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Amplifying Testimonios of Latino Male Student Success

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AMPLIFYING TESTIMONIOS OF LATINO MALE STUDENT SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

AMPLIFYING TESTIMONIOS OF LATINO MALE STUDENT SUCCESS

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The purpose of this qualitative counternarrative ethnographic study was to explore the success stories and lived experiences of six Latino male students, utilizing an asset-based approach and consideration of intersectional identity, cultural wealth, and contextual settings. This asset-based theoretical framework, the Latino Male Student Success Paradigm, was developed and used to contextualize the Latino male students' *testimonios* of their experiences and how they advanced their academic success. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to invite *testimonios* from the research participants, which included discussions about their academic success. The *testimonios* provided insight into what facilitated their resiliency when facing adversity within an academic environment. Conclusions from the study highlight the necessity of understanding the resiliency Latino male college students possess and how culture and self-awareness of their identities are an integral part of their educational experiences.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALMAS – Academic, Leaders, Mentors, Aiming for Success
AVID – Advancement Via Individual Determination
CCS – Chicana and Chicano Studies
COVID-19 – Coronavirus disease 2019
CRT – Critical Race Theory
EOP – Educational Opportunity Program
HACU – Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
HSI – Hispanic-Serving Institution
KFF – Kaiser Family Foundation
LGBTQ+ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, or another diverse gender identity
LGBTTTQQIAA – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Allies
MALES – Mentoring to Achieve Latino Educational Success
MEChA – Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán
MEXA – Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán
NCES – National Center for Education Statistics
SAHE – Student Advocates for Higher Education
SJSU – San José State University
SOLES – Society of Latino Engineers and Scientists
STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

Chapter I: Introduction

Issues of gender-based gaps continue to further exacerbate achievement gaps within the Latinx/Hispanic community. Hegemonic masculinity, which are behaviors among men that perpetuate gender inequality (Jewkes et al., 2015), is a barrier to academic success and personal growth against Latino males and hurts the Latinx/Hispanic community collectively. Therefore, solutions to this problem urgently need to be found. This thesis intends to bring awareness to our communities about the alarming issues of how the school system's lack of empathy is liable for the harmful behaviors of hegemonic masculinity such as academic failure and quality of life for Latino males.

Today's nation is diversifying faster than ever, with Latinx/Hispanics being the fastest-growing minority population in the United States. In 2018, 38 percent of the Latinx/Hispanic population in the U.S. belonged to the Generation Z age group, a group who are currently 21 years old and younger (Statista, 2021). The National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019) reports that the percentage of American college students who are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black is increasing. The data show that the achievement gap between White students and those of disadvantaged racialized populations continues to be discouraging. With Latinx/Hispanic students becoming a larger percentage of classroom populations, we shift to another gap that requires focus: gender disparities.

The NCES (2020) reported the percentage of 18-to-24-year-olds enrolled in college by sex and race/ethnicity of students from 1970 through 2019. Before 1972, the Latinx/Hispanic demographic was included within the White and Black demographics to account for college

enrollment data. In 1972, it was first reported that 15.1% of Latino students were enrolled in college, whereas 12.0% of Latinas were also enrolled. Until 1980, Latinos were in the lead in higher education at 15.9 % but a shift occurred where Latinas' enrollment increased to 16.2%. While the college enrollments in 1980 did not show a huge difference in gender disparity, with the gap being at 0.3%, a shift was still recognized. And, although, the NCES (2020) showed that Latinas' college enrollment (16.5%) decreased compared to their Latino counterparts (18.5%), the cause or reasons for this disparity were not identified. However, by 2019, Latinas were at 39.6%, indicating a continued increase in college enrollment, while their Latino counterparts were at 32.9%. Hence, while there is a need to support continued growth in college-going by students of Latinx/Hispanic identities, there is also a gender disparity within this population such that additional effort is needed to promote college access and success for Latino male students. The current trajectory of the Latinx/Hispanic population growth, along with the general and gender-based gaps in their college-going, will make it impossible to close the achievement gap unless focused and significant investments are made to change the conditions that perpetuate these problems.

Furthermore, there is a large presence of academic literature that portrays Latino male students through a deficit-based lens based on stereotypes and assumptions about gaps in their academic success being primarily their own fault rather than addressing systemic failures (Cerna et al., 2009; Harper, 2010, 2015; Rivera-Batiz, 2008; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). When the challenges that affect Latino male students' education are presented within a master narrative, it silences the experiences of people of color by inferring assumptions based on negative stereotypes, thus, narrowing the depiction of a cultural group (Solórzano &

Yosso, 2002). For example, perceived shortfalls that affect Latinx/Hispanic students' education are their socioeconomic background, family and parental involvement, and the condition of school (Rivera-Batiz, 2008). A counternarrative, often neglected in the literature, offers an alternative side of the story for people of color and requires one to critique master narratives (Harper & Davis, 2012; Stanley, 2007). Hence, an anti-deficit approach can be valuable guidance in improving access and success in higher education (Harper, 2010).

Latino male students' achievements, particularly those associated with their success, are counternarratives (Harper, 2010, 2015; Howard et al., 2019). In addition, a gendered analysis can assist in addressing the gap between male and female Latinx/Hispanic students' achievements (Piña-Watson et al., 2016; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). Therefore, researchers need to investigate Latino male students' success through an asset-based lens that centralizes their cultural wealth and includes their aspirations and values related to college choice (Cerna et al., 2009; Yosso, 2005), and that is precisely what was done as part of this thesis.

Research Questions

This thesis addressed the following research questions:

1. What factors impact Latino males' collegiate journeys?
2. What are the contributing factors to the gender disparity between Latino men and Latina women?
3. What are the potential asset-based factors and supports that aid Latino males' education attainment?

4. How can education be a catalyst to address these underlying issues that can alleviate the generational effects of patriarchy that Latino males experience?

Definition of Terms

To carry out the present research, the thesis used the following definitions:

Caballerismo – This includes characteristics such as being family-centered including being nurturing, noble, and chivalrous, which may promote deeper connections between masculinity and academics (Sáenz et al., 2015). However, it also includes chivalrous behavior such as benevolent sexism, rather than positive masculinity, defined as a set of sexist attitudes towards women that view women stereotypically and in restrictive roles, yet subject to a positive tone (Shnabel et al., 2016).

Critical Race Theory – This is an evolving paradigm that explains the emergence of race-conscious responses to account for White supremacy and racism gains. This framework addresses the explanatory power of the continued atmospheric and systemic nature of theorizing race in U.S. society (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vue et al., 2017).

Decolonization - "The questioning of, and attempts to overcome, all forms of oppression against groups considered to be subordinate, those who, historically have been subject to mechanisms of control and denial of their existence and culture" (Costa et al., 2020, p. 97).

Familismo - Family values among the Latino community that relate to their strong ties to immediate and extended family members. In addition, family values can serve as protective factors for their well-being. Protective factors, which include pride, belonging, and obligation to members of the family, continue to be distinctive attributes across generations regardless of the length of time one has resided in the U.S. (Ayón et al., 2010).

Hegemonic masculinity - "An analytical instrument to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other (often minority groups of) men" (Jewkes et al., 2015, p. 113).

Hypermasculinity - "A personality trait that predisposes men to engage in behaviors that assert physical power and dominance in interactions" (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003, p. 70).

Intersectionality - The association with multiple identities along interlocking systems of disadvantage and inequality (Torres et al., 2018).

Latinx/Hispanic - The terms Latinx and Hispanic are used interchangeably in this thesis and describe people who are of or relate to Latin American origin or descent. "Latinx" is a more inclusive term for "Latino/Latina" (De La Torre, 2017; Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020).

Machismo - The patriarchal gender role construct of Latinx/Hispanic men; conceptions include male dominance, aggressive, unemotional, and assumption of being heterosexual (Estrada et al., 2011; Estrada & Jimenez, 2018; Peña-Talamantes, 2013).

Marianismo - The patriarchal Latinx/Hispanic gender role construct of women; wives' conceptions of submissive behavior (Sanchez et al., 2017).

Postcolonialism - The historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism (Ivison, 2020).

Racial Microaggressions - The actions of interpersonal discrimination that are ambiguous and difficult to recognize; verbal and non-verbal layered assaults based on race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname that take a

psychological, physiological, and academic toll on marginalized groups (Huynh, 2012; Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015).

Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade spoke at the Alumni of Color Conference for the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University and stated, “We have to be committed to understanding the level of suffering our students have experienced before they enter our classrooms” (Mirviss, 2010, para. 7). Looking through a Critical Race Theory framework suggests that the education system needs to address deeper-rooted issues of learning attainability that Latino males face instead of just focusing on standards-based grading (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vue et al., 2017). Chapter II presents barriers pressed on Latino males that hinder their academic attainment and success. Furthermore, findings from the present study identify the strengths that assist in facilitating the resiliency of Latino male students to help with their personal and academic development in higher education.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter summarizes the literature on the postcolonial effects that perpetually impact Latino males' academic achievement. While the United States addresses the concerns of the higher education racial gaps, additional work needs to be done to demonstrate and respond to the effects of colonization and Eurocentric values on education and other destructive impacts on minority communities. Critical Race Theory framework describes the systemic barriers that interfere with Latinx/Hispanic students' learning and accessibility, which disfavors the racial demographic, leading to low mobility and entrapment patterns of the cycle of poverty (Ayala, 2012; Gonzales & Shields, 2014; Kim & Calzada, 2019; Luis et al., 2020; Reiter, 2019). While the racial achievement gap remains a serious concern, racial stereotypes and gender ideology remain factors that hinder Latino males on their collegiate journey. Therefore, the presenting issue requires an in-depth historical look that unpacks the lingering effects of patriarchal teachings within learned behaviors, gender roles, mental health, and education.

Historical and Cultural Factors that Affect Learned Behaviors

Latinx/Hispanic communities are the fastest growing population yet they have inequitable access to educational opportunities, particularly in terms of Latino males' attrition rates compared to their Latina counterparts (Cerna et al., 2009). To understand why, we can look at what we know about American history and colonialism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) explains how racism plays a factor in education, which presumes the manifestation of disadvantages for Latinx/Hispanics (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vue et al., 2017).

In precolonial times, Tenochtitlan was a collective communal empire where men and women fulfilled highly distinctive roles - especially women because of the connection to nature and fertility. The Aztecs believed in deities that were not exclusive to males, as women were seen as goddesses. However, under Christianity's beliefs, Eve's biblical scripture created justification for women's restrictions by supporting male dominance and gender ideology (Heep, 2014; Taylor et al., 2012). The idea that men are made in God's image rationalized males' privileges through the proposition that they are and should be the dominant gender, and this was embraced across Latin America (Pennock, 2011).

Gender Roles

Latinx/Hispanics in the United States are likely to experience social injustice such as lower socioeconomic status because of systemic biases associated with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and citizenship (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). These intersectional identities also complicate their community's definitions of manhood and feelings of legitimacy. As such, Hurtado and Sinha (2016) equate hegemonic masculinity to *machismo*, which are the beliefs and behaviors of catering toward Latino males as a multidimensional gender construct consisting of three dimensions: 1) domination of women, 2) emotional distance/reserve, and 3) denigration of intellectual activities, and an overarching theme of never showing weakness or emotion.

Machismo behavior thrives on power over those viewed as weak and subject to domination (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). Although *caballerismo* may seem like a positive aspect of masculinity because of displaying behaviors such as being family-centered, nurturing, noble, and chivalrous (Sáenz et al., 2015), *caballerismo* behaviors include chivalry which

promotes sexism (Shnabel et al., 2016). Chivalry provides Latino men with a positive image by romanticizing hegemonic masculinity at the expense of women (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). C*aballerismo* behaviors are problematic because of the acceptance of benevolent sexism, such as beliefs that men and women have different yet complementary traits, that men are incomplete without a women's love, and that men's role is to protect and support their women (Shnabel et al., 2016).

"Gender roles are the stereotypical emotions, cognitions, and behaviors associated with being male or female, presumably acquired through socialization" (Kulis et al., 2010, p. 2). Gender roles have standardized behaviors as a norm, which helps predictability and establishes comfort, leaving less room for conflicts and threats. Blueprints of hegemonic masculinity include being heterosexual because homosexuality is frowned upon due to the patriarchal entitlement of what a dominant man represents and the Catholic church's teachings (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018).

Many Latino men adopt homophobic views due to the fear of their masculinity being challenged and being identified with feminine submissiveness or derogatory terms such as, but not limited to, *"maricon"* (sissy), *"joto"* (fag), and other hurtful words that torment Latino males (Estrada et al., 2011; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). Homosexuals are perceived as being more like women than men, disregarding what men should be, and viewed as being subordinate to the ideal heteronormative standards (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). Through the lens of patriarchy, homosexuality destabilizes the standards of manhood in the Latinx/Hispanic community bringing shame, guilt, and hurt to the individuals and their families.

While discussing Hurtado and Sinha's (2016) dimensions of *machismo,* one must also understand that women who accept the behavior of submissiveness tend to practice behaviors of *marianismo* (Sanchez et al., 2017). Sanchez et al. (2017) researched how youth are subject to the learned behaviors of *machismo* and *marianismo* through familial ethnic socialization. They surveyed preadolescent Mexican girls and boys living in the southern states and found that there was a positive relationship between familial ethnic socialization and *caballerismo* (e.g., responsibility, nurturance, and emotional connectedness), but there was a weak link between familial ethnic socialization and *machismo* (e.g., dominance over women and restricted emotionality), for boys. The link between familial ethnic socialization and *marianismo* (i.e., gendered cultural values, for girls, however, was not very strong. Miville et al. (2017) explored the phenomena of traditional gender role behaviors within the Latino community from 1982 to 2013 and found that gender roles are passed along generations through children to keep the patriarchal value; therefore, the youth are subject to the learned behaviors of *machismo* and *marianismo*.

The Latinx/Hispanic community practices a collectivist culture, relying on material and emotional support and help; therefore, *familismo* is crucial to understanding how family influences Latinos' mental health (Ayón et al., 2010). However, *familismo* can be a protective or a risk factor and such risk factors can have consequences on children's development, such as patriarchal gender ideology (Calzada et al., 2012; Glass & Owen, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2017). *Familismo* links gender roles to family obligations that expose unforeseen consequences of academic success, which take a toll on children's time and

energy, leading to school absences, dropout, and lower college enrollment rates (Calzada et al., 2012; Sanchez et al., 2017).

Effects of Gender Roles

The teachings of hegemonic masculinity manipulate Latino males and undermine achievement of their potential by discouraging or punishing any behavior outside the dominant expectations since alternatives pose a threat to its power (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003). Consequences limit Latino males' behavioral motivation, such as the ability for self-actualization, which is the drive to realize one's true potential (Maslow, 1943). Therefore, Latino males who gravitate towards hegemonic masculinity satisfy their needs according to the masculine script due to acceptance and less resistance towards dominant gender norms. Without the masculine script, then, what is their true identity? Unfortunately, *machismo* perpetually influences Latino males to prevent self-actualization due to its exaggerated belief about what it is to be a man (Maslow, 1943; Vokey et al., 2013).

While following traditional gender norms may elicit positive regard (McLeod, 2014) within the community, it is conditional on adhering to scripted standards. As men continue to follow the masculine script, it generates an identity that masks their vulnerabilities since it is an undesirable trait in hegemonic masculinity.

Existing restrictions on expressing emotions lead men to alternatively internalize and externalize their problems. The fear of femininity being embedded in dominant masculinity scripts poses a threat to men because feelings of vulnerability are discouraged while aggressive tendencies are encouraged. Casselman and Rosenbaum (2014) stated that "male aggression is a significant source of physical injury, and psychological dysfunction for men,

women, and children" (p. 513). Hypermasculine behaviors impact men's health because they are taught to suppress a physiological function intended for humans to communicate naturally (American Psychological Association, 2022; King et al., 2018; Patel & Patel, 2019; Trettenero, 2020).

Hegemonic Masculinity and Mental Health Among Latino Males

As mentioned, *familismo* can contribute to risk factors for children's development when intergenerationally teaching hegemonic masculinity (Calzada et al., 2012; Glass & Owen, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2017). Hegemonic masculinity also entails psychological risk factors that begin during childhood and carry on through adulthood if left untreated. Kendrick Lamar provided an example of how men's mental health perpetuates the cycle of hegemonic masculinity through father and son engagement in his lyrics, "Oh, this the part, he breaks my humility just for practice, tactics we learned together, sore losers forever, daddy issues" (Lamar, 2022a, Track 5).

While it is uncommon for Latino men to seek support or discuss emotions because it goes against male role expectations and they, instead, emphasize strength and emotional restraint (McKenzie et al., 2018), there are consequences to withholding their emotions. For example, hypermasculinity unconsciously has long-lasting effects on Latino male experiences and inhibits their psychological and physical health by impacting their self-esteem and identity development (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012; Miville et al., 2017).

Although there are limitations to men seeking mental health services, supporters can encourage change for Latino males with internalized *machismo* by understanding the restraints they place. As mentioned before, men have been conditioned to suppress their

feelings and may not find the vocabulary to articulate their emotions. An example of encouraging change is Falicov's (2010) approach to identifying machismo behaviors using open facilitated conversations regarding previously unquestioned behavioral patterns.

Education in the Latinx/Hispanic Community

Various factors feed into the economic disenfranchisement of the Latinx/Hispanic community, including barriers such as inequitable academic opportunities, lack of cultural competencies, and weak relationships with their teachers that continue to undermine their academic success (Schneider et al., 2006).

Many historical social movements have had a common goal of educational reform, such as The Chicano Movement, *El Movimiento* (1940-1970s), and the 1968 East Los Angeles Walkouts. Another pivotal event associated with educational reform was the Brown v. Board of Education case culminating in a Supreme Court decision in 1954 that desegregated schools within the broader context of the Civil Rights Movement. These historical events led to considerable changes and opportunities for brown and black communities. However, prejudice, discrimination, and racism remain active toward students of color and continue interfering with their education.

Many educators have a misconception that Latinx/Hispanic parents are less involved with their child's education (Medina et al., 2015); however, when the predominant language spoken at home is absent within the child's education, language barriers exclude families. The lack of understanding by educators who believe Latinx/Hispanic parents are not involved with their children's academics stems from the absence of cultural competency, which causes families to be less acculturated with American academics (Marrero, 2016). Valenzuela's

(2005) study on primary youth of Mexican descent and effects related to school-subtracting, where schools remove culture and language, found students to have negative perceptions about education resulting in academic underachievement.

School settings with racial microaggressions impact minority students and generate consequences such as lack of engagement, unsatisfactory grades, and more school absences leading to negative performance (Howard & Gay, 2010; Huynh, 2012). Racial microaggressions existing in school settings, intentional or unintentional, verbal or nonverbal, are interpersonal discriminations based on race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname. This environmental quality takes a psychological, physiological, and academic toll on marginalized groups (Huynh, 2012; Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015).

Using previously mentioned environments that prevent students of color from moving forward, additional barriers exist as a disservice when passing students. Howard and Gay (2010) specified on the dilemma of how educators promote students due to retention reasoning even when they are not prepared. However, retention does not necessarily improve student learning. Instead, it increases the likelihood that a student would fall further behind and drop out, and research has shown that African American and Latino male students are overrepresented in rates of suspensions, expulsions, and subsequent dropout (Howard & Gay, 2010, p. 22).

School systems should take an in-depth approach to support students of color, particularly male students of color, with emphasis on the teaching of noncognitive skills, which include behaviors, skills, attitudes, and strategies that are crucial for academic success

(Nagaoka et al., 2013). Research has shown that noncognitive skills are essential within a classroom setting and can lead to an increased sense of belonging; this sense of belonging leads to positive cognitive interactions that encompass a student's self-confidence and enable validation (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018; Luis et al., 2020). This recommendation will not remove the quality of the environment students of color face, yet it may provide transferable skills beneficial to their success as they continue their education.

Negative Impacts Caused by Hypermasculinity in Education

Gender stereotypes reproduce underachievement in students of all genders because of the existing social constructs. However, *machismo* behaviors also harm Latino males because it promotes toxic behaviors toward women, other men, and themselves. Latino males enact *machismo* through dominance, aggression, suppression of emotion, and heteronormativity (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018). Gender ideology grabbed the attention of Sáenz and Ponjuán (2009) and Piña-Watson et al. (2016) on how Latino males are vanishing from the education pipeline to college. Their findings highlighted that *machismo* reflects a negative attitude toward education because the academic image does not illustrate their identity of being Latino or male (Piña-Watson et al., 2016; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009).

Educators harm male students by feeding into the stereotype that male students do not perform well academically due to gender-based differences. While boys have had power and privileges over girls, studies have found that boys are now perceived as disadvantaged in education because schools contribute to gender-based differences in perceptions of intelligence (Musto, 2019). Due to this judgment of preconceived notions, many students develop poor learning skills and low self-esteem (Appel et al., 2015). Furthermore, in a

discriminatory learning environment, students of color experience an attack on their intelligence, are perceived as second-class citizens, or are assumed to have a criminal status based on their race (Sue et al., 2007). In addition, the manifestation of gender ideology continues to be an obstacle for minority students, including Latino males of varying ages (Kim & Calzada, 2019). At an early age, Latino boys are taught to undermine themselves and devalue educational opportunities based on the patterns and influences of their learned stereotypes. For example, Musto (2019) discovered that "educators reserved their harshest disciplinary practices for Latino boys" based on the assumed academic competency of Latino boys, therefore, creating an environment perceiving them as the "dumbest" students at the school (p. 371).

The school-to-prison pipeline (SPP) is a known track for minors and young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds to become incarcerated because of inequitable school and municipal policies (Hanson & Stipek, 2014). Alarming statistics show that the largest student drop-out population by ethnicity in the U.S. are Latinx/Hispanic and African American men (Hanson & Stipek, 2014; Howard & Gay, 2010). In addition, Latinx/Hispanic and African American men are prisons' highest demographic.

However, when Latino males are successful in school, they are presumed by their peers to be "acting White," perpetuating racial stereotypes and microaggressions (Estrada et al., 2011; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). Yet, Latino men who enroll in higher education are likely to experience unworthiness and the phenomena of imposter syndrome (Ramirez, 2014). For example, participants from Azmitia et al.'s (2018) study presented a narrative of, "...I feel like I am always acting a part to try and be somewhere" (p. 92).

In addition, mainstream media feeds into hegemonic masculinity by displaying muscle adulations, a sizeable sexual history, stoicism, and drinking alcohol in excess as qualifications that certify one's manhood (Perrotte et al., 2020; Walters & Valenzuela, 2020).

Hegemonic masculinity inhibits males' psychological and physical health by impacting their self-esteem and identity development due to gender role expectations (Miville et al., 2017). This belief system detriments Latino male students at another layer because hegemonic masculinity and racial microaggressions are pressed against Latinos' identity. When Latino males' identity does not illustrate the hegemonic script and the racial microaggressions pressed against them, they mold their identity of what is perceived as "Latino" and "male" into limiting stereotypical expectations.

The Transition Between Male and Female Gender Roles

Due to *machismo* beliefs and behaviors, men internalize gender role stress due to the expectation of becoming the head of the household or breadwinners. Nevertheless, pivotal historical moments stimulated change in gender ideologies and modified how women entered the workforce (Vasquez, 2014). For example, during World War II, women resumed traditional homemaking once men returned from war. The war challenged women's gender roles by necessity due to the need for labor in providing military materials and replacing those male workers who were serving in the conflict. While this situation was certainly not the only factor, it was part of motivating even more women to insist on pursuing employment, education, and other opportunities outside the home (Yellen, 2020). In turn, pressures to renegotiate general roles and scripts were amplified by these pivotal moments (Vasquez, 2014).

These gender role shifts were not as apparent among communities of color, particularly among Latinx/Hispanic family households who maintained deeper investments in traditional gender roles (Lam et al., 2012; Vargas et al., 2016; Wight et al., 2012; Zamarripa, 2020). In addition, racism and discrimination in the workforce towards Latinx/Hispanics, specifically prohibiting access to certain types of jobs with higher income potentials, made fewer employment opportunities available to them. In other words, if there are fewer employment options for people of color of any gender, then there are also fewer internal pressures linked to employment and income to change gender scripts.

Latino Men and Intersectionality

Intersectionality is associated with multiple identities and interlocking systems of disadvantage and inequality (Torres et al., 2018). "According to Intersectionality, Latinos [Latinx/Hispanic community] in the United States are likely to see social injustice based not solely on any one category — their class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality — but on all of these categories simultaneously" (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016, p. 56). Although Latinx/Hispanic men and women should have similar gendered experiences compared to their privileged White counterparts, intersectionality leads to various forms of oppression based on their different identities.

Relating to the various factors that influenced Latinx/Hispanics being economically disenfranchised and with education being a pivotal barrier, Latinx/Hispanic women in the Chicano Movement challenged the dominant male segment that interweaves prejudice based on gender:

> In a letter addressed to the Brown Berets' national headquarters, the women of the Los Angeles chapter collectively resigned on Feb. 25, 1970, citing 'a great exclusion

> on behalf of the male segment...We have been treated as nothings, and not as Revolutionary sisters...We have found that the Brown Beret men have oppressed us more than the pig system.' (Martínez & Barajas, 2020, paras. 8-9)

Machismo beliefs and behaviors deny women leadership roles because of stereotypical gender roles. Latina women rejected notions of passiveness or submission to the male-dominated leadership and created a new reform organization, *Las Adelitas de Aztlán*. As women continued to express and voice political views, such as reproductive rights, the more visible they became and continued to challenge gender views in society. However, intersectional masculinity holds a level of manifestation of a greater consciousness around gender issues, including feminist identification (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016).

Advocacy for women of color contributed to new educational opportunities and economic wealth for women who rejected scripted gender roles. The *machismo* script and values of men showing their dominance, such as being breadwinners, were no longer feasible because of dual-house income and new social liberties that deconstruct gender roles. Researchers have documented how the working class and minority females use school success to resist societal constructs that view them as inferior to males and reinforce their subordinate social status (Cammarota, 2004). The continued upheaval Latinas demonstrated towards progressive opportunities outside their traditional gender role reveals how Latino males remain bound to hegemonic masculinity.

Intersectional Identity of Manhood

Literature written by Hurtado and Sinha (2016) examined the intersectional identities of manhood among Latino participants who identified as feminists. The study intended to explore dismantling *machismo* and constructing new masculinities. Intersectionality is

associated with multiple identities that interlock systems of disadvantage and inequality, such as patriarchal standards, that distance Latino males from academic success. Hurtado and Sinha (2016) identified the following themes in respondents' definitions of manhood: 1) relational engagement, 2) positive ethical positionings, and 3) rejection of hegemonic masculinity. The relational engagement theme is a part of the definition of manhood that includes dimensions of relationships with family, community, and other social groups. Positive ethical positioning exhibits values such as respect for others, truthfulness, self-respect, confidence in one's decision and identity as a man, and pursuit of education to become a better person. Manhood rejects hegemonic masculinity and possesses positive attributes, such as being collaborative, supportive, open to new ideas, and able to express emotions. Hurtado's and Sinha's (2016) intersectional Latino masculinities contributed to the development of the conceptual framework used for this thesis project – the Latino Male Student Success Paradigm (described in more detail towards the end of this chapter). This framework is used to understand participants' behavioral resilience when hegemonic masculinity persists in widening the gender disparity gap.

Familismo as an Asset-Based Support

In layman's terms, higher education facilitates and promotes social mobility. However, an academic institutional barrier, such as discussing tuition costs, is still highly intimidating and discourages many low-income families from pursuing it. Families need a safe space to open up and encourage conversation and comfortability to request additional services to help their families thrive. Many Latinx/Hispanic students are the first in their families to go to

college. Family involvement is a priority and a significant cultural value that can leverage student assets that are often ignored (Jabbar et al., 2019).

First-generation students experience a disconnect with their families in terms of how to access and navigate the college systems successfully. Latinx/Hispanic students use their families as sources of knowledge, however, with the lack of formal education passing over from previous generations, it is educators' responsibility to make information accessible and easy to navigate within educational systems (Hurtado et al., 2020). An academic connection can change history for many generations, therefore, representation and support are crucial. Unfortunately, Latinx/Hispanics are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions in academic institutions, especially Latino males (Covarrubias & Stone, 2015). Many Latino males internalize stereotypes that can cause ambivalence and guilt about leaving families behind and failing to fulfill family obligations. Therefore, integration is vital for Latino males to see themselves reflected in their academic mentors and among their peers.

Community Cultural Wealth

The traditional interpretation of academic success is rooted in negative views toward communities of color in schools (Harper, 2015; Vue et al., 2017; Yosso, 2005). Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vue et al., 2017) explains that the design of the education system was not to support students of color [and for any student rejecting the hegemonic script]. Yosso (2005) defended that non-traditional techniques assist students of color in succeeding in schools with Community Cultural Wealth. This theory also contributes to Latino male students' resiliency by including the participants' assets such as cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and networks (Yosso, 2005). Although traditional Anglo-

American education disregards cultural teachings, cultural skills are dependent values that support academic success and have helped communities survive and transition (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994).

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth theory encompasses different forms of capital: *aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance*, that are not typically acknowledged or valued by the narrowly defined White middle-class values, assets, and resources that prioritize property and wealth. For example, Yosso (2005) defined *aspirational capital* "as the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers"; *linguistic capital* as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style"; *familial capital* as "to that cultural knowledge nurtured among familia/kinships that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition"; *social capital* as "networks of people and community resources, and other social contacts that can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions"; *navigational capital* as "the skills of maneuvering through social institutions"; and *resistance capital* as "the knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 77-80).

Moreover, it is essential to note that these various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static but dynamic processes that build on one another as part of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). By using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework interwoven with Hurtado and Sinha's (2016) Intersectional Identity of Manhood framework, the complexities of how and with what skills the participants facilitated their

resilience for academic success were identified as part of this thesis. However, the contextual settings express the intentionality because this thesis examined the contributing factors that impact Latino male students' success.

Academic Development to Support Latino Male Students

Historically, the education system has structurally favored male students who are White, heterosexual, middle-class, and Christian. Although policy initiatives such as Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Equal Opportunity in Education Act provide inclusivity, schooling and socialization processes remain a sexist practice where gendered stereotypes remain problematic for our young boys (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009).

Learning is associated with vulnerability, which goes against hegemonic masculinity because it violates the emotional distance required for *machista* masculinity (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). Yet, some educators and schools are unaware that our society is educating young boys within a patriarchal system that enables feelings of shame and hating the academic setting that makes them feel that way (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009).

In 2019, 12.3% of the United States was at the poverty level and, of the 12.3%, Latinx/Hispanics represented 17.2% (Kaiser Family Foundation [KFF], 2020). In addition, due to long work hours and lack of resources, Latinx/Hispanic families continue to be disadvantaged in obtaining academic information compared to college-going families.

While a plethora of academic literature on the educational disadvantages and underachievement of Latino male students exists, this only provides one form of narrative that Latino male students are experiencing. The Anti-Deficit framework (Harper, 2015) explored counternarratives and experiences of African American male students enrolled in

higher education and minority student success. Similarly, to understand Latino male student success better, we need to understand those few who graduate. The influences of *machismo* have Latino males in a crisis that has evolved into an association of low-level skill jobs leading to underutilized talent. Therefore, rather than feeling supported to attend and graduate from college, many leave college before graduating (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009).

Socio-Ecological Model

The final dimension to the Latino Male Student Success Paradigm narrows to where the participants are resilient in academic success. McLeroy et al.'s (1988) Socio-Ecological Model provides information on how the quality and context of education can impact health and behavior. The origin of the Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988) is an extension of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. McLeroy et al. (1988) divided their ecological model into five parts (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, and public policy). "It is important to note that activities, roles, and relationships cannot be isolated from one another; in the bioecological model, they overlap with and influence one another" (Demetriou et al., 2017, p. 20).

Socio-ecological models are significant in identifying factors linked between individuals, societies, and ecosystems. This study mainly identified contextual settings relating to academic environments where Latino male students facilitated their resiliency. "Resilience embodies the capacity of linked socio-ecological systems to absorb recurrent disturbances to retain essential structure, processes, and relationships" (Francis & Bekera, 2014, p. 102). Furthering the resonance of this theory, educators, social workers, and policymakers can see the effects on communities of color caused by interactions within social-ecological

environments. Social contexts are needed to comprehend the participants' narratives as they take the opportunity to navigate higher education settings where the odds are against Latino male students.

Advocacy for Change

The work of everyday people challenging gender scripts for beneficial reasons in making gender roles inclusive redefines human relations from the rigid fundamentals instilled within us. These challenging efforts come in various forms, and can be intentional or incidental, and can have significant or small impacts depending on the people and contexts involved. Professional opportunities, policy making and legal reforms, and artistic expression within popular culture are examples of areas where advocacy work can go a long way.

Hegemonic masculinity persists in restricting and discouraging men from expressing themselves emotionally. While rap and hip hop have embodiments of hypermasculinity, artists of these genres are taking the platform to express themselves. For example, in music, hip hop and rap are genres in which there is a platform to amplify the voices of marginalized communities. There are relevant criticisms about instances of sexism and homophobia found in artists' lyrics, but these are often framed as a problem with hip hop/rap per se rather than a by-product of the patriarchal society in which they are written and performed (Ciro, 2019). As some stereotypes may continue within the hip hop and rap genre, there has been a new wave of counternarratives. For example, Kendrick Lamar's newest 2022 release, *Mr. Morale & The Big Stepper*, challenged hegemonic masculinity by expressing vulnerable lyrics as a confessional, including father-son traumas (Lamar, 2022b).

Reggaetón originates in American hip-hop, rap, Dominican merengue, and Jamaican reggae (Álvarez Trigo, 2020). One artist, in particular, Bad Bunny, has gained global popularity. In previous years, his music demonstrated violence and hypersexual narratives (Rivera Figueroa, 2021). However, in his latest music, Bad Bunny expresses themes of queerness, self-love, and political advocacy to support Puerto Rico (Rivera Figueroa, 2021).

Other modalities that advocate for change are choices of employment. For example, sport refereeing has historically been a profession ruled by men (Hietala & Archibald, 2021); however, women are now taking the lead within the sports community. Specifically looking at the National Football League [NFL], the 2022 season "set a precedent never before achieved in terms of female inclusion among coaching positions as there are 15 female coaches, an increase of 25 percent compared to the previous campaign" (García, 2022, para. 1).

Men have also broken away from gender scripts by working as early childhood educators. While men, particularly White men, have dominated educator positions at the university level, the absence of male early childhood educators contributes to the dominant ideologies about gender roles (NCES, 2022; Sumsion, 2005). As early childhood educators try to express nurturance towards their students through positive and appropriate touch, male educators fear scrutiny "because you're a male and you just want to avoid any issues" that may put their reputations at risk (Cole et al., 2019, p. 7). This double standard within gender roles in early childhood education generates suspicion toward male teachers (Cole et al., 2019). However, those who do take employment opportunities within this profession redefine

masculinity. For example, the following narrative reflects their position as early childhood educators:

> I'm showing them that not every man is scary or somebody that isn't dependable. That men are people who can say, 'Good job! I noticed how you did this.' Men can give you advice or can be encouraging or nurturing and give you, like, a hug. You know, a side hug. (Cole et al., 2019, p. 1)

Also, despite having political leaders and policies that advocate for change, the United States remains one of few nations that do not offer paid maternity and paternity leave. Research shows the benefits of having paternity leave; for example, "paid parental leave can reduce financial stress, allow parents to focus on bonding with their child, and increase gender equality when fathers have more time to participate in child care duties" (Abrams, 2022, para. 6). While the United States does not have policies to support new mothers and fathers, expectations reveal that mothers should be home to bond with newborns while fathers return to work.

In sum, the work of everyday people challenging gender scripts reaches across music, sports, education, and the importance of maternity and paternity leave. While the listed examples merely scratch the surface of advocating for change, more challenges exist in dismantling gender scripts.

Generativity

Patriarchy continues to benefit from the social structural system harvested from generations of colonialism. Actions of generativity (Erikson & Erikson, 1998) can dismantle hegemonic masculine behaviors and their teachings when making positive connections. Fathers and male role models that challenge hegemonic masculinity create positive outcomes through mentorship, which can be seen in fathers connecting with children, male role models

mentoring through kinship, or involvement in community activities and organizations (Rubinstein et al., 2014). This positive male engagement is an investment for their communities that will benefit future generations (Erikson & Erikson, 1998; McAdams & Logan, 2004; McLeod, 2018).

Healing in Academic Settings

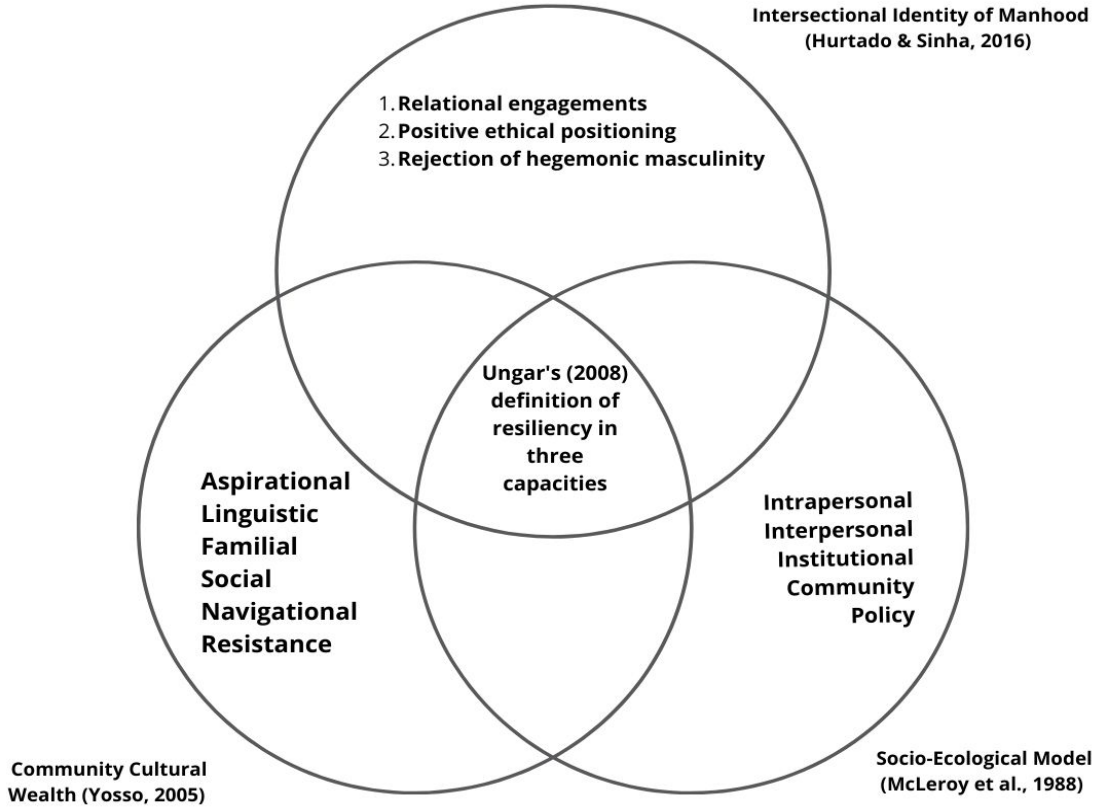
Project MALES (Mentoring to Achieve Latino Educational Success) is a multi-faceted research and mentoring initiative from the University of Texas. The cohort mentorship program enhances Latino male student success to improve educational attainment (Project MALES, 2022b). College can be significant in identifying and critically responding to damaging constructs to help Latino male retention and success. Latino male students who learn about decolonization can apply this awareness to dismantle the disseminated knowledge of "Western tradition," the foundation of European imperialism (Reiter, 2019). By having a mentorship program that leverages social capital among peers, Latino male students can strengthen and foster a sense of belonging by cultivating intrinsic motivation associated with academic outcomes over time (Anderson et al., 2019; Project MALES, 2022b; Simmons & Smith, 2020).

The Latino Male Student Success Paradigm

The Latino Male Student Success Paradigm (see Figure 1), the conceptual framework developed and used to inform the current study, was derived by combining aspects of three theories – Hurtado and Sinha's (1998) Intersectional Identity of Manhood, McLeroy et al.'s (1988) Socio-Ecological Model, and Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth.

Figure 1

Latino Male Student Success Paradigm



Note. Figure 1 was created as a framework to identify what tools enable Latino male students' resilience. Information included in the figure was adapted from the Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), the Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988), and Ungar's (2008) definition of resiliency in three capacities.

The narratives of Latino males deliver personal, political, and social realities; therefore, it is essential to recognize that social identities connect to larger systems of oppression (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Patrón & Garcia, 2016). Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016) includes behaviors that adhere to societal standards that contrast Latino male students' perspectives because they promote courage in vulnerable settings. The interrelationship between the Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016) and the Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988) explores the engagement of the participants' masculinity connected with their academic aspirations towards navigating college. With the use of *aspirational capital* and Yosso's (2005) other forms of cultural capital, this study examines how Latino male students show, through learned skills, how to facilitate resilience while navigating college.

The Latino Male Student Success Paradigm (see Figure 1) provides a multi-dimensional understanding of how Latino male students enroll, continue, and succeed in college. For example, in the Latinx/Hispanic community, valuable cultural knowledge may be obtained that may not seem purposeful in a traditional school context (Yosso, 2005), however, the array of knowledge and skills provides the mobility to maneuver to and through education. This teaches Latinx/Hispanic students how to engage in behaviors and maintain attitudes that challenge Eurocentric status quo.

Latino male students use cultural and community epistemology as a strength of social mobility. To better understand Latino male student success, we must analyze their characteristics and behaviors through the lens of Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016) and the tools of their Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). As Latino

male students navigate through higher education, there is an interrelationship between Cultural Capital Wealth (Yosso, 2005) and contextual settings that help understand what strengths Latino male students apply in academic environments that help facilitate their resilience. The Latino Male Student Success Paradigm is composed of a combination of complementary theories and helps to limit any possible misinterpretation of how the participants facilitate their resiliency, therefore, context, resources, and identity must all be taken into consideration.

Latino men who enroll in college reap the benefits of their male privilege. However, by analyzing this through a Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988), the juxtaposition of White-male centered spaces (e.g., campus, workplace) to unfulfilled safe spaces and validation for Latino male students can be unpackaged. The Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988) depicts how the education system impacts Latino males navigating higher academics and enrolling in predominantly White higher education spaces (Bukoski & Hatch, 2015; Patrón & Garcia, 2016).

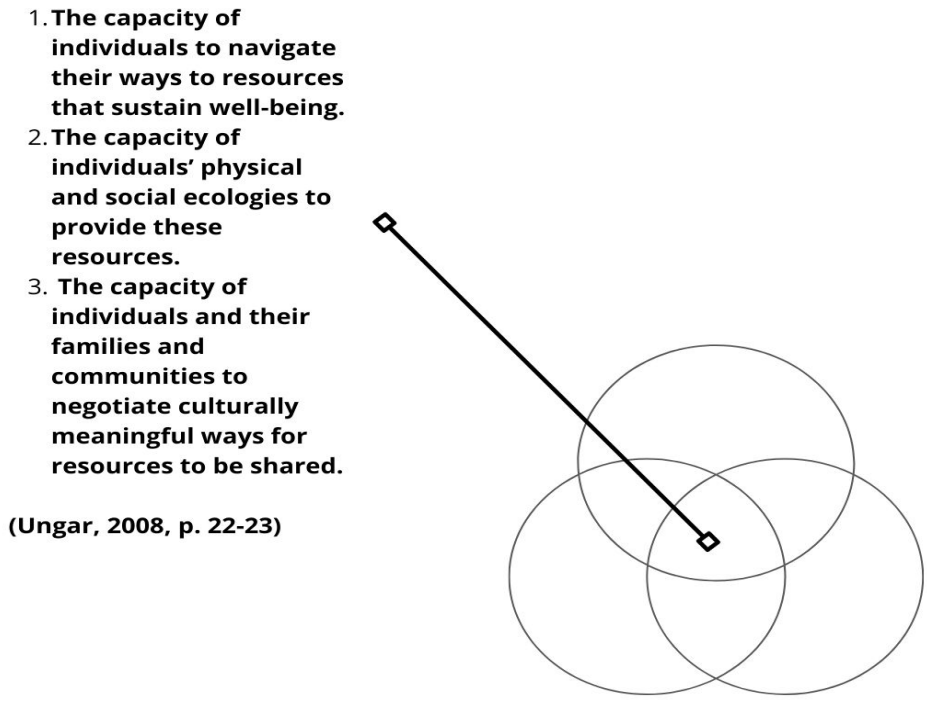
The Latino Male Student Success Paradigm assists by breaking down the students' resilience embedded within their identity, culture, and what contextual setting it facilitates. A multi-dimensional framework, including observations of participants' *testimonios* is compacted into this paradigm. Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988) all concentrate simultaneously on limiting the misinterpretation of resiliency that Latino male students possess as they navigate towards academic achievement.

Examining the resilient capabilities Latino male students possess can be best understood using Ungar's (2008) definition of resiliency, shown in Figure 2. Ungar (2008) describes resiliency as:

> the capacity of individuals to navigate their ways to resources that sustain well-being; capacity of individuals' physical and social ecologies to provide these resources; capacity of individuals and their families and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways for resources to be shared. (p. 22-23)

Figure 2

Ungar's (2008) Definition of Resiliency in Three Capacities



Note. Figure 2 was created to define at what capacity Latino male students successfully navigating higher education. Information included in Figure 2 was adapted from Ungar's (2008) definition of resiliency.

In context, the current study focuses on how resilience facilitates during adversity and how individuals' academic needs are met. While it is important to note that resiliency looks and operates differently for each individual, insight into individuals' interactions and relationships helps to identify causes and solutions to the underrepresentation of Latinos in higher education (Patrón & Garcia, 2016; Ungar, 2008). Under this lens, the resilient outcomes can justify recommendations for education practices, institutional leaders, and federal-state policymakers on supporting Latino males to and through college.

Conclusion

Harper (2012) claims:

> To increase their educational attainment, the popular one-sided emphasis on failure and low performing Black male undergraduates must be counterbalanced with insights gathered from those who somehow manage to navigate their way to and through higher education, despite all that is stacked against them—low teacher expectations, insufficient academic preparation for college-level work, racist and culturally unresponsive campus environments, and the debilitating consequences of severe underrepresentation, to name a few. (p. 2)

Similarly, learning about Latino male success is learning from Latino men who complete degrees. Unfortunately, researchers propose that Latino males are vanishing from higher education (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009), viewing them through deficit narratives focusing on the challenges rather than their successes. However, there is much value in identifying strengths in Latino male students' academic retention and attainments, such as protective factors of parent support, teacher support, and their locus of control (Sciarra & Whitson, 2007).

Education is a powerful tool for self-identity. The education system neglects to acknowledge how colonization and Eurocentric values amplified destruction within minority communities; reclaiming this education is significant for healing Latino men. We must find

solutions to the gender disparity gap to close racial achievement gaps because they are interdependent.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how Latino male college students succeed when barriers persist in widening the gender disparity gap as they navigate higher education. This qualitative research study used narrative inquiry through the collection of stories (Creswell, 2013). This study explored six Latino male students' *testimonios* (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012) of their resiliency while attending San José State University. The following four themes were identified across participants, which highlighted resources and tools that promoted their educational success and resiliency: support from *la familia*, the value of higher education passed on through generativity, supportive school interactions, and identified purpose.

The use of narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013), informed by the Latino Male Student Success Paradigm (see Figure 1 in Chapter II) served as the methodology to gather interview data from the Latino male student participants regarding their experiences and identities. Also, Howard et al. (2019) advocated that:

> Participants' narratives contribute significantly [to understanding phenomena] by a) shining light on a population that is rarely seen or heard as high achieving [through the lens of Eurocentric academics], community-contributing, caring young Latino men; b) [centering] participants as focal points and depicting them, and their definitions of success; and c) offers cases of success that can assist in creating environments that are both supportive and nurturing for students. (p. 2)

Another methodology tool used is *testimonios* (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012), which uses a similar analysis seen in the Critical Race Theory framework (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vue et al., 2017), and Latina/o critical race and Chicana feminist theoretical lens (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The Latino male student participants' stories were examined through the *testimonio* genre to identify and describe their resiliency with details about how they were

supported—and by whom—while navigating through higher education spaces. Therefore, the *testimonio* genre is a culturally relative descriptive discourse in analyzing Latinx/Hispanic students' struggles and understanding their triumph in overcoming systemic oppression.

Also, this research draws upon Ungar's (2008) definition of resiliency to examine how Latino male students develop and utilize such a capability. In this context, this thesis explores how resiliency shows best during adversity and aids in reaching the participants' academic needs. Latino males have resiliency embedded within, yet their resiliency needs to awaken when battling adversity. Therefore, additional frameworks are oriented within the multi-dimensional paradigm to fully encompass Ungar's (2008) definition of resiliency. The Latino Male Student Success Paradigm (Figure 1) includes theoretical frameworks that constitute fundamental beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) to identify how the participants' social identities facilitate resilience, with what techniques, and in what contextual setting Latino male students succeed for in-depth comprehension.

The Researcher's Positionality

I, the researcher, identify as a first-generation Chicana who is also navigating through higher education. I see similarity in what the Latinx/Hispanic community goes through and what tools we use to take spaces for better opportunities. I was already aware of the deficits that our community experiences to which I reminisce of my high school senior quote stating, "Never label me as a stereotypical Latino statistic because I'll prove them wrong." With my newfound knowledge and understanding, what I meant to say was, "Don't press upon me through a deficit lens because I am aware of my strengths and resiliency."

In the text, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Wilson (2008) advised:

> To understand the lifelong learning to intuitive logic and ways of analysis…. All pieces go in until, eventually, the new idea comes out. You build a relationship in various and multiple ways until you reach a new understanding or higher state of awareness regarding whatever it is that you are studying. (p. 117)

This passage helped me understand the need to deconstruct scripted colonial oppression within the Latinx/Hispanic community, myself included. I, too, needed to reject the patriarchal script to obtain a higher level of awareness. There were multiple moments when I was immersed in our ethnography because we shared similarities (Creswell, 2013; Kramer & Adams, 2017). Due to my own intersectional identity, I related to similar forms of adversity. During the development of this research, I was able to recognize that I had also fallen into the blind teachings of hegemonic masculinity and, therefore, raised my resiliency awareness. This realization enabled me to analyze the educational access and achievement disparities among Latinx/Hispanic students, Latino male students, and Latina peers.

Also, I have been working in the education field for more than ten years within various positions and with diverse populations. I am currently working in a program that assists marginalized populations, including a large percentage of Latinx/Hispanic students but who predominantly identify as females. This aligns with what is reflected in the research on gender disparity gaps in education and, in part, what sparked my interest in this research.

Participants

Six individuals who identified as Latino, male, and who were enrolled at San José State University volunteered to participate (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Academic Classification	Academic Discipline	First-Generation (Yes/No)
Edwin	Doctorate	Education	No
Aaron	Graduate	Education	Yes
Elian	Graduate	Anthropology	Yes
Dominic	Undergraduate	Engineering	Yes
Uriel	Graduate	Engineering	No
Angel	Undergraduate	Communications	Yes

Four out of the six participants identified as first-generation students. Out of the six participants, three were working towards their bachelor's degrees, two were working towards their master's degree, and one was working towards a doctorate. One out of the six participants one was a student-athlete. Five of the six participants were born in California. Three participants were born and raised in Southern California, one from the Central Coast, and the other in the Bay Area. One participant, born in South America, came to the states as a teenager and identified as undocumented. The participant proceeded to begin a new life in the Bay Area of California.

All participants attended San José State University. Based on the 2020 Census, California's identified Hispanic or Latino demographic is 39.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In San José, California, the demographic of identified Hispanics or Latino is 31.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). San José State University is a Hispanic-Serving Institution

(HSI). For colleges to be designated an HSI, a minimum of 25% of their total student enrollment need to identify as Hispanic/Latinx to qualify (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities [HACU], 2022). In Fall 2020, San José State University had a 28% Latinx/Hispanic enrollment compared to 34.4% Asian, and 3.4% African American or Black (San José State University Institutional Research, 2022). There were 33,027 students enrolled at San José State University in Fall 2020. Nine thousand two hundred fifty-three identified as Latinx/Hispanic, and of the 9,253 Latinx/Hispanic students, 3,885 identified as male (5,358 identified as women and ten identified as unknown) (San José State University Institutional Research, 2022).

With the Institutional Review Board's approval obtained before recruitment, a purposeful sampling technique was essential in selecting individuals willing to participate, communicate, and state opinions in an articulate expressive manner based on their experiences of this phenomenon. With this strategy, one can compare, contrast, and identify similarities and differences in the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2013).

Each participant was given a pseudonym to provide anonymity. These fictitious names were used in the study to ensure confidentiality.

Instruments

Testimonios included hour-long one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews, using eight open-ended questions that welcomed participants to tell their stories (see Appendix A for interview protocol and questions). The interview questions were developed to identify the descriptive support the participants experienced as they navigate higher education. The

product of *testimonios* provides the collection of data (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, audio recordings).

The researcher used their San José State University Zoom account to record the interviews. Later, the recordings and transcription were moved to the researcher's San José State University student Google Drive. The Zoom and Google Drive accounts are password protected with dual verification. In addition, participants' names were changed to protect their confidentiality.

Procedure

Recruitment messages and flyers seeking participants (see Appendix B and Appendix C respectively) were sent to email accounts associated with Chicanx/Latinx organizations at San José State University. Some of the programs included:

- Academic, Leaders, Mentors, Aiming for Success (ALMAS) de SJSU
- El Espartano Noticias
- Grupo Folklórico Luna y Sol
- Destino
- Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán (MEXA)
- Society of Latino Engineers and Scientists (SOLES)
- Student Advocates for Higher Education (SAHE)
- The Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies (CCS)
- The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

In addition, messages were posted in related groups on social media platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn, and word-of-mouth recommendations (e.g., snowball sampling) (Heckathorn, 2011). Classmates assisted in further outreach to prospective participants.

While the COVID-19 pandemic exists today, relying on telecommunication is becoming the norm. To promote this research, the researcher connected with Latinx/Hispanic academic and student programs at SJSU, looking for participants selected based on their identities (e.g., Latino, male, currently enrolled at San José State University). In addition, the researcher did personal outreach to student clubs and athletics programs via social media (i.e., Instagram/LinkedIn). As a result, supporters of this research reshared the post and promoted research visibility. In addition, both the intake form (Appendix D) and the consent form (Appendix E) were electronically sent to the participants' SJSU student email accounts before the scheduled interview date.

The qualitative study involved conducting, recording, and transcribing interviews with participants who shared their stories of resilience. In addition, this research includes an ethnographic approach, in which the researcher actively participates in a particular social/cultural group to gain an insider's perspective; therefore, the researcher became a participant due to the immersion in culturally shared behavior, language, and interactions among the Latinx/Hispanic community (Kramer & Adams, 2017).

Data Analysis

The data analysis was used to examine how cultural wealth and behavior, rooted within community and family, aided the participants' navigation through higher education. The data analysis resulted in the identification of the following four themes: 1) support from *la*

familia, 2) the value of higher education passed on through generativity, 3) supportive school interactions, and 4) identified purpose.

For an accurate interpretation, the video and transcription data collected from the *testimonios* were analyzed for comprehensibility defined in many ways (i.e., word choice, syntax, relevance of the topic, and nonverbal nuances) (Fox Tree & Schrock, 2002). In addition, discourse markers presented during the interview, such as, *you know* (signaling shared understanding) and *like* (linking concepts and experiences), were considered in the data analysis.

Discourse markers are a form of verbal metacommunication and involved implicit interpretations from the researcher. These markers may also define intention and not necessarily semantic structure (Fox Tree, 2006). Discourse markers may provide extra information or be randomized in speech with no distinction but rather to provide nuance information about the comfortability the participant is experiencing during dialogue (Fox Tree, 2006; Fox Tree & Schrock, 2002). Within the current study, body language and tone were considered to interpret each participant's *testimonio.*

In order to ensure trustworthiness (i.e., congruence with participants' intended meaning), the researcher relied on her own lived experience within the Latinx/Hispanic community and the resonance of participants' accounts with relevant literature. In addition, because of the community's shared understanding between the researcher and the participants, presented data were analyzed from an ethnographic lens (Creswell, 2013).

The data analysis helped to understand how cultural wealth and behaviors, rooted within community and family, aided the participants' navigation through higher education. The six

forms of cultural capital (*aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance*) can overlap because of the experiences students of color face as they resist and survive oppression (Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). In addition, the participants' *testimonios* portray resilience in alignment with Ungar's (2008) definition of resiliency, and the participants' *testimonios* reveal how different life experiences shaped their unique stories of resiliency. The findings related to the themes of support from *la familia*, the value of higher education passed on through generativity, supportive school interactions, and identified purpose are presented in the next chapter through the participants' *testimonios*.

Chapter IV: Findings

The analysis of the participants' *testimonios* was intended to identify themes that promote resiliency in Latino male students. The participants revealed that support from *la familia*, the value of higher education passed on through generativity, supportive school interactions, and identified purpose assisted their navigation to higher education.

The participants' chosen discourse markers are mutual knowledge which are coexisting forms of *social*, *linguistic*, and *resistance capital* (Fox Tree & Schrock, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Therefore, their *testimonios* demonstrated a shared view of how kinship is an essential resource to the Latinx/Hispanic community through positive connection (Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, a synopsis of each participant's background is available with analyzed *testimonios* using the Latino Male Student Success Paradigm (see Figure 1 in Chapter II). The theoretical frameworks of Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988) were used to inform this paradigm and assisted in identifying resilience as the driving force in how Latino males navigate and succeed in higher education.

Theme 1: Support from *La Familia*

The first theme examines the role of *la familia* in how parental encouragement and *familismo* serve as assets to Latino male students for college success. *Familial capital* is a form of cultural wealth derived from cultural knowledge and commitment to uplift a community (Yosso, 2005). This concept of family and kinship creates a sense of community and cultural intuition. Family is essential to the Latinx/Hispanic community because it provides a sense of pride, identity, and support (Greder et al., 2020).

Out of the six participants, three disclosed identifying as first-generation and how their families were a driving force towards higher education. For example, first-generation college students often ponder thoughts of self-deprecation such as *ni de aquí, ni de allá* [not from here nor from there] due to the acculturation stress of interacting with a new culture (Capielo Rosario & Dillon, 2020). Furthermore, first-generation students are likely to possess other intersectionalities associated with dropping out (Cataldi et al., 2018); *familismo* is one asset that leverages Latino male students through engagement in obtaining college-going aspirations. In addition, family households are doing what they can to be more informed in hopes of encouraging their children as support for lack of academic guidance.

Aaron was born and raised in Southern California, which has a predominately Latinx/Hispanic population. He is a first-generation college student who received his baccalaureate degree from the University of California. He currently works in direct student services support roles (left out to protect confidentiality) and applies himself to help others. When I asked Aaron, "How did you take your interest to go to college and make it a reality?" He replied:

> I think it's always been embedded in me that I would pursue college. My…both my parents are immigrants. My mother was a stay-at-home mom while my father was, you know, working multiple jobs growing up.

Latinx/Hispanic immigrant parents, families, and children demonstrate protective factors such as the capacity to survive physically and psychologically in the circumstances requiring strength, determination, and overall flexibility to adapt to a new lifestyle for upward mobility (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). Aaron uses the thought of his family's sacrifices as a striving force of *familial capital*. As mentioned before, the array of cultural capital can overlap

(Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). For example, Aaron's *familial* and *aspirational capital* overlap as he makes his college interest a reality while acknowledging immigrant families' desire to offer their children more significant opportunities for growth and advancement. Immigrant families refer to education as both a goal and a pathway to upward mobility (Roubeni et al., 2015). Approximately 5.3 million students from immigrant families attended U.S. colleges and universities in 2018, 63 percent being Latinx/Hispanic students (Batalova & Feldblum, 2020; Jordan, 2020). The association between Aaron's response to college interests and making college a reality was accomplished using his experience as "a child of immigrant parents," which refers to how Latinx/Hispanic culture nurtured and empowered him (Yosso, 2005).

Aaron's mother is a stay-at-home mom, and his father works multiple jobs. Latino fathers' high level of labor force participation is likely to have a corresponding low level of education and high poverty level, especially immigrant fathers (Karberg et al., 2017). Within Latinx/Hispanic families, "Mothers have been described as the primary socialization agent responsible for maintaining cultural beliefs and values, and structuring the family environment to support and maintain those values" (Durand, 2010, p. 257). Aaron continued to speak about his family:

> We never had chores growing up, like, washing the dishes, taking out the trash, like nothing like that because my parents, and really my mother really just wanted us to focus on our studies.

There is a distinctive connection between mother-child relationships within the Latinx/Hispanic community. Latinx/Hispanic families are likely to have mothers as the primary parent due to gender role expectations (Dumka et al., 2009). Therefore, mothers

perform a crucial role in serving their children's best interests through nurturing and having more opportunities that influence their children's academic outcomes than their fathers (Dumka et al., 2009; Durand, 2010; Livingston, 2020).

It is no surprise that Aaron's mother served as an agent for Aaron. In addition, a mother's emotional support for academic opportunities is essential because, without it, Latino males are likely to join the workforce immediately after high school instead of pursuing a college degree (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2011).

Dominic was born in San Diego, California. He is a first-generation college student born to immigrant parents. He is a transfer student working on his bachelor's degree pursuing STEM in his third year. When I asked Dominic, "How did you take your interest to go to college and make it a reality?" He replied:

> I considered it when my parents were like, always wanting you to go to school because they never went to school. You almost have to fulfill the shoes that they didn't even, you know what I mean, *unos nunca podian* [some could never].

Parents can foster the expectation of attending college and provide encouragement and emotional support to their children. Like Aaron, Dominic's *familial and aspirational capital* overlap as he uses his family's thoughts to motivate him to attend college. His influences come from his cultural values to meet the demands and expectations of his parents. The sacrifices and hardships experienced by immigrant families create *resistance capital* within their children (Ojeda et al., 2011; Yosso, 2005). In turn, the children respond with an obligation that they may need to further their parents' dreams of a better life by going to college (Ojeda et al., 2011). *La familia* energizes a collectivistic asset of motivation that first-generation students use because their parents' sacrifices will not go in vain. Dominic's

commitment to pursuing higher education cultivates from *familial* and *aspiration capital* because his decision was not just for himself but for his family.

> I feel like it's a privilege if you do go to school, and you know, it's, it's a big factor in terms of like getting educated, so that for me to get educated as well *la familia* [the family]. It's a big thing, you know what I mean.

Traditional culture characterizes being family-oriented, valuing respect, and, as mentioned before, having traditional gender roles (Piña-Watson et al., 2016). Research shows that family involvement promotes academic success in Latino males during grades K-12 (Gofen, 2009; Lam et al., 2012). The strengths of *familismo* focus on the ability to withstand adversity and builds on the growing interest in the individual's resilience of breaking the pattern of intergenerational inheritance through positive educational aspirations (Gofen, 2009; Yosso, 2005).

Similar to Aaron and Dominic, Angel also experienced family support. Angel, a first-generation undergraduate student-athlete. He was born and raised in Southern California, which has a predominately Latinx/Hispanic population. Angel's interest in college and making it a reality came from the opportunity of his full-ride athletic scholarship.

> Like I don't come from the most like wealthiest family, and I don't have the most successful family members, and seeing the money that professional athletes make, eventually I can use that money and then help out my family, like brothers, sisters, my parents.

Students from ethnic minorities and lower socioeconomic backgrounds often see education as an entryway to better their lives and avoid the hardship experienced by their parents (Lopez, 2001). Angel disclosed that in his family not many members have successfully enrolled and completed higher education. Instead, they dropped out of high

school or joined the labor force (Ojeda et al., 2011). Angel's father works in construction and notices a high volume of men, like Angel, wanting to work in the labor field.

> My dad does construction. He has met a lot of people who are very young and ambitious and start construction for the money and they end up getting comfortable with the amount of money, because it is a pretty good paying job.

Angel witnessed his father's physical deterioration from years of intense work for inadequate compensation. In efforts to create a form of resistance capital, fathers intentionally expose their sons to strenuous working conditions to teach them that life could be more manageable by getting an education (Sáenz et al., 2017; Yosso, 2005). Angel's father's intuition in teaching his son the hardships many that immigrant families face is an interwoven form of capital. The strengths of *familial, resistant*, and *aspirational capital* helped Angel understand how education will alleviate the need to work labor-intensive jobs and end financial struggles with the benefits it provides (Kish, 2003; Lopez, 2001).

> Doing stuff that the family is used to, and you start to get mixed in with White America, because everything like...the more you get away from Mexican culture or your culture, for whatever ethnicity that is, and you just get into White America, and so the distance between your culture, and the culture you're in now becomes hard.

To experience academic success and social mobility, first-generation college students undergo a slow, painful social identity transition that clashes with the American college system (Kish, 2003). Angel uses the thought of his family as leverage to help motivate him through the challenges he faces at school.

> I feel like in Latino culture because we're very family oriented. And like for me like I'll use my family to be happy.

Angel's *familial capital* is one mode that helps facilitate his resiliency. Latino males have an interdependent mindset which includes a sense of togetherness and collective

responsibility to fulfill family obligations (Ojeda et al., 2011; Piña-Watson et al., 2016). *La familia* is one key element that motivates Latino male students to overcome adversity, which helps focus on the aspiration to pursue higher education (Yosso, 2005).

The role of *la familia* and cultural values manifest for Aaron, Dominic, and Angel as a protective factor and motivation for academic effort (Calzada et al., 2012). The three participants expressed their strengths through experiences related to but not limited to *familial, aspirational*, and *resistant capital* as contributing factors to their social mobility in academics. Overall, *familismo* is a cultural asset of robust social networks and *familial* as *social capital* to facilitate lifelong educational success (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2011; Yosso, 2005).

Theme 2: The Value of Higher Education Passed on Through Generativity

As Aaron, Dominic, and Angel described first-generation experiences of how their family supported them in pursuing higher education, Edwin and Uriel had different upbringings because their parents went to college. As mentioned in Chapter II, the efforts of generativity assist in nurturing future generations (McAdams & Logan, 2004). With the assistance of their family (Edwin's parents and Uriel's father), the importance of higher education became instilled. This theme encompasses forms of *social*, *navigational*, and *resistant capital*, as it overlaps with *familial capital*. The array of conditions helped Edwin and Uriel achieve an advanced academic status. However, both of the participants' stories showed similarities.

Edwin was born and raised in the Bay Area, California, which is a widely known diverse area. He currently works in direct services student support roles committed to helping students in need. Currently, he is pursuing a doctorate and working on his dissertation, which

focuses on the Latinx/Hispanic community. When asked, “Please tell me how you first started thinking about attending college,” he replied:

> College was always something that was going to happen. Yeah, it's as far as I can remember, in terms of when college was introduced and it was just I was around educators. I would hear education talk at the dinner table, and when we would have like they would host Puente parties here at my house, and so there'll be all kinds of like, you know, educators and students and everything so, it was it was just always kind of something that was a part of my life in some way, shape or form.

Growing up, Edwin mentioned that his family would host Puente parties. The Puente Project, founded in Hayward, California, in 1981, is a nationally known program that assists educationally disadvantaged students to enroll in four-year colleges, earn degrees and return to the community as mentors and leaders to future generations (Puente Project, 2019). The Puente Project is one form of assistance within the environmental context that supports and empowers students as *navigational capital* (Yosso, 2005).

Furthering McLeroy et al.’s (1988) theory, Edwin absorbed influences through interpersonal interactions from the levels of the Socio-Ecological Model with academic support from his most immediate and outer environment. Edwin's home and school life significantly overlapped as his educator parents were the role models influencing mobility and emphasizing an academic future. All of these efforts contributed to his *social* and *navigational capital*.

Later, I asked Edwin through email to elaborate on Puente parties:

> The Puente holiday parties were meant to celebrate the hard work of the Puente students, their mentors, and other faculty and staff that worked with the program. Since a component of the Puente program is for each student to be assigned a mentor from the community, the mentors were often other faculty from the same college where my parents worked or professionals from within the community. There was a stretch where my family would host the Puente party every year so I remember it being a regular occurrence. Though I wasn't part of the program, I saw and felt a real

> sense of community amongst everyone involved with the program that came to the parties. As I think back, I'm really appreciative I was able to see that sense of community that could be fostered within education. Everyone listed above was invited to the parties: program faculty and staff, students, and mentors.

Moreover, additional contributions to Edwin's student success include his community's cultural wealth. Edwin's *testimonio* about witnessing Puente parties exposed him to an academic network at an early age. Influences from his parents developed knowledge and resources that blended with the teachings of the education system. Edwin's experiences, such as when his parents hosted Puente parties in the comfort of their home, highlight *familial*, *social*, and *navigational capital*, all overlapping (Yosso, 2005). The high concentration of strengths shows how generativity can apply to kinship, connections between community and resources, and what knowledge looks like when it has returned to their social networks.

Edwin's *testimonio* mentioned that both of his parents work in the education field. While there is a significant gap between Latinx/Hispanics and Whites obtaining education, Edwin had the advantage of his parents attending college. Both parents work in the education sector in California, one in K-12 and the other in higher education. Edwin's father's occupation revealed a similarity to Edwin's profession of being an educator. While there are limits to the knowledge of Edwin's father's experiences, Edwin's father's choice of occupation defied hegemonic masculinity through *resistant* and *aspirational capital.* Edwin's father's occupation in investing in education is an action of generativity.

Parents who demonstrate egalitarian attitudes inspire their children to demonstrate similar views, likely lasting through adulthood (Schroeder et al., 2019). Living in an egalitarian household permitted Edwin to experience unity within positive gender attitudes while active in the labor field (Lam et al., 2012).

While some families may not have sufficient knowledge to help their children navigate academic pathways, Edwin has the recognizable privilege of family support fostered through school settings, which leads to communal bonds.

Uriel was born and raised in Monterey County, California, which has a predominately Latinx/Hispanic population. He received his baccalaureate degree from a public polytechnic university located within a predominantly White community and is pursuing a graduate degree in an engineering field at a different public university designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. When I asked, "What experiences have made it easier for you to attend and continue in college," he replied:

> I went to college because my dad went to college so my dad was the one who emigrated from México. And so, he came here when he was younger, he started elementary here. And so, you know he went through the school system and so forth and when he got into high school, he was planning to work on the railroad like his, his father had, my *abuelo* [grandfather]. He had a counselor that reached out to him kind of talking about the opportunities of college, the scholarships and financial support options for him. And that led to him to go into UC Santa Cruz to pursue his degree in economics. And so, from that, college has always been very important to my parents, and I've been privileged and blessed to have my, my education supported and paid for.

Similar to Edwin's success, Uriel has absorbed the positive academic influence from his family, particularly his father. However, Uriel's father likely experienced something similar to what Aaron, Dominic, and Angel described as a first-generation Latino male student. Uriel's interest in higher education stems from overlapping *familial capital, social*, *navigational*, *resistance*, and *aspirational capital* factors.

Parsons (1909) wrote:

> The wise selection of the business, profession, trade, or occupation to which one's life is to be devoted and the development of full efficiency in the chosen field are matters of the deepest moment to young men and the public. (p. 3)

Uriel's father chose to defer from college and join the railroad labor works, but his counselor significantly promoted his personal and career development. The counselor helped Uriel's father activate his forms of *resistance* and *aspirational capital*. Uriel's father then used a form of *navigational capital* to evolve away from the strenuous labor field that compounds personal stress and negatively impacts others (McIntosh, 2000). Finally, Uriel's father used his self-efficacy to voice his values and beliefs for a new opportunity that differed from what his parents and other adults viewed (Harris & Wood, 2016; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2016; Wood et al., 2017).

In Uriel's *testimonio*, he mentioned that his parents would not be leaving him an inheritance; that paying for his education would be an inheritance. This pivotal moment demonstrated how Uriel's family valued education. Father-child interactions go overlooked because of the assumption that fathers' involvement does not influence children's development (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). Uriel's father's personal and career development provided more of an opportunity for his son by removing financial barriers. Uriel's *familial* and *aspirational capital* were inherited from his father: *aspiration* and *navigational capital.* Uriel utilized his Capital Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) to navigate through higher education and immersed himself more into the college culture with his form of *resistant capital* to oppose workforce labor.

As mentioned earlier, *la familia* support is a protective factor in promoting psychological well-being and predicts social adjustment with institutional attachment to college (Llamas & Morgan Consoli, 2012). When looking into fathers, their engagement in fostering early educational success and academic support positively links to boys' motivation (Alfaro et al.,

2006; Sáenz et al., 2017). Pérez (2014) found that individuals with capital cultural wealth can be passed on intergenerationally to their children. Fathers connecting with their sons show actions of generativity, as it nurtures individuals to change the trajectory of opportunity for future generations (McAdams & Logan, 2004). When asked the participants to speak about how they first started thinking about attending college, both had witnessed the benefits education can provide from their fathers.

Theme 3: Welcoming and Supportive School Environments

Participants who did not explicitly identify a role model in their life or academics explained support differently. The third theme examines how welcoming and supportive school environments can prevent academic attrition. If interactions are foreign, this adds another troubling barrier to students due to the unwelcoming environment that detaches them from the university. When students enroll in college, a new cultural dynamic brings another external force that shapes their sense of belonging on campus and contributes to a capital strength that enables *aspirational capital* (Yosso, 2005). Participation in student clubs or services develops a sense of community with capitals that include *social, navigational, familial (kinship)*, and *linguistic capital*.

Student services are essential for retention, allowing students to integrate into the college environment by providing services to the diverse student populations entering college (i.e., academic support services, student support services, admissions, financial aid, career services, health and wellness services, community resources and service learning, counseling, food and housing services, multicultural/intersectionality programs, recreational sports, and student activities) such as helping foster students form friendships and network among their

peers in efforts to increase retention rates (Bronkema & Bowman, 2017; Guzzardo et al., 2021). In addition, student services are safe spaces for students to be vulnerable in finding assistance to continue their academic success (Nagaoka et al., 2013).

Elian was born in a South American country, came to the states as a teenager, and was raised in the Bay Area of California. He is a first-generation student who received a baccalaureate degree from a California State University and holds a master's degree from a public University of California institution. Currently, he is pursuing his second master's degree. He also disclosed that he was undocumented. At the beginning of the interview, Elian asked if I spoke Spanish. After saying yes, Elian mentioned that being able to talk in Spanish makes the setting more relatable and comfortable, which is his use of *linguistic capital*. When I asked, "What experiences have made it easier for you to attend and continue in college," he replied:

> I met with this counselor [name protected for confidentiality] *y el me dijo directamente*, [and the school counselor directly told me] "So you want to go to college?" and I say, "Yeah" and he's like, "You have papers?" and I said, "No" and he's like, "Okay, so you're going to stay three years at this high school [name of high school protected for confidentiality] to qualify for the AB540 and then you can apply to any in-state colleges" Like seeking community colleges, CSU [California State Universities]. *Me dijo solamente necesito buscar becas* [the school counselor told me I just need to look for scholarships]. He was bilingual so he explained this to my mom, as well in Spanish and English. Later on, *entonces y a la vez también era como que* [then and at the same time it was also like] I got into the habit of asking questions and you know, looking for scholarships.

Undocumented students experience another layer of oppression and tend not to identify themselves on college campuses. Possible barriers faced include: poverty, assimilation, foreign language, violence in their community or home environment, lack of access to healthcare, and mental health issues (Eusebio & Mendoza, 2013). In 2018 the American

Community Survey (ACS) found that undocumented students account for approximately 450,000, two percent of all students in higher education (Feldblum et al., 2020). Undocumented students pursuing higher education at an undergraduate level are ninety percent and ten percent at a graduate level within the higher education enrollment (Feldblum et al., 2020).

The sociopolitical climate during the Trump era amplified hate sentiments toward Latinos and the deportation of all undocumented immigrants (Reilly, 2016; Valdivia et al., 2021). As a result, xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments have harmed undocumented students and other minority groups as they enroll in higher education. In addition, undocumented students need additional college guidance by including how their legal status can cause barriers and providing them with ways to overcome systemic challenges (Pérez Huber & Malagón, 2007).

Institutions may not have recognized the need for guidance or support beyond the standard advising system (Gámez et al., 2017). School systems and academic counselors' lack of cultural competence is a gatekeeper in not encompassing a larger scale of guidance for undocumented students. However, when a counselor serves undocumented students, the transactional experience they endure from the counselor preserves *aspirational capital*.

Students uncover why higher education is a privilege as they face economic challenges such as working long hours, taking care of their families, and not being able to afford tuition or school supplies (Luke et al., 2014). In addition, students' obligations, such as financial responsibility, contribute to dropout and completion rates. However, undocumented students use their *aspirational* and *resistant capital* to continue to immerse themselves within academic institutions. Through the lens of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, student

support and academic services use approaches by helping with financial aid and legal services to remove portions, if not all, of the financial burden. With enough accessible guidance, undocumented students can obtain enough awareness to expand their *social* and *navigational capital*.

Elian's *testimonio* demonstrates his striving force to pursue higher education. The experience between him and his counselor was a form of *social* and *navigational capital*. Support from AB540 and scholarships helped Elian remove barriers without feeling shame. While financial assets demonstrate power, Elian understands the purpose of asking questions to help with his mobility. Elian's confidence is part of his *aspirational capital*; his social identity facilitates resilience. After the assistance from his counselor and his inclusion of his mother and speaking Spanish, Elian realized that his initiative in asking and reaching for support demonstrated the development and use of navigational skills to overcome systemic challenges.

The transactional experience between Elian and his counselor includes *linguistic capital* because of their bilingualism. *Familismo* is a cultural value and preference that is not quantifiable but looked at through a qualifiable lens (Jabbar et al., 2019; Martinez, 2013). A common barrier is a disconnection between immigrant parents receiving school resources, which leads to a lack of knowledge about the U.S. education system (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). The counselor included Elian's mother in the conversation, which formed a bridge between the institutions and the family with resourceful information for Elian and strengthened *aspiration capital*, overlapping with *social* and *navigational capital*.

Expectations for men to advance their families through labor-intensive work are now re-envisioned with academic success (Ojeda et al., 2011). Additionally, a mother's emotional support is essential for educational opportunities because Latino males are likely to join the workforce immediately after high school instead of pursuing a college degree (Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2011).

Elian's mother showed support in his *social* and *navigational capital*. He mentioned that his mother is a single parent. While single parenting may result in greater strains of high obligations, single mothers' time with children is a paramount source of intimacy, fulfillment, and security (Meier et al., 2016). Using *resistant capital* to challenge hegemonic masculinity, Elian's mother encourages his academic success and *aspirational capital* to foresee better opportunities in this country for her family.

Students need the motivation to remind them that they belong to optimize their growth within their educational journey. The interpersonal interactions and experiences increased Elian's network. Elian's forms of *aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital* invested a higher emphasis in getting his second master's degree. Elian expressed that he had developed a form of companionship with his professors, which is how he obtained professional and personal support. Such methods made it easier for Elian to attend and stay in college.

Other forms of student support are the interpersonal reactions to developing friendships with other students. Students can find outlets for emotional support and companionship from their social networks within the engagement. As for Aaron, his support reflects the use of his

social capital. When I asked, "What experiences have made it easier for you to attend and continue in college," he replied:

> So, I think that, I think there were systems in place that made it easier for someone like myself to get into school. Staying in school is a different story.
> I was a member of EOP and then I also belong to some like campus clubs, and I was also on the soccer team for a little bit so I think like all those different
> groups of people is what really ensured that I stayed in school.

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) is a student services program created in the late 1960s to overcome economic and social barriers that prevented minorities and underrepresented students from attaining a college education (California State University, 2022). First-generation students struggle to master the student role while simultaneously meeting professor expectations. Existing issues such as stereotypes, race-related stress, family financial responsibilities, a sense of belonging on campus, and teacher misperceptions can threaten their chances of success persisting towards their degree (Winograd et al., 2018). As EOP helps students overcome economic and social barriers, efforts contribute to higher retention and completion rates and foster students to form friendships and network among their peers (Bronkema & Bowman, 2017; California State University, 2022; Guzzardo et al., 2021).

Student clubs are a necessary experience for students. Student club involvement affects students' retention and persistence as an investive learning process central to student development. Chickering (1993) explained the seven vectors of the student development model, which include: 1) touching on moments such as developing competence, 2) managing emotions, 3) moving through autonomy towards independence, 4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5) establishing identity, 6) developing purpose, and 7) developing

integrity. Chickering's (1993) seven vectors encompass a higher level of understanding that student development in higher education can affect students' emotional and social development, which helps with student success.

Men find it difficult to establish relationships in schools because of the façade that men do not talk about their personal issues or emotions (Estrada et al., 2011; Estrada & Jimenez, 2018; McKenzie et al., 2018; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). The tension and fear of what society deems masculine often act as a barrier for those men who actively seek emotional support from their networks but are likely unsure how to find those relationships (McKenzie et al., 2018). Student clubs are one method of student life to help students identify themselves within the college campus community (George Washington University, 2022). Aaron's connections with others and building companionship, and having a sense of belonging helped facilitate his resiliency. As Aaron's *social* and *navigational capital* expanded, he felt the support that ensured he stayed in school.

As for Uriel, the experiences that made it easier to attend and continue in college included his connection and involvement in MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán]

> There was moments that I was the darkest, or you know there was a few women or I was also, you know, sometimes the only queer person in the room and being queer and Latin and in those spaces often I didn't feel the support or even the desire my classmates to want to be around me or just a level of respectfulness and so let me lead to that like imposter syndrome. And I found that solidarity through communities of color specifically do the Latinx organizations that really kind of supported me and just gave me that emotional support to kind of leave that headspace and just, you know, not be thinking of engineering. I felt like there was a connection of our identity.

Although Uriel was not a first-generation student, his cultural capital wealth is intergenerational (Pérez, 2014). Like Aaron, Uriel could identify how campus clubs helped ensure his stay in school; however, he needed a club with other students with similar identities. As noted before, Uriel attended a public polytechnic university in California. That institution enrolls approximately 20% Latino students (fewer than the 25% required to be designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution by the U.S. Government), with over half the students identified as White, nearly 15% Asian, and under 1% African-American.

MECha is now known as Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlan (MEXA). The purpose of MEXA is a cultural, social, and political group that supports promoting higher education to Latinx/Hispanic identified students, “a family away from home” (California Polytechnic State University Chicanx Latinx Faculty Staff Association, 2022). Research shows associations between students' sense of class belonging and their academic motivation in their classes (Freeman et al., 2007). Therefore, supporting students' layers of intersectionality is vital, and there is a need for safe spaces. Student groups like MEXA enable a safe space where they can identify themselves within the college campus, to discuss topics and issues that affect their community from the societal pressures placed on students of color (California Polytechnic State University Chicanx Latinx Faculty Staff Association, 2022; Freeman et al., 2007).

Uriel expressed his identity, encompassing many components of being a Latino, male, queer, and STEM student. Within patriarchy, a dominant hierarchy usually finds women and homosexuals at the bottom of the heap (Jewkes et al., 2015; Newsom, 2015). The commonly-used acronym — LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, or

another diverse gender identity) — refers to the communities included in the "LGBTTTQQIAA" acronym (Youth.gov, 2022). However, queerness is stigmatized as weakness, making men afraid of vulnerability within themselves and tormenting Latino males (Estrada et al., 2011; Peña-Talamantes, 2013).

Latino males who enroll in higher education are likely to experience the phenomenon of imposter syndrome (Ramirez, 2014). Unfortunately, another layer contributing to imposter syndrome is the underrepresentation of Latinx/Hispanics in undergraduate and graduate STEM programs because of a lack of exposure to STEM subjects at the K-12 levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Although data shows that less than two percent of the STEM workforce is Latinx/Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2022), Uriel uses *resistant* and *aspirational capital* to facilitate his resiliency and persistence as he gets his master's.

Student support has been advocated for students since the *Student Personnel Point of View*, a report issued in by the American Council on Education in 1937 and revised in 1949 to justify education as a holistic concept that plays a pivotal developmental role. Student development includes intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually (Williamson, 1949). However, the social pressures of hegemonic masculinity ostracized any value of femininity, such as the need for relationships (Newsom, 2015). Therefore, the participants use their *resistant* and *aspirational capital* to fill their feelings of loneliness by expanding their *social* and *navigational capital* to identify themselves within the college campus community.

Theme 4: Their Purpose

The fourth theme examines the participants' awareness of why they continue to pursue their education. The participants' reasons for pursuing higher education are much more profound because it is emotionally driven. When students experience support from their homes, community, and environment, their external assets promote healthier learning and a sense of purpose (Capizzi et al., 2017). The participants used their *aspiration capital* to help identify their purpose and *resistant capital* to pursue their academic goal as it challenges the patriarchal status quo.

The participants' responses to their purpose in pursuing higher education revealed an array of noncognitive domains. Noncognitive domains are intrapersonal skills and attitudes used during social interactions within their academic context (Harris & Wood, 2016; Wood et al., 2017). The participants' *testimonios* provided examples that influence student success outcomes, defined by Harris and Wood (2016):

> The extent to which students believe they are capable of being successful in college (self-efficacy), the amount of personal control they assume they have for their success (locus of control), the value they place on obtaining a college degree or certificate (degree utility), and the energy and focus they invest toward their academic endeavors (action control) all come into play in shaping student success outcomes for men of color. (p. 38)

Family values among the Latino community serve as protective factors for their well-being (Martinez, 2013). Participants with fathers present in their lives and identifying as first-generation students use *resistant capital* in rejecting joining the workforce and simultaneously using their families' sacrifices as a form of *familial capital* as leverage (Ojeda et al., 2011; Sáenz et al., 2017). The participants used the thoughts of their families to remind them that they are pursuing their degrees because their family's sacrifices will not go in vain.

The centrality of mother-child relationships within Latinx/Hispanic families serves as an agent for emotional support and establishes a positive mindset that they can succeed in college (Durand, 2010; Harris & Wood, 2016). Participants who disclosed support from their mothers used *familial*, *resistant*, and *aspirational capital* for academic opportunities.

Participants who are not first-generation students and had father figures valuing education use their forms of *familial*, *social*, and *navigational capital* to continue the actions of generativity. While we must acknowledge the privileges of individuals who have family role models, specifically fathers who value education, patriarchy persists in our society and affects all men. Therefore, participants use *resistant capital* to continue investing in their academic endeavors while simultaneously rejecting the notions of hegemonic masculinity (Harris & Wood, 2016; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016).

Family involvement is a significant cultural value that can leverage student assets (Jabbar et al., 2019). All participants unanimously found how obtaining a college degree has positively shaped their lives. With their obtained degree, the participants discussed the need to further their efforts by providing resources to their communities in culturally significant ways. In Edwin's *testimonio*, he disclosed his 'why':

> I think one thing that is really, really important is we have to continue to diversify our faculty. If we, if we compare the if we're specifically looking at Latinx looking at that next folks if we look at our coming college system.

Edwin uses his *aspiration capital* to obtain his doctorate to advocate for his community, specifically on how to best support Latinx/Hispanic students in higher education. Due to his line of work, he has already observed patterns and looked at success and completion rates from his site, and he is currently writing his dissertation to help support the cause. In

addition, Edwin emphasizes the importance of diversifying college faculty; therefore, his choice of working in a higher education environment in leadership and mentorship demonstrates his *resistant capital.*

Aaron, Dominic, and Angel are first-generation students. All three of their fathers were present and worked in construction. Aaron received student support from EOP, student clubs, and groups. In Aaron's *testimonio*, he discussed his purpose in staying in school:

> The driving force I guess was really, I hate to say this but it was kind of an escape, almost. I mean I love my life in LA but like I really wanted that kind of that sense of independence in college, provided that I wanted to explore and be someone different be someone new, and college provided that. And I ended up building a different life… Once I started like learning more about those social emotional pieces about myself is where I started really focusing on the different learning that happens to college. You know the engagement, the interactions, the cognitive exploration and the discussions that happen. I found those to be very rewarding.

Aaron notably stated, "To be someone different, be someone new, and college can provide that." Aaron found that school has positively shaped his capabilities and agency in his personal life. Although hegemonic masculinity embeds its constructs on gender expectations, education is a powerful tool for self-identity. Aaron uses *resistant capital* to authentically immerse him in a learning environment, enabling him to create a sense of self that rejects hegemonic masculinity.

Similarly experienced, Dominic felt his growth as he persisted with the school. In his *testimonio*, he mentioned challenges while taking calculus and considered dropping out. Dominic uses *aspirational capital*, believing that "Anyone can be an engineer"- that anyone is capable of being successful in college. He metaphorically compared the process of academic growth to a fruit tree, that it takes one step at a time and to *échale ganas* [to put maximum effort] because people are one step away from their goals.

Dominic sees that getting a higher education means obtaining the tools that contribute to facilitating "what a confident person in society" looks like. He continues:

> You like a good leader. And I feel like *a veces uno lo aprecian tanto* [sometimes you appreciate it so much] as you should. And where there's a strong male, there's a strong community, that's how I see.

Dominic sees the purpose of obtaining his college degree and associates the meaning of a strong male role model. Hegemonic masculinity manipulated the definition of manhood. However, Dominic's investment in his education is self-efficacy, which defines a Latino male in his perception. Dominic is aware of the strengths of his *social* and *navigational capital* and the value of his degree in giving back to his community.

Angel notices a need for more role models in his community. He wants younger children in his community to know about their powerful capabilities.

> To show those, like little, like Mexican kids to go like, if you want to do something, like, if you want to do something, you have every power. Free will is remarkable in this country.

In high school, Angel was a student-athlete and an AVID student. AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination, helps students develop the skills they need to succeed in college (California Department of Education, 2022). In his AVID class, they went on a university tour where he found out the expenses of university tuition. At that moment, his thoughts on pursuing higher education almost ended because he faced challenges with financial barriers and likely could not afford college. However, his *social capital* discovered athletic scholarships as he continued his high school career and advanced his athletic skills. Angel mentions that he wants to be an example for young students.

> I definitely want to be some kind of example for like, when I have kids and for future generations. Those guys can do it. Like if I can do it, you do it…Now I am the first

> one in my family to go. And it's actually something special to me and I had a lot of motivation behind it.

Angel's purpose in pursuing higher education is to set an example for others, particularly youth, not to feel discouraged when setting goals. Angel's use of *aspirational* and *resistant capital* helped him facilitate resilience among his community in uplifting his *social* and *navigational capital,* mentioning that pursuing education would set value in obtaining a degree and set an example when he has future children. His anticipated teachings as a father support the actions of generativity (McAdams & Logan, 2004; McLeod, 2018).

Uriel, who is not a first-generation student, expressed the need for mentorship within his community. Although Uriel's cultural capital was generativity passed intergenerationally from his father, Uriel's mentor amplified a different scope and is from his community in Monterey County. He describes this mentor as:

> He did business overseas and pretty much, you know, he made it so well that at a very young age he retired early and moved back to our hometown. And he coaches Tennis, substitute teaches, he's on the school board now and he's, he's very generous. He gave a very generous donation for there to be an arts program and music program…He's always been a mentor. He hasn't, you know, sat next to me in the classroom helping with the textbook but I always know that someone I been able to reach out to and just talk about how college is going and he's always generally enthusiastic and interested to see where I am in my careers and seeing the opportunities…He inspires me a lot of just you know paying it forward, as I said earlier, I've seen what he did with his career and coming back to our hometown and trying to improve it in the way that he can I very much see that as something very aspirational.

Uriel witnessed his mentor invest in his community as a precedent to make a change. Due to his relationship with his mentor, Uriel expanded his *social* and *navigational capital*. Uriel sees the importance of mentorships and how they can influence growth within the community, especially for individuals who share similar identities. Uriel's additional goal in

obtaining a college degree is to "pay it forward." For Uriel, the act of mentoring in the future is a form of *aspirational capital*.

Elian, who is currently pursuing his second master's degree also wants to be a change for his community. In his *testimonio*, he reflects on his thoughts of himself going to school:

> It's hard for me because all this that I'm doing… It's almost inception as well…It helps me grow as a person to try to help the community as well.

Elian states that pursuing higher education is hard for him. Undocumented students often navigate the education system without family guidance while simultaneously confronting overlapping issues that impede their ability to succeed (Eusebio & Mendoza, 2013). Elian's purpose in going to school was to establish a new beginning with his mother to pursue a better life. Elian's *social capital* allowed him to further his entrepreneurship skills towards his *navigational* and *aspirational capital*. As Elian mentions how he wants to help his community, studies show that undocumented students are powerful role models because they exhibit higher than the average community and civic activity levels (Eusebio & Mendoza, 2013).

Conclusion

The *testimonios* revealed themes that facilitated the six Latino male college students' resiliency towards obtaining a higher education. The themes that promoted the participants' resiliency include support from *la familia*, the value of learning passed on through generativity, supportive school interactions, and identified purpose. A discussion of the findings is provided in the following chapter.

Chapter V: Discussion, Recommendations, Future Research, and Conclusion

This thesis sought to better understand the experiences of Latino male students through amplifying testimonios of how they resist obstacles to reach academic success. In addition, the following questions were addressed throughout this paper: 1) What factors impact Latino males' collegiate journeys? 2) What are the contributing factors to the gender disparity between Latino men and Latina women? 3) What are the potential asset-based factors and supports that aid Latino males' education attainment? and 4) How can education be a catalyst to address these underlying issues that can alleviate the generational effects of patriarchy that Latino males experience? Some of the questions were addressed through the extensive review of the research literature in Chapter II and others through the study's research findings and discussion.

The majority of existing literature on the topic discussed in Chapter II magnified the effects of postcolonialism through a Critical Race Theory lens (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Vue et al., 2017). Therefore, an anti-deficit approach (Harper, 2010) was used to reveal the counternarratives and assets that facilitate the success of Latino male students as they navigate their college education.

Discussion

This thesis documented qualitative evidence on how Latino male students navigate academic institutions using their intersectionality and cultural tools as a form of resiliency. The definition of resiliency draws upon Ungar's (2008) three capacities of resiliency, and this was used to develop a multi-dimensional framework, compacted into the Latino Male Success Paradigm, to understand the participants' success. The paradigm provides a lens that

includes gender identity, cultural teachings, and contextual settings. The development of the Latino Male Success Paradigm also included elements from three complementary theories -- Intersectional Identity of Manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and the Socio-Ecological Model (McLeroy et al., 1988).

Hegemonic masculinity behaviors serve as a gatekeeper with an embodiment of shame and fear that subvert and shame feelings of vulnerability and humility. There are many challenges Latino male students face in their efforts to be self-supporting, academically successful, and life-sustaining; however, the saturation of academic literature undermines their achievement (Howard et al., 2019). The participants reckoned with disenfranchisement and patriarchal challenges and worked towards their inner revolution.

It is critical to provide counternarratives about these men being in a constant state of crisis (Howard et al., 2019). The participants' *testimonios* included methods that guided them to their academic success. As each participant underwent different life experiences, their *testimonios* disclosed themes revealing rich insights into how they overcame barriers.

In Chapter IV, the analysis revealed the various methods of asset-based implications and tools aiding Latino males' educational attainment. The participants in this study demonstrated grit through an array of Cultural Capital Wealth (Yosso, 2005). Participants unanimously stated that *familismo* played a crucial role in obtaining their education. The traditional core family value of closeness, a source of emotional support, contributed to positive psychological outcomes such as elevated self-esteem and higher academic self-efficacy (Durand, 2010; Piña-Watson et al., 2013). *Familial capital* was heavily mentioned as a form of support, aspiration, and determination.

Participants, with the support from family or role models presenting positive influences on education, restated the privileges within their *familial* and *social capital.* These efforts help to promote the likelihood of reapplying the actions of generativity for future generations, whether as a mentor or a community role model. In addition, there were connections between the participants' value of obtaining an education and wanting to give back to their families and communities.

As men find it difficult to establish relationships, the participants revealed the importance of connection for immersive learning. Student support services helped the participants enable their college development by offering services to help them overcome barriers. Additionally, developing companionship from a supportive learning environment, such as student clubs, enabled engagement and emotional support to establish a sense of belonging. The participants used their *social* and *navigational skills* in their college development.

Lastly, findings in this study confirmed that the participants' demonstrated college development and success through their skills and attitudes towards education. Sinek (2009) stated that when someone does not know their *why* (driving force), it enhances difficulty when required to decide. The participants' commitment to higher education while simultaneously experiencing societal oppression pressing against Latino males further validates that they were aware of their driving force.

The actions elicited from all participants' accounts include that their resiliency was facilitated by an overlap between *aspirational* and *resistance capital*. The participants' grit demonstrated rejection of hegemonic masculinity and accepted a developing identity that supports their self-efficacy for better learning. All participants acknowledged that working

towards a college degree can be strenuous; however, all participants were able to identify their purpose. The participants possess a variety of noncognitive domains that helped them intuitively identify themselves and the worth of their efforts within the education system (Harris & Wood, 2016).

Overall, this study revealed that all the participants had self-awareness of the values of obtaining a college degree, demonstrating that education is one method of liberation. Furthermore, the findings confirm that the participants enable their self-efficacy by rejecting hegemonic masculinities.

Practice Recommendation: Programs that Support Healing in Academic Settings

Men encounter criticism when deviating from social constructs of hypermasculinity embedded within patriarchy. Pressure comes by way of the media, peers, and influential adults. Schools can catalyze by providing intentional programming to respond to hegemonic masculinity and the gender disparity gap by employing specific strategies addressing the roots of this behavior problem. “Tracing forms of colonial masculinity to its historical roots may create useful tools for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who wish to interrupt or undo its power” (Morgensen, 2015, p. 38). Freire (1972) noted how oppression these people experienced forced them to think critically about their situation. Academic institutions can help dismantle the culture of silence by challenging male students, particularly men of color, to engage in meaningful work that helps motivate them to make sense of their lives (Greene, 2005).

Effective programs use prevention strategies tailored to illuminate the multiple dimensions of identity and recognize contextual and historical dynamics that influence

gender performance (Davis et al., 2011). Individual men are generally not the problem; rather, the crisis lies centralized in hegemonic masculinity within our systems. In addition, prevention strategies help engage men's emotions to reinterpret masculinity resulting in greater empathy.

Help-seeking avoidance may present as a lack of interest, but silence and stoicism are central to hegemonic masculinity (Shrira, 2016). Since men are restricted and discouraged from expressing themselves emotionally, seeking assistance through counseling, mentoring, supervisory, or forming relationships is unlikely without intervention (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Shrira, 2016). Another way that schools can catalyze the healing of our men of color is by employing a critical perspective within male groups. School programs can effectively serve men of color by providing safe spaces for engagement to reconceptualize their definition of manhood and realize how patriarchy impacts their academic success (Cervantes et al., 2022).

Male groups can challenge patriarchal norms and provide an advantage in allowing space for essential mindfulness that leads to healthy masculinity (Davis et al., 2011). Research indicates that men are likely to express positive attitudes and behaviors if they know the truth about other men (Berkowitz, 2011). Preventative interventions that address men's misinterpretations of one another help deconstruct what men learn about manhood (Berkowitz, 2011).

Project MALES is one program that addresses the structural causes of the Latino male achievement gap (Project MALES, 2022a; Campos et al., 2018). Project MALES originally started as a mentorship program for male middle and high school students of color, focusing

on relationship-building among males (Project MALES, 2022b). Its mission is to collaborate with local schools and communities to implement and sustain effective mentoring services using a Critical Mentoring Curriculum framework (Project MALES, 2022a). The framework uses dynamic and intergenerational approaches to guide men of color to redefine masculinity. Redefinition is seen within brotherhood, leadership, college and career readiness, health, wellness, and identity to empower them by looking in-depth at themselves and how they relate to others and communities around them (Project MALES, 2022a).

For almost a decade, through peer mentoring, the Project MALES Student Mentoring Program has positively impacted the lives of hundreds of young boys and men of color in local schools (Project MALES, 2022c). In addition, Project MALES has played a crucial role in helping the university earn national recognition for its commitment to Latinx/Hispanic students (Project MALES, 2022c). However, the nation cannot rely on one widely known program to develop a nurturing support system inside and outside school.

Schools can broaden their outreach methods by implementing inclusion through integration and family encouragement. Leaders and educators applying empathetic approaches can raise consciousness about what strengths align with Latino men for academic growth and healing to help them succeed in their future. Recruitment and hiring process reforms can increase the representation of culturally diverse faculty and staff in higher education to help Latino males succeed.

Another suggestion to promote healing in academic settings is through mediation to develop insight into how Latinx/Hispanic male students can better understand and manage their emotions (Ludeman, 2011). In addition, acts of role modeling can empower emotional

expression and encourage and affirm emotional expression by male students and male mediators (Ludeman, 2011).

This study provides recommendations for those who endeavor to improve programs, policies, and practices; however, we have much to learn from the insights of Latino male student success. Based on the findings derived from the experiences of Latino male students, academic institutions need to provide welcoming and supportive programs, policies, and practices that include masculinity and connection in learning environments. In addition, student affairs professionals require more training to view these issues affecting men through a gendered lens (Davis & Laker, 2004). While the likelihood of other possible interventions created by practitioners exist, this study provides a mere recommendation using the participants' *testimonios*. Nevertheless, this thesis supports Harper's (2015) and Howard et al.'s (2019) research on the value of using the counternarratives of Latino male students to understand their conceptualization of success and utilize their insight as a catalyst to enhance their educational experiences.

Future Research

There is a significant absence of research explaining the academic development and success of men of color (Harris & Wood, 2016; Howard et al., 2019; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). And some challenges that scholars face when helping underserved students with programs, policies, and practices, are severely under-resourced (Wood et al., 2017). Therefore, an anti-deficit research inquiry serves a great purpose by centering on the voices of Latino male students who defy the odds (Harper, 2010; Howard et al., 2019).

Also, many studies focus on deficit perspectives of unmet needs of men in education, specifically Latino males (Harris & Wood, 2016; Howard et al., 2019; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009). Additional studies are needed to examine other assets, not addressed in this study, that Latino males and students with intersectional identities possess.

Another research recommendation from this study is to explore the global and national impacts presented in the year 2020 – 2022. There is growing evidence that future research should incorporate the survival mode and mental factors faced during the COVID-19 crisis, which widened the academic achievement gap. Further research is needed on the impact of and remedies to factors, such as the hostile sociopolitical climate and police brutality faced by Latinx/Hispanic people and communities, and environmental and political conditions that force or constrain their migration.

Conclusion

bell hooks' (2014) states,

> The academy is not a paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all of its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p. 207)

In order to understand someone else's narrative, there also needed to be a self-understanding. The efforts of self-reflection I applied meant opening up to vulnerability in efforts to analyze not only the testimonios of the participants but also my own. I admit to initially being unaware of the amount of self-reflection needed to complete this study. My advisor quoted Sivers (2020), "Fish don't know they're in water… They're so surrounded by it that it's impossible to see. They can't see it until they jump outside of it" (p. 22). As a

result, when I did not meet deadlines, I started to feel distant from my study and questioned my self-worth and capabilities: Am I scholarly material?

Learning to transform does not happen overnight. I recited Sivers' (2020) quote throughout the process until reaching new revelations in my self-discovery. That form of liberation was needed to complete my qualitative ethnographic research; I was unknowingly a participant. When I began the project, I did not understand the necessity of including myself in analyzing my identity. When themes emerged while reviewing transcripts with familiar assets and methods, they resonated with me on how I also defied obstacles to navigate higher education successfully.

It has been more than a year since I first began this thesis, and my program catalyzed my healing in developing an understanding of how I can help my myself and my community. To help the Latinx/Hispanic community is to help out Latino male students and their families by engaging men's emotions to reinterpret masculinity. While I understand my actions will not solve the crisis nor eliminate the hegemonic systems that persist in widening the gender disparity gap, I have the knowledge to address my healing and to provide assistance as a dedicated lifelong educational professional. The work presented in this study reflects who I am as an individual, educator, and a scholar to not only help but to challenge systems that impact underserved communities. While contemplating accepting this academic challenge, I became aware of the potential to advocate for not only my community but for other marginalized communities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

You may know that there have been more Latinx people going to college over the last several years. But, when you look at who is going, it tends to be more Latinas than Latinos. I'm interested in figuring out ways to support the Latinx community, while also helping increase Latino males' college enrollment to be here along with Latina peers (and even Latinx individuals who do not identify with male OR female). Since you've obviously figured out how to pursue a higher education, which is a huge deal by the way, I want to talk to you and get your insight on some of the topics below. We'll begin with your own story and build it from there.

1. What was your motivation to volunteer for this study?
2. Please tell me how you first started thinking about attending college.
3. How did you take your interest in going to college and make it a reality?
4. What experiences have made it easier for you to attend and continue in college?
5. What experiences have made it harder for you to attend and continue in college?
6. As I mentioned, I'm interested in understanding ways to increase the number of Latino men in higher ed. Tell me about how you think about college—getting here, staying here, what you do after, etc.—how does that relate to you as a Latino man?
7. What do you think would lead to more Latino males coming to college and graduating?
8. Is there anything we didn't discuss that you want to make sure to mention?

Appendix B: Recruitment Message

Hello,

I am Jilian Gómez, a current graduate student in the Counseling and Guidance Master's program at San José State University, working under the supervision of Dr. Jason Laker. Currently, my thesis research aims to listen to the narratives of our Latino male students of their resiliency while simultaneously navigating San José State University. Furthermore, the voices of Latino male students are to provide insight on what to learn from Latino male student success.

I am writing to see if you would be willing to share information about the study with students, **particularly Latino males.** They can contact me if they are interested or have any questions.

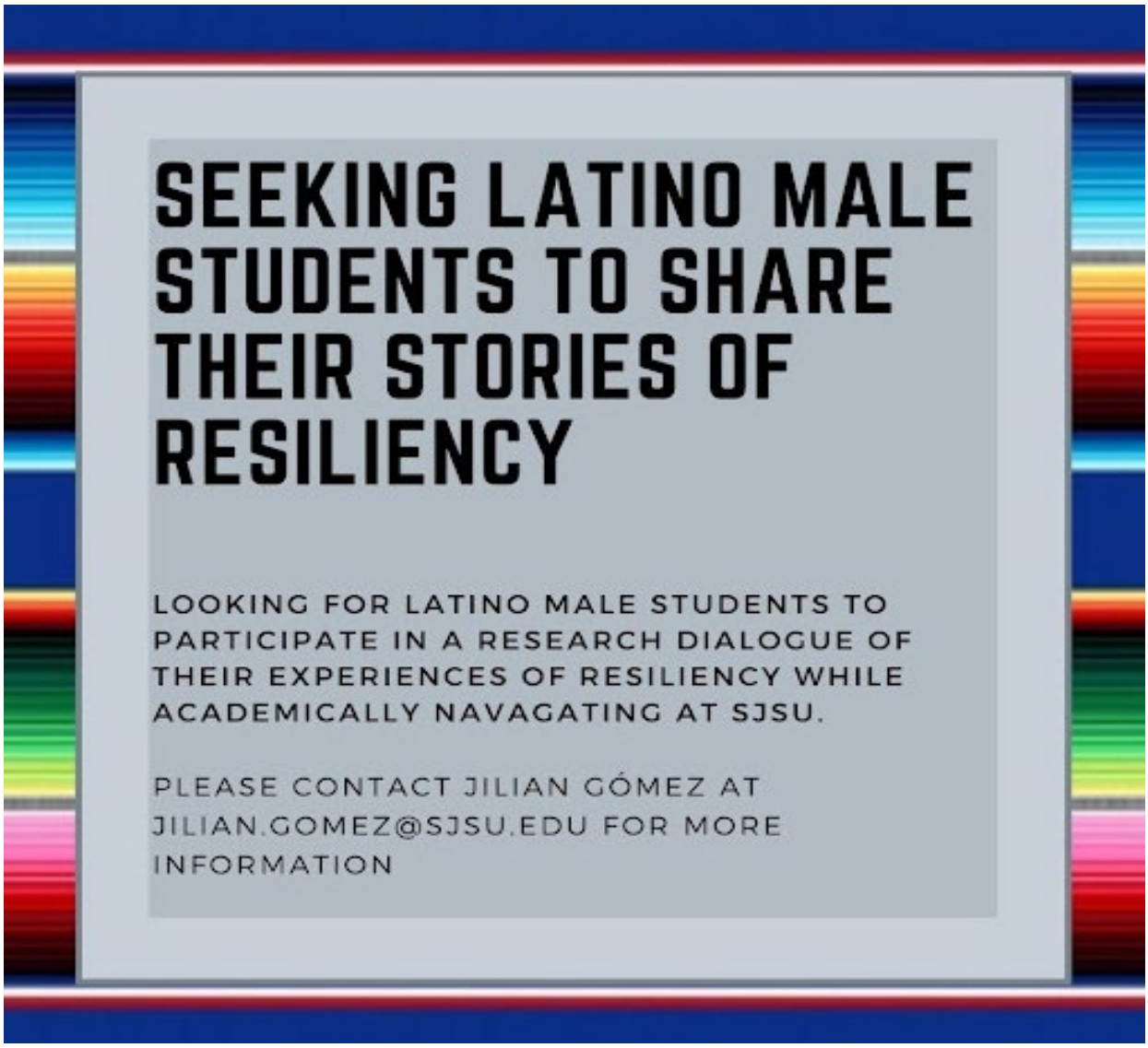
To qualify for participation, one must meet the following: Anyone who identifies as a Latino male.

If eligible, the student will be required to fill out a consent form. Then, one-hour interviews will take place via ZOOM.

If anyone comes to mind, forward this email to them, encouraging them to reach out.

In solidarity,
Jilian Gómez

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer



Appendix D: Intake Form

Intake Form

Hello,
I'm Jilian Gómez, a current graduate student in the Counseling and Guidance Master's program at San José State University, working under the supervision of Dr. Jason Laker. Currently, my thesis research aims to listen to the narratives of our Latino male students of their resiliency while simultaneously navigating San José State University. The voices of Latino male students are poised to make great insight on Latino male student success because their resiliency offers what to learn from Latino male student success.

In solidarity,
Jilian Gómez

* Required

1. Name *

2. SJSU student email (@sjsu.edu) *

3. Are you a first generation student? *

4. What is your major or interest of study? *

Appendix E: Consent Form

SJSU SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

Consent Form

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Title of Study:
Latino Male Student Success

Name of Researcher:
Jilian Gómez, San José State University Graduate Student
Dr. Jason Laker, Thesis Supervisor, San José State University Faculty, Department of Counselor Education

Purpose:
This conducted study is in connection with my M.A. Thesis for the Master of Arts Degree in Counseling and Guidance. The focus of my research is Latino male student success. This interview will focus on your educational experiences, beliefs, and goals; and how your identities as Latino and male are connected. This research aims to increase the representation and understanding of Latino male students in scholarly literature and inform educators' training and development to support Latino male students' access, retention, and success.

Procedures:
Complete the consent form via DocuSign
Participate in a one-hour interview via ZOOM that will be audio and video recorded

Compensation:
No compensation

Confidentiality:
Participants have the right to confidentiality. However, Jilian will have access to the recordings used for the study. The participants' recordings are not to be shared outside the research team, and recordings will be deleted at the end of the study once published.

Participation Rights:
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

1

SJSU SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

Consent Form

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any adverse effect on your relations with San Jose State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

Questions or Problems: Please contact Jilian Gómez (jilian.gomez@sjsu.edu) or Dr. Jason Laker (jason.laker@sjsu.edu).

Signatures:
Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Signature

Participant's Name (printed)	**Participant's Signature**	**Date Signed:**

Researcher Statement:
I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands their rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent	**Date Signed:**