregon and his replacement was a white individual (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995). The students developed an "Alternative Course" centered on weekly discussion about race and civil rights issues from Bell (1973), *Race Racism and American Law* (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Critical Race Theory was introduced in the field of education in the 1990's, by scholars Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Solórzano (1997) to expose and challenge existing discriminatory racist disparities within U.S. educational systems and structural inequalities (Ledesma & Burciaga, 2015; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). CRT scholars formed a movement of their own centering the analysis of law through "fiction, personal

experiences, and the stories of people on the bottom illustrate how race and racism continued to dominate our society” (Bell, 1992, p.144). Furthermore, Critical Race theory “questions the purpose and methods of academic inquiry by shifting the research lens to focus on People of Color, recounting history from the perspectives of those at the margins of society and mobilizing toward positive social change” (Yosso & García, 2007, p. 147). Critical Race Theory has five tenants that form its perspective:

- *The intercentricity of Race and Racism* centralizes race and racism, while focusing on how racism intersects with other forms of oppression;
- *The challenge to dominant ideology* addresses color-blindness, equal opportunity, meritocracy, objectivity and race neutrality in the educational system which usually supports the dominant culture (Ledesma & Burciaga, 2015; Yosso, Villalpado, Delgado Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009);
- *Commitment to social justice* provide the opportunity to work to dismantle forms of oppression and provide opportunities for subordinate groups to rise against oppressive systems;
- *Centrality of experiential knowledge* centers the experiences of People of Color as having knowledge of their own experiences and encourages storytelling as a form of liberation (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002);
- *Utilization of interdisciplinary approaches* to understand the histories and contemporary contexts and going outside of traditional discipline to understand race and racism (Solórzano, 1997).

As noted by Yosso et al. (2009)

...these tenants present a unique approach to existing modes of scholarship in higher education because they explicitly focus on how the social construct of race shapes university structures, practices, and discourse from the perspectives of those injured by and fighting against institutional racism” (p. 663)

CRT provides a framework for scholars to critically analyze and recognize racism in society and to examine dominant ideology and discourse focused on race neutrality and color blindness (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical Race Theory is a framework used by scholars to examine educational inequities including disparities in graduation rates among historically underrepresented students –a social justice approach (Solórzano et al., 2005). Zamudio et al. (2011) argues social justice demands an analysis of the relationship between individual inequity and its relationship to societal structures; to move from individual impact to society structural change. CRT framework and the intentionality regarding social justice equity, identifying racist structures and naming assets that contribute to a counter-narrative for Latinx individuals as the foundation of Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth model.

Cultural Capital Theory

Bourdieu’s theory of Cultural Capital incorporates the notion that social class influences school success (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1984) asserts social resources (knowledge, practices and artifacts) are valued differently by society, depending on a person’s habitus; wealthier individuals are more privileged and often are better off. Cultural capital derives from a persons’ social class status through ones’ customs, norms, preferences, wealth, knowledge and behaviors nurtured through a persons’ family (Bourdieu, 1986; Perna, 2000). Bourdieu (1986) outlines three forms of cultural capital (Embodied, Objectified and Institutionalized). Embodied-cultural

capital refers to a person's style, manners, cultural preferences and affinities, and valued types of cultural knowledge. Objectified-cultural capital are artifacts and goods (such as cultural literature, music, dance forms, art, historical sites, museums, trips). Lastly, institutionalized-cultural capital is a person's access to academic credentials and educational qualifications-education provides a person with distinction, thus, having institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Researchers supporting cultural capital theory view investments in social relations as instrumental to enabling historically underrepresented and disadvantaged communities to acquire the knowledge and the skills necessary to succeed in a highly capitalistic society. This philosophy assumes that if one gains more cultural capital or status in society, the better outcomes they will achieve. Since race and socioeconomic status strongly influence access to social capital (Solórzano et al., 2005), the high concentration of Latinxs in urban communities create social stratification providing fewer opportunities and resources available for Latinx students. Taking into account the deficit perspective in Bourdieu's theory, one would assume these students would not likely be successful because they lack the cultural capital needed to succeed.

Other scholars such as Trueba (2002) asserts that regardless of lower-class status, communities of color, including Latinxs, can pull from their own cultural capital and habitus to achieve academically at the same level as individuals with higher financial means. Trueba's assertions are similar to Yosso (2005) framework, sharing that regardless a student's economic status and community upbringing, they can pull from their own cultural knowledge and be successful. Lastly, Cultural Capital theory draws on the concept of habitus, which stipulates students develop a sense of possibilities in their educational trajectory based on their own family

socialization and schooling experiences (Bourdieu, 1986; McDonough, 1997). Bourdieu's construct of habitus and cultural capital contribute to the dissonance and discourse trying to identify whose culture is better.

Community Cultural Wealth Model

Yosso (2005) developed the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model to counter the deficit perspective that communities of color are culturally disadvantaged and have less cultural capital than privileged communities and individuals. Accepting Bourdieu's theory places people of color, low-income and immigrant communities to possess limited levels of knowledge, culture, or aspirations for upward mobility leading to the perception they have less cultural capital (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Contrary to the belief addressed in Bourdieu's theoretical construct, Pérez (2016) argues cultural wealth should be used to acknowledge the capacities of racial and ethnic minorities because they have "unique forms of cultural capital, accumulated assets, and resources racial and ethnic minorities possess and utilize to negotiate their marginalized social positions within educational institutions" (p.133). Yosso (2005) demonstrates how educational systems can be oppressive and also emancipatory; educational structures have the ability to marginalize and oppress students of color, but also have the potential to emancipate and empower Latinx individuals if community-cultural wealth is valued at the societal level. Yosso (2005) states "the main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower People of Color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities" (p. 82).

Yosso's model has six forms of cultural assets which she refers to as forms of Community Cultural Wealth. The six forms of cultural wealth are as follows: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital. These methods of cultural wealth

focus on individual talents, strengths and assets students of color bring with them from their homes and communities to their college environment, thus can assist them to navigate the educational process from enrollment to matriculation. “These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another” (Yosso, 2005, 77).

Aspirational Capital. Aspirational capital refers to hopes and dreams students of color and their families embrace despite negative conditions and lack of resources (Valdez & Lugg, 2010; Yosso, 2005). This notion of aspirational capital provides an opportunity for Latinx communities to exhibit forms of resiliency and maintain dreams, even though they might face inequities and lower educational outcomes than other ethnic groups. Boden (2011) found first-generation Latinx students wanted to go to college and to earn a degree for economic mobility. This resulted in their ability to be more likely to provide for their family.

Tenacity and ability to dream, is what Yosso (2005) describes as aspirational capital which “is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals” (p. 78). In their research study, Rendón et al. (2015) found students had aspirations of making it to college and those dreams were validated by other People of Color who shared “*testimonios* (life stories) on overcoming adversity and who provided support and *consejos* (sage advice)” (p. 105). Yosso and García (2007) confirm Rendón et al. (2015) findings and share that aspirations in people are developed within the context of social and familial experiences, usually through *cuentos* (stories) and *consejos* (advice) on how People of Color can maneuver through difficult and oppressive structures. For Latino males, the ability to see other Latino male role models becomes an avenue of hopes and dreams.

Linguistic Capital. Linguistic capital consists of the intellectual and social skills developed through communicating in more than one way. “Linguistic capital reflects the idea that Students of Color arrive at school with multiple language and communication skills” (Yosso, 2005, p.78). However, linguistic capital is more than just language, it is also the ability to communicate through various methods, including talking, visual art, music or poetry. Drawing from research emphasizing the value of bilingual education for Latinx student (Darder, 2016) and Latino males (Pérez, 2015), Yosso (2005) asserts Latinx students possess linguistic-capital storytelling, which can include “oral histories, parables, stories (*cuentos*) and proverbs (*dichos*)” (p. 78-79). For many first-generation Latinx students whose primary language is Spanish, finding connection with others who speak the language becomes a form of comfort and support allowing them to connect on a much deeper level (Rendón et al., 2015), thus becoming an asset for retention.

Familial Capital. Familial capital derives from the notion that immediate family, extended family and community networks benefit students of color, including enhancing the Latinx student experience (Yosso, 2005). Support systems, which includes connection with family, play an important role for Latinx students when deciding where to go to college (Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Boden, 2011; Borrero, 2011). Familial capital also incorporates cultural knowledge obtained from relationships extending beyond the immediate family to aunts/uncles, grandparents, cousins and friends (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

First-generation Latinx college students go to college and form networks with whom they can gain support from and be validated by other Latinxs on campus in order to feel connected as family (Gloria and Castellanos, 2012). There is also research suggesting, faculty and staff may

also be seen as part of the extended family structure. Students can find supportive faculty or staff members who can positively impact them. Student-faculty interactions are believed to be a critical factor of college persistence (Thile & Matt, 1995). For Latinx students, research suggests students' formal and informal interactions with Latinx faculty and staff, including forming mentor-mentee relationships, are especially important to their persistence (Santos & Reigadas, 2002; DeFreitas & Bravo, 2012; Hurte, 2002). Thus, it is imperative for college faculty and staff to affirm, support, validate, and reinforce Latinxs' capacity to develop as individuals (Gándara & López, 1998; Rendon, 1994), especially when Latinx students see them as part of their familial capital that could assist with their retention.

Another term used by scholars researching the Latinx experience is the notion of *familismo*, which relates to the connections Latinx students have to their immediate and extended family. As Ojeda & Castillo (2016) note, most research on *familismo* often focuses on one aspect of how family impacts the success of Latinx students (either it hinders their success or supports their retention). Ojeda & Castillo (2016) found *familismo* to positively influence Latino male success. Similarly, in their seminal work, *The Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education*, Sáenz and Ponjuán (2008) state, “the notion of *familismo* among Latino families should not be seen as a negative force working to perpetuate gaps in educational attainment between males and females” (p.10). For Latino males in higher education, *familismo* can serve to enhance their experience because of the strong connection to their families and communities they create while in college.

Social Capital. Social capital refers to the people, social contacts and community resources that “can provide instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Bourdieu (1986) posits social capital consists of contacts and

memberships in networks to be used in personal gain. Social interactions and expanded networks for Latinx students increase a sense of belonging on college campus. In Nuñez (2009), the researcher concluded the greatest sense of belonging for study participants at their respective universities were through interactions with faculty and actively participating in class. Hurtado, Carter and Spuler (1996) also found the presence of faculty of color was necessary to create and enhance a diverse educational environment. Hurtado et al. (1996) argue the racial/ethnic diversity of faculty members demonstrates a commitment to creating a multicultural learning environment, thus can potentially assist Latinx students to socially acclimate to the campus environment. Delgado-Romero et al. (2007), asserts “institutions of higher learning must not miss opportunities to expose their students to a diverse learning environment with faculty who are representative of the society and cultures in which they live” (p. 48). This notion of accountability provides Latinx students with the opportunity to build relationships, networks and ultimately develop strategies to socially integrate on campus with the support of faculty, administrators and staff.

Peer interactions are also known to increase Latinx students social networks and the building of social capital on a college campus. López (2005) found Latinx students saw their Latinx peers as a support network to battle racially hostile campus environments, utilizing the network to support them through their first-year at the institution. Similarly, Perez (2016) found Latino males found social networks to be instrumental in retention, in building leadership capacity, and overall campus satisfaction. Rios-Aguilar and Deil-Amen (2012) suggest social networks for Latinx students are critical to enhancing the undergraduate student experience and career trajectories. Similarly, previous research found higher levels of Latinx campus satisfaction

when students were involved in a variety of social organizations on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Navigational capital. According to Yosso (2005), navigational capital provides students the opportunity to use their own skills in maneuvering through the educational system, especially navigating through an institutional environment that wasn't necessarily created to provide success for students of color. Rendon et al. (2015) found Latinx students used their lived experiences to navigate successfully through college. They found students were successfully finding their way through college because they recalled how it felt while living in the *barrio*. The *barrio* is the neighborhood or "hood" as it is often referred to by communities of color who live in low-income communities where gangs, liquor stores and police are part of their daily experiences. The study also found Latinx students used social skills they developed prior to enrolling in college through interactions with friends, living in a native country, socializing with family and learning about family and spirituality. This form of capital provides students with the ability to be resilient, overcoming obstacles, and successfully navigate a college environment where too often Latino males have failed. However, if we continue to accept systemic structures hindering the success of Latino males, then we will continue to accept how race and racism shapes the experiences of students of color in higher education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Resistant Capital. Resistant capital can be understood as the skills and behavior developed to oppose or "resist" inequality (Yosso, 2005). Researchers have noted, students may work to change discriminatory perceptions of their group status and achieve positive-educational outcomes (Hurtado & Ponjuán, 2005). Furthermore, Solórzano and Villalpaldo (1998) suggest, acts of resistance can be demonstrated overtly or covertly. For students of color, these forms of resistance can be regularly seen on college campuses through protests, sit-ins, walkouts, and

student-written letters demanding the president and administration make structural changes to the campus policies. These forms of transformative practices are how Freire (2000) suggests, individuals process and come to understand their own oppression, and therefore resist. When people feel they are treated wrongly or unjustly, they often “resist” in an attempt to gain equitable treatment. In their study, Garcia, Patron, Ramirez and Hudson (2018), they argue that all higher education institutions must provide culturally-relevant spaces that allow students to explore their social identities while fostering resistance. As Yosso (2005) identifies, resistance capital provides students the necessary tools to advocate for equity on a college campus, to fight against racist practices and overall challenge the notion that Latinx students are not smart, underperform, and will not graduate.

As suggested by this literature review and explanation of the theoretical framework guiding this study, social structures are in place which serve as obstacles to the educational success of Latino-male students. This literature review however, despite all opportunities available to hinder the success of Latino males, demonstrates how Latinx students, including Latino males, have the skills, knowledge and ability to be successful on a college campus when institutions acknowledge the community cultural wealth students bring with them when entering higher education institutions. Too often, as research point out, students of color, which include Latino males, are battling societal structures of inequalities for an opportunity to be successful.

The aspirations Latino males bring with them to college campuses, combined with the resistance to be successful, the social capital they build on campus and in the community, and the skills they use to navigate a terrain that often times has not been walked by family members, support these students to be successful. When Latino males are underperforming and not graduating at the same rate than their female counterparts, educators and administrators must

change the narrative and look at why few Latino males are graduating. As noted earlier in the chapter, California State Universities are graduating over 51% of Latino males in six years, although not high, what factors are leading to their graduation?

In conclusion, Yosso (2005) asserts the importance of using a student's community cultural wealth as a positive contribution to Latinx success on a college campus without having to compromise their own self-identity. Regardless of where Latino males begin their post-secondary education and the multitude of challenges that can hinder their success, Latino males can be successful (Cabrera, Rashwan-Soto, Valencia, 2016; Trueba, 2002). Thus, as noted by Pérez (2015), using various asset-based frameworks is vital to ensure academic prosperity of Latino males.

The asset-based narrative employed in Yosso (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model is the reason why this theoretical framework grounds this research. The theory posits Latinx students, including Latino males have six forms of assets prior to entering a college environment that contributes to the success of Latinx students. This study explores factors that contribute to Latino male student success and assets that assist with their retention through graduation, which is a perfect fit for utilizing Yosso's model as a theoretical framework guiding this dissertation.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The chapter provides an overview of the qualitative research design used to conduct this study. The research was conducted using a qualitative design that included in-depth interviews, a demographic questionnaire and photo elicitation to examine the experiences of Latino male graduates from two similar southern California 4-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The research identifies factors that contribute to Latino academic success and graduation. In order to understand the retention experience of Latino male at these institutions, three questions guided the study:

1. How do Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth for their retention while enrolled at southern California CSUs designated as HSIs?
2. What factors contribute to Latino-male students' graduation from public 4-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions in California?
3. What other factors outside of the Community Cultural Wealth model do Latino-male students identify as part of their success while in college?

Epistemology, Theoretical Perspective and Methodology

A constructivist-epistemological framework guided the theoretical perspective employed in this study. Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge acquisition (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014). Constructivists recognize that meaning making is not solely an individual process; it recognizes that knowledge is constructed by processes of interpreting social interactions and cultural influences (Crotty, 1998; Jones et al., 2014). A constructivist epistemology allows individuals to interpret what is happening in society and make meaning linking new knowledge and skills to their existing understanding of life (Beck, Kosnik, 2006; Crotty 1998; Jones et al., 2014). Individuals or groups of individuals define this reality through

their individual-lived experiences. Therefore, knowledge is created by the social interactions of individuals within society which is at the center of constructivism (Schwandt, 2003).

Phenomenology served as the guiding methodological framework for the study because this research is aimed at understanding how Latino male alumni experienced their undergraduate college years and how those experiences contributed to their success while enrolled at one of the target universities. The key characteristic of phenomenology research is to understand how members of a group interpret the life around them (Mertens, 2010). Phenomenology allows the researcher to describe the “lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell, 2014, p.14). Jones et al. (2014) explains that phenomenological research uncovers the essence of experiences and making meaning of the experience itself, rather than conceptualizing the experience. Phenomenological research is “...less about portraying individuals’ unique experiences and meaning-making and more so about uncovering an essential structure of a particular phenomenon that resonates with many individuals” (Jones et al., 2014, p.91).

Furthermore, constructivist epistemology through a phenomenological method demanded great reflexivity on my positionality, privilege, perspectives and interactions that were taken into account because it could influence my research. As noted by Charmaz (2014), “...researchers must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis..., it also means that their values shape the very facts that they can identify” (p. 13). The ability to constantly analyze my positionality while conducting the study is referred to as *epoché* or what many scholars refer to as bracketing (Creswell, 2014; Jones et al. 2014). In order to increase the credibility of my study, I considered bracketing my positionality by defining my lived experiences throughout the research study. (Charmaz, 2014; Jones et al., 2014).

Positionality

For the last twelve years I have served as a student-affairs professional in a variety of capacities and at several institutions in southern California. I currently work at a California State University, in southern California, designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. As an administrator in one of the largest campus operations, Division of Student Affairs, one of my responsibilities is to work closely with historically underrepresented students, including Latino males. I am aware that as a student-affairs professional, my positionality plays an important role in this study. The direct findings addressed in this research are from alumni who earned their bachelor's degree from a campus similar to the one I am currently employed at, which allows me to understand how campuses can enhance the experiences and support the cultural wealth students bring with them to our institutions. Although I did not complete an undergraduate degree at a California State University campus, and did not attend a Hispanic-Serving Institution, I am familiar with the culture and campus-life opportunities provided to students attending these institutions; the majority of my professional experiences come from working within the CSU system.

Professionally, I have been employed in a variety of student-affairs departments; I work and have worked closely with students from historically underrepresented cultural groups, including Latino males. I believe that if Latino males feel their lived experiences are validated, are nurtured on campus, are provided with resources, receive cultural validation, and the campus facilitates opportunities to build community, Latino males will experience higher retention rates. My experiences working with Latino male organizations and Latino cultural and social fraternities over the course of my professional career provides me personal lived-experiences and informal understanding of the Latino male experiences at several California State Universities

designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. I currently serve as an advisor for several Latino based fraternities and sororities and also served as an advisor for Latinx culturally-based organizations for several years. I also serve as a mentor to many Latino males and often find myself working with and supporting Latino males in their journeys to be successful. I connect with Latino male students and am aware of my own privilege as an administrator on campus.

It is important to disclose that I self-identify as a Latino male, which is a characteristic and part of an intersecting identity of the population of this research. Not only do I identify as a Latino male, I am also a first-generation college graduate, raised in South Los Angeles, California, an area where many of my participants were born and raised. As a Mexican American from an immigrant family, I share similar values and lived experiences as my participants.

I implemented different practices to control for my biases, including bracketing my biases. In qualitative research, bracketing is a method to mitigate the potential effects of preconceptions that may taint or negatively impact the research process (Creswell, 2014). I am cognizant of the experiences of Latino students and understand how these experiences and my own positionality in this research could impact my interpretation of the analysis. I thus employed several techniques to ensure trustworthiness in my study, which I describe later in the chapter. I remained as neutral as possible in my analysis of the research findings.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed several data-collection methods in order to increase the trustworthiness or confidence in the research findings. The primary form of data collection used in this study were interviews, which is traditional to any phenomenology study (Creswell, 2014; Jones et al., 2014). Phenomenological interviews were conducted as the principal data collection method; it involved interacting with respondents and soliciting personal experiences and ascribed

meaning. Merriam (2009) suggests interviews elicit in-depth of understanding of a phenomenon, which is critical to understanding the research problem. Interviews were semi-structured, flexible and included broad, open-ended questions, which are essential for a phenomenology study. The interview process consisted on average of 60-minute individual interviews. Participants were provided an option to meet via Zoom (online video conferencing) or in person, thirteen interviews were conducted using Zoom and one interview was conducted in person.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I recruited four current students at one of the participating institutions who met most criteria in the study but were not graduates of the institution. They served as members of a pilot. I reviewed the pre-interview questionnaire and the interview protocol with each of them and asked them to answer the questions. They also provided feedback that would contribute to a richer interview protocol and better developed pre-interview questionnaire. I also followed-up with two other Latino males who had graduated from institutions that were not part of the study and served as participants in the pilot interviews. All the feedback received through this process was incorporated into the final interview protocol and questionnaire.

Prior to initiating my study, I submitted required documentation to the Claremont Graduate University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approval was given, participants were recruited using a purposeful sampling approach. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants and sites that best help understand the problem and provide information-rich participants (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) describes purposeful sampling as a way to "select information and rich cases strategically and purposefully" (p. 243). I emailed student-affairs colleagues and advisors and spoke with alumni-engagement officers at both campuses; they emailed or texted my recruitment flyer to possible participants. This recruitment

method produced several alumni who were interested in participating in the study. Latino male alumni who followed-up with me via email, as instructed by the recruitment flyer, were asked if they could kindly identify other potential research participants. Participants were encouraged to share the recruitment flyer on their social media and text to friends and peers who might be interested in participating. This approach is known as Snowball Sampling, which is a common method in qualitative research and a common practice to increase participant responses (Jones et al., 2014).

Alumni who accepted the invitation were asked to complete an online consent form and a 26-question online pre-interview questionnaire. The consent form and questionnaire were administered using Qualtrics, an online survey software. The questionnaire was used to collect demographic information and assess whether participants met the requirements for the study. The information collected from the questionnaire assisted in identifying appropriate participants to interview. The following qualifications were needed to be a participant: Subjects had to 1) identify as a Latino male, 2) have graduated as members of the class of 2018 or 2019, 3) identified as a first-generation college student, 4) had graduated from one of two participating CSU HSI campuses, and 5) had started at the campus as a first-year freshman.

In order to further document the experiences of participants and provide meaningful descriptions of their lived experiences, a photo-elicitation component was incorporated as part of the interview process. As stated by Charmaz (2014), images provide insight into other perspectives, practices and events that are not easily obtained through formal interviewing and can draw participants to reflect through a different modality about their lived experiences. Participants were invited to provide one to five images or photos of anything (people, paraphernalia, campus, document, etc.) from their undergraduate (CSU) institution that

positively impacted their experience and assisted with their retention to graduation. Participants were asked to email all photos/images at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled interview in order to analyze and incorporate questions about the photos during the interview.

Furthermore, if participants were unable to provide a photo/image, they were encouraged to provide a response to the following question: “If you had the opportunity to provide an image that showed what positively impacted your experience and assisted with your retention to graduation, what would the image show?” All participants submitted at least one photo and during the interview, participants were asked to explain each photo or reflect on follow-up questions that presented themselves when discussing the image. While analyzing the images and speaking with one of my committee members about possible findings, he asked if I received approval from IRB to use the images as part of the study. Although approval was requested as part of my initial protocol and documentation, I was asked by IRB to resubmit an updated consent form to allow usage of the submitted photos. Updated consent form is included in the appendix.

Academic Institutions

Participants from the study were required to be alumni from two California State University institutions located in Southern California and designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Both institutions are designated as Research I institutions, granting Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral level degrees. Located in Southern California, both institutions and per the mission of the California State University system, are advancing the economic prospects of the region where they serve. To ensure anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used to identify each campus.

According to the California State University website (CSU Dashboards, 2020), the institutions have the following characteristics:

Valley State

Enrolled approximately 35,000 students in Fall 2019; 87% of which were undergraduate students. Latinx students account for 32% of the student body and of those Latinx students, 45% are Latino males. The majority (62%) of enrolled undergraduate students are from the campus service area. The majority of students are full-time students (90%) and 52% of students are taking at least 15 units. Undergraduate students who are first generation account for 38% of enrolled students. The six-year graduation rate for Valley State is 72.8%. The Latinx student six-year graduation rate is 71% (1.8 percentage points below the average). The data on Latino males who fit the demographics the study (Latino males who are first generation) have a six-year graduation rate of 59.5% (an equity gap of 13.4%) (CSU Dashboards, 2020).

Harbor City State

Enrolled approximately 38,000 students in Fall 2019; 90% of which were undergraduate students. Latinx students account for 52% of the student body and of those Latinx students, 45% are Latino males. The majority of the students (87%) of the enrolled undergraduate students are from the local service area. The majority of students are full-time students (85%) and 34% of students are taking at least 15 units. A little over a third (38%) of undergraduate students are considered first-generation college students. The six-year graduation rate for Harbor City State is 55.2%. The Latinx student six-year graduation rate is 51.3% (3.9 percentage points below the average). The data on Latino males who fit the demographics the study (Latino males who are first generation) have a six-year graduation rate of 38.7% (an equity gap of 16.5%) (CSU Dashboards, 2020).

Participants

According to Cresswell (2014), phenomenological research typical ranges from three to ten participants. Since I am conducting research at two California State Universities in southern California, with similar student demographics, I wanted to recruit a sample size between 3 and 10 participants per campus, thus a maximum of 20 participants for the study. Since one institution has a higher six-year graduation rate for Latino males than the other, this research can help showcase how both institutions are shaping student experiences.

After recruiting 16 participants, 14 completed their consent form, participated in the interview, and submitted a response to the photo elicitation component of the study; Table 3.1 shows participant demographic information. For example, half of the participants were graduates from the class of 2019 and the remaining 50% (7 participants) were graduates of the class of 2018. All participants from Harbor City State were from the local-service area of the institution but some lived on-campus or in close proximity to campus, while only 33% of the participants from Valley State were from the local-service area. The vast majority (64%) of participants received a California Pell Grant, which is indicative that they were a low-income student, therefore, nine participants identified as first-generation, low-income Latino males. Lastly, based on self-reported data, the average grade point average (GPA) for all participants was 2.94.

All participants were California residents and lived in southern California the majority of their life. Participants were asked to provide a pseudonym to use for the study. This section contains a description of each participant and Table 3.1 provides a participants' profile summary.

Aaron

Aaron was raised in a single-mother household in the San Gabriel Valley and attended a private high school where he played baseball. He has a sister who is seven years older. At the age

of 10, Aaron's mother re-married and he became stepbrother to three more siblings. His grandparents were active in his life and supportive of his family. While in college, Aaron lived on campus his first year and became a member of a Latino-based fraternity. He also served on the executive board of the Fraternity/Sorority Life council. He graduated from college in four years with a 3.1 G.P.A. The only financial aid he received was in the form of loans; he did not work while in college. Aaron graduated from Valley State in 2018 with a major in Criminal Justice. He is now pursuing a degree in nursing.

Allen

Allen was raised in various parts of southern California and his parents finally settled close to campus. He attended a newly created charter high school and was a member of the first-graduating class. Allen lived with both parents and decided to attend Harbor City State. Allen was academically disqualified and was readmitted after completing several requirements. After his return, he worked diligently and graduated with a B.A. in English. He lived with his parents and commuted to campus. The only financial aid he received was in the form of loans. He also worked off-campus approximately 30 hours-a-week. Allen was not involved on campus and graduated from Harbor City State in five years.

Axel

Raised in a city southeast of downtown Los Angeles, Axel was bussed to a magnet school in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. Axel grew up living with both parents and two younger sisters; one sister was in her last year in college. Axel lived on campus his first year at Harbor City State with a friend he knew from his neighborhood. While in college, Axel worked on campus through the work-study program, and received campus scholarships including a Cal Grant. He was an Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) scholar and a member of an

academic organization. He graduated from Harbor City State in four years, after taking several years of summer courses, with a degree in Public Health and a 3.2 G.P.A.

Brian

Brian was raised in Orange County and attended the same high school as many of his extended-family members. Brian has a close connection to his extended family, including his cousins and uncles. He grew up with both parents and has an older brother who is three years older. Brian was able to attend Valley State with his brother; Brian's brother was in his last year when he came in a first-year student. During his first year in college, Brian lived in the residence halls in the leadership-learning community. Brian was actively engaged on campus and joined a Latino-based fraternity which was a cultural and an academic organization. In addition, Brian was an EOP scholar and a recipient of many forms of financial aid, including Pell and Cal Grants. Brian graduated from Valley State in four years with a bachelor's degree in International Security and Conflict Resolution (ISCOR) and a minor in Religious Studies. He was employed on campus and worked 10-20 hours per week. He is now a student in the Public Administration master's program at Valley State.

Cesar

Cesar was born and raised in Orange County and lived with both parents, a sister and a brother. He attended a public high school where he played soccer. Cesar was actively engaged with an after-school college access program that provided foundational support for college enrollment and supported him while in college. Cesar lived in the residence halls his first year and traveled home every weekend to visit his family. During his tenure in college, Cesar worked on campus approximately 20 hours a week. He was a recipient of scholarships and Pell and Cal Grants. He joined a Latino-based fraternity and graduated from Valley State in five years. He

was also an EOP scholar. Cesar graduated with a degree in Psychology and a minor in Counseling and Social Change with a 3.1 G.P.A.

Marco

Marco was raised in in the same county as his university. He was raised by both parents and has five siblings. He has an older sister who attended the University of California, Los Angeles. His younger siblings look up to him. Marco's parents worked most of the day and the older siblings took care of the younger siblings (they were latchkey kids). While in high school, Marco participated in sports, did fairly well with academics and participated in the AVID program. Marco received a scholarship that covered his tuition expenses to attend Valley State. Marco lived in the residence halls his first year and connected with other members who received the same scholarship. Part of his scholarship was to serve as a mentor for two middle-school students who he mentored throughout his undergraduate career. While in college, Marco worked on campus through the federal work-study program and also received Cal and Pell grants. Although he was not involved with any student organization, he participated in various organizations and attended events. Marco graduated from Valley State in six years with a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in three departments (Psychology, Counseling & Social Change and Leadership). Marco was also an EOP-student scholar. Marco is now a student in the Higher Education Administration/Student-Affairs Master's program at Valley Sate.

Marcos

Marcos is originally from Baja California, Mexico where he lived until the age of 13. He immigrated to California with his mother because of domestic violence in the household. Marcos attended middle school and high school in the region where the university is located. He learned to speak and write in English when he moved to California. While in high school, Marcos was

able to participate in a high school – college bridge-program where he took several courses at the local community college. He attended Valley State and subsequently completed his degree. During college, Marcos was a commuter student who lived with his mother and uncle in the same county. As an AB 540 student and DACA recipient, he was able to work approximately 35 hours per week in an off-campus job. He was also a recipient of several private and campus scholarships and grants. Marcos was highly involved on campus; he was a member of a Latino based fraternity, the president of the undocumented student group, a member of a service organization, and an EOP scholar. He graduated from Valley State in five years with a degree in Finance and a 2.98 GPA.

Oscar

Oscar participated in magnet programs since elementary school. He was raised by both parents in a city southeast of downtown Los Angeles. His older brother and sister, both graduated from college before he did in 2019. His first year in college, Oscar lived in the residence hall with a friend he knew from his neighborhood. Although Oscar was not involved in any organizations on campus, he worked approximately 20 hours per week in an on-campus job. He received a Pell Grant, campus scholarships and loans throughout college in order to pay for his academic expenses. He graduated from Harbor City State in five years with a degree in Public Health.

Paco

Paco was raised in a city in southwestern Los Angeles county. He was raised by both parents and has a younger sister. During high school, his parents felt it would be best if he attended a high school in a neighboring city, still close enough to home but more diverse and a better academic curriculum. Paco's parents wanted him to attend a private high school but due to

limited financial resources, he attended the high school in the neighboring city. When it was time to attend college, Paco decided to live-on campus his first year. During the first semester of his first year, Paco joined a Latino-based fraternity. He was active with his fraternity and became the president of the organization. He saw it his mission to engage with other culturally-relevant fraternities and sororities during his time in the position. Paco also worked approximately 20 hours per week in an on-campus job. He received financial aid and was a recipient of Cal and Pell Grants. He graduated with a 2.5 GPA from Valley State in five years and earned a degree in Business Management.

Santana

Santana was born and raised in Los Angeles and lived in a single-family home with his mother and younger sister. Growing up, he lived with uncles and aunts in the same household and during in his teenage years, his immediate family moved to South Los Angeles. In order to avoid acclimating to a new high school, he continued attending the same school and used public transportation or his mother drove him to school. He decided to attend Harbor City State because of the proximity to his home and his family. He lived at home with mother and sister throughout college and commuted to campus. Santana joined a cultural/political organization and became the chair (president) of the organization. He also worked on-campus approximately 20 hours per week. Santana came from a low-income family household and received Pell and Cal grants. Santana graduated from Harbor City State in five years with a 3.45 GPA. He earned a degree in Sociology and minor in Psychology.

Ulises

Ulises is the son of Salvadorian parents and grew up in Korea Town, a neighborhood in Los Angeles. At the age of seven, his parents separated which resulted in him living with his

mother and grandmother. He moved homes frequently and attended various K-12 schools, including two high schools. He decided to attend Harbor City State because of the proximity to his home. He lived at home and commuted during the first couple of years in college and then moved closer to campus. He was actively engaged on campus with political movements, joined cultural and political organizations. Ulises also worked 25-30 hours per week in an off-campus job. He graduated from Harbor City State in five years with a degree in Computer Information Technology and a minor in Philosophy. His overall academic performance was a 3.23 GPA. As a low-income college student, Ulises received Cal and Pell Grants and also accepted loans to meet his academic expenses.

Vicente

At the age of two, Vicente's father passed away and was left to live with his mother and two siblings. He lived in South Los Angeles and attended a public charter-high school that has a 95% college acceptance rate. Vicente's oldest sister attended another local university and graduated; she now has her master's degree. Vicente attended Harbor City State and spent five years completing his undergraduate degree. During his tenure at the institution, he was an EOP scholar, a member of a Latino-based fraternity, regularly participated in intramural sports, and worked approximately 20 hours per week in an on-campus position through the federal work-study program. As a low-income student, Vicente received Cal and Pell Grants and also applied for loans and scholarships. He graduated with a degree in Sociology and maintained a 3.1 GPA.

Victor

Victor was born and raised in the same county as his university. He has a younger brother and was raised by both parents who migrated from Mexico. At a young age, Victor participated in English-language development programs until he was proficient and could maintain English-only

curriculum. He attended a high school that enrolled predominantly White students. Victor had a small group of friends because he was quiet and kept to himself most of the time, he was also a student enrolled in the AVID program at the high school. He was admitted to Valley State.

During his first year, he lived on-campus in the residence halls. He joined a Latino-based fraternity and ultimately became the president of the organization. He also worked approximately eight hours a week on campus. Victor graduated from Valley State in four years with a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in Chicana/o Studies, Anthropology and Public Administration. He culminated his undergraduate journey with a 3.4 GPA.

X

Born and raised in a town close to his university , X grew-up with both parents and three siblings; he has an older sister, a younger brother, and younger sister. X's parents were always working, and it was up to him and his older sister to take care of the siblings (they were latchkey kids). Due to gang-affiliated concerns, X attended another high school in the district where he was academically successful. He participated in the Upward Bound program and attended a summer program during his junior year at Harbor City State. He picked Harbor City State because of his experiences there in Upward Bound. During his undergraduate career, X was a commuter student, taking public transportation to and from home. X was actively involved on campus in various cultural and political organizations and was also an EOP scholar. He worked approximately 20 hours a week in an off-campus job and also received Pell and Cal Grants. He accepted loans and was awarded various campus scholarships. X graduated from Harbor City State in six years as a double major in Sociology with a concentration in Criminology/Criminal Justice and Chicana/o Studies. He also completed a minor in Civic and Community Engagement. X is now a student in the Master's in Social Work program at Harbor City State.

As part the questionnaire, participants were asked to self-report their ethnicity. As seen in Table 3.1, participants described their ethnicity in various forms, among them were Mexican-American, Chicano, Latinx, Latino and Mestizo. The participants' description of their ethnic identity is consistent with how Latinos across the US identify, there is no consistency, it's highly subjective and contextual (Torres, Hernández & Martinez, 2019). The majority of the participants are of Mexican descent (86% of participants) and the remaining two participants have origins from El Salvador.

Table 3.1

Participant Profile Table

Pseudonym	Institution	Service Area	Ethnicity	Pell Recipient	College GPA	Graduation Year
Aaron	Valley	No	Mexican	No	3.1	2018
Allen	Harbor City	Yes	Latino	No	2.47	2019
Axel	Harbor City	Yes	Latino	No	3.2	2018
Brian	Valley	No	Mexican-American	Yes	3.46	2019
Cesar	Valley	No	Latino	Yes	3.1	2018
Marco	Valley	Yes	Latino	Yes	2.66	2018
Marcos	Valley	Yes	Latinx	No	2.98	2019
Oscar	Harbor City	Yes	Hispanic	Yes	2.3	2019
Paco	Harbor City	Yes	Latino	Yes	2.5	2019
Santana	Harbor City	Yes	Latino	Yes	3.45	2018
Ulises	Harbor City	Yes	Mestizo	Yes	3.23	2019
Vicente	Harbor City	Yes	Mexican-American	Yes	3.1	2019
Victor	Valley	No	Latino	No	3.4	2018
X	Harbor City	Yes	Chicano	Yes	2.2	2018

Data Analysis

Data Analysis is one of the most important aspects of the research study. As Jones et al. (2014) notes, analysis is “perhaps the most pivotal” part of the process (p. 164). Prior to analyzing the data, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using *Rev.com*, an online-transcription website. After each interview was transcribed, I reviewed all transcriptions for

accuracy. I also emailed all participants the updated transcript and asked participants to provide feedback or include any other information they felt was missing from their interview transcript. I received six updated-transcripts and all others had no changes.

In order to code the interviews, I used *NVivo*® 12, a qualitative software that supports the coding process. After each interview, I drafted memos reflecting on each conversation and provided details about my interactions during the interviews. Following Creswell's (2014) and Charmaz (2014) recommendations, data from the interviews and photo-elicitation were analyzed generating categories of information (open coding), I then developed categories and aligned them within the theoretical model employed in the study (axial coding), lastly, I developed themes with rich descriptions from the interconnection of these categories (selective coding).

To maximize the quality and trustworthiness of the findings, member checks and peer debriefing were included as part of this process. According to Jones et al. (2014), ways of ensuring trustworthiness of a study, the researcher must include credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. I engaged participants with member checking to confirm the findings. Once I identified themes with rich descriptions and aligned with my theoretical framework, I emailed participants and asked for their input. Participants responded positively to the results and were supportive of the findings. One participant shared the following:

I carefully read over the attachment a couple of times trying to see if anything was missing or if I had any recommendations, but I found it to be very thorough and it captured the meaning of my words when we spoke. This study looks great and I could not agree more with the recommendations you provided. This is super exciting and something that I am becoming interested in myself. Thank you so much for allowing me to be a part of your journey and research!

A colleague in the field checked for content and bias. My advisors also verified my findings and provided input and direction.

Since this was a phenomenological study, it was less important to triangulate the data as a form of trustworthiness because this methodological approach revolves around the “participants’ articulation of their experiences” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 38). Generalized findings for all populations are not identified from qualitative research. The findings should be transferable to individuals, sites, or places that are similar to the participants in the study (Creswell, 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2010). Lastly, confirmability requires that findings are connected with data and analysis (Jones et al., 2014); in this study findings were aligned with the theoretical model guiding the research.

Protections of Human Subjects

Prior to starting the participant recruitment process, I submitted all of my paperwork to the Claremont Graduate University (CGU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). After a month of working with CGU IRB, I received approval on 1) invitational flyers to recruit participants at both campuses, 2) recruitment email/letter, 3) oral invitation, 4) consent form, and 5) interview protocol. Efforts to ensure protection of all study participants began with disclosing the purpose of the study, providing requirements for participation and indicated potential risks associated with their involvement in the study, including loss of time and possible emotional distress (see Appendix A-E for all documents). I also participated in Claremont Graduate University’s CITI Program, human subjects’ protection training. I completed this process in order to understand how to effectively protect all of my participants. For purposes of this study and to support confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used for all participants and the institutions involved. Images used in this study were approved by participants and a second consent form

was signed. All e-mail communication with participants were deleted, eliminating any potential breach of information. All Zoom interviews were only audio recorded and saved in a password-protected folder. I followed all of IRB recommendations to ensure proper protection of all participants.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand how Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) to aid their retention while enrolled at two southern California CSUs designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The study is also intended to identify which factors contributed to Latino male students' graduation and identify if other factors exist that are not embedded as part of Yosso (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model. Participants identified how aspirational, familial, navigational, social, resistant and linguistic capital were used in various ways during their undergraduate years. Since participants were alumni from the class of 2018 and 2019, their experiences are relevant to current local, state and national climates, which are manifested in their responses.

This chapter also identifies three other forms of capital that emerged from the analysis of semi-structured interviews, photo elicitation and pre-interview questionnaires, which address question three of this research. These three additional forms of capital Latino males used during their undergraduate years and assisted with their retention were: Spirituality/Religious capital, *Valor* (courageous) and *Ser Servisioso* (Serving). A form of resistant capital that also emerged is Dignity Work –coined by Rios (2011) focusing on Latino and Black boys of color but relevant and applicable in the context of higher education.

This chapter begins with a discussion of themes connected with Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model and also addresses how students used their CCW to assist with their retention through graduation. The second part of the chapter provides the emergence of new forms of capital and showcase how students used those forms of capital to create a sense of belonging on campus, which is a predictor of retention and graduation (Hurtado & Carter,

1997). Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summary bridging all nine forms of capital used by Latinos males at four-year southern California, Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Community Cultural Wealth

Community Cultural Wealth manifested itself for the Latino male participants in the study in various ways. This section explores how participants used their familial, aspirational, social, linguistic, navigational and resistant capital to promote their retention and ultimately, their graduation. Table 4.1 below highlights the various forms of capital in CCW and how they were constructed by participants. The last column of Table 4.1 denotes how many participants used the respective form of capital and includes a percentage response rate. As seen in Table 4.1, there were three forms of capital that all 14 participants used throughout their academic career: aspirational, familial and social capital. Resistant capital was the least form of capital used by participants but still used by almost half of the participants (43%).

Table 4.1

Description of CCW Forms of Capital (Themes) and How They Manifested for Participants

Theme	Codes	Definition	Percentage of Participants
Aspirational Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish with a college degree 	“...the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78)	100% (14)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanting to give back to pay it forward 		
Navigational Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigating to feel comfortable asking for help, it's Ok to ask for help. 	“...skills of maneuvering through social institutions” (Yosso 2005, p. 80)	86% (12)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking with faculty/advisors to navigate academic requirements 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding places on campus to study and grow • Finding resources to stay nourished 		
Familial Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieving back to the family for financial and moral support • Creating “familial” relationships with faculty and staff of color • Creating lasting relationships with friends (become family). 	“a commitment to community well being and expands the concept of family to include more broad understanding of kinship” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79)	100% (14)
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College is about finding yourself, thus connecting creating friendships and joining organizations. • Building relationships with colleagues (work) and relationships with classmates to create study groups, etc. • Surrounding self with people who will elevate you and challenge you to be better. 	“networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79)	100% (14)
Linguistic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with staff/faculty who speak Spanish • Connecting with peers who speak Spanish and share the same culture 	The “...intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78)	43% (6)
Resistant Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking up against racism in the classroom & on-campus • Challenging negative view on Latino males • Dignity Work 	“...knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 8–). Dignity Work - “Fighting for dignity...entails being	50% (7)

willing to take the risk of
harsh discipline or arrest,
in order to expose the
contradictions of the
system and achieve
acknowledgment and a
feeling of dignity.” (Rios,
2011, p. 144).

Aspirational Capital

As defined by Yosso (2005), aspirational capital refers to “...the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (p. 78). All 14 participants described in various ways having aspiration to graduate from their respective institutions. They shared having the need to excel academically for themselves, for their parents, siblings and family members. They also shared, and of importance, the will of wanting to be able to graduate and give back to other students, their families and friends. Below are two ways aspirational capital manifested itself for the subjects.

Finish with a college degree. The fourteen participants when asked if they had goals while in college said their number one long term goal or aspiration was to graduate. Some spoke in length about why they hoped to graduate. For example, Cesar shared his parents’ struggle of immigrating to this country was the reason why he wanted to graduate:

...just the fact of upholding the, not the values, but the story that my parents, you know, that my parents have. Uh, and it comes with every undocumented person here in the U.S. like they come here to give their kids a better life...[they] gave me this opportunity that they didn’t have because they came over here to the United States. So, I think that’s one of the main things that kept me motivated to continue to, you know, achieve this goal that they didn’t have.... So just the idea that they came here to give me a better opportunity.

Yeah. Being somebody in life or you know, just achieving things that they didn't achieve was the main reason as to why it continued to motivate me, continued to keep me determined to get a bachelor's degree.

For these first-generation Latino male college students in my study, graduating was the primary goal they had. Another participant, Allen, returned to school after being disqualified for academic performance issues and came back stronger than ever. He was committed to his girlfriend and his grandmother and wanted to do everything in his power to get done and complete his undergraduate coursework. As he was reflecting about his original setback and how he was returning, he shared the following:

The picture I sent you about my girlfriend and my grandma. Uh, that's pretty much it. They were just two people that I couldn't let down for anything. So, I promised both of them...I told them "look, I'm going to get through this and I'm 'gonna' make you guys proud". Okay. And that's pretty much it. I want it to be the first generation, uh, in my family to graduate from a university, a four-year university. So, I wanted to make both of them proud.

Another participant (X), shared a picture (See Figure 4.1) of his neighborhood friends who served as his motivation to meet his goal of graduating, he stated:

This picture serves as a motivation to my graduation as I recall the struggles and people I have had in my life, and the privilege I have to attain the education opportunities that I have while others tried, but were unable to, due to being victims of the school-to-prison-pipeline or deficit factors embedded within our communities.

Figure 4.1

X and his neighborhood friends during his first year in college.



As X shared, his motivation toward graduation was also fueled by looking at other Latino males who weren't able to pursue higher education. X was able to express how privileged he is compared to others with similar backgrounds who were funneled into a system that led to incarceration. However, his ability and commitment to see himself succeed and graduate, and now currently in the master's in social work program, is an example of his aspiration to do better for himself and others.

As part of the photo elicitation part of the research, 86% of the participants (12 males) submitted pictures of themselves, with their family or with friends during graduation. Since all participants are graduates of their respective institutions, it is not by chance that their one long term goal and major aspiration was graduation, they conveyed this message in various forms. For example, Vicente shared images of items around campus that supported his vision to the finish line. In the description of one of the pictures he sent, Vicente shared that every year during graduation it gave him motivation and hope to strive to complete his college degree. He shared the following,

[Harbor City State] library always has their flags down during graduation season. The result of that is motivation to graduate. Every semester I battled through, got me closer to my goal. From there I KNEW THAT I WILL ONCE WALK THOSE STEPS TO GRADUATE IN FRONT OF THE LIBRARY I STUDIED ENDLESSLY.

Other participants shared their aspiration to graduate as something they just needed to do. For example, Ulises shared that all he ever wanted to do “was just graduate”. Victor compared his ambition to graduate, to that of other college students by sharing that “Like any other college student I just wanted to graduate.” Furthermore, Santana also expressed similar thoughts, he said, “I don't think there was anything that I was necessarily striving for in my time there outside of just graduating.” Regardless of how intentional their aspirations were (e.g. doing it for family, just to do it, others are doing it, etc.) each participant had their own reason for dreaming about graduation as the overall outcome in their undergraduate journey. Their aspiration to succeed and graduate resulted in ultimately completing their goal and becoming one of the 20% of Latino males in the US under the age of 29 with a college degree.

Regardless of how many roadblocks they perceived experiencing, participants worked hard to finish college and get a degree. Five participants shared that their aspiration started with trying to finish college but along their academic journey their goal expanded to wanting to graduate and pursue a master's program. For example, Oscar shared he “always had a clear path in the sense that I knew I wanted to graduate college and you know, potentially go for a master's degree or figure out my line of work and go from there.” Three of the participants (Brian, Marco and X) were inspired to continue their education and are now enrolled in master's programs at the same undergraduate institution and Aaron is back in school pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). For example, Brian recalls that since he was a child, he had the dream to

complete an undergraduate degree, pursue a master's program and a Ph.D. Although he has altered his plan slightly, that goal to finish kept him pushing toward graduation, he shared the following:

I always remember telling myself, I want to go to college four-years, and go to get my master's right after that, boom, two years. And then I'm going to get my Ph.D., right after that, boom. I've now adjusted not to do the Ph.D., but I've done the first two...

Some participants didn't have a clear road map like the one Brian shared, however several participants were aspiring to pursue a master's degree in the upcoming years, including Victor who shared that he's now "having conversations with [his] parents" about wanting to pursue a Master's program and also Cesar who is now looking at "leadership development, higher education or educational administration programs" to further his educational and professional career. Ultimately, these examples demonstrate how the participants' aspirations to graduate manifested and now that they are graduates of their respective institution, they have goals to continue furthering their education.

Wanting to give back and pay it forward. A significant way in which participants shared their aspirational capital as a way to graduate was the notion that they wanted to pay it forward and give back to other students and family members. For example, in a picture Aaron submitted (see Figure 4.2), he commented that he aspired to become a role model for his younger nephews because of the large influence he has on them,

My two nephews look up to me. I want to make sure they have a role model that went to college. In the picture, it shows them holding the same pose as I am, shows how much influence I can have on them. Thus, I want to keep motivating them.

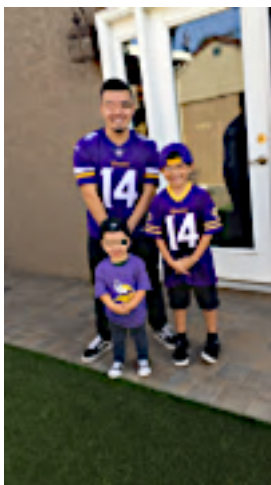
During the interview, Aaron elaborated about the picture and shared, “I want to set a good example for [my nephews]...just because your parent didn't go to college or just because whatever obstacles you encountered you can still go to school and graduate.” He continued by sharing,

...the [picture of the] Vikings, it just shows that we are one, you know like that even they pose the way I pose. They smile the way I smile. You know like they just try to be like me. That's why I try to set the best example.

In the previous example, Aaron shared the reason why he wanted to graduate, which was for his nephews to have a role model who they can look up to, regardless of the obstacles and parent's inability to go to school. Since he was able to go to school, his nephews now have someone who is educated, and they can look up to.

Figure 4.2

Aaron is a positive influence on young nephews.



Similarly, Axel shared wanting to graduate and be the best example for his sisters,

... I was wanting to set that example for them. I'm the oldest. I can't let them see anything bad. So, I feel like the role they did was like, you know, motivated me show them like a better example of what they had to do to get there.

As Axel shared, his relationships with his sisters as the oldest sibling served as a motivator to continue moving forward and ultimately graduate. He shared that his younger sister is graduating this year from another 4-year institution in southern California and he was glad he was able to provide a good example for her.

Another way participants shared their motivation to do well and to graduate, were based on their need to set examples and serve as a mentor to others – they wanted to pay it forward. Marco shared the reason why his dream to graduate and pursue a master’s program is important to him. Marco was grateful to the university professionals who helped him when he struggled and now, he wants to support future students. Marco shared the following:

... my second senior year, that's where I was like, okay, like I think I want to go a masters and that's where it was like, well, if I wanna do the masters, I want, I'm [going to] do it in Student Affairs because I gained a lot from student affairs professionals and I see myself in a lot of like other students or um, not say myself, but my experiences like a lot of, I'm not the only one who has struggled. So, I wanted to like help those students out. And I think the master's degree was a good motivator for me to, you know, like start doing better in my classes. Started taking classes that interested me more, classes that would give me that knowledge or that foundation learning of what I needed to like really work with, other people in general.

The participants in this section shared their perspective of why they were motivated and had hopes to graduate to serve others, including setting an example for their families and providing assistance to future students. The narrative of wanting to give back to assist others by aspiring to graduate was clearly a form of capital they used during their time as undergraduate students.

Both of these forms of aspirational capital demonstrated how these Latino males had a goal and vision of graduating to make their parents proud, to help others, to help themselves and also mentor students and family members. The participants indicated that their aspiration to graduate kept them moving toward the finish line – graduation.

Navigational Capital

There were definitely roadblocks along their journey, however participants shared how they were able to overcome them by effectively connecting and moving through the campus environment, thus utilizing their navigational capital. Navigational capital, as noted by Yosso (2005), refers to People of Color's ability and "...skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80), especially when the institutions were not created for students of colors in mind, including Latino males. This section highlights how participants discussed their ability to navigate their environment in four distinct ways: (1) they navigated to feel comfortable asking for help and it was OK to do so (especially from people of color, including peers); (2) they spoke with faculty/advisors to navigate academic requirements and successfully do well in their courses (3) they found places on campus to study and grow (including academically, personally and professionally); and (4) they found resources to stay nourished, despite food insecurity, financial stability and time constraints.

Navigating to feel comfortable asking for help, it's OK to ask for help. The males in the study shared about their initial discomfort when asking for help, however they tapped into their own self-efficacy to make the initial outreach. Self-efficacy means, "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 2002, p.94). There were four distinct ways participants described navigating to feel comfortable asking for help – various aspects of the college process (pre-

enrollment, policies and opportunities of being undocumented, classroom support and on-campus support). For example, a participant shared that his first time asking for help was prior to enrolling in college. He shared his story by stating how he felt ashamed for needing to ask for help but understood the positive impact it had on him:

... I remember, solely remember asking for help the very first time, which it goes back to before college. Like how do you do this application? How do you sign up for this? Like what should I do? Like it humbles you, it kind of makes you feel ashamed, but they humble you as a man and teaches you how to move forward. And that's a lot of things that as men, we don't do that's why we're so prideful. That's why like I got this, whatever. Right? So, is that pride? That pride breaks. (X)

The story X shared was something that many first-generation Latinx students share about their lack of knowledge regarding the application process when applying to the university. X shared the feeling of shame, however was able to ask for help. X's experience contradicts previous research (Sáenz et al., 2013), where they found Latino cultural norms required males to exhibit forms of *machismo* by not soliciting help even while facing a threat of failing. He was able to not be prideful and solicit the help he needed to be successful.

Another participant shared his experience of being undocumented and not understanding all the ins-and-outs of federal and state support for undocumented students and how it related to his AB 540 status. He built rapport with the advisor of the organization he joined in order to feel comfortable to ask for help, he states that he owes most of his knowledge to the organization he joined and also the advisor that supported them,

I became a part of... the undocumented student org. Cause' I, myself, I'm an undocumented student. I'm a Dreamer student. So yeah, man, you know, being first

generation Latino undocumented, that it's a big deal for me, you know...navigating the system was kinda tough, you know. But uh, with the help of my peers, my advisor ...which is pretty helpful, honestly, I was able to navigate all, like little things that I needed to do, paperwork...I navigated through it pretty well. So. Thanks to a lot of people... because a lot of resources weren't given to me cause...the first two years as an undocumented student I wasn't offered a lot of resources, you know, aside from like the Dream Act that I filled out for tuition purposes and the AB 540 law, which was for in-state tuition...all my knowledge honestly came from joining [the student organization] like different laws that existed, the up and coming laws that were gonna pass. It was just mainly like 50% looking for help and then 50%, um, help that was given to me. So, it was a matter of looking and being given some help, you know. (Marcos)

Not only was Marcos needing to understand how to be a college student, he also needed to understand how his undocumented identity impacted him and his environment. He was able to connect with an organization that provided him the tools he needed to be successful and an advisor who cared and provided time and recommendations for her students.

Several of the participants shared they could have done better asking faculty members for assistance when they were not doing well academically, including attending regular office hours. Others shared how they did not hesitate to solicit support from their faculty, for example, this was the case for Oscar who shared that he was able to connect with faculty members and his peers and felt comfortable asking for help when he needed the support. He shared the following,

If I wasn't doing so well in a class, I could definitely go speak to some of my peers or speak to my professor in the sense of like hey, I need help and then I was actually provided it. So, the environment again has always been supportive as long as I'm the one

that is advocating for myself because again, you don't say something they are not going to know.

Later in our conversation, Oscar shared how he was extremely appreciative of his supervisors who he had built a relationship with and who he trusted. He shared how at work (on-campus position) his supervisors were understanding. He discussed how his supervisors understood his journey of trying to navigate a university structure and they knew of some of the obstacles that he faced in his academics and job performance. He shared that he was comfortable asking for help and most importantly he knew they truly cared, making his college experience that much better,

... they put me through professionally through work but also kinda' keeping me in a good state I knew that even when work was getting tough, that school was the driver no matter what...so I always knew I had the backing from them almost on a daily basis, if I ever needed help, I could always talk to them and if it was anything serious, you know, they dropped their world. I was lucky and grateful to recognize that I have people in my life and work who will support me through tough times, both personally and professionally.

The positive interactions with student-affairs professionals enhanced and positively impacted Oscar's ability to perform professionally and also academically; he knew he could ask for support from his supervisors. One of the pictures he sent, was a picture of himself and both of his supervisors (see Figure 4.3), neither of which identify as Latinx. As he described, "they have honestly been the reason why I try my best to produce top quality work, not just for work, but also in anything I do. Their support is something that I will never take for granted..."

Figure 4.3

Oscar with supervisors.



Oscar's on-campus position provided him the opportunity with flexibility and comfort to speak up when he needed help at work and with his academics. His supervisor's ability to listen, have compassion, and care made it a pleasant working environment on campus. His ability to ask for help, to feel comfortable to ask for help, is against the perception Latino males do not ask for help because of traditional norms of masculinity or *machismo* (Sáenz et al., 2013). However, Harris et al. (2015) found that Latino and Mexicano males who asked for help, without being perceived as weak or feminine, were more likely to stay focused in college. The experiences highlighted here of participants being "Ok" to ask for help are supportive of Harris et al. (2015) identifying their comfortability to ask for help without feeling shamed or inferior. This same experience is what Paco highlights as we were discussing the type of advice, he would give others entering a Hispanic-Serving Institution,

...and if you don't know, ask for help. Whether it be someone in your family, a guidance counselor, advisor, anyone that can help because as independent and strong as we want to be, we don't always know the answers to everything. And sometimes our pride is what

holds us from asking for help and sometimes that's where it really affects us and hurts us at the end.

The world can be a difficult place and it is critical that a person is strong and keeps getting the services they need to make it in the world. This may mean mental health services and other forms of support that can assist with healing wounds that impact daily life. X shared a picture of when he was 15 years old concealing a 22', he described the picture by stating,

...weeks after a friend was murdered and violence and death rates had gone up in my community. Serves as a motivation as I remember the pain and hurt, I went through as a child. How far I have come. And how far I have to go.

Marcos indicated that seeking psychological services may be needed in order to stay mentally healthy, "Psychological services I guess, off campus or on-campus. I needed that for a couple of years. Um, yeah, that's it". Another participant, Marco, sought the support of counseling services as well. He shared "Um, so I struggled. I struggled a lot and I don't believe I had the skills to like' survive. Um, if it wasn't for [mentor] reaching out to me and having me go see, um, Counseling and Psychological Services, I don't know where I would be."

Speaking with faculty/advisors to navigate academic requirements. The majority of participants shared positive comments regarding advisors and faculty members at their respective institutions, specifically relating to the way they helped them navigate the college campus. For example, Allen shared how his advisor was able to assist him in enrolling in the courses he needed and into the English program he now participates in, even after graduation. Allen stated,

...he taught me how to...what to do and what not to do at school cuz' I was that kid going into college that was just, it was just different for me. And then like I said' my high school didn't prepare me for that so he introduced me to a lot of different people. Um,

he's the one who got me into my English program with them. So, if it wasn't for [my advisor], I wouldn't be where I'm at today. I wouldn't be as mature as I am today. He just pushed me, he didn't sugar code anything. He just told me straight to the point, well, what I need to do...in order for me to be successful in my degree...

Allen's advisor was extremely helpful in facilitating a smooth transition to campus, helping him connect with other members in the community, and ultimately helping him navigate uncharted territory. His advisor understood how to encourage and guide him and push him to maneuver through his academic journey. This advisor opened a door that led him to work in a program that is now his full-time job. Similarly, Victor shared that his fraternity brothers were the initial impetus to consider changing his degree, however his advisor was the main person who helped him understand the requirements he needed to make the academic change:

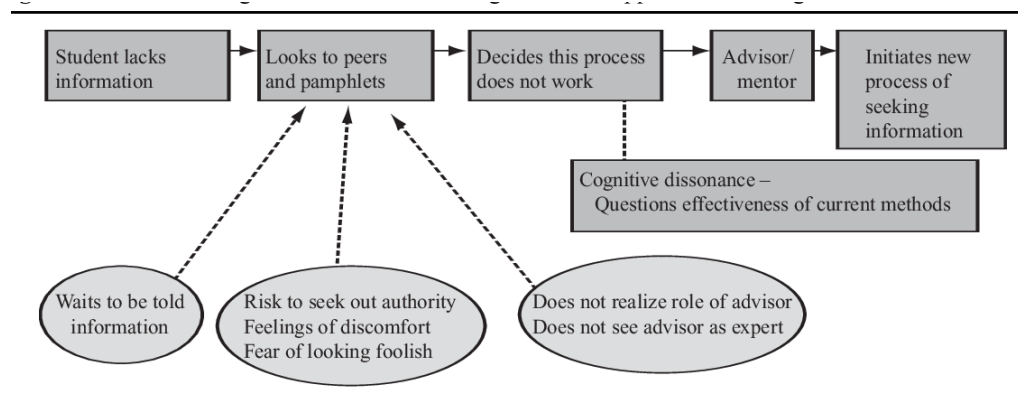
And so, I was talking to some of my peers and my fraternity brothers and one of them actually recommended to check out interdisciplinary studies, which I did. I went to go talk to the counselors and they recommended based off classes I was already taking as pre-recs that I should pursue Chicano/Chicana studies because I had taken various classes, uh, in English and History, which would count as that Public Administration because I could still keep a lot of my pre-recs but still involve myself with people. And then anthropology was just something that I will always enjoyed on my own and so that ended up being my third branch.

For first-generation Latinx students, peers are often the first individuals Latino males seek to find information. According to Torres et al. (2006) Latinx students, including Latino males, get information from friends, which is what happened in this example. Victor received information about possibly changing his major, a recommendation first given by friends and

fraternity brothers. He then visited trained professionals to assist with the navigation process and ultimately made the decision to change his major. Figure 4.4 below shows a model Torres et al. (2006) developed to explain how first-generation Latinx students seek information. The model was indicative of the journey Victor and several other participants took.

Figure 4.4

Model of first-generation Latinx college students' approach to seeking information adopted from Torres et al. (2006).



Advisors serve on campuses to provide direction, support and guide students through their academic journey. At the core, faculty provide academic education to students focused on academic progress and success. Marcos shared how one of his professors was able to assist him even when other students were failing. He shared that his faculty member welcomed him during office hours and worked with him through this academic experience:

I would go to office hours, uh, only for the classes that I really needed the help. You know, like Business Law. I remember it was one of my toughest classes from undergrad. I would go to office hours almost at least twice a week, three times a week because it was a chapter almost two times a week because we had the class two times a week and it was a chapter every day...Tests were brutal...A lot of people were getting D, C, you know, and then I would go with the professor. I would ask “Hey, like what's going to be on the test? What can I pay close attention to?” ... It was just a matter of like getting on their

good side and you know, and hopefully being able to give me a good grade on the exam...

Although struggling and nervous for the outcome, the support the professor gave him motivated him to ask questions about his class. The discomfort of asking for help from the faculty member was not as visible for him because he wanted to perform better in class and not be another student performing poorly. It was the faculty member who also contributed to making Marcos feel like he could approach him and ask for help, which was not the experience he shared about other professors.

Another participant was able to identify his career path because of conversations he had with a Chicano/a Studies professor he had that “peeked his interest” in a field he had no idea existed. Santana commented that his interactions with faculty member opened the doors that otherwise would have never been found, he shared the following:

...There were people that I would like to have and I did look for when I needed to talk to someone and those were definitely, a professor of Chicano Studies in a public speaking class cause he was, again, I mentioned that he was the first person to open up my eyes to just everything that was on my plate as a first-generation, uh, you know, Mexican college student. And so he, he's the one that opened my eyes to that. So it was definitely, I was just able to talk to him and I didn't even have to be about like, you know, a class. Like I was able to talk to him about like professional development and he was the first that peeked my interest in, um, and working for like parks and like forest service and things like that because he was part of the Conservancy, the San Gabriel mountains Conservancy. And so he peaked my interest in that. So that was somebody that I knew I could talk to.

Finding places on campus to study and grow. Several participants talked about finding places to study and get work done. Many used the university's library partly because it was open late and easily accessible. The library was also a resource with printers, study rooms and offered academic support. Here are comments from Axel:

The second picture is the [Harbor City State] library, I chose this picture because I would always come here to study. I was really bad at studying at home because I would get distracted easy. Studying here would help me not only study and focus but also finish my assignments. I also appreciated the resources they offered such as the free printing and the study rooms which I used a lot.

Another participant talked about the importance of the library. Allen said:

You were basically on your own. I mean, like I said, it wasn't like high school where they held your hand and just told you what to do. It was more like on your own. But the resources at [Harbor City State] were good. I mean, if you knew where you had to go, it was pretty solid. Like, um, uh, like the learning the learning center over there at the [Harbor City State] library, it was a pretty solid place to go study or ask any help.

Allen continued to explain where he would go and why. He liked going to the university's library because he found it to be a place where he could get his academic work completed:

...I just spent most of my days there. Every day I would spend like a few hours at the library and then Fridays I'll spend it there all day. So, I wouldn't even go to work that day. I would just spend my time at the library. I would be there by the time they open to the time they closed. So, I'll say the library was a big influence on me because it pushed me to it, put it away. It was just me by myself. If I wasn't doing no one else can do for me.

Other participants discussed the importance of having other places on campus they could study and work on homework and class responsibilities. For example, Marcos shared how he spent time in a student lounge on campus:

I was most of my time...in [Valley College Student Life Office] just studying like day and night? Cause I didn't know how much to study and so I would stay there till like closing time, like nine and 8 PM.

Ulises explored the campus trying to find places outside of the library to study. He shared his struggle of needing to find places on campus because it was difficult to concentrate at home:

I spent a lot of time just exploring the campus on my own, like finding little hidden places that I could sit and study for a while. Places where I could like have a, a private space. And I think that's mostly because, like I said, I was commuting and so when I would go home, I was in a room with my brother who always had the TV on and it was really difficult for me to concentrate in areas like that. So, it was refreshing to have a space where I could go between like empty classrooms and open like semi urban forest, you know, like [Harbor City State] has like that strip of, uh, space that they call like their urban forest and like the botanical garden. I liked looking around to find those different kinds of spaces to find areas to study.

Ulises also identified the importance of cultural spaces on the campus, specifically identifying the space early in the academic process. He stated, “The cultural houses allowed me to find a closer-knit community my final year of school. It was a resource that I wish I had found sooner because commuting in the early part of my education was exhausting.”

The flexibility of the campus environment was important for students. Their stories about using the library for more than just having a quiet space was important, including the extra

resources the library provided. It was also important to see how they navigated spaces that were not traditionally meant to study, like a botanical garden and a forest. Lastly, spaces like cultural centers were important for students, specifically if found early in their college career.

Finding resources to stay nourished. One of the issues that Latino males faced was food insecurity. Sometimes students did not know where they could eat or if they had time to eat. Vicente shared how the campus' food pantry provided great resources for student including providing him the opportunity to apply for CalFresh (California program to support low-income people and families have access to food). Other students shared how they didn't have time to eat. X struggled for several years with food insecurity, it was until one of his advisors in EOP pulled him aside and confronted him, inquiring if he had eaten, he shared the exchange:

I remember once, [Advisor] from EOP, she asked me, "*No has comido verdad?*" It hurt me to say "no" but she already knew the answer. And so once I told her I've gone, actually I've gone the last year like this she started getting on my case. "You need to eat *mijo*. You're messing up. That's your mentality. That's your health". I was like "there's no time [advisor], like gotta get up early, catch the bus, go to class, don't have money for lunch, go to class again. I'd rather sleep than then I'd take a nap and go to class tired and you know, whatever it is. Take the class late, come back home on the bus, get home super late and be too tired to eat. Like I rather sleep. Like you know how it is, and she would say "I know how it is, but there was always a "but". Okay. And it wasn't until I started listening, I'm like, okay, started taking some time to take care of myself. So, whenever there were events on campus, boom, go real quick, snatch up some food. Um, and I think that's how my mind expanded cause I'm like going to different conferences and for an events, different things they have on campus. Now I'm gaining my community over there.

I'm understanding what this is. Right? So, it's like, okay it works. I guess the starvation for food and the search for food kind of opened my mind though too. Cause it's like now I'm at a different event talking about um, this educational panel on how to provide services to communities and I'm like, Oh, damn like, okay. Right. So, and they had food. Other participants shared the same story X shared about the lack of resources he had and time constraints that resulted in forfeiting the opportunity to eat. For example, Ulises shared that sometimes he didn't have food and was low on funds but was able to pay \$2.50 for a meal at a campus dining facility,

...they have this, uh, this option on the menu where like they, they have, they call it the vegetables and starch where like, depending on the day, like it could be like rice and broccoli or like other vegetables...it's just like a small box...I couldn't, uh, buy like a full meal, like I at least could go get that little box for \$2.50 and like at least had something in my stomach.

The participants struggled to identify how to make time, how to utilize the small amount of funding they did have to make it last. X benefited from campus programs that offered free food, Oscar shared a similar story. He talked about how he used the food pantry and a free resource in the university Union that provided food and free scantrons during finals week. Oscar said:

But anything on campus I didn't utilize it as much as I probably should have but the food pantry. Honestly that saves so many people. I forgot what is it called, kinda like when they have finals they have free breakfast and scantrons, there you go that was another thing, that was a big thing because I hated that time of year and it was so much stress and it was kinda having to manage other things and money had always been the stressor so just being able to just have some people be able to understand that like hey, one or two

little scantrons will help. It's going to make your day a little bit better, you know it kinda always, so really the on-campus thing came from the Union, really all came from the Union.

Familial Capital

For Latino males in this study, familial capital stemmed beyond immediate family. Familial capital as noted by Yosso (2005), is “a commitment to community well being and expands the concept of family to include more broad understanding of kinship” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). It is widely known that *familismo* (familial) is a value in Latinx culture and an important tenant for Latino males. Welland & Ribner (2008) found that *familismo* is a primary support system sought by Latino men, since family is one of the strongest values. Ojeda & Castillo (2016) also found the importance of *familismo* in the success of Latino males. All but two participants submitted a picture with them and their family – family could mean various things for individuals. When asked how frequently they communicated with their family members (phone, text, email, etc.), four participants (29%) shared they spoke with family members daily and the remaining 71% spoke with their family at least one to three times per week. For participants who lived at home or in close proximity to home, they visited their family at least one to three times per week (36%), 21% visited them once a week or every other week and the majority, 43% visited at least once a month.

When asked in the questionnaire if participants had mentors on campus to support them, the majority of participants, 64% shared they at least had one mentor they could count on. For students who shared they didn't have a mentor, during our conversation they recanted their statement and said they either had really strong connections with faculty or a staff member or a seasoned peer who did serve as a mentor.

This section shows how participants tapped into their familial capital by retrieving back to their families, creating new family bonds on campus with faculty and staff and utilizing their friends to create familial and mentoring connections.

Retrieving back to the family for financial and moral support. One of the factors that made a huge difference in the lives of students was their families and extremely close partners. All 14 participants discussed family, immediate and extended family and new on-campus family as motivation and support to succeed while in college. Family members and other significant others would provide extra financial and emotional support. Sometimes parents would call Latino males and see how they were doing at the university. Mothers might prepare extra meals for them to take with them back to campus, so they had food to eat during the week. Others might motivate the Latino males to do well in school and not give up. Here is a comment from Axel as he's describing the importance of his family's support:

They always like offered me help financially and I appreciated it, but at the same time I don't like taking money from my parents. I want to be able to do this on my own. So, they were always there financially and then anything I needed, like if say for example, like I told them I'm like, Oh I need an iPad or something. Like they would always like, you know like come out here just to help me buy one and stuff. They were always like on top of it and they would always check up on me too. They would call me like three times a week just seeing how I'm doing. And then, well my mom, especially she would like to give me food to take back. Like when I would come back home, she would tell me not to worry about buying food or cooking. So, like that actually really helped a lot. It took time I could use to do other stuff like study or something. They were really supportive the whole way and I really appreciate it. Definitely both of them. Both of them were always

checking up on me and making sure everything was good and they always told me like anything you need just let us know and like we'll be there to help.

Marco and Marcos also felt supported by their families. In fact, Marco specifically talked about his mother's encouragement. Marco stated:

This is a picture [see Figure 4.5] of me and my family on the day of my graduation from [Valley State], a moment I thought I would never experience. My family was not the best support when it came to my studies, but they were very much supporting me in different ways. College was always an expectation of me but my family did not necessarily understand what it meant to get a higher education, nor did I when I first got here.

However, I was able to persist through the relationships and support systems I developed on this campus and knowing that I had to get this degree for my family as well.

Figure 4.5

Marco with his family at graduation from [Valley State].



Marcos talked a great deal about the influence of his mother and how she supported him throughout his college days. As we were talking about his pictures (see Figure 4.6), Marcos

shared how it was not easy for him to have made it to graduation, but his mother was his number one support system:

But just pulling through, a lot of it, I owe it to my mom. Like I mentioned in the commentary and my pictures, she's always been there for me and she's always been my number one supporter and my number one cheerleader and, I hope she knows that. You know, I owe a lot to her. I wouldn't be the guy I am today. Not a lot of people have what I have. I'm pretty fortunate. I'm working. I have my own car. I'm paying bills. You know, at least some of that part of being responsible, being able to have a job and, you know, being able to pay at least for some my own things and even then like give myself a little *lujos* here and there and like taking trips at least two times a year driving across the country. Yeah, yeah, I owe that to my mom.

Figure 4.6

Marcos and his mother at graduation.



Brian also realized how important his parents were in his academic success and their continual support made the difference. As he was describing his pictures, he stated, “last but not least my most important photo (Figure 4.7). My parents. Simply put, if it wasn’t for my parent’s

constant support physically and emotionally, I would not be where I am today. Their faith, believe and love for me is the strongest push for me to succeed.”

Figure 4.7

Brian with his parents.



Oscar shared that sometimes he got depressed and was not sure he wanted to finish his academic program, but his family was there for him and he realized that his success was not only for himself but others too. Although he tried not to ask his family for financial resources, he knew they would help him even though they themselves did not have much. However, Oscar never wanted to take their emotional and financial support for granted. He was so grateful that his parents helped him and his siblings through school, he shared:

If I had anything to pay, whether it was for books or if I was low on having to pay rent or utilities you know, I already knew that I could already ask. Being that we are not in the best financial situation, I always steered away from that...It was probably one of the biggest things that got me through college because half-way through I didn't want to do it. I was like why am I here, like not caring much about my classes, I work a lot better than school...Yeah it's a bigger purpose it's not just for me, uhm but I always had that support I know that a lot of people don't. I never took it for granted.

As we were discussing one of the images he sent (Figure 4.8), Oscar made sure to say that he was extremely indebted to his family:

They have done so much hard work to help three kids living in low-income status get into college and finish our degrees. They were understanding all the time when it came to school because they understand the importance of education and the access that it could bring to us. I came to get my degree to make my parents proud of what they have accomplished in their lives and also to further myself in the position I can put myself to provide for my family and close friends. They would always tell us that they don't want us to be working as hard as they do, they want us to be better professionally but also as a person. They were and are still great role models, both of which migrated from Mexico to start a new life and have done so much to get them to the place they are now. I truly wish to one day be able to give back as much as I could, it is my duty and purpose to make sure they are taken care of and now that I have a full-time position, they couldn't be any happier for me. They are my rock and will always continue to be.

Figure 4.8

Oscar's parents having dinner.



Another participant, Paco, reflected on how his third year in college was probably the hardest semester for him in terms of how stressed he was. He shared how he called his mother and both, his mother and father were able to calm him down and ground him. The support he received was what he needed. He shared the following:

I remember there was the first week I was getting back from a shift late at night and I remember I called my mom. I was just telling her that I'm feeling very stressed. That, I don't know what to do sometimes, but I just feel my head is all over the place. First of all it was late, so my mom thought something was wrong. I was like, no, no, I'm just getting off. Um, and she just gave me a speech, a lecture in a sense. "You know, there's a point where you're gonna' work hard now so that you don't have to work so hard later on in life. Remember, you're doing this for yourself too. Like if you need something, if you need to let go of something, you can, I'm here. Your father's here." Um, shortly after I spoke to my father and he gave me some encouragement and after that I felt more, more motivated and more positive knowing that I had told them and they are there to support me whether I was going to continue doing everything I was scheduled or was going to let go of some few things.

Familial support was not just by parents, it also manifested itself with significant others. Oscar, Ulises and Allen all shared how their significant others were supportive through the process and provided emotional support as they completed their undergraduate degree. In particular, Allen remembered the emotional support his significant other gave him when he was depressed, had little money and was not enrolled at Harbor City State. He shared the following:

This photo [see Figure 4.9] was especially impactful to me because this woman, my significant other was the one who pushed me to go back to [Harbor City State]. Without

her, I wouldn't have been motivated to [go] back to school. I was at a dark time in my life, getting kicked out of school, my struggles financially and at home, everything was falling apart and she basically was the light at the end of the tunnel for me.

Figure 4.9

Allen at graduation with his significant other.



Regardless of how participants shared familial capital through their support of immediate and extended families, familial capital was a significant motivator to continue persisting until graduation.

Creating “familial” relationships with faculty and staff of Color. Family relationships extended into bonds with faculty and staff of Color. Sometimes they became important mentors in the process and acted as family members on campus where Latino males could go for support and advice. X talked about the importance of his Chicano/Chicana Studies classes:

So, I took Chicano/Chicana studies classes, I'm a Chicano/a Studies major. A lot of professors that I would meet up, were my same color skin. I felt more comfortable with, um, growing up with a single mom. My older sister, um, I felt more comfortable with, with *mujeres*. And so, when I was here a *profesora* would ask me like, would you happen to know, like, I guess it was easier to ask her, ask them for help, then ask another male

professor for help or another friend that was a guy for help, even if they were like homies or something.

The narrative X shared was one of finding someone he felt comfortable with, regardless of the gender, but he felt more comfortable with women because he was raised by an older sister and mother. His vulnerability to feel comfortable connecting with his faculty member allowed him to ask for help in the process. Allen identified a professor he developed a trusting relationship with and frequently visited for office hours. He mentioned students on campus felt he was a difficult professor and at one point, Allen was intimidated by him as well, but he wanted to build a relationship with him. He stated:

The first week I introduced myself, I went to his office hours and then it was just like, it wasn't personal, it was, I just called him by his last name. And then, um, it wasn't until like the second or third week he started talking about 20 minutes of the lecture of whatever, whatever we need to talk about and then like the rest of the hour we're just talking about life. So, he would tell us that it was just me and two of my friends that would just go every other week. He knows my first name and I feel like that was a positive influence on me because he pushed me. He really did motivate me, you need to have a positive and meaningful impact...He was legit. I feel like he was the only one that probably gave me that big of an impact.

Allen also shared the impact and relationship he built with an on-campus academic advisor. He shared how his advisor was caring and made him feel like family, "Some other person that I met, was [advisor]. He was a bigger influence on me because he was more like... your typical Latino dad, like hard on you. Every other day telling me you how you're doing or asking, how are you? How you been or how are your classes going?" Allen's experience with his advisor and one of

his faculty members made him comfortable and resembled that of his family- he shared he was grateful.

After asking him to describe an experience that was most meaningful to him when he was going through his program, Vicente shared about the positive relationship he built with his advisor in EOP after he encountered some difficulty understanding how to be an effective student. He shared that his EOP advisor was the person that informed him and leveled with him on how he could do better, a strong mentoring relationship was built. He shared:

And it was through my advisor. It was through my counselor, advisor, however you want to say it. She definitely has continued to mentor me, continue to provide guidance, all that good stuff. But most importantly, she was just real, like she was just “*al cien, al cein diez*.” She would just keep herself so professional, but at the same time too, be able to relate to me. And I'm like, how is she doing that? And I'm like, yeah, she's a bad ass mother fucker. Right. But, um, she, she told me how to be professional, how to guide myself, how to mentor myself at the same time too. Hey, guess what? I'm here to support you. I'm here to contribute to your life. That's how I got a job on campus. That's how I did it. It was through my advisor. “*Me gané la lotería*”. She provided the ropes, she provided the tactics, she provided the road most importantly to get where I'm at right now.

Creating lasting relationships with friends (become family). Many graduates talked about the importance of finding friends in the college community that they became close friends, almost like family. This was a vital aspect of their journey towards graduation. Aaron explained how his friends helped him, “my best friends...I called them every night while in college”. Axel shared that he had friends from middle and high school who were his roommates – He felt a shared sense of family with them. They helped and supported each other through graduation:

Like that made me feel like at home basically. They gave me the ability to not feel like isolated. I feel like that actually has something to do with it to graduating cause I feel like I still had people around me helping me out and I didn't feel lonely...my roommates were like my friends that I had since back in middle school and high school. So, like they're the ones that I basically grew up with and they went with me to college and we all graduated together.

Brian felt that without his friends, he might not have made it through to graduation. As he was describing a picture he shared:

This photo [Figure 4.10] is a picture of my core best friends that I made out in [Valley State]. They were my main support group since my first day in the dorms. For four years we were there for each. It felt like we were family. And that's what this picture represents family. Because apart from us being family our families are family.

Figure 4.10

Brian with his core friends from college.



Marcos also felt his friends were a major factor in his academic success. He shared this comment:

I then chose the picture of my friends in the vineyards [Figure 4.11] because aside from me, they also were a major support group for me throughout my experience at [Valley State]. I have lived and experienced many unforgettable memories, both fun and motivational that helped me to push through every semester of my undergraduate experience ... And then I won't be the guy or the student I am today. And now aside from that, friendship, a lot of support from them too. You know staying there, countless nights till like 2:00 AM and even after that the next morning and waking up at 7:00 AM back to studying in the morning before the test. Shit, I would be like sleep deprived but then you know, at once that exam just ended, *A dormir papá*.

Figure 4.11

Marcos with his college friends.



Sometimes it was a girlfriend who also made a difference in motivating the participants to do well in college. Oscar met his girlfriend his first year in college while living in the residence hall, when asked about his support system, he shared it was his girlfriend:

And my girlfriend. I've been living with her, basically we've been seeing each other every day for the past four or five years, uhm so she is someone that helps ground me. I know I can talk to her...I always know I have the support from her. She always wants

better for me, kinda understood like even though it gets hard sometimes just keep looking at the end, that's kinda the driver uhm, so really, I would say those were the biggest supporters that I had on a daily basis.

Marco shared he created a strong friendship with a friend he met in his scholarship program and also with his mentees. In discussing his pictures, he shared the following:

This is a picture of me, my mentee... and my friend...and his mentee. [We] were close friends in the program and did many things together in college. Our favorite thing was going to our mentoring site and hanging out with our Mentees. We were able to develop strong relationships with our mentees and continue this relationship to this day. My mentees were the reason why I did not give up on myself and dropped out of school my second year in college despite all the mental health problems I was going through.

Social Capital

For Latino males in the study, social capital was an important facet of their undergraduate journey. All 14 participants stated various ways in which they used social capital to inform their retention practices. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital consists of the contacts and the involvement with various networks for personal gain. Latino males in the study shared how social capital facilitated access to networks, information and resources, consisted with findings in Huerta & Fishman (2014). Rios- Aguilar and Deil Amen (2012) concluded that social capital has the capability to increase academic success and provides direction for student career plans. As noted by the participants, there were three ways in which social capital was interpreted: (1) connecting with peers and joining organizations, (2) developing relationships with colleagues and classmates and (3) Surrounding themselves with people who would elevate and challenge them to do better. Figure 4.12 below, depicts the student involvement and their social capital

reach with student employment and involvement. All but three participants (79%) were involved on campus with student organizations through social fraternities, political, cultural or academic organizations and more than half (57%) served in an executive leadership role, including president of the organizations they were a part of. Half of participants (50%) were members of EOP and shared extremely positive remarks about their experiences with the program. The vast majority of participants (93%) shared they worked and all but one shared they worked at least 20 hours per week.

Figure 4.12

Participant Leadership and Employment Profile

Pseudonym	Leadership Position	Academic/Service	Cultural/Political Involvement	Fraternity Involvement	EOP	Work
Aaron	X			X		
Allen						X
Axel		X			X	X
Brian	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cesar				X	X	X
Marco					X	X
Marcos	X		X	X	X	X
Oscar						X
Paco	X			X		X
Santana	X	X	X			X
Ulises	X		X			X
Vicente			X	X	X	X
Victor	X			X		X
X	X	X	X		X	X

Note. Information collected from the Pre-interview Questionnaire an “X” means student provided in formation supporting that experience.

Connecting with peers and joining organizations. Graduates realized how vital it was for them to join organizations and become active with others. Paco, Vicente, Axel, Brian, Marcos shared comments about the importance of being part of college organizations. Paco shared these comments:

...from my experiences I would definitely have to say was joining my organization [Nu Alpha Kappa Fraternity, Inc.] because it was definitely a home away from home because, um, one of the things I kinda sold it to me was brotherhood because I didn't have any brothers growing up. I'm sure I had a few friends and in high school, but they were, I would never consider them like, you know, brothers. I just saw them at school I would, you know, hang out with them other than at school. So, I wanted to build a relationship here and a bond here.

His chapter brother, Vicente, also shared a similar experience about him joining the Latino-based fraternity, “The NAK crest (Figure 4.13) is part of my life since my first year as an undergraduate student at [Harbor City State] and till this day my fraternity is something I embrace and find pride...because it helped me learn how to network, academia, and overall make the best out of my college experience.”

Figure 4.13

Nu Alpha Kappa Fraternity, Inc. Crest.



Brian also felt his fraternity was a great choice for him because of the skills he developed and the networks he made as a member.

I chose this picture because joining my fraternity, Lambda Theta Phi has been one of the best decisions of my life. Since the day I became a brother to now my skills, my determination, and my confidence are through the roof. I have made immense growth thanks to my fraternity. Apart from all the benefits I received in my schooling I gained a vast network of brothers around this country. Through conferences like this one I have met them across the US and am learning more about what it means to be Latino.

Figure 4.14

Brian with other members of his fraternity, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc.



As a member of a Latino-based fraternity, Victor mentioned how his social network expanded and also his education about his own culture grew when he joined the fraternity. He commented:

... I joined Greek life, that's when I started to see a lot more support. Those are people that I went to a lot more frequently, a lot more that I could see them around campus. Just ask them like, Oh, how's your day been going as opposed to like how do you do this assignment kind of thing.... I ended up joining a Latino fraternity, which kind of pushed me into learning more of my culture itself. Um, my peers kind of put me back in touch with the culture that I lost in a sense when I first moved from [from cities]. I felt like I had been very removed from what it meant to be Latino and my peers all four years kind of pushed

me back into knowing more about my identity and then on top of that one of my majors actually became Chicana/Chicano Studies, which then further enhanced my learning and I guess reeducation of the Latino culture.

Marcos was also inducted into Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. He shared a picture of the Greek letter Lambda because of how important his fraternity was for him during his undergraduate years.

I chose the Lambda letter because of my proud affiliation as a brother of Lambda Theta Phi, Latin Fraternity Inc. Becoming a part of the brotherhood really had a mark in my experiences as an undergraduate student. Whether that was meeting brothers from other parts of the country, having socials with other organizations, Greek and non-Greek, and opening the doors to a huge nationwide network of brothers, Lambda Theta Phi will always definitely be one the major milestones of my undergraduate career as it really impacted my willingness to continue and ultimately graduate from college.

Figure 4.15

Greek letter Lambda - Marcos' Fraternity (Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc.)



Marcos was highly involved on campus and shared how his social network stemmed beyond just fraternity and sorority life. He shared about his involvement with a cultural organization dedicated to supporting undocumented students. He ultimately became the president of the organization: “I was a part of [undocumented student organization] for three years. I started as a general member and then joined the executive body...And then from there, I jumped as a treasurer. And then my last position was the president of the organization.”

Axel found career opportunities from the student organization he joined that focused on Public Health:

I would say I joined [public health organization] my last year. I was just in there for one year, but I wish I had been like before. That's where I got a bunch of experience on like what public health is and really made me realize how I actually like this stuff.. we would do events at [Harbor City] we would educate, like just random people walking by like [campus] Library...And then that's where I actually got connections for my internship. I didn't have any idea where to go and based on people that were there like, you should like check out on like the CDI, which is like where I did my internship at...that gave me motivation major wise. So, basically, they gave me the experience I needed.

Ulises shared how he tried to connect with various organizations on campus, but he struggled due to commuting home. He then found a Central American organization during one of his last year on campus. He shared:

I had tried to join other groups to be more involved with my personal major. Uh, but yeah, I had tried to join, um, things like [computer science organization], which is a computer security club and it wasn't so much that I couldn't relate with a lot of the other people in the group but I also had to drive home when the group meetings were like in the

late evening made it like not so convenient. So, I didn't really stick it out. But then finding the group, like with [Central American Organization], finding people that I had a relatable experience being Central American and just having a space to talk to people without pressure made it like a really pleasant experience.

Santana shared his experience connecting with members from the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) and how positive it was for him, "...and just talking to those folks, like those were just good people overall that just like kept me motivated and kind of just like, you know, emotionally like, you know, everything that I was going through. It was like just people that I could talk to about that." During the member checking process, I asked all participants to reflect on the themes that emerged from the research and Victor commented regarding student involvement and building social capital through organizations. He commented the following:

In connection with that, organizations whether they are clubs, fraternities, programs such as EOP or [Undocumented Student Organization] for example, all provide a space for the students to find that family unite, but then further their own personal growth and become their own person, growing with the people around them. All students want to graduate and succeed, making sure their respective families struggles are honored and paid back in a sense, and it during their college years when they are "alone" when they are able to find a new family with values similar to their own that they can grow and start to become the person they want to be.

These experiences resonated with all participants who shared they were involved on campus. Their social networks spanned across various parts of campus. They shared they connected with peers, created family and ultimately enhanced their experiences during their undergraduate years.

Regardless of the type of organization they joined, they found a connection with the purpose of the organization, the members or club and created positive experiences. Their involvement enhanced their sense of belonging on campus by providing a connection to the organization on and off-campus, including a national network of individuals as Brian shared.

Developing relationships with colleagues and classmates. Many participants in the research saw the value in developing relationships with other classmates and colleagues. Some worked on campus, so it was easy to mentor other students. Axel explained that getting to know his coworkers encouraged him to keep going to school and graduate.

I worked for this department for my last two years at [Harbor City State] as a Student Meeting Room Crew Lead. I would say this really helped me because this job worked around my school schedule. They never scheduled me during my classes and always took school as a priority for all its student employees. Also I worked on campus so I didn't have to worry about driving far to go to work since I did not drive at the time. This took a burden off my back because I did not have to stress about balancing the two as much or rushing to get from school to work or vice versa. I also made many friends out of my coworkers who motivated me to finish school and study. I still keep in touch with them now that I graduated. They made [Harbor City State] feel like a second home to me and I would even hangout with them outside of work. There was not a better job I could imagine myself having...

When I asked him to explain his relationships on campus, he shared he felt more comfortable with students around his age who he could relate with and study. He shared,

...well I feel like, yeah, my main relationship was better with my friends. Like people like around my age. So like all my coworkers, my roommates and all them, like those are

the people that really socialized with and I feel those are the people that like actually like, you know, like studied and did homework with and stuff. So, I feel like we just influenced each other to do our work and get stuff done.

Working with others on campus benefitted Marcos too. He and his friends took some of the same classes and then would help each other in the courses:

...honestly a lot of help came from my other peers from class. Most of the time I would join classes they were in with me. They would say, "hey, what classes are you taking this semester, let me take it with you"....

Oscar also became friends with others and took the same classes with them. They helped each other and became close:

I had a lot of them in the same classes, so I basically kinda grew up with them...I kinda switched to this major my sophomore year...I basically had the rest of them throughout my classes and it ended up being that on the day of my graduation I was basically hanging out with one of the guys that I've been in classes since my sophomore year, uhm so I was like oh, that's really cool.

Surrounding self with people who will elevate you and challenge you to be better.

The participants saw the value of surrounding themselves with others who would challenge themselves to be better and to support each other with the goals of personal development. Comments from Allen, Oscar, and Paco described how the college communities they were engaged in made a difference in their career and educational goals. Allen shared how his friends would help each other:

...just the library and then talking to my friends, talking to my peers in my classes who are struggling just as bad or if not, the same as me. We would just push each other. I

mean we're all at the end of the day, we're all here for one thing, just to get a degree and move on. So, my friends were much more than my peers. Yeah. We pushed together.

Oscar talked about the importance of being part of the Student Union because it helped him realize how much he liked being active in Student Affairs and he has chosen Student Affairs as his career path.

The Student Union, if I wasn't there I probably wouldn't be as engaged as a student as I was. Just because I was trying to breeze by and get the college degree but the Student Union made me understand the importance of development and just seeing the role that other people can have...which is why now, I want to go into Student Affairs, and now I have that opportunity of working full-time at the Union so yeah the Union was my biggest driver and probably still is, uhm you know in terms of me wanting to get my master's degree.

Paco was honored with a special Greek Unity Award during his last semester and he came to the realization that he had the opportunity to work with many strong leaders and elevate his own potential.

The Greek Unity award is a special award I won my last semester as an undergrad during Spring 2019. I have been a Greek since Fall of 2014 and since I joined, I was always involved with my organization and was always supporting the organization in their events. Looking back, I am thankful for the award, because I met a lot of amazing leaders from other organization who believed in the same ideas as I did.

Victor shared how positive it was for him to surround himself with others that were putting in the work to get the grades. Regardless of how busy he was, he made it an effort to connect with others who were going to the library, studying at a coffee shop, etc. He shared the following:

Surrounding yourself with people who also want to succeed. People who are taking those harder classes and they're always like in the library or at a coffee shop, they're always studying. When you're surrounded by a group of people who are doing something to achieve something, you start to get that mentality in your mind. I know for me, if I wouldn't have surrounded myself with people who did want to succeed in a class and get A's, get those high Bs, at least then the drive wouldn't have been there. But when you have, people are like, "Hey, let's go study. Let's just go to library." If you don't need to study just read a little bit of your book or just come and like give me a little bit of a refreshing break during my studying, people who are just always there and the mentality that I need to finish, I need to study, I need to do good, changed my mentality and was like I need to be doing this.

During the member checking process, Axel responded and shared how surrounding himself with people who wanted to do better motivated him to do better, he shared the following:

This is a MAJOR contributor to my academic success. The reason I did so poor in high school was because my social groups were composed of people that did not really value education. That changed in college when I was surrounded by people that valued education and always motivated me to move forward. This helped me not only graduate college but get grades as well.

Resistant Capital

Historically underrepresented students, including Latino males are constantly battling racial fatigue that comes from various forms of resistance to oppressive behaviors. Yosso (2005), identified resistant capital as "those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80). This form of resistance was evident in the

interactions participants had with administrators, faculty, staff and their peers. Participants shared traumatic experiences that led them to resist for honor and dignity for themselves but also the Latinx community. Participants often were resistant as part of a group similar to how Yosso (2005) shares:

Those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover that they are not alone and moreover are part of a legacy of resistance to racism and the layers of racialized oppression. They become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others. (p. 75)

Various participants experienced racial tensions and other forms of discriminatory practices that inspired them and motivated them to resist against a system that wasn't necessarily meant for students of color. The current state and national political climate impacted students' experiences and students were found speaking up against racism in the classroom and on-campus and several participants used Dignity Work as a means to honor their body and mind.

Speaking up against racism in the classroom & on-campus. Participants were aware of racism in the classroom and on campus. They noted when their professors did not have much understanding of Latinx culture. They understood that the instructors were biased. Allen gave an example of what one professor said in class and how the professor's comment was disturbing:

Like my professor for my senior year, I forgot what class it was. She kept mentioning how she tried to relate herself to like the Latino culture. But I mean, my friends are like, no, that's not how it goes. Because she would say that, "Oh, I remember one time I left my son at a golf course" or something. Me and my friends were like, oh yeah, I remember when my family left us at Sepulveda Blvd [laughed]. Well, it just didn't make

any sense. Like, wow, how can you say that? How can you relate our struggle with your own life? That makes no sense. Even though some of the racist comments made in class might have been unintentional, professors had little knowledge of the racial struggles that we have as Latinos. Their perspectives can create barriers between students and professors because they did not seem to want to understand our lives. They do not try.

Oscar explained his feelings and views of racism on campus:

Kinda like a microaggression, but just kinda of an unintentional like ways of speaking in a sense that they, being that they were at least for a couple of my professors, being that they were Caucasian, they couldn't relate to our culture in a sense. We have other struggles that they didn't have so they didn't see our struggles as one because it didn't happen to them. I can't pin point exactly when or how many times but I know it's been the case and it could just be unintentional but like things like that happens and that pushes students from wanting to get to know the professors because it makes it seem like oh, they don't understand, why am I going to go ahead and talk to them. Uhm, and that was a case once for me. It's like if you are not going to understand me literally have never been through it, why am I going to go to you. But most of the time the cultural aspects of class have always been respectful and understanding that this is a diverse community and we are not the same but we can all work toward the same goal. Challenging negative view on Latino males.

As Santana and I were having a conversation about him not connecting with faculty and staff in the Sociology department, he started reflecting on why that was. He shared his discontent and lack of trying from a department who is heavily composed of white faculty. He commented on a classroom assignment that he felt was not favorable to the Latinx community and was almost

insulted from having to do a project that shared the oppressive nature of economic disparities among racial groups. He stated the following:

I think the one that stood out to me where I was like, I kind of have to make this by writing it in the essay. I was like, I have to make this statement because I have to be true to myself. And it was, it was a class on the “Sociology of Aging” and they had us go to an assisted living facility, um, to observe and get like a tour and kind of talk to some people. And while at the assisted living facility, uh, you know, everybody there is white, like that's an assisted living facility as something that white people go into because they're the ones that have the money for it. And so, I wrote in my essay and I made the comment in the class that like, yeah, that's good. Like, you know, people like get the assistance when they get old and when they get older and need help and like, yeah, it's good like that there are places like that that exists. But for me and my community, that's not something that we really know about, you know. We take care of our family until the end, like we don't, it never crossed my mind not having a family member with me, um, and putting them in an assisted living facility. So, um, I think things like that kind of really didn't make me entirely gravitate towards, uh, some of the people in the sociology department. And for the most part, again, most professors being white, um, feeling like not being able to share anything with professors that are white or like feeling like I'd be misunderstood coming from my background. Um, so I think that really well that definitely was like a big thing. Yeah.

Victor reflected on his engagement in speaking up when racism on campus was taking place and joined various protest when he felt him or members of his community were impacted, he passionately shared the following:

If it impacted me or impacted me in a way because of somebody that I knew and I was able to, I would be there as a support. I would either be there in the front or be there supporting towards the back because I felt social causes and social issues that were happening on campus are representative of what's happening nationwide. And I felt like these things happening on our smaller scale were important enough to warrant some free time that we had or maybe take away a few minutes from studying just because they were that important.

Ulises shared how one of his professor was racist and insensitive to courses in the humanities, specifically ethnic studies departments. As a STEM major, his professor made comments about how the major was better than others. Several years ago, the CSU drafted Executive Orders 1100 and 1110. Soon thereafter, due to heavy activism across the system, a revised version of 1100 was drafted (EO 1100R), that mandated the CSU to implement unit requirement impacting ethnic and gender studies departments (1100R) and 1110 which added an additional 3- units of quantitative reasoning for incoming students. Ulises was heavily involved in activism around the issues and shared the following: "I heard that people that were involved with like saving or like fighting against the Executive Orders had like a very bad, uh, perspective on him because he was not, not supportive of the cultural studies." He proceeded to comment how during class the professor would have personal views that were problematic with students. Ulises describes his exchange with him:

So, like, in a sense, I kind of feel like he felt like a champion, but he was playing against like children, you know, so like, of course you're going to win, dude, that isn't a fair fight. But like, uh, I did try to like come with my own counterpoints and he wasn't like, he wasn't the type of person that was really open to like getting his mind changed. So once I

recognized you know, I'll let the person be because it's a losing battle. I'm not gonna throw all my energy into something that isn't gonna have any kind of result. So, I guess that's the way that I have to see it, if it's a fight that can't be won no matter what, it's not a fight worth fighting.

Although Ulises mentions that he might have not won the fight, he still stood up against a faculty member who he thought was problematic. Overall, regardless how subtle or overt the forms of racism and oppressive behavior and actions were, students resisted to ensure their narrative was being heard.

Dignity Work. As a form of resistant capital, Dignity Work allows Latino males to gain dignity in a world that often seems that it's against them. However, this section shows how Latino males in the study use Dignity Work as a form of pride, honoring culture and own-self. Dignity Work is a form of resistance first coined by Sociologist Victor Rios, as he discussed how Black and Latino Boys fought to regain their self-worth against a system that “strips their dignity”. Rios (2011) states, that Dignity Work is “Fighting for dignity...entails being willing to take the risk of harsh discipline or arrest, in order to expose the contradictions of the system and achieve acknowledgment and a feeling of dignity” (p. 144). Basile (2020) further elaborates the definition by stating that “for youth of color dignity work becomes a functional and understandable modality of resistance” (p. 99). Although Dignity Work has been used to describe resistance employed by Latino and Black boys, it is relevant and applicable in the college setting. For example, X provided two pictures (only one is included in the study because the second image identifies the institution) see Figure 4.16, of a campus protest he was involved with. After inquiring about the pictures and why they were important in his success on campus, he stated the following,

The protest weren't able to help me graduate in any way shape or form as resistance in higher education is seen as taboo. But it did give me the sense of resiliency and empowerment needed to continue and survive throughout undergrad understanding and knowing that resistance was and is a crucial experience of students of color to survive in institutions without assimilating into the system. Resistance [is] a crucial part of identity politics and identity culture. Resistance [is] necessary since our roots as students of color in higher education and throughout history is prevalent.

Figure 4.16

X Participating in a protest advocating for the betterment of student necessities



Marcos also was involved in protests. As a member of MEChA, he was involved in various protests to fight racism and specifically not worrying about the repercussion, since he was fighting what was right.

I was a little involved with like MEChA and you would see the different kinds of shit that you, you see on campus, like lack of resources. I remember one time I was a part of this, I'm not sure if it was a sit-in, but basically me along with a couple of other brothers and MEChA students, we circled the president at the time. We circled that little ****. So, uh, I think we were, what was the issue, uhm I think that there were, uh, some, some racist events happened on campus or racist, offense happened on campus or something and the

president didn't speak on it or anything, you know, so like a lot of the students approached him, "Hey, like what's going on? Why are you not doing anything?" You would see a lot of those things going on, you know, lack of opportunities for Latino students, you know, not a lot of support. Uh, well that's typical thing that I would see a lot on campus.

Victor was also part of the same incident Marcos addressed and he shared:

I remember when there were some issues on campus. Some students being called out on campus, I was part of the group that was protesting the president during their meeting in the Union leading down into, uh, his car with the police. And that was very interesting experience. I was in support of student concerns and the president didn't say anything.

These forms of resistance were instrumental for students to feel supported and validated on campus. The actions were against faculty that didn't get how racism and oppressive behavior or curriculum that wasn't culturally relevant could negatively impact students. These students stood up to the administration, including the President of the university. They resisted regardless of the consequence.

Linguistic Capital

For many first-generation Latinx students, Spanish was the first language spoken at home. Linguistic capital as noted by Yosso (2005) refers to the "...intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 78). Yosso further asserts Latinx students possess linguistic capital through communication, such as storytelling, and recounting oral histories, parables, and proverbs. Participants noted two ways in which they validated linguistic capital as a form of retention.

Some participants connected and built relationships with faculty, staff and support staff (custodians, etc.) that spoke Spanish, it was a reminder of home life. Others shared how they connected with peers through language, especially when telling stories of home life. When asked their native language, 79% (11 participants) shared they learned to speak Spanish as their first language. Only one participant shared they learned English as his first language. The remaining two participants shared they learned English and Spanish as their native languages.

Connecting with staff/faculty who speak Spanish. X connected with support staff on campus. He spoke Spanish and developed relationships with others who also spoke Spanish and was part of his local community. He saw the support staff as an extension of his family because of the connections they had in language, perspectives, and cultural experiences.

...the custodial staff - love them to death. That's like the mom, mom or dad right there, right. I would stay here late at night studying and they would pass by and look at me cause and you know I look Asian. So they wouldn't know how to talk to me in Spanish or not and I would be like "*Buena noches, como está?*" and they would be like "*que haces mijo, estudiando?*" So we have full on conversations up to this day still I'll say hi to them. I still feel comfortable around them. I feel more comfortable around custodial staff than administration. So, it's like that imbalance and that professionalism or like that blue collar, white collar kind of perspective. Right. And I guess that's just coming from where my background comes from. Blue collar, blue collar workers feel more comfortable around them than white collar structure.

During the member checking process, both Victor and Oscar had something to add regarding linguistic capital in adding asset to the experience for Latino students. Victor shared,

I agree with your finding entirely, especially the parts with connecting with Spanish speaking staff (Custodians, teachers, students) because as Latino males, we are family oriented and whether we are commuter students or living at our schools, we want to have that sense of family and we search for those who have similarities to us.

I followed up with Victor and asked if he personally had connected with Spanish speaking faculty, staff and he shared he had, he said, “Yes, I did. Faculty specifically when I got into my chicana/o classes were the teachers I connected with the most. I found them the easiest to approach.” Similarly, Oscar shared “I really think that it is key for people from Hispanic speaking families to have more comfort in someone who can understand them not only from a linguistic standpoint but a cultural viewpoint”. Marco recounted how he changed majors multiple times and the last major he completed had several faculty members he related to and could connect with. He shared how cultural understanding and language was part of the reason why:

I didn't see much representation and there wasn't really like maybe three, four professors, but those three, four professors, those last two years, my last year were the years I really liked. I felt like I could connect with or like felt like some sort of connection. Like other than just the work maybe interested and the field, um, there was more like I could talk about like my culture or the different types of like Latino cultures, um, like speak Spanish with them. Um, and I didn't feel that with any other professor or like feel like there was any other type of connection that I had with any other professors.

Vicente shared a story of him attending a National conference where he was fortunate to attend on behalf of the institution. During the conference he thanked and spoke to the cooks and the serving crew. He shared excitingly how he was humbled by the encounter:

Me puse las pilas, no me queda de otra pues. I have all of that Spanish influences. You know, I just gotta I just gotta sometimes, uh, bite my tongue and just continue with the flow. Don't forget ever of where you come from. I was greeting the people that were serving the juice, the coffee, the water. “*Ola cómo estamos? Mi nombre es [Vicente] mucho gusto, gracias por ayudarnos*” and they, brighten up. They brighten up. I can see it in their face, it's all about energy. And I was like dayum this is good. I'm glad that I can say hi to somebody else that I can identify to.

Connecting with peers who speak the language and share the same culture. Axel was comfortable at his university because he saw many Latinos working there. In addition, there were many Latino students so he felt comfortable.

‘I don't think I felt like an outcast cause there was like, I feel like at least 50% of them were like Latinos. So, I felt comfortable, I feel I was part of like the lower population of Latinos’, I've never experienced that. So, I guess like it's something that I kind of wanted to experience, like I’ve never been in a situation where like, you know, Latinos were rare. Um, but no, just cause the fact that there's like a lot of Latinos around me I feel like it wasn't like, yeah, like I felt comfortable. Like I felt like at home basically just surrounded by my people...

In a follow-up conversation, I asked what he meant by feeling at home and he shared “...it was because I have never been in a school where Latinos were a minority so seeing so many Latinos just made me feel like I fit in and belonged there”. He then shared that he spoke “slang” Spanish with his roommates “but I do it because I feel at home with them. The Spanish I would use with other people like adults for example would be more professional”

It was also important for Oscar that some of his friends had a similar culture. He knew that there is culture shock. However, Oscar liked having peers who had much in common and he could relate to his friends.

Our families are slightly different you know unlike me and my two friends that I lived with, we can talk about certain things and like oh yeah, my mom does that, my dad does that. We can relate we have similar uncles and things like that. It's like those looking back is how similar we are even though we are from different families but the culture itself is fairly similar. And it's really understanding what a Quinceañera is and they knew what that was. And I've spoken to many people and they're like "oh what's that" and it's kinda like it doesn't set you off from that person but you know that you can't relate as much with someone else that is fairly similar to you. But I think it honestly helped a lot just because I didn't recognize how big cultural shock is.

As I was going through the member checking process, Oscar elaborated and said

I did connect with others but more my peers rather than my professors. It was great because I knew that if I explained something about my family, it's possible that they may relate closely to what we were talking about. It was nice because there was comfort knowing where I was coming from rather than feeling like I could get judged for saying things like sour cream tubs are used as Tupperware after they get used. Most people might just think that's weird but whenever I spoke with someone who related, we could laugh about it and be comfortable.

The stories the participants shared demonstrated their ability to connect with others in the institution because of their native language. Like Oscar shared, it wasn't just about the language, it was about having the ability to speak with others who also shared the same culture.

Participants connected with faculty, support staff and peers who spoke their native language because they felt comfortable and it reminded them of home – they created a home away from home community with these individuals.

Additional forms of Capital

Three additional forms of capital emerged from the data. These forms of capital are what I call “*Valor*” (Courage), Spiritual/Religious capital and “*Servicial*” (compassion to serve & give back). Below, Table 4.3 shares a description of the three themes and the way participants leveraged the three forms of capital. The table also provides a definition for the theme and a percentage of how many participants used this form of capital to persist toward graduation. This section will provide a detailed narrative about the three forms of capital that emerged from the study that are not part of the theoretical framework employed in the study (Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth Model).

Table 4.2

Emergent forms of Capital Latino Males used for Retention & Graduation

Theme	Codes	Definition	Percentage of Participants
“ <i>Valor</i> ” as a form of Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledging your Self-worth <i>Valor</i> to look at what others are doing and take the leap to know “I” can do it too <i>Valor</i> to get out of shell 	<p><i>Tener el valor de confretar a si mismo y navegar una lucha interna para ser la major versión de ti mismo.</i></p> <p>(The courage to confront oneself and navigate an internal struggle in order to become a better version of yourself)</p>	71% (10)
Spirituality/ Religious Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrieving inner religious and spiritual higher being to stay grounded 	<p>Highlights the belief that Latino males use spirituality and religious practices to stay grounded and motivated.</p>	64% (9)

“ <i>Servicial</i> ” as a form of capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serving the Community 	<i>El amor de ayudar a la comunidad</i> (compassion to serve & give back)	50% (7)
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Valor

After reviewing the transcripts, it became evident that students expressed an inner desire to succeed against all obstacles. Prior research (Arámbula Ballysingh, 2016; Easley, Bianco & Leech, 2012; Rendon et al., 2015) found *ganas* (determination) to be an asset in Latinx student persistence. Although *ganas* is a powerful and valued asset, it doesn’t fully describe what the participants in the study shared, which was *valor*, to confront oneself and navigate an internal struggle in order to become a better version of themselves.

There were three ways this form of capital manifested for the students, (1) they acknowledged their own self-worth, even when they doubted themselves that they could be successful; (2) they had the *valor* to look at what others are doing and take the leap to know they can do it too; and (3) they had the courage to get out of their shell and connect with the campus community.

Acknowledging Your Self-worth. Participants believed in themselves. They developed a stronger sense of who they were and the directions they were taking in their lives, in their careers and as a person. They endured many obstacles and were more determined to be successful. They felt that racism was definitely a huge obstacle to their successes. X wanted his mother to be proud of him and he also realized that he had the opportunity to do something important with his life. When a discussion of what he has learned about himself, he shared:

Two words, and I didn't learn these words until my last year and I would hear them throughout my undergrad, but I never understood what it meant until I saw myself putting

them in practice, being resistant and being resilient. Those two words define the success story that I've become or the success story that other Latino and Brown males of color become. We're either too resilient to give up. We've been through too much for us to give up now, Like that's my mentality, I've been through too much shit for me to give up. And if I give up now, what kind of person would I be? What kind of man would I be? What kind of, not to blame anybody else who does give up, right, but for myself, my family doesn't have that privilege. My mom gave everything for me to be here. I've lost too many friends throughout, throughout undergrad for me to give up for too many friends at that time. Right? And that was my mentality.

Self-worth was also important to Oscar. He wanted to prove that he had a future and the inner-strength to get through with his studies. He believed in himself but was not over-confident.

I wanted to prove myself and then like don't start something that you're not going to finish. But also like, I know I'm smarter I know I can do things; I know I can have a future, I just have to build it for myself...I would say resilience. You have to get through it, it doesn't matter how hard it hurts, you got to get through it. Uhm and then also just having confidence in myself I was always like, ok, I'm not cocky but like in my right mind, in anyone else's field, whether it's physical or educational if I'm confident in myself I know I can beat that person, I can do that, but it all starts in your head and if you doubt yourself, then you already lost.

As part of the member checking process, Oscar explained how he internalized not quitting and really having to understand himself. He wanted to address how important it was to look from within and have courage, he said:

From my experiences the one attribute I learned was to try your hardest no matter the task. I was able to relate this to finishing my degree since at times it was hard to not want to just quit. Through lots of thinking and re-evaluation I realized that the best thing to do is fight through the struggle because the end result is only going to benefit me.

Santana shared how he had conversations with his partner about imposter syndrome and how he had the will to move past it to finish. He shared the following:

Um, definitely my partner was a really big important person for me, uh, at [Harbor City State] and you know, today continues being able to talk to her about it. Like the things that I was going through and you know, and we definitely talked about like imposter syndrome, you know, feeling like you don't belong. Uh, so just being able to talk to people about that. Um, also like knowing that at the end of the day that I was like, I wanted to get out graduating and being able to do something for the community that I was coming from. And for people like me where like there's not, there's no, maybe they don't feel like they don't have a plan or I feel I'm underrepresented or feel like there's, something they're not, they are they're not achieving or they're not aware of. So, it definitely am thinking about like, I know I have to finish this, so yeah, I can move on and help other people not feel the same way that I do.

As we were discussing his involvement with MEChA and the Chicano/a Studies department, he shared his gratitude for the chair of the department and his willingness to create a vision for him that it is ok to step-back and for others to take the lead. He showed *valor* for thinking selfishly about his future, something that he wasn't able to do before,

...[Department Chair] managed to tell me when I was going through the rough times, he was one of the first people that I told I was planning on leaving MEChA and he said, you

know, you have to do what's right for you. And he's like, at some point, I had to leave, uh, I forget what organization he said, but he's like, I have to leave the organization because I was just doing too much, you know? And yeah, there are people that are going to understand, there's going to be people that are like, you're not about it, but at the end of the day you have to do what's right for you. And so, hearing him say that and hearing him come from that similar background or that similar story of like you had to, you have to pull back, to do what's right for you. That's something that can be motivating.

Santana's conversation with the Chair of the department gave him the strength to realize that he could make decisions for himself and not depend on what others think. The Chair gave him the courage and *valor* to look at his own capacities and understand that what he had done was enough for the organization and for himself.

Valor to look at what others are doing and take the leap to know they can do it too.

In having a conversation about what inspires Vicente, he shared he was inspired by this research project and by Latino males accomplishing long term academic goals. His response:

You man. You're in your doctor's program. You know you're doing your research. I look up to people like you man. Growing up, I didn't have people like that in my household or my community. But most importantly is you, your colleagues, your cohort. I look up to people that were different skin color, but you're still doing it. Like I bow down to people like you man. Cause I want to be that one day. Right. Definitely you, anybody else that's in their graduate program, anybody else that's in their master's. Anybody that is applying to any Cal State, any UC any out of state but that are achieving higher education, hell yeah. That's who I look up to, period. I cannot put it all into words, but everyone in higher education makes me so proud. And I want to obtain like everybody who is first

generation, from a single parent household, two parent households, somebody that comes from a low-income community. People that just want to achieve. I look up to people that want to achieve that, that want better for their lives. We come from dirt, but that doesn't define us. What defines us is what we do, what legacy we leave. That's how I see it. So, I look up to you.

Axel shared how he saw others putting in effort and he worked diligently to succeed. He stated, So, I feel like that's actually another really important thing, like having the same company and like they're all good influences that I hope to like motivate each other. We actually motivate each other just to finish and yeah we were able to finish. So that's actually a major fact that I haven't mentioned, my roommates, being with them through all the college.

X shared how he looks up to people that are putting in work and he is motivated and builds valor to keep moving up,

Like finding out our own ways of how we study. Like somebody could help us on that. We could definitely have a mentor or mentors beyond have gotten me to this point. And still to this day, like I've seen. I'm like, damn, he's getting his Ph.D., he just got his Ph.D. they're like, they just got a supervisor position. Like, I could do that. Think they're more from the neighborhood and I am, they've been on it. They, they know what the grind is too, so who says I can't do that.

Valor to Get out of Shell. Several of the participants shared how much they grew after attending college. In understanding the complexities of their growth, it became evident that they came into their respective campuses shy, closed in and needed to develop confidence. Paco

described how his undergraduate experience was transformational, he put in the courage to get out of his comfort zone. He commented,

My confidence went up. If only you would see me in high school at high school, I that kid in the back, I would just sit to myself and work on my homework. Here now, today I feel like I'm talking to everyone. I say "hello" to everyone and I don't have any, any type of low self-esteem.

During the member checking process, Paco wanted to make sure that after reading my themes and comments he was unaware of whether he informed me about being shy and opening up once he joined organizations. The story he shared during the member checking process aligned with what he previously mentioned,

I'm not sure if I did bring up...but definitely is something you may add. How starting my journey at [Harbor City State] I was very reserved and to myself, and it's not until I got involved where I started opening up and breaking out of my comfort zone. Slowly I started to have a voice and be someone to help others. With speaking up came the opportunity to work with classmates and socialize more with advisors and mentors. Within time, I completely broke out of my shell/bubble to a state of comfort that no matter who I am speaking to I can always find a topic of conversation.

Victor shared how he was always with his roommate who came with him from his high school but he knew he had to make a change, he needed to branch out and connect with others:

And luckily, I had a classmate from my AVID class who also got accepted. We both decided to apply for the dorms, same exact dorm. And we were actually roommates. So, I had him, he had me for our first year, we had a third roommate, he ended up switching dorms. So, it was literally just the two of us for our first year and we're both each other's

support system and we were each other's support system for all four years. Cause we were roommates all four years...I kinda heard that college was a time for you to learn more about yourself and branch out. And so, I took that really to heart and I was tired of just being that shy kid who doesn't like asking for help or like doing anything on his own. So, I took the initiative to go out and try to investigate clubs and other organizations to see what I could do.

As he described his participation in the process to join his fraternity, Cesar excitedly shared how much he had grown and his self-esteem was now higher than the year before:

And then while being a part of the interest group for the organization, I started getting more involved on campus. I started breaking out of my shell. I started, you know, interacting with other people and with that, like once the whole interest process was over and it was time to go into the education process for the organization, that's when I was as motivated to finish this than to like just give up on this. It was a very intense process, but at the same time it just taught me a lot about myself...and then once I became a brother, that's when it just opened up, like motivation was there. My self-esteem was a bit low going into my sophomore year, my confidence was low, but becoming a brother really, encouraged me and motivated me to get back to where I wanted to be or probably be a better version of myself as well.

Spirituality/Religious Grounding

Spiritual/religious capital is found to be significant in previous research highlighting assets for Latinx students. For example, in their study of 47 Latinx students at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), Rendón et al. (2015) found Spirituality or faith to be a significant *ventaja* (asset) in the success of Latinx students at that particular Hispanic-Serving Institution. In

their study, Castellanos and Gloria (2008) identified how the influence of spirituality and religion could contribute to Latinx student success. Pérez Huber (2009) also found spirituality to be used as an additional form of asset for undocumented Mexican Chicanas (females). She contends that “Spiritual capital can be understood as a set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to a reality greater than oneself. Spiritual capital can encompass religious, indigenous, and ancestral beliefs and practices learned from one’s family, community, and inner self” (p.721).

Pérez Huber (2009) shares the impact of spirituality as a form of capital that is missing from the Community Cultural Wealth model. She states critical race scholars like Burciaga, Solorzano and Yosso have discussed how Communities of Color use spirituality as an asset, thus could possibly be included as an expansion of the CCW model. Participants in this study discussed the importance of spirituality/religious followings in contributing to their retention. Most references were about *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (The Virgin Mary).

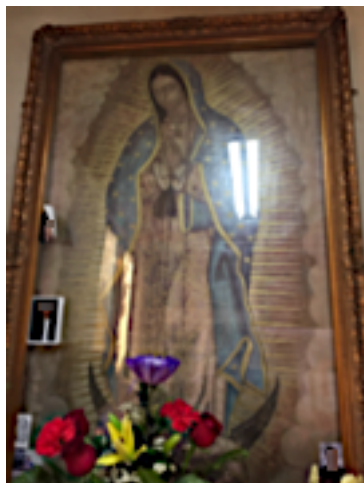
Retrieving inner religious followings to stay grounded when it gets difficult. Marcos and Vicente shared images of La Virgen de Guadalupe (Figure 4.17) as part of their photos that contributed to their success. Marcos shared the following about the picture:

I also chose a small picture of *La Virgen Maria* or Virgin Mary. Although I am not really religious as my mom would otherwise want me to be, I still hold onto my beliefs pretty strongly. Just like *La Virgen* and my mom, both have always looked out for me in my most desperate most worrisome situations and thanks to both of them and by always asking and praying for hope and blessings, I was able to continue my undergraduate experience by always grasping to my faith and always trying to be the most hopeful, faithful person I could be.

Vicente described this picture in the following way, “The Virgen Mary is always in my heart and is my mother from the sky/heaven. I have faith that she guides me in my every action and decision making. We’re too blessed to be stressed.” During the interview, Vicente was sharing how he felt lost his first year on campus, but he was grounded in the notion that having faith would produce a positive outcome. He shared “you don't know how to get there, but you have that cultural background and it's like everything is going to be okay as long as you have faith. Right? So, that was my faith. That was my mentality.”

Figure 4.17

Image of La Virgen de Guadalupe – La Protectora



Towards the end of my interview with Marco, I asked if there was anything else, he wanted to share with me that we had not discussed throughout the interview, he commented about his faith as contributing to his graduation... “self-motivation was a big thing for me. And faith. *Nomas tener fé* [just have faith]. Whether that be my religion, religious faith, or just having faith with myself. Now, that was a big thing”. As part of the member checking process, Paco confirmed that he too believed in God in allowing him to finish. He shared “I too believe in God and the ability it gave me to be successful”. Oscar described how his parents would speak with him about believing in God and things would be better, he shared

Whenever it got to the point where I wanted to quit, my parents would tell me to believe because there's a higher purpose to all of this. If it was ever scary, I would pray to God and it would help reassure myself.

Other members like X, used references like "God knows", "the universe and stars aligned" and being "a miracle" as he described his journey during college. He shared that God would have not given him a difficult life if he didn't believe that he would be better because of it. Lastly, Aaron shared how he was extremely "blessed" for a supportive family, "blessed" with his academic performance, and "blessed" for the journey. Regardless of how difficult it got; participants found faith as an opportunity to keep hope that things would be better.

Ser Servicial

The last concept and of importance for the participants, was this notion of immediately giving back in the form of service to the community. The majority of participants, which stories I've shared before, wanted to become mentors, wanted to give back to their own families. Participants also made significant references to connecting with their communities through service, as an important part of their success.

Serving the Community. Santana discussed the importance of always staying connected to his community by giving back. He shared a picture of him sorting canned goods for the campus food pantry,

This picture is of some of the time I spent at the campus food pantry. My supervisor in the volunteer program also supervised the food pantry, and as such, our work managed to overlap at times. While I wasn't always at the food pantry, it was a great time knowing I could help provide to some of the community in need on campus. In addition, I was also

able to share information about the resource to people I met that I knew could benefit from the program.

Figure 4.18

Santana volunteering to support the Food Pantry



Marco shared a picture of him providing service with an organization in Tecate, Baja California. He shares how his involvement with serving the community was extremely beneficial,

This is a picture (Figure 4.19) of the fraternity I would often hang out with during my last three years in Undergrad. I met these guys through my work at the [student involvement center]. I began talking to one of my coworkers that was a brother of the fraternity and then soon met the other members in the organization. At first, it was more of a social environment for me but then I started to really learn a bit more about what they were all about. I wanted to become a brother of the fraternity and joined the interest group for them. This allowed me to be a bit more involved and meet other people and be a part of some events they collaborated on. One of my favorite events was collecting and taking donations for an orphanage located in Tecate, Baja California and going there ourselves

to hang out with the kids. This was a humbling experience for me that taught me more about myself and widen my world views a bit more.

Figure 4.19

Marco conducting service with Lambda Theta Phi



Victor sent two pictures of him providing service to the community. The first picture he provided was with an organization called “Border Angels” (not shown to protect family members). He shared him and his organization helped leave water at various places. The second picture (Figure 4.20) depicts his fraternity and sorority leaving food with the homeless, Victor shared:

Post *Día De Los Muertos* event, we had left over food from the event and decided to take leftover *pan dulce*...in order to feed the homeless in the community. This opportunity, along with many others, would be what set me on a path to want to help others who may not be able to support themselves and what would result in my change in majors from Business in the private sector, to cultural studies and apply it to the public sector with Public Administration.

Figure 4.20

Victor feeding the Homeless



Participants' narratives of helping others allowed them to give back and also learn about themselves, the communities they were serving and in addition, served as a tool for retention.

Chapter Summary

The Latino males in the study shared 23 ways they exhibited 9 forms of capital to successfully complete their undergraduate careers. Their internal motivation to be successful, coupled with the support from their families, friends, colleagues, faculty/staff and the resources they used, facilitated a process that ultimately was favorable to them, earning them a college degree. Despite research showing Latino males do not ask for help (Sáenz et al., 2013), this group of men were not afraid to reach out to receive critical services. These examples demonstrate the capacity Latino males have to be successful, despite the narrative that Latino males are lacking qualities needed for success.

Whether students found solace and support from their peers or faculty/staff members that looked like them or they grounded themselves through aspirational hopes and dreams, all fourteen participants navigated an environment that often is toxic for Latino male students. Their stories of advocacy, resistance, and navigating a campus that often seemed too big, they were

able to connect and build an environment that worked for them. Words like “Sense of belonging”, “caring”, “felt heard”, “felt supported”, “felt like I was home”, were part of the narrative that allowed these participants to be successful. Their contributions to the communities they were serving, the mentoring that they provided to others, must also be acknowledged – they just wanted to give back.

Using Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Theoretical framework was able to capture the richness of forms of capital students brought with them from their homes, and also of importance, how they created additional forms of capital while they were undergraduate students. Participants shared various experiences. Some worked, some were involved in political organizations, others were part of Latino-based fraternities, some served in leadership roles, others didn’t. Their unique experiences showcase the diversity within the same ethnic group, and various ways they navigated the same college environments. Being part of a Hispanic-Serving Institution helped with building relationships with peers, however some of the racist, oppressive behaviors experienced at predominately white institutions were also present on their campuses. The next chapter will provide a discussion and recommendations on how Latino males are able to use their own forms of capital to be successful and debunk a myth that Latino males cannot succeed.

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Implication & Conclusion

The Latinx population is the largest minority ethnic group and projected to be the largest racial group in the United States, yet trail in academic attainment compared to most racial groups. Research shows Latino males are underperforming compared to their female counterparts and also compared to most males from other underrepresented- racial groups (Crisp & Nora, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2019; Mendez et al., 2015). Thus, it is imperative to understand how successful Latino males described their journey through their undergraduate careers. Their experiences highlight ways we can support the retention and graduation of other Latino males in higher education, specifically those attending four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions; the majority of Latinxs enter higher education through an HSI.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how Latino male graduates experienced college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from specific California State University (CSU) campuses designate as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) in southern California. Guided by Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework, this study focused on identifying how Latino males used CCW to assist with their retention, account for the types of CCW forms of capital used and if other forms of capital emerged.

Through pre-interview questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and a photo elicitation component, 14 alumni from two institutions participated in the research study and yielded results that were confirmatory of prior research focusing on Latinx students and identified new emerging data to support Latino-male success. Participants used all six forms of capital in the Community Cultural Wealth framework (aspirational, familial, navigational, resistant, linguistic and social) and exposed other forms of capital that assisted Latino male students with successfully matriculating and graduating from their respective campuses. Thus, this study

contributes to the extant literature on Latino male success at four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions, exclusive to those attending campuses similar to the participating institutions in the study.

Three research questions guided this dissertation:

1. How do Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth for their retention while enrolled at southern California CSUs designated as HSIs?
2. What factors contribute to Latino male students' graduation from public 4-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions in California?
3. What other factors outside of the Community Cultural Wealth model do Latino male students identify as part of their success while in college?

This chapter will begin with a discussion of significant research findings as it relates to the theoretical framework. The chapter will then discuss how findings can inform implications for research, theory and practice. I will end by providing limitations to the study and recommendations for future research.

Significance of the Study

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework provided a useful tool to examine the "knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro- and microforms of oppression" (p. 77). The theoretical framework fits well with the experiences and values of Latino males. The forms of capital outlined in CCW supported Latino subjects to resist, survive and thrive in a college environment often seemed hostile. Figure 5.1 below, highlights the various forms of capital used by the Latino males and their respective strategies they implemented. Figure 5.1 also highlights the density of how many participants used that form of capital during their undergraduate career as a means for retention. For a participant density map, please reference Appendix K.

Figure 5.1

Density Map per Form of Capital

Aspirational Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Finish with a college degree</i>• <i>Wanting to give back to pay it forward</i>	14 Participants
Navigational Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Navigating to feel comfortable asking for help, It's Ok to ask for help</i>• <i>Speaking with faculty/advisors to navigate academic requirements</i>• <i>Finding places on campus to study and grow</i>• <i>Finding resources to stay nourished</i>	12 Participants
Familial Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Retrieving back to the family for financial and moral support</i>• <i>Creating "familial" relationship with faculty and staff of color</i>• <i>Creating lasting relationships with friends (become family).</i>	14 Participants
Social Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Connecting with peers and joining organizations</i>• <i>Developing relationships with colleagues and classmates</i>• <i>Surrounding self with people who will elevate you and challenge you to be better.</i>	14 Participants
Resistant Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Speaking up against racism in the classroom & on-campus</i>• <i>Dignity Work</i>	7 Participants
Linguistic Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Connecting with staff/faculty who speak Spanish</i>• <i>Connecting with peers who speak the language & share the same culture</i>	6 Participants
"Valor" (Courage) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Acknowledging Your Self-Worth</i>• <i>Valor to look at what others are doing and take the leap to know they can do it too</i>• <i>Valor to get out of Shell</i>	10 Participants
Spirituality/Religious Grounding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Retrieving inner religious followings to stay grounded when it gets difficult</i>	9 Participants
"Ser Servicial" (compassion to serve & give back) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Serving the community</i>	7 Participants

As part of this research, I believe the strategy identifies "how" the form of capital was used which addresses question one of this research study. I am suggesting that the most used

forms of capital applied by each participant are the factors that contributed the most to their graduation, which addresses question two. Lastly, the “Additional Forms of Capital” in Figure 5.1 answer question three of this research. I start this section by addressing the top three forms of capital and their respective strategies.

CCW and Latino Male Retention

To answer question one of this research study, about identifying how Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth for their retention while enrolled at southern California CSUs designated as HSIs, we must analyze the strategies incorporated by participants as part of the CCW framework. Participants in this study produced 17 strategies in the six CCW forms of capital (Aspirational, Navigational, Familial, Social, Linguistic and Resistant) that led them to graduation. All forms of capital were used in one capacity or another. Below is a discussion on how the top three forms of CCW assets (Aspirational, Familial and Social) and their respective strategy were used by participants.

Aspirational Capital. All 14 participants in the study shared aspiration as a form of capital that was important for them to accomplish their goal to graduate. All participants at one point mentioned their family as the most important reason to accomplish their goal of graduation. Some were clear (Oscar, Cesar, Marco, Aaron and Victor) identified they wanted to earn their degree to make their parents proud. X, Allen and Ulises discussed having the aspirations to graduate because they wanted to make their siblings (X) and grandmother and partner proud (Allen). Ulises also wanted to make his parents and partner proud of this accomplishment. Coming from a single parent household it was important for Vicente, Santana and Marcos to demonstrate they could be successful and complete their degree, their accomplishments were for their mothers.

The other strategy to continue with their aspiration to graduate was to have a degree to inspire their communities and other students who are like them. The participants ultimately wanted to pave the way for the next generation of Latino-male scholars. X, Marco and Vicente mentored other students in college, and they wanted to continue in a larger capacity to give back to their communities. Similar to other research on Latinx students, including Latino males, students had really high aspirations that kept them motivated to complete their degrees (Rendón et al., 2016; Yosso, 2005).

Familial Capital. The 14 participants in the study also found familial capital to be of most importance in their retention and graduation. This finding is consistent with other research about Latinx students. For example, in his study of 21 Latino-male achievers at selective institutions, Pérez (2007) found Familial Capital was among the most important forms of capital used for retention. Similarly, in their study of Latinx students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution in Texas, Rendón et al. (2015) found familial capital to be highly used as a means for retention.

For participants in my study, they went back to their households to find solace and comfort. Victor shared that although he did not live with his parents, he knew he could go back whenever: “I could go back home if at any instance I didn't feel not welcomed”. Others, like Oscar, Axel, and Parco shared how their parents would pack lunch for them so when they returned back to campus, they at least had food for some of their meals. And X shared that his mother would cook for him and although sometimes he would not eat at the house because he was tired and lacked the time, he knew his mother would cook for him any time. Family to some of the participants included girlfriends, grandparents and uncles, aunts and cousins. For Brian, he was really close with his cousins and uncles, so his family circle and support was also provided by his uncles. Aaron shared how his neighbors were really close with his family and “Even [his]

neighbors drove to Valley State to see [him] graduate”. For Allen, his grandmother and girlfriend as he shared, “...[are the] two most important women in my life and who still are. They both pushed me and never gave up on me throughout my academic career at [Harbor City State].”

Familial Capital also was evident for participants in the form of creating relationship with faculty and staff of Color. Participants discussed how the most impactful relationships were with faculty and staff of Color who were often seen as family members. X shared how some of his *profesoras*, were the women he spoke with, he became comfortable with them, instead of other males. For Vicente, he connected the most with an EOP female advisor who was candid and would be “real” with him. Although sometimes he didn’t want to listen, she provided the best advice. Others like, Ulises and Victor, connected with faculty members from the Ethnic Studies departments. Oscar shared that his relationships were with his supervisors, who did not identify as Latinxs, but were extremely supportive of his workload and his academic success. Paco connected with his Fraternity/Sorority Advisors and other Student-Affairs professionals he could speak with and be relaxed around them.

Lastly, developing long-lasting relationships with peers was of importance for participants. Oscar, Axel and Victor shared how they moved into their residence hall their first year with people they knew. Some lived with their group of friends all throughout college, they created long-lasting bonds. Brian shared about his relationship with friends he met during his first year that ended up being his really close friends; he shared how he took them to visit his home and although his friends didn’t know Spanish, they connected really well with his parents. Others like X, Allen and Aaron shared how their close friends were friends from the community they grew-up in. They balanced what Anzaldúa (2012) coined, “borderlands”- the struggle of living in two environments completely different and having to navigate both as best as possible.

Cesar, Paco, and Marcos shared that their fraternity brotherhood became family; they taught them about being selfless, but also about their culture and to have a strong bond to succeed. There is extensive research on Latinx students, including Latino males using familial ties to strengthen their goals to succeed.

Social Capital. The last form of CCW capital that all participants drew from was Social Capital. They used three different strategies to tap into this asset. The first strategy of social capital was connecting with peers and joining organizations. Above, I mentioned that several participants (Cesar, Paco & Marcos) created familial bonds with fraternity brothers. The other participants that were involved with Latino-based fraternities (Vicente, Brian, Aaron and Victor) noted their social network exponentially grew when they joined their fraternities. They were connecting with faculty and staff they normally wouldn't have connected with, they were connecting with peers from their campus in other organizations and with fraternity brothers from across the country, which was the case for Cesar who shared, "And all these networking opportunities, I traveled to other states and had the opportunity to connect with brothers out there and that group of brothers out there. It just makes it simpler just to communicate with professionals."

Other participants shared their expansion of friends through cultural, political and academic organizations. X, Ulises, Axel, Marco and Santana discussed how their involvement with these organizations allowed them to get to know more about their culture, to be resistant and have friends with similar cultural understanding. For Axel joining an academic organization was extremely important, he noted obtaining his internship from that experience. As part of the member checking process, he reminded me of his regret for not joining the organization sooner,

he shared, “My only regret is not joining the organization I was in sooner. I joined it my senior year, but I should have joined it at least during my junior year.”

Outside of student organizations, participants also shared the necessity to work because of their financial status. As I explained previously, nine participants were considered low-income students, all nine shared they had employment. Only one participant noted he did not work during his undergraduate education. The opportunity to work on campus allowed participants to work with other students who they created relationships with and took classes together. Several participants (Victor, Cesar, Aaron, Brian and Axel) shared the importance of creating class study groups to be successful in some of the course content. Their ability to expand their social network was important.

Lastly, the last strategy participants shared about their social capital was to surround themselves with people who would elevate them and would challenge them to be better. Allen, Oscar, Paco, Victor, and Axel all commented on the importance of creating a group of friends and classmates who would encourage them to be better. Victor shared how he went to the library when people would invite him, even if he had no homework, he would read. Axel wanted to add that his academic performance in college was better than in high school because of his network of friends who elevated his ability to think; he saw himself as a scholar. In conclusion, Social Capital was beyond the ability to build relationships, it was about sustaining them for many years. Participants shared the importance of building trust among students in order to contribute positively to their own success.

The three forms of capital outlined in this section were instrumental in the success the participants highlighted. The strategies on how they practiced each form of capital contributed to “how” the students implemented those forms of capital. We are also able to see the types of

factors that contributed to their success: Strong familial bonds with family, friends and faculty/staff, developing relationship with friends, student organizations and colleagues through on-campus student employment were all vital in the CCW model. Lastly, their aspiration to succeed was important.

Valor and Latino Male Retention

Three additional forms of capital were identified by participants as supporting them through graduation and are equally as important as the forms of capital found in CCW. As I did above, I will only discuss the strongest form of capital outside of CCW which, I identified as *valor*. *Valor* I define as the courage to confront oneself and navigate an internal struggle in order to become a better person. There is a relationship between the term *valor* and masculinity, specifically as it relates to *machismo and caballarismo*, which are grounded in respect, pride and honor (Arciniega et al., 2008). *Valor* can manifest itself through positive traits of *machismo* like *caballerismo*, as noted below, the Latino males in the study exuded inner strength, the ability to envision their capability and desire to be better than who they were, all in an effort to be successful.

Valor manifested itself in three different strategies for participants. The first strategy was for participants to acknowledge their own self-worth. As Santana noted, overcoming feelings of imposter syndrome were important for participants, but they had to internalize those feelings to overcome them. X, Oscar and Marco also shared the countless times they had doubt, they could continue until they found themselves acknowledging that they could do it. Both X and Marco were the two participants who spent the most time completing their degrees (6-years), and they are also two out of the four participants completing a master's program, Social Work and Higher

Education Leadership, respectively. The length of their time in their undergraduate career, did not stop them from continuing pursuing a master's degree.

The second strategy participants developed was having the *valor* to look at what others were doing and to take the leap to know they could do it too. This strategy allowed participants to identify how to make the best of their college experiences and had the courage to push forward. For example, Vicente shared how he saw members of his community doing great things that encouraged him to take the leap and to pursue other opportunities in higher education. X also shared that after seeing other Latino males completing master's programs and Ph.D. programs, it motivated him and gave him the courage to want to continue with his education.

Lastly, several participants entered college being timid and shy. They shared that in order for them to continue building relationships on campus they had to get out of their shell. Victor, Paco, and Cesar all shared that joining their respective fraternities helped them developed higher self-esteem and ultimately got out of their "shell" and "comfort zone", which resulted in positive experiences for all three graduates. This level of development allowed them to build internal self-worth and *valor* that ultimately led them to succeed academically and socially. They gained ownership of their lives and the valor to keep pushing, keep striving to be better and to graduate.

The forms of capital I addressed in this chapter were the most impactful for participants with their respective strategies. Aspirational, Social, Familial and *Valor* were among the most used forms of capital to be successful that lead their participants through graduation.

Implication for Research and Theory

Although Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model was clearly beneficial for Latino males to show how the six forms of capital are relevant for Latino males, additional forms of capital emerged. Due to this emergence of new forms a capital, it provides an opportunity for

future research. I would suggest that a researcher expand Yosso's model to include other forms of capital, including *valor* (courage), spirituality and religion, and *Servicial* (compassion to serve and give back). In addition, Pérez Huber (2009) and Rendón et al. (2015) found Latinx student tapping into their religious and spiritual belief systems. Oftentimes spiritual and religious beliefs are taught by parents, which was the case for Marcos.

Also, as I was analyzing and identifying themes, and as noted by the data in the findings section, there were overlapping forms of capital. This intersection, which is another area for further research. A scholar can study how forms of capital interact with one another. These forms of capital maybe mutually exclusive. In addition, there may be a need for a multi-dimensional structural model. Latinx students are diverse in ethnic, social and cultural upbringings. These factors could possibly impact the way Latinx students use the various forms of capital and another opportunity for further research.

Implication for Practice

This research resulted in various implications for practice. I will address them in two sections. Section I is on the individual level, working directly with Latino males. The second section will be focused on how HSIs can better serve Latino males based on findings from this research study, including finding addressed by participants. I will use García et al. (2019) to compartmentalize the implications for practice at the campus level. The four levels are as follows: (1) HSIs lack of communication with students, (2) racism and institutional/systemic issues that hinder Latino male success, (3) the positive impact of faculty/staff of color and their interaction with students, and (4) positive peer interactions that are created through student organizations and employment.

Individual Level

This section refers to the impact individual people can have on Latino males. Below I've identified incidents that were addressed by students and provide a solution for each.

1. Faculty members who do not acknowledge the diversity of the students and see them

as less than. During the interview Ulises shared a story of how one of his professors dismissed Ethnic Studies majors as being less than a STEM degree. This engagement silenced Ulises as he shared, "it's not a fight worth fighting". Oscar also shared how his professor was trying to engage the class in dialogue about various experiences that ultimately negatively impacted students in the course because the examples were not culturally relevant to the students. *As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, faculty and staff who work with students at minimum must participate in mandatory diversity and sensitivity training and the campus must develop policies that support the experiences of Latinx students.* Pérez et al. (2017) argue that offering workshops and professional development focusing on social justice and inclusion is not enough. They argue the importance of developing research, policies and practices to enhance the experience of Latinx student success at a campus-wide level.

2. Administration that supports Latinx students; demonstrate Latinx students matter.

Several participants shared their discontent with the campus administration at both institutions. In Valley State, Cesar and Victor shared an incident where students protested against a campus climate that was hostile towards students of color. They shared their negative experience with a president who did not comment on the situation. The environment became incongruent and unsafe for these Latino males. X at Harbor City, shared a similar thought about his institution, he even said he was negatively impacted by

the administration and shared: “They deserve the bad things that happen to them because they're not paying attention to the community, being part of the student body. It's like they don't understand us. You don't understand what I'm going through.” Both incidents are examples of students resisting and were identified as Dignity Work. Latino males in this study believed that administrators do not care. *As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, intentionally outreach, recruit, and hire Administrators that understand how to work with students of historically underrepresented communities, including Latino males. Allow students to provide input in the administration hiring selection. Participate in the same training as noted in number 1.*

3. **Student involvement as an important factor of campus engagement and increasing sense of belonging.** Over 85% of participants were engaged on campus through various student organizations: cultural, political, service and fraternities as noted in Figure 4.13. More than half (66%) of students engaged in an organization, served in a leadership role with the organization. It was evident that their engagement increased their social capital on campus and connected them to campus faculty and staff and also departments they frequented. As I concluded the interviews, I asked participants to share one advise for other Latino males wanting to be successful. Several of the participants encouraged engagement. For example, Axel shared “I would definitely say to join clubs just so they could learn...that way they build connections.” Marcos shared, “...join different orgs, talk to different people, get to know a lot of different people...try to join Greek Life...that a pretty big thing...it opened a lot of doors for me.” Both of the advice provided here are indicative of the impact organizations have on the development of Latino male students, including enhancing their connections on campus. *As a Hispanic-*

Serving Institution, value the experiences student organizations provide to Latino males and increase the opportunities for students to get involved. Invest money in student organizations and student leadership opportunities.

Institutional Level (Structural)

Campus climate of the institution cannot be changed overnight. It takes time, intentional transformation, and critical structural and systemic changes to bring about a campus culture that is welcoming to students. Students in this study mentioned several instances where they felt more could be done, some are easy implementations, others will take time.

1. **Ensure students know what HSI means, share HSI grants widely and inform students what they are.** Over 50% of participants were not aware they attended an institution designated as Hispanic-Serving. The majority of students (57%) attended their institutions for 5 years, yet the majority of them were oblivious to their designation. They shared some thoughts: “There are various students at HSI who are not able to fully utilize the resources and opportunities around them because they are not aware of them” (Victor). Marcos shared the following:

Valley State, prides itself for being one of the top 10 Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the country- or maybe California...blah, but you know, the numbers don't add up...I feel like they paid more attention to other things, [than] being able to support me, and the Latino population on campus was not a priority.

Since the majority of students in the study were not aware of the HSI designation, it poses a problem of not being mission aligned. *As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, it should become a practice to communicate with students about the HSI designation,*

which on-campus grants are part of the HSI pool of money and continue to provide meaningful programs to positively impact the retention and graduation of Latino males.

2. **Offer on-campus employment- those students who worked on campus connected widely with peers and staff who supported them.** Participants who worked on campus expressed the relief of working in environments where academics were considered and reinforced. Oscar and Axel shared that working on campus provided supportive supervisors who not only cared about producing great work-related outcomes, but also academic success. Others like Vicente and Brian became a resource for students and served as Peer Mentors. Most participants (93%) worked and those that worked off-campus discussed concerns with traffic and having to commute from work to school and vice-versa. *As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, more opportunities for employment should become available to support Latino male working students, including work study opportunities and supervisors that care about the development of students.*
3. **EOP, resource centers and other cultural support services.** The opportunity to provide services for historically underrepresented students, including Latino males is of utmost importance. Students who participated in EOP showed favorable connections with campus, most importantly with their advisors. They got personalized attention every time they went. Victor advocated for these types of support services:

Having dedicated centers, i.e. EOP offices, Latino Resource Centers, MEChA offices, or even Latino branches in the library all allow students to see people

like them and build the family relationships on campus that will drive students to want to finish their higher education. Both support at home, and support on campus are the most important factors to the continued success for Latino male students.

These types of programs should not be exclusionary and dependent on income. Some Latinx students get negatively impacted for having parents who make just above the threshold to qualify, negatively impacting their chances for great services. For example, Axel shared the following:

Offer programs despite financial need. When I was in college my family's income was much less than it is now, so I was able to join EOP. Now that my youngest sister entered college, my family's income is higher and not low enough for my sister to join EOP. I feel like my sister could benefit from EOP but unfortunately, she cannot join it.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions should provide culturally relevant resources for Latino males to succeed. It was important for Latino males to connect with people that look like them, peers, faculty and staff. Create a pipeline to connect faculty, staff and students that is not dependent on income.

4. Support ethnic studies and culturally relevant curriculum. It was extremely important for participants to connect with faculty that looked like them, often found in ethnic studies courses. *Hispanic-Serving Institutions must support culturally relevant curriculum, including Ethnic Studies classes. These courses connect Latino males to their culture, create faculty/student relationships and connect students with other peers; all of which are relevant to tapping into familial capital.*

5. Expansion of services to support students facing food insecurity and additional counseling services. Several students expressed concerns regarding not having enough money for a proper lunch meal while on campus. X went without properly eating for a year. Ulises could only afford \$2.50 lunch meals, Vicente and Oscar used the food pantry periodically when they found themselves needing food. Marco, Cesar, Marcos and Oscar utilized Counseling services to support them through some struggles. Due to masculinity traits mentioned previously, it is well documented Latino males might not seek mental health support, however, participants in this study sought support and requested services. *Hispanic-Serving Institutions must provide adequate support to feed Latino males who are facing scarcity of resources. Provide food pantries, free food options at various programs (X- survived by attending programs with food) and increase mental health support.*

Limitations

Any research conducted poses limitations. According to Creswell (2014), potential weaknesses or issues with the research study must be identified by the researcher. There were several limitations to the study. First, this study was limited by the selectivity of participants. Although I tried to obtain a sample size that was diverse in experiences, the majority of my sample were students who were actively engaged on campus (79%), 93% had at least a part-time job, and 86% are of Mexican descent. The over-representation of some of the participant identities might have skewed the data, but highly unlikely since rich data were consistent with other participants and a level of saturation was reached (Jones et al., 2014).

The second limitation to the study was the small sample size. Although qualitative data grounded through a phenomenological approach focuses on participants making meaning of their

lived experiences and not on quantity of participants (Creswell, 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Mertens, 2010), it poses the concern that 14 participants might still not be a large sample size to explain the phenomenon. However, I took explicit approaches to ensure a high level of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability to ensure a rigorous research process.

The third and last limitation that I want to address regarding the study, is having voluntary participation. As the process moved along, I lost participant engagement. I started the process with 16 confirmed participants who completed the initial consent form and pre-interview questionnaire. I was able to interview and collect the photo elicitation component of the study from 14 participants (8 participants from Harbor City State and 6 participants from Valley State). Although not needed to ensure trustworthiness, I provided transcriptions to all participants and received feedback from five participants (36%). The feedback received was favorable and I moved along with the coding process. Once I completed the coding process, determined themes, codes and rich definitions, I shared my findings with all participants (member checking), I received feedback from 71% of the participants. Although not all participants responded to this member checking process, I was satisfied with the response from those who did respond. Some comments were “Thank you so much for allowing me to participate, everything here is something that I had remembered speaking about” (Oscar), “I agree with your findings entirely” (Oscar), Vicente shared the following, “Thank you again for allowing me to be part of your research it was an honor. Moving forward, I am highly content with all the data and context you have provided”. Other participants had more information to add, for example, Santana’s comments during the member checking process allowed me to conceptualize the way family played a role for participants,

This all looks good to me! I guess for me personally while familial capital was a thing, it was minimal in the sense that my mom didn't know how to help me outside of financially. My moral support mostly came through my friends. So, I think it still meets the way it's defined, but I thought maybe I should throw that in there.

Although participation was not consistent throughout the process, the level of engagement from those who responded to the member checking process allowed me to confirm my findings and ultimately provide findings that were representative of the data collected. Thus, I was comfortable that my own biases did not hinder the analysis of my research.

Future Research

This research study was able to provide context on how successful Latino males at two four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions in southern California were able to use their own assets to graduate from their undergraduate programs. The findings added depth to understanding Latino male success and reframing the Latinx deficit-narrative framework often used by scholars (Pérez et al., 2017; Solórzano et al., 2005). However, the focus of this research was regional to the Southern California experience of Latino males, where a large Mexican/Mexican-American population resides. As any qualitative research, findings from this study are not meant to be generalized for all Latinx males, thus it is important to understand the situational context of this research and future research should account for the diversity of Latino male identity. Continued research in understanding Latino male success in California is needed.

There is also a need for future research to disaggregate commuter from residential Latino males. This research was focused on both populations and based on some of their experiences, although they tapped similar forms of capital, their experiences were vastly different and the way they used their assets varied. To understand the complexities of these experiences is important,

especially in the way Latino males use of CCW and the various other forms of capital addressed in this study.

Lastly, it is important to continue to research the servingness of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (García, 2018; García et al., 2019), specifically focusing on Latino males in four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions. As part of this process and an opportunity for future research is to conduct a content analysis using García et al. (2019) to assess the servingness of both institutions in the study. In addition, it is important to compare the perceptions at the individual level of Latino males with the views of administrators of HSIs in their beliefs of how well institutions are serving Latino male students. It is clear the diversity of Latino male students poses unique opportunities for campuses to engage in critical dialogue on what they're intentionally doing to support this population, thus further research should be addressing Latino males at four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions. A quantitative study focused on national data would also contribute to identifying patterns, trends and opportunities for growth for Latino males at various regions in the country. Latinx students have various experiences based on cultural norms, countries of origins, and other characteristics, thus disaggregating national data is of importance.

Conclusion

Using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework, this research was able address and highlight how Latino males used their own assets to successfully complete their undergraduate degrees. Their aspirations to succeed despite all odds, their ability to navigate an environment that at times was difficult, their *valor* to utilize support to be successful and their grounding in spirituality and religion were among the many forms of capital students shared that contributed to their success as undergraduate students at their respective Hispanic-Serving Institutions. It is important to acknowledge the multifaceted ways in which these Latino males

navigated their environments and sought support from various institutional agents, peers and their families. They tapped into all CCW forms of capital as well as three other types of capital in order to accomplish their goal of succeeding academically. Along the way, the Latino males developed more hopes and dreams. At the individual level, participants reached deep-within themselves to understand their own capacities and ultimately became one of the 18.4% of Latino males younger than 29 years old to earn a college degree in the United States.

This research also served as an opportunity to address and highlight complex issues (positive and negative) impacting the Hispanic-Serving Institutions where participants attended. Participants identified four areas that universities should consider in more effectively serving Latinx students: (1) HSIs lack of communication with students, (2) racism and institutional/systemic issues that hinder Latino male success, (3) the positive impact of faculty/staff of color and their interaction with students, and (4) positive peer interactions that are created through student organizations and employment.

Lastly, this study provided an opportunity to listen to the voices of 14 Latino males; there are countless others who can share similar stories. Their achievement in higher education shed light on some great work happening at these campuses, but also highlighted the need for more in depth university commitment to increase the retention and subsequent graduation of Latino males at these Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Institutions of higher education must transform their paradigm and move toward new ways of serving students. Student demographics are shifting and will continue to diversify as noted by the increase of People of Color attending these institutions, in particular Latino males at these Hispanic-Serving Institutions. I close by saying, in order to continue providing equitable opportunities for students, HSIs must revisit their

institutional mission, hire administrators who care, and faculty and staff that will continue to support the next generation of Latino males.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



Dear Freddie,

Thank you for submitting your research protocol to the IRB at Claremont Graduate University. A representative of the Institutional Review Board reviewed your study, CGU #3505 Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students: Four-Year Hispanic Serving Institutions. , and approved it under the rules for expedited review on 08/06/2019.

The approval of your study is valid through No Expiration Date, by which time you must submit an annual report either closing the protocol or requesting permission to continue the protocol for another year. Please submit your report by so that the IRB has time to review and approve your report if you wish to continue it for another year.

Unless (a) you have been granted a waiver or alteration of documentation of informed consent or (b) your consent form is incorporated into an online survey that uses a click to indicate consent and continue format in place of subjects' signatures:

1. use copies of the stamped version(s) of your consent form(s) to obtain consent from all participants.
2. remember a completed consent form (with participant's name redacted) must be submitted with the renewal or closure documentation.

If during the conduct of your research you discover or determine that any changes should be made to the leadership; sponsorship; recruitment scale, venues, or population; consent forms and processes; compensation; experimental interventions, survey elements, observational procedures; or similar significant features of the approved protocol, then promptly report on the proposed changes to the IRB. The proposed changes must not be implemented without IRB approval, except where necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to participants.

If any injuries or problems are encountered in the conduct of your research, whether relating to anticipated or unexpected risks to participants or others, you must notify the IRB as soon as practical but in no case more than five days after the occurrence (phone: 909-607-9406 or via email to irb@cgu.edu).

When your research is completed, please notify the IRB to close out the active file and identify any problems encountered. This will assist the board in approving future research of the type you conducted. Please *note that you are responsible for keeping all consent forms for 3 years after your protocol closes.*

Note: Most listservs, websites, and bulletin boards have policies regulating what types of advertisements or solicitations may be posted, including from whom prior approval must be obtained. Many institutions and even classroom instructors have policies regarding who can solicit potential research subjects from among their students, employees, etc., what information must be included in solicitations, and how recruitment notices are distributed or posted. You should familiarize yourself with the policies and approval procedures required to recruit for or conduct your study by listservs, websites, institutions, and/or instructors. Approval or exemption by the CGU IRB does *not* replace these approvals or release you from assuring that you have gained appropriate approvals *before* advertising or conducting your study in such venues.

The entire CGU Institutional Review Board wishes you well in the conduct of your research project.

Sincerely,
Andrew Conway,
IRB Chair
andrew.conway@cgu.edu

James Griffith,
IRB Manager
james.griffith2@cgu.edu

150 East Tenth Street • Claremont, California 91711-6160
Tel: 909.607.9406

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter for Amended Consent Form



Dear Freddie,

The amendment to protocol **CGU #3505 Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students: Four-Year Hispanic Serving Institutions.** was approved on 01/22/2020.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,
Andrew Conway,
IRB Chair
andrew.conway@cgu.edu

James Griffith,
IRB Manager
james.griffith2@cgu.edu

150 East Tenth Street • Claremont, California 91711-6160
Tel: 909.607.9406

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyers (Both Campuses)

Individual flyers were provided per campus with personalized information. In order to protect my participants, I removed identifying information pertaining to the institution name.

The flyer has a dark blue background with a large, abstract yellow brushstroke graphic in the upper half. A white-outlined hexagon is centered within the yellow stroke, containing a yellow megaphone icon and two lines of text. Below the hexagon, a yellow circle contains the text 'Understanding the Latino Male Experience!'. The lower half of the flyer is divided into three columns by thin yellow vertical lines. The first column is titled 'Make a Difference' and contains a bulleted list of qualifications. The second column is titled 'Participation will require no more than 2 hours of your time.' The third column is titled 'Contact:' and lists 'Freddie Sanchez, Ph.D. Candidate' with a redacted email address. At the bottom, there are two sections: 'Qualified Participants Must' with a bulleted list, and 'Purpose of Study' with a paragraph describing the research goal.

Are you a Latino Male?
Did you graduate from [redacted] in 2018 or 2019?

Understanding the Latino Male Experience!

Participants needed for Ph.D. Research Study

Make a Difference

Participation will require no more than 2 hours of your time.

Contact:
Freddie Sanchez, Ph.D. Candidate
[redacted]

Qualified Participants Must

- Be recent graduate of [redacted] undergraduate program (Class of 2018 or 2019)
- Identify as First-Generation Latino Male College Student
- When you first enrolled, you were a first-year student at [redacted] (did not transfer into [redacted])

Purpose of Study
To examine how Latino male graduates experienced college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from specific California State University system (CSUs) campuses designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

Appendix D: Updated Recruitment Email



Dear [Insert Name], I hope this e-mail finds you doing well.

My name is Freddie Sanchez. I am a doctoral student in the San Diego State University (SDSU)/ Claremont Graduate University (CGU) Joint Ph.D. Program in Education. I invite you to participate in a research study titled “Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students: Four-Year Hispanic Serving Institutions”.

This qualitative study examines how Latino male graduates experienced college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from specific California State University system (CSUs) campuses designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI). The study is guided using Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework. The information collected from this study will assist current and future research seeking to better understand the Latino male experience at southern California HSI CSUs.

You were identified as a potential participant because you recently graduated from one of the CSUs campuses participating in the study and identify as a Latino male. In addition, your name may have been provided to me by someone affiliated with your former institution as a potential candidate for the study.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary. During the study, you will be asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire, an opportunity to submit 1-5 photos depicting your experience as an undergraduate student, participate in a 60 minute in-person or video conferencing interview and respond to a follow-up email to provide responses to the analysis. Your participation will take about 2 hours of your time (approximately one hour each day, days will be dependent on your availability) and can shape the future experience of Latino males on college campus.

Your name and private information you provide will not be presented in the results of the study. The answers you provide will be kept completely confidential. Honesty in answering all questions will assist with the credibility of the study.

If you are willing to participate, please email me at freddie.sanchez@cgu.edu. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or on my cell phone at (909) 815-2440.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you!

Freddie Sanchez, Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix E: Oral Invitation



Hello, my name is Freddie Sanchez. I am a graduate student at the San Diego State University/Claremont Graduate University Joint Ph.D. Program in Education. I am conducting research on Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students at Four-Year Hispanic Serving Institutions in Southern California, and I am inviting you to participate in the study. You were identified as a potential participant because you recently graduated from one of the CSUs campuses participating in the study and identify as a first-generation Latino male college graduate.

Participation in this research includes completing a questionnaire soliciting background information that will assist in understanding you as a participant, which will take approximately 15 minutes. If you agree to participate in an interview about your perception about your experience as a student at your undergraduate institution, that will take approximately 60 minutes. I may also be reaching out to you as a follow-up to the interview to inquire about any information that may have not be clear and to provide you with my analysis of our discussion, which may take up to 45 minutes. If you participate in everything I've shared, your total time commitment will take approximately 2 hours.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at

Appendix F: Consent Form

Consent Form was approved by IRB to be embedded as the first question in the Questionnaire.



AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students: Four-Year Hispanic Serving Institutions

You are invited to participate in a research study. While volunteering will probably not benefit you directly, you will be helping to examine how Latino male graduates experienced college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from several identified California State University system (CSUs) campuses designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). If you decide to volunteer, you will be responding to a pre-interview questionnaire, the opportunity to submit 1-5 photos depicting your experience as an undergraduate student, participating in a 60-minute interview and responding to a follow-up conversation to discuss the analysis of the researcher. Volunteering for this study does not involve risk beyond what a typical person would experience on an ordinary day. Since your involvement is entirely voluntary, you may withdraw at any time for any reason. Please continue reading for more information about the study.

STUDY LEADERSHIP: This research study is led by Freddie Sanchez (Ph.D. Candidate) of the San Diego State University (SDSU)/Claremont Graduate University (CGU) Joint Ph.D. program in Education, who is being supervised by Valerie O. Pang, Ph.D. (SDSU) and Deborah F. Carter, Ph.D. (CGU).

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to (1) understand how Latino males use their own Community Cultural Wealth to aid with their retention while enrolled at Southern California CSUs designated as HSIs, (2) identify what factors contributed to Latino male students' graduation from Southern California CSUs designated as HSIs and (3) identify if other factors exist that are not part of a students' Community Cultural Wealth that assisted with their retention and subsequent graduation. The findings of this study could inform higher education administrators and campus policy makers on how to design and develop policies and programs that are guided by a belief in utilizing the strength of the cultural capital of Latino males at Hispanic Serving Institutions.

ELIGIBILITY: (1) Recent graduate of participating CSU campus (Two years or less), (2) identify as first-generation Latino male college student, (3) When you first enrolled at CSU campus, you were a first-year student (did not transfer into CSU campus).

PARTICIPATION: During the study, you will be asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire, an opportunity to submit 1-5 photos depicting your experience as an undergraduate student, participate in a 60 minute in-person or video conferencing interview and respond to a follow-up

email to provide responses to the analysis. Your participation will take about 2 hours of your time (approximately one hour each day, days will be dependent on your availability) and can shape the future experience of Latino males on college campus.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal. There may be some minimal discomfort to certain individuals when deeply thinking and analyzing one's college experience.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: While volunteering will probably not benefit you directly, you will be helping to examine how Latino male graduates experienced college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from the California State University system (CSUs).

COMPENSATION: You will NOT be directly compensated for participating in this study, but I do appreciate your time and honesty in the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason at any time without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at SDSU or CGU.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but I will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will provide a pseudonym to your responses and not include any identifying labels in the research study. Interviews will be recorded via tape recorder (iPhone app) or via online video conferencing system (Zoom) and stored without identifying information to ensure privacy of participants. The online video conferencing **recording** will ONLY be audio. Since Audio recordings are not anonymous, I will erase the recording after the study is completed. The recording will be transcribed, coded and summarized.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me at XXX or via email at XXX. You may also contact my faculty advisors at XXX or XXX The CGU Institutional Review Board has approved this project. If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

CONSENT: Your signature below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this consent form with the participant and answered any of his questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Researcher _____

Appendix G: Interview Protocol

I appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to talk with me about your experiences when you were an undergraduate student. I am conducting a study examining factors that might positively influence the academic achievement and success of Latino male college graduates of California State Universities designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions in southern California. Over the next 60 minutes, I will ask you a range of questions and most will be related to your experience while you were an undergraduate student. With your permission, I will audio record the interview for analysis purposes only. I will keep all information confidential, and I will use pseudonyms in the written document to refer to research participants. Please note, as a volunteer in this study, you have the right to refrain from answering any questions or stop the interview. Do you have any questions regarding this process?

1. Tell me a little about yourself. (Where are you from? What hometown did you grow-up in? How was it growing up in that environment?) ^[L]_[SEP]
2. As a Latino male college student, how would you describe your experiences on campus? Which of those experiences are most significant or meaningful to you? How would you describe the relationships you had with faculty? Staff? Students?
3. Did you have academic goals while in college, if so what were they? As you reflect on your college goals, can you recall any times when you found it difficult to continue toward your goals? How were you able to stay motivated to achieve your goals? Who if any, helped you achieve your goals?
4. How would you describe the environment as an undergrad in terms of helping you to be a successful student?
5. Do you think you were effective in balancing academic, social, and personal commitments? Why or why not? (If yes, who helped you be more effective? If no, what would you have done differently?)
6. What, if any, on-campus resources played a pivotal role in continuing your degree? (e.g., programs, services, student organizations, or specific individuals) ^[L]_[SEP]
7. What, if any, off-campus resources played a pivotal role in continuing your degree? (e.g., programs, services, work, family, or community organization) ^[L]_[SEP]
8. Did your professors make any of your lessons culturally relevant? If so, how did that make you feel?
9. What accomplishments are you most proud from your undergrad and why?
10. During college, how supportive was your family? (If they were supportive, how did they show their support? If they were not supportive, what did they do that made you feel they were not supportive? (Note to self: Recognize who is “family” for participant)
11. Did anyone on campus serve as a mentor? If so who? How did they make you feel? Why

was that person/people your mentor? (Review response from Questionnaire)

12. What was it like for you to be a college student at your campus? Do you think your experience is typical of other Latino males on the campus? Why or why not? How do you think being at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) impacted your experience?
13. Would you choose to attend the same institution if you were to start the process again? Why or why not?
14. Is there anything else that might have impacted you positively to continue pursuing your degree, that you have not shared?

Thank you for your time. I will be transcribing the interview and coding your responses. Once I finish this process, I will contact you and review my notes with you. That may take an additional 45 minutes if you choose to participate further in this research. Thank you for your time and I will speak with you soon.

Appendix H: Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Interview questionnaire was administered using Qualtrics, an online assessment software system.



This questionnaire will be sent via email to participants and completed via Qualtrics survey instrument.

Participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym (a fictitious name) you would like to be referred as throughout the research study for confidentiality purposes. This name should not be a.) your real name, b.) a nickname that you associate with, or c.) the name of an immediate family member. _____

Demographic Questions

1. What is your name? *Fill in the Blank*
2. Where is your hometown? *Fill in the Blank*
3. What High School did you attend? *Fill in the Blank*
4. What's your ethnicity? *Fill in the blank*
5. Are you a first-generation Latino (Parents did not attend college)? *Yes / No*
6. What's the highest formal level of education obtained by either of your parents/guardians?

a. Less than High School	b. Associate's
c. Some High School	d. Bachelor's
e. High School/GED	f. Master's
g. Some College	h. Doctorate

7. Did you receive financial aid while in college? *Yes/No*
8. What type of aid did you receive? Check all that apply

a. Did not receive financial aid	b. Private Scholarships	c. Loans	d. Pell Grants
e. Campus Scholarship	f. Federal work-study	g. Other-please specify	

9. What was the first language you spoke as a child? *Fill in the Blank*
10. How often did you speak with your family while in college?

a. Once a week	b. Once a day	c. 1-3 times a week	d. Once a month
e. Never	d. other (Specify)		

11. How frequently did you visit family while in college?

a. Once a week	b. Once a day	c. 1-3 times a week	d. Once a month
e. Never	d. other (Specify)		

Involvement and Extracurricular Activities

12. Were you involved with organizations as an undergraduate student? If so, what type of organization? Check all that apply.

a. Cultural Organization	b. Social Fraternity	c. Cultural Fraternity	d. Academic organization
e. Service Organization	f. sports clubs	g. religious organization	h. Other (Specify)

13. Did you hold any leadership role on campus? If so, what? (List)

14. Did you have mentors? Yes/No

i. How many?

ii. Was your ethnicity similar to your mentor's?

15. Did you work as an undergraduate student? (Yes/No)

i. How many hours a week?

ii. Was the job on campus or off-campus? (check box)

16. Did you have friends on campus?

i. How many?

ii. Was your ethnicity similar to your friend(s)?

17. How many hours did you spend speaking with friends while an undergraduate student a week?

a. 0	b. 1-3	c. 4-10	d. 10 or more
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Academic Questions

18. Which university did you graduate from? Choose

a. Option 1	b. Option 2	c. Other -Specify
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19. What year did you graduate from college? Choose

a. 2019	b. 2018	c. Other-Specify
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20. How many years did it take you to graduate?

a. 4	b. 5	c. 6	d. 7 or more
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21. What was your GPA when you graduated from college?

a. 2.0-2.5	b. 2.51- 2.99	c. 3.0 -3.44	d. 3.5-4.0
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22. What was your program of study (what was your major(s)? minor(s)? – Fill in the Blank

23. Did you live on-campus your first year? Yes/No

24. Did you participate in any academic related programs (e.g. EOP, McNair, Sally Casanova, etc.)? If so, which one? – Fill in the blank

25. How many hours did you spend studying a week?

a. 0	b. 1-5	c. 6-10	d. 10 or more
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26. How many times a semester did you attend faculty office hours?

a. 0	b. 1-5	c. 6-10	d. 10 or more
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Appendix I: Photo Elicitation



You have the opportunity to provide 1-5 photos of anything (people, paraphernalia, campus, document, etc.) from your undergraduate (CSU) institution that positively impacted your experience and assisted with your retention to graduation. If you are unable to provide an image, you are encouraged to provide a response to the following question: “If you had the opportunity to provide an image that showed what positively impacted your experience and assisted with your retention to graduation, what would the image show?”

Photo(s) should be emailed in jpeg or pdf. file to XXX_no later than three days in advance of the scheduled interview.

In your email, provide a detailed explanation about each photo and why that particular photo invoked a positive memory about your experience as an undergraduate student that assisted with your retention to graduation.

If you have any questions about the photo, please call me at XXX or via email at XXXX.

Appendix J: Amended Consent Form for Photo Elicitation Approval



AGREEMENT TO USE IMAGES/PHOTOGRAPHS AS PART OF RESEARCH STUDY

Factors Influencing the Retention and Graduation of Latino Male Students: Four-Year Hispanic Serving Institutions

Thank you for participating in the interview process for my dissertation this past semester and for submitting images/photographs as part of the photo elicitation component of my study. As you recall, my research examines how Latino male graduates experience college and identify factors that contributed to their graduation from several identified California State University system (CSUs) campuses designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

I am interested in using the images/photograph(s) you submitted, and I am committed to protecting your privacy, so I am asking for your approval to use the images/photograph(s) you submitted as part of the study. All images used as part of the study will be published as part of my dissertation. Providing approval to use the images/photographs you provided is entirely voluntary.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me at XXX or via email at XXX. You may also contact my faculty advisors at XXX or XXX. The CGU Institutional Review Board has approved this project. If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

CONSENT: Your signature below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this consent form with the participant and answered any of his questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Researcher _____

Appendix K: Density Map for Form of Capital and by Participant

The table below highlights each participant and their respective form of capital they used throughout their undergraduate career to be successful.

	Aspirational 100% (14)	Navigational 86% (12)	Familial 100% (14)	Social 100% (14)	Resistant 50% (7)	Linguistic 43% (7)	<i>Valor</i> 71% (10)	Spirituality / Religious 64% (9)	<i>Ser</i> <i>Servicial</i> 50% (7)
Aaron	X X		X					X	
Allen	X	X X	X X	X	X				
Axel	X	X	X X	X X		X	X		
Brian	X X	X	X X	X				X	X
Cesar	X X	X	X	X			X	X	
Marco	X X		X X	X		X	X	X	X
Marcos	X	X X X	X X	X X X	X		X	X	X
Oscar	X	X X	X X X	X X	X	X X	X X	X	
Paco	X	X	X	X X			X X	X	X
Santana	X	X	X	X	X		X X		X
Ulises	X	X X	X	X	X				
Vicente	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Victor	X X	X	X	X X	X	X	X		X
X	X X	X X	X	X	X	X	X X X	X	