

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF LATINO HIGH SCHOOL  
MALES WHO WERE IN DANGER OF DROPPING OUT BUT PERSEVERED**

A Record of Study

by

JAN ELIZABETH NELL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2010

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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of Dropping Out but Persevered

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Jim Scheurich
Committee Members,	Terah Venzant Chambers
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	Anita McCormick
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**ABSTRACT**

An Investigation of the Perceptions of Latino High School Males Who Were in Danger  
of Dropping Out but Persevered. (December 2010)

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate perceptions and experiences of four Latino male students who obtained their high school diploma despite considerable adversity. An in-depth examination of the participants' academic experiences, familial impact on their education, and societal acculturation were explored to elucidate Latino male academic achievement in public high school.

The dropout conundrum has serious economic and societal implications for the United States. In addition, the explosion of the Latino population in the southwestern portion of the U.S. adds another dimension to this dilemma since Latinos have a greater dropout rate than their white counterparts. However, there has been minimal qualitative literature that has given voice to students and their perceptions of academic success. Therefore, this study was conducted with individual, semi-structured interviews to give the students' voice to their story and create rich, thick descriptions for educators to understand the reasons these students were successful in school.

Participants were selected from a randomized purposeful sample from the same high school. In addition, each student was interviewed three times to ensure prolonged engagement. Interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed by the researcher. Member checking, peer debriefing, artifact collection, and reflexive journaling were utilized to establish trustworthiness. The transcribed interviews were categorized to establish patterns and themes in the data.

Even though the four participants were very different from each other in generational status, family environment, and personal interests, they were all able to obtain their high school diploma despite the hardships that have played a role in the failure in school of others much like these four. The students clearly articulated that treatment by the staff at school was a major factor in their academic achievement, and, even though they all came from non-traditional families, education was valued and encouraged in their homes. Recommendations for future studies include research on Latino college achievement and the role of Latino parents in their children's education.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Joan Abel Timmons and John Adrian Crumpler, your confidence in me gave me the drive to begin and complete this work. I am thankful upon every remembrance of you and the value of education you instilled in me.

I must also dedicate this record of study to the two men in my life, Mike and Matthew. Mikey, I love you and appreciate all the times you supported me in this long journey. I can't imagine that I could have been successful without your love, emotional encouragement, and cheerleading every step of the way.

To my little man, Matthew, you are the light of my life and pure joy. I love you for who you are.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have remained faithful” (2 Timothy 4:7). The completion of the doctoral process and record of study was a lesson of perseverance and a difficult road to travel. I feel I have much of which to be thankful at this point of completion. There were many individuals along the way to lean on, brighten the path, and laugh with.

The wisdom throughout the doctoral process of committee members, Dr. Fred Bonner, Dr. Tara Venzant Chambers, and Dr. Anita McCormick, was insightful and invaluable. I never felt discouraged or criticized when they offered constructive comments to improve the study. For that, I am truly grateful. Dr. Jim Scheurich, my advisor and chair, has an extraordinary work ethic. Rarely did I have to wait more than a few days to receive corrections on written work submitted. Indeed, Superman Scheurich usually sent corrected work back to me within 12-24 hours with specific instructions on what needed editing. He is a role model for all educators to emulate when assisting and mentoring students.

The first summer when the Cy-Fair cohort started classes together, I was not sure we would make it, but this group of fine people made sure that when one of us stumbled others were there to catch us before we hit the ground. After losing both parents within a span of eight months, I was not sure I would continue with the coursework. However, several cheerleaders within the group were there to offer support. Patty Mooney and Robin McGlohn even sent specific feedback to me as encouragement and an aide so I

could frame upcoming assignments after missing classes. Wanda Baker always offered encouraging advice and had a gracious heart in offering help. Additionally, I discovered that Cheryl Henry is my kindred sister. We have so many things in common that working together was effortless. We always supported each other to meet certain deadlines with quality work.

My extended family at Highpoint High School was supportive in numerous ways. From proofreading, time off work, and an understanding ear, there were so many that helped me during this arduous journey. Mignon Mabry is a proofreader extraordinaire who inserted such kind comments with all the editing marks on the paper. She was an angel in the tedium of academic writing. In addition, I was blessed to have a supervisor, Marguerite Weatherall, who never hesitated in allowing me to leave during the school day to run and interview a student. When I moved from the ninth grade campus of Highpoint to the 10-12 grade campus, Carol Heard graciously offered to pick up where Mignon had left off to proofread Chapters IV and V.

The staff at Apex High School did so many favors for me so I could complete this study. They are a dedicated group of professionals who truly want to make greater strides in helping *ALL* students achieve success. Dena Alvarez allowed me to use her conference room when needed or she simply helped find students so I could touch base with them. Additionally, Rosie VandenBrook took the time to call in Apex students and explain this study before I initially met with them. This made the first meeting much smoother with these students.



Another great source of support was my church. When needed and called upon the Faith Factor Bible study class offered encouragement and prayer. Just knowing that I could call on Carolyn Roetman or Melinda Mallett to say a prayer and it would be done, was such a comfort.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Entering high school is a critical time for adolescents both socially and academically. At the academic level, students begin to accrue credits that count toward a high school diploma. For some students, the high school diploma is seen as the end of their educational journey. For other students, the high school diploma is just the beginning as they aspire to earn a post graduate degree in college or trade school. However, there is another segment of high school students who never receive their high school diploma.

Why are some students successful in the traditional high school setting while others are not? Are there particular strategies that some schools or teachers have utilized to help students find academic success in their high school years? What are student perceptions of those particular strategies utilized by educators to help them succeed academically? Finally, what motivates the student to persist even when hardships exist? Since the state legislature, Congress and society have focused on high school dropout rates in recent years, these questions are pertinent to understanding the dropout dilemma and approaches that may lower the number of students who do not successfully complete high school each year. Education professionals continually search for answers as to why some students are academically successful and others fail.

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This record of study follows the style of *Educational Administration Quarterly*.

The economic, societal and educational conundrum of high school dropouts has been recognized for decades (Rumberger, 1987). Students who drop out before completing high school face a reduction of their standard of living throughout their adult life (Fulk, 2003 & Rumberger, 1987). After studying the dropout trend, Rumberger (1987) and Grier (2000) have speculated about the different types of dropouts. Grier placed dropouts into two different categories: students who are “pushed-out” and students who are “pulled-out.” Students who were “pushed-out” of high school felt unwanted and lacking in academic success (Grier, 2000). Consequently, the “pushed-out” student copes with his inability to fit in to the high school experience by reducing the amount of time on school work or even the amount of time at school (Grier, 2000). The “pull-out” category was also discussed by Grier when describing external factors outside the school that affect a young person’s choice to stay in school. Dynamics that hinder a teenager’s academic success in high school may include financial stability of the family, the necessity of taking care of a family member who is disabled, and struggles at home with a parent or stepparent (Grier, 2000).

From societal cost of dropouts to this critical point in the high school career, Fulk (2003) maintained that the ninth grade year is a critical crossroad for students in their high school success. When students enter the ninth grade, they are faced with an academic system based on credits, which count toward graduation. In junior high, students typically need to pass only three-quarters of the core content areas in order to be promoted to the next grade level. Furthermore, Fulk (2003) reported that students are more likely to be closely monitored in the elementary and junior high settings rather than

the larger high school organization. This reality creates a stumbling block at a point where students are uniquely unable to understand or foresee the consequences of a few failed courses, and the stage is set for subsequent frustration and failure.

Within the ninth grade phenomenon of high failure rates is the problem of males who have a significantly higher failure rate than females (Roderick & Camburn, 1999; Tremblay, 2000). Males may have more difficulty in making passing grades in the ninth grade for several reasons: 1) possible gang recruitment or affiliation, 2) removal from the classroom due to disciplinary incidents, 3) a perception by faculty that males are a threat, 4) hostility when coping with adversity rather than seeking help from the establishment (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). Rumberger (1987) reported that more than 50% of Caucasian and African American males cited school-related reasons for dropping out of school; whereas, Latino males cited economic reasons for leaving school early. Most researchers (e.g., Rumberger) agree that high schools with a cohesive plan to assist students with coping strategies during the eighth to ninth grade transition phase experience lower retention rates in their ninth grade cohort.

Along with the school-related reasons for males who drop out of school, components such as familial obligations, social reasons, and economics are also predictive components to the male dropout epidemic (Rumberger, 1987; Tremblay, 2000). Some researchers maintain that the cure for the male dropout dilemma is the cultivation of personal relationships, nurturing climate, and the feeling that the individual is a viable member of the community (Pollack, 2000; Rotundo, 1983). In his extensive work with adolescent males, Pollack (2000) found that when young men were



misunderstood, disengaged and distressed, they wore a mask of cool invincibility to cope with the stress. Pollack (1999) further maintained that the fictional depiction of being strong, not following rules, showing surliness to teachers, and spending time with cool friends is not the reality of adolescent males. Such fictional stories are not only incorrect but unfavorably manipulate the male adolescent's ability to achieve by reducing emotional and behavioral objectives (Pollack, 2000).

Behavioral problems with boys are often a sign of other issues in their lives that may not be obvious to an untrained person. While studying adolescent depression, Navarrete (1999) found that indications for female depression were symptoms such as being quiet or withdrawn. However, indications for adolescent male depression were more likely symptoms such as aggressiveness, disruption, and oppositional defiance (Navarrete, 1999). Indeed, Navarrete compared the depressed teenage male to a disobedient child, who would typically receive disciplinary action. Unfortunately, this type of reaction leaves the young man untreated for depression (Navarrete).

More specifically, by the seventh grade Latino and African-American boys were more likely to respect and value other male acquaintances that were underachieving in school (Taylor & Graham, 2007). This is an alarming assertion since United States citizens of Latino descent are the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic group in North America. The children of America will include 62 percent faces of color by 2050, up from 44 percent today (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009). Schools face many challenges with the growth explosion of the Latino population. Issues such as acculturation, linguistics,

and poverty are part of the challenge in Latino academic achievement in the American public school system.

Within-group diversity has had minimal research dedicated to its intricacies. Valenzuela (1999) perceived definite variations in identity development across generational status (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. born) and level of cultural assimilation. Their generational status, extent of segregation within their personal ethnic peer groups, and collective differences amid immigrant and U.S. born Latino students are all aspects that mold their schooling experiences. Valenzuela (1999) found that immigrant and U.S. born Latino students lose the appreciation of their experiences and camaraderie within their own peer groups while also participating in a school system that does not foster their culture. Additionally, Umana-Taylor and Bacama-Gomez (2003) found that generational status was a considerable predictor of the effects of peer pressure among this population. Furthermore, Umana-Taylor and Bacama-Gomez (2003) assert that teenagers who have lived in the United States for extended periods of time and who had a family member born in the U.S. were more easily persuaded by peer pressure, while other immigrants who had lived in the U.S. for a lesser amount of time, and did not have family members born in the U.S. were more likely to resist peer pressure.

Included with the generational and acculturation concerns, language surfaces as a substantial obstacle in acquiring an education in the U.S. Since many of the English Language Learners (ELLs) enter U.S. schools with different levels of fluency in their native language, the language barrier not only affects the Spanish speaking students but also the relationships of Spanish speaking parents with their children's schools. Latino

children comprise the largest group of limited English proficient students the United States (Garcia, 2001) and there were 5.1 million English Language Learners (ELLs) in Pre-K through twelfth grades during the 2004-05 school year (NCELA, 2009).

The vast majority of researchers agree that in the elementary grades bilingual educational programs are necessary to utilize transfer of knowledge, contextualized language, and affective and cognitive variables (Cummins, 1989; Greene, 1997; Hakuta, 2001, Krashen, 1996, and Thomas & Collier, 2002). Krashen maintained that most of the first generation immigrant children placed in English immersion curriculums have some fluency of subject matter, especially those who have already had some education in Mexico or other Latin American countries. Additionally, Hakuta (2001) advocated that Latino students who have had academic success in English-only curricula typically come from homes in which there is a high level of education. They also are in schools where teachers possess the proficiency to converse in the language of the students. Furthermore, Hakuta contended that these programs tend to be the exception instead of the rule.

While language may be often thought of as an obstacle for the education of many Latino children, the family structure or familism has often been described as unified, intergenerational exchange, deep commitment, and support for one another. In fact, researchers assert that Latino families exhibit stronger familism traits than their Anglo counterparts (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, 1987). Merriam Webster (2010) defines familism as a social pattern in which the family accepts a place of supremacy over individual benefits within the family. In a study of European Americans, African

American, and Mexican American families, Montiel (1973) discovered that Mexican-American families have the prevalent and most socially integrated family networks of all three ethnic groups. Montiel affirmed that among Latinos, the family is a loyal and protective entity, which is more valuable together than any of its individual entities. Support within the Latino families functions as both the social circles and also delivers financial support for members in times of need. While European American culture highlights independence, hard work and breaking away from the family to be successful in the business world, Latinos focus more on the concept that hard work is the means to accomplishment while also positioning an elevated meaning on interdependence, familism, and aiding and obtaining assistance within the family (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

When surveyed by the Pew Hispanic Center (2009), Latino voters ranked education as one of their highest priorities. In an attempt to explain Latino underachievement in our schools, Ogbu (1998) classified ethnic groups into voluntary (immigrant) and involuntary (non-immigrant). Voluntary immigrants decided to relocate to the U.S. while involuntary immigrants, on the other hand, are those who were born in the U. S. and have been dominated, colonized and confined. Ogbu argued that his categories are based on a group's past and not their race. The results of Ogbu's study showed that voluntary immigrants distinguished their education in the U.S. to be much improved in comparison to their native country. Thus, the voluntary immigrants were impervious to negative peer pressure and other distractions in order to attain a better life. Conversely, involuntary immigrants did not have their native country to compare and

contrast opportunity in the U. S. As a result, these involuntary immigrant students perceived formal education more negatively than the voluntary immigrants did.

Valenzuela (1999) pointed out that this involuntary immigrant becomes the essence of "subtractive schooling" because the second, third or fourth generation immigrant has been subtracted or weakened by losing part of their cultural resource that first generation immigrants possessed. Additionally, exploring the "subtractive" assimilationist trait of formal education, Valenzuela (1999) asserted that schools remove cultural 'resources' from students in different ways. Subtractive schooling incorporates subtractive assimilationist policies, indifferent school-based associations, and organizational configurations and conventions. Additionally, subtractive schooling takes on an attribute of assimilationist because it is intended to remove student's culture and erase distinctiveness, thus exchanging a diverse cultural identity with an "Americanized" one.

To fully understand and empathize with the current situation of Latino education in the U. S., one must go back several centuries to examine the experiences of Latinos as the United States was settled. From the Spanish conquest in Mexico in the 16th century to Mexico gaining their independence from Spain in 1821 to Mexico losing to the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1846, Mexico has not enjoyed much independent history to build continuity in their own government. Indeed, throughout this period, there was a strict cast system and racialization of the Mexican people (Menchaca, 1999). When the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed with the United States, Mexico lost 1/3 of its territory to the United States. Mexicans who were currently living

on the land taken by the U. S. government were promised American citizenship if they chose to stay. However, shortly after the treaty, the Mexicans lost property rights to the land they owned and did not gain U. S. citizenship either (Weber, 2006). These disenfranchised Mexicans were in limbo because they had migrated to this Mexican area (now the Southwest portion of the U. S.) in search of property and a better way of life because they had few rights in Mexico. Therefore, returning to Mexico after the Mexican-American War was not an option they wanted to pursue (Menchaca, 1999).

Meanwhile, schools throughout the southwest had been established. Before the Mexican-American war, formal schooling was founded by the Catholic Church and Mexicans. After the war, the Anglo politicians and protestant religious leaders started their own schools (San Miguel, 1999). White politicians established schools to indoctrinate “religious, secular and linguistic traditions, and to learn American customs and more readily integrate into the developing social order,” (San Miguel, 1999, p. 4). Both the Catholic and Protestant model schools assumed a considerable role in the social order of the southwest (San Miguel, 1999). Additionally, both schools taught the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Catholic schools typically utilized the Spanish language and culture to teach the indigenous people while the Anglo Protestant schools focused more on European American culture and eradicating any language other than English (San Miguel, 1999).

During most of the 20th century, schools in the United States became institutions dominated by the American cultural values and Taylorism. Throughout this period, there was an increase in *de jure* segregation that lasted until the mid 20th century (Gonzalez,

1990). *De jure* segregation was an educational policy enacted by educators to modify educational programs and curriculum based on language and cultural capabilities of the students (Gonzalez, 1990). Additionally, many students of color attended different schools than Anglos. In 1954, the Supreme Court handed down the decision of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* that outlawed government imposed segregation of schools. The intent of this ruling was to allow students to attend their neighborhood schools even if that school was built for whites only. More importantly, the intent was to close achievement gaps among students of color and their white counterparts. Regrettably, even though the achievement gap has narrowed noticeably in the past 30 years, substantial gaps still persist presently with African American and Latino students in contrast to white students (Kao & Thompson, 2003).

Because of the existing gaps that persist within the Latino population some educators utilize the cultural deficit model as an explanation for underachievement (Cuban, 1989). Perhaps the most alarming bi-product of the cultural deficiency stance is the influence it may have on young teachers graduating from teaching programs in colleges and universities (Persell, 1977). Indeed, high poverty, urban schools are typically full of novice teachers. Education in high poverty areas is often considered as remediation rather than the synthesis and application of knowledge (Rose, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings (1994), many educators in high poverty areas are not inclined to see racial and ethnic differences among their students. As a result, these teachers do not recognize their students' needs and they do not recognize their students' individual characteristics (Rose, 1995). Valenzuela (1999) concluded in her study

“teachers tended to be concerned first with form and non-personal content and only secondarily, if at all, with their students’ subjective reality” (p. 22). However, Valencia and Black (2002) sum up the cultural deficiency model of Latinos to the origin of deficit thinking. They contend that the belief that Latinos do not value education stems from the attitude of internally defective families or the lack of ability to learn. This is the definition of deficit thinking (Valencia & Black, 2002).

Because of recent unease with immigration procedures, most Latino illegal immigrants are portrayed as a danger to United States national security. The perception of Latinos by Anglos and others play an essential part in the student's school success and learning. Researchers have explored how the opinions of others have critical consequences for self-perceptions and subsequent actions (Jussim, 1986; Miller & Turnbull, 1986). Negative perceptions may sometimes be to blame for the development of self-fulfilling prophecies, in that these harmful attributes are internalized and become part of the self-identification of the Latino student.

Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) publication of *Pygmalion in the Classroom* initiated dialogue relating the extent to which teacher expectations generate self-fulfilling prophecies on their students. Several decades of research have revealed the consequence of teacher expectancy on an assortment of student outcomes. Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski (1995) conducted a case study on teacher expectations and the consequences of student performance in the classroom. Weinstein et al. asserted that teacher expectations for their students result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. When the classroom instructor believes that certain students cannot attain a particular level of



scholarly rigor, the low expectations are confirmed by low student achievement, thus confirming the instructor's beliefs (Weinstein et al., 1995). Antithesis to the Weinstein study, Brophy (1983) contended that teacher expectations in their classrooms are generally accurate concerning content area assignments. In addition, Brophy claimed teachers are usually open to corrective feedback. However, Brophy did maintain that in certain cases particular personal characteristics of teachers may negatively impact some of their students.

The amount of developmental time students spend at school makes it imperative for new knowledge to be gained and internalized so that educators are aware of individual student needs. At the middle and high school levels, students see many teachers in one day; therefore, empathetic teachers are essential to building positive relationships with these young people. Unfortunately, while some students bond with their teachers and form solid personal relationships at the secondary level, there are students who feel isolated and marginalized.

The theoretical frameworks that inform this study stem from the research on dropout literature, ninth grade success, male adolescent students, teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy, and Latino culture. Although there is considerable literature on students who drop out of high school and the possible causes of this phenomenon, there has been little focus on generating thick descriptions of the Latino male students' perspectives of their success in high school. Moreover, how were these students affected by educators and the strategies utilized in the school to ensure student success?

## **Problem Statement**

Transitioning ninth graders from junior high school to senior high school typically results in a high failure rate among ninth grade students. Once students fail core subject areas in the ninth grade, they continue to fail in high school and usually become dropouts. McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan and Legters (1998) stated that students who are not successful in acquiring a high school diploma are not likely to be marketable in the global economy. Therefore, Roderick and Camburn (1999) emphasized the importance of identification of instructional strategies by educators to promote student success rates and decrease the chances of students dropping out of school as a critical component to any successful reform in a high school. In addition to the overall dropout dilemma in U. S. education, it is more remarkable when one layers other challenges to male academic success – difficulties like ethnicity, poverty, language fluency, and a general lack of understanding about the American educational culture. Despite federal mandates that attempt to narrow the achievement gap between students of color and their white peers, educational achievement among Latino students remains as a persistent dilemma in United States education. According to Valenzuela (1999), students of color typically receive a smaller amount of quality instruction and an additional amount of test preparation instruction. This study will examine Latino male twelfth grade students and evaluate their perspectives of successes and failures in the ninth grade and throughout high school. Further, it will investigate what person or event in life assisted them in overcoming adversity and achieving a high school diploma.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Traditional schools do not work for many students in the public schools. However, completion rates in America's high schools are a central component to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Under NCLB, students enter high school at the beginning of ninth grade and are placed in a cohort to complete high school within four years (Swanson, 2004). If a student takes longer than four years to complete the state accredited curriculum or opts to drop out from high school in pursuit of a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), that student counts against the high school on completion rates under the Average Yearly Progress (AYP) as stipulated by No Child Left Behind Legislation. With the explosion of the Latino population in the United States, it is expected that American schools will be made up of 62% of students of color by 2050. The sheer number of young Latinos living in the United States will affect and will continue to impact educational trends and instructional strategies (Lester, 2006).

Quantitative numbers drive most of the research in the area of high school dropouts and ninth grade success, and, the few studies that are qualitative in nature are from the teachers' perspectives about why students are failing. There is scant information from the students' perspectives about what the institutional barriers are in high school. The purpose of this study is to examine perspectives from twelfth grade Latino male students to determine what factors were obstacles to their academic success in the ninth grade and throughout high school in order to evaluate the reasons for their success. There has been a significant awareness dedicated to the quandary of the African American male student; however, the interest and research focused on the Hispanic or

Latino male is not as substantive. Understanding Latino history and the underpinnings of formal education in the Latino culture is essential to understanding the dynamics of Latinos and academic achievement.

### **Significance of the Study**

Student perspectives about strategies deployed by educators and what helps them succeed is a missing link in the research literature. Teacher perspectives are more often represented in studies. Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski, (1995) conducted a case study to determine if teacher expectations related to a self-fulfilling prophecy with their students. Teachers were interviewed and classroom observations were conducted to determine if the relationship existed. However, no information was collected from the students. In addition, Fulk (2003) conducted a study regarding poor academic performance among ninth graders. Unlike Weinstein et al., Fulk (2003) collected data from the students via surveys. Although this is a definite step in the direction of gaining knowledge about student perspectives, a deeper knowledge of why students believe they are academically successful would be obtainable if students were able to provide a thick description of their particular circumstances.

If educators can understand the reasons certain students are successful or not successful in the classroom, then new policies and procedures might be born from this information. Thus, increasing data and knowledge about successful academic strategies will develop and increase school strategies to improve the completion rates of their students.

Moreover, the next plausible steps for high school dropout study, according to Roderick (1994), could be the study of alternative approaches to classroom instruction and grouping of students to improve academic success for all students. In addition, identification of instructional strategies by educators to promote Latino student success rates and decrease the chances of students dropping out of school is critical to any successful reform in a high school (Roderick & Camburn, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). Since the student is the primary stakeholder in his education, it makes sense to have him evaluate teaching strategies and the school itself concerning his academic success (Song, 2006). A Latino male perspective of why he was successful in school is one of the missing puzzle pieces in the research literature.

### **Overview of Methodology**

Because the researcher needed an investigative course of action for participants to contemplate their unique encounters in public education, qualitative naturalistic inquiry was utilized for this study. Naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to understand and portray the participants' stories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, the researcher can communicate the social action from the lens of the social actor (Lincoln & Guba). The vast majority of studies, involving high school dropouts, have been quantitative in design and have produced findings that may be generalized to other students. However, the missing component in the research is rich information gathered from interviews of students producing a deeper understanding of their obstacles in acquiring an education. Thick description is not focused on amassing

facts, but rather on interpretative characteristics of the topic being studied that differentiate a particular phenomenon (Geertz, 1973).

The researcher will serve as the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). A minimum of four interviews will be conducted with each participant. Constant comparative analysis will be utilized in order to gather data and organize the data based on similarities and differences (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Themes or patterns will be derived from the data to construct a coded category or concept (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Concepts emerging on their own will permit the researcher to determine which recognized theory may assist in producing a hypothesis (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

An important question in any research study links to the extent of certainty in the legitimacy of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, are the findings accurate in relation to how the information was communicated by the participants (Lincoln & Guba)? In order to establish trustworthiness, several techniques will be utilized to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Peer debriefing, member checks, purposive sampling, reflexive journaling, and thick description will be used by the researcher to triangulate the data. Triangulation is necessary to determine the integrity of inferences drawn by the researcher with data collected in the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

In order to complete this study, the researcher will develop all interview questions, conduct the interviews of participants, transcribe the information, and maintain a reflexive journal. The anticipated ethical issues would include gaining access

to students with the appropriate authorities and preventing any inappropriate use of the identities of the students and data collected about them. Naturally, pseudonyms will be used.

### **Research Questions**

Exploring the complexities of high school academic success or failure from the Latino male perspective could stimulate dialogue among education professionals. This dialogue could generate solution for the dropout epidemic in public schools. The following research questions are proposed:

- What do four twelfth grade male Latino students who had difficulty passing core subjects in the ninth grade perceive about the hardships or difficulties they had to overcome to succeed in school?
  - *Difficulty passing* – A term defined by the researcher as a student who either failed the first attempt at a particular subject or dropped below the passing grade of 70 more than once throughout the term of the class.
- What important roles do the four students perceive that the school leaders, teachers, or other professional staff played in assisting students in being successful in high school?
- Do the four students perceive that they have role models outside of the educational institution who positively impacted them in acquiring a high school education?
- What impact did the immediate or extended family have in encouraging these four students to be successful in their high school education?

## **Limitations**

This study abided by the principles of qualitative research. It was personalized to the participants, specialized to their environments, and therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other contexts. In quantitative research, objectivity is embraced; however, in qualitative research, personalizing the participants in their contexts is intended. Through the investigation of biases we learn and acknowledge our standards, which can then lead us to formulate new inquiries. This reflexive practice permits us to gain meaning of our lives, experiences, and the manner in which we structure our perception of reality.

This study was environment specific and told the narrative of four Latino males who were seniors in high school. It concentrated on their perceptions of obstacles and barriers while they were in high school. Although the findings from this study were distinctive to the participants' environment and context, and for that reason not generalizable, the procedure was communicated in a precise manner so that other researchers or educators could replicate a comparable endeavor.

In keeping with the qualitative research techniques, I was the primary means for the collection of data and its analysis (Merriam, 2002). Consequently, it is essential that I recognize my perception of humanity as it relates to the creation of my own complexities. I view the world from my lens as a white, middle-aged female doctoral student who has worked in the public school system for 21 years. Additionally, I was raised in a middle class blended family home. However, the lens of the Latino male students is also portrayed in this study. The purpose of this naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln



& Guba, 1985) was to allow the students' voice to be heard in order for educators to understand these particular students in an informed fashion and possibly build on the findings to improve the experiences of future students.

### **Assumptions**

There were two primary assumptions made by the researcher during this study. First, data collected and transcribed would be accurately recorded. In addition, it was assumed the students would give reasonably honest accounts concerning their difficulties at home and their perceptions regarding educators who attempted to help them or hinder their pursuit of a high school diploma.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Academic Success* – the achievement of the minimum state standards (NCLB, 2001).

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* – an individual state's measure of the minimum level of academic improvement that schools and districts must achieve each year (NCLB, 2001).

*At-Risk* – Label intended for students who may have a higher chance of not completing high school. The at-risk label may be applied for several of the following reasons: school discipline, home life such as death of parent, free/reduced lunch, failed state mandated test, English as a second language (Pallas, 1989).

*Core Courses* – Courses that are part of the required curriculum to graduate from high school but are not generally thought of as “electives”. Core classes will include: social studies, English, math, science and foreign language classes (College Board, 2009).

*Dropout* – A student who voluntarily leaves school before graduation and does not enroll in another school within one year (TEA, 2008a).

*Economically Disadvantaged* – a term that describes students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch or other public assistance (TEA, 2008b).

*No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* – Public law 107–110: 107th Congress signed into effect January 8, 2002. The purpose of the act is to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so no child is left behind (NCLB, 2001).

*Sub-group or Sub-population* – A particular group within a larger group of students as defined by the state and federal governments. No Child Left Behind identifies these groups as African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Free or Reduced Lunch, Hispanic/Latino, Limited English Proficient, Native American and Special Education (NCLB, 2001).

*Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2008b)* – TEA is a branch of the state government of Texas which oversees public primary and secondary education as well as charter schools in the state of Texas.

*Title I Schools* – are designated as eligible for participation in programs authorized by Title I of Public Law 107-110, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002. Those with *school wide programs* are schools in which all students have been designated by state and federal regulations as eligible for participation in Title I programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

## **Organization of Study**

This record of study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the problem and a background for the study including the significance and need for this particular study. Furthermore, Chapter I included an account of the methodology, research questions, limitations and assumptions associated with the study. Finally, Chapter I provided a definition of key terms for the reader.

Chapter II will give the general framework of the high school dropout dilemma relating it to the male gender and Latino ethnicity. Further, this chapter connects the problem to ninth grade as a critical year for student success as they transition from the eighth grade. In addition, Chapter II discusses Latino generational characteristics, acculturation, linguistic issues, familism, academic identity, and the historical perspective of Latino education. Moreover, Chapter II relates the Latino adolescent male dropout dilemma to teacher expectations along and the development of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ultimately, this chapter articulates and describes the Latino culture and general obstacles that are common in their journey to attain a high school diploma.

The third chapter will outline the methodology utilized along with a description of the data content, selection and analysis. Chapter IV will include the results of the study. The final Chapter V will discuss the findings and make recommendations for theory, practice and future research directions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The high school dropout dilemma has long been seen as an economic, social and educational problem (Rumberger, 1987). Children who leave school prior to the requirements for graduation severely limit their earning potential throughout their adult lives and are twice as likely to be unemployed as their high school graduate peers (Fulk, 2003 and Rumberger, 1987). Swanson's (2004) research at the Urban Institute in Washington claims that there is a 68% graduation rate in U.S. public schools. Additionally, students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds have only a 50% chance of acquiring their high school diploma (Swanson, 2004).

The selected review of literature will summarize the research components and theoretical ramifications when investigating the dilemma of Latino male adolescent students in their pursuit of a high school diploma. The first section studies the adolescent dropout phenomenon defining adolescence as somewhere between childhood and adulthood and additionally forecasts students at-risk of not completing high school. The second section reviews students' academic success or failure in the ninth grade highlighting the characteristics of ninth graders such as social skills, academic abilities and behavioral tendencies. Section three examines challenges in the transition process of students entering the 9-12 high school configuration from the eighth grade. Section four reviews data associated with males who do not complete high school and investigates the

unique challenges male students encounter during their formal schooling experience. Section five discusses the generational characteristics, acculturation, linguistics, familism, and Latino academic identity. Section six outlines the historical perspective of Latino education from the Spanish-Mexican Era to Latino education in the 21st century. Section 7 investigates the cultural deficiency model and stereotypes of Latinos. The last section discusses the effect of teacher expectations and their impact on students along with self-fulfilling prophecies that some students may develop as a result of teacher expectations.

### **The Adolescent Dropout**

Because schools and states have different ways of measuring and defining dropouts, making an accurate prediction is difficult at best for school leaders (Schwartz, 1995). Indeed, some students return to school even after they have been counted as a dropout, which adds another dimension to the numbers. Some additional information given by Schwartz (1995) further identified issues involved with dropouts: 1) roughly 77% of students who drop out do so by the tenth grade, and 20% of students drop out by the eighth grade, 2) African American and Latino students are more likely to drop out than European American or Asian American students, 3) dropouts are a bigger problem in urban and Title I schools (Schwartz, 1995).

In addition to the findings from Rumberger (1987), Fulk (2003) and Schwartz (1995), and Thornburgh (2006) forecasted that than one-third of students in public high school would not graduate. Furthermore, a report written by Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced “There is a high

school dropout epidemic in America. Each year almost one third of all public high school students – and nearly half of African-American, Latinos and Native Americans – fail to graduate from public high schools with their class” (p. 1). This data along with a report from the National Center for Education Statistics (2005) corroborated a current drop in the national graduation rate. Data further corroborated the impression that the graduation rate has been in a continual decline after a 77.1% graduation rate in 1969. All but seven states have experienced a decline in graduation rates between 1990 and 2000 (Barton, 2006). Bridgeland et al. along with Rumberger (1987) reported that students who drop out of high school were much more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, unhealthy, living in poverty, utilizing public assistance, in prison or jail, and divorced or single parents whose children end up dropping out of school themselves.

Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) attempted to build a multiple variable longitudinal study to synthesize information related to the path of students who drop out of school. The five theoretical frameworks utilized by Battin-Pearson et al. were: 1) full mediation by academic achievement, 2) general deviance, 3) deviant affiliation, 4) family socialization, 5) structural strains. The longitudinal study had three data collection points at grades 5, grades 7-8 and grade 10. The sample consisted of 808 multiethnic urban students from schools in high crime neighborhoods. The twenty variables studied by Battin-Pearson et al. did exert influence on a student dropping out by the tenth grade. However, the five theories tested with three to five variables each, “were fully adequate to explain the data” (Battin-Pearson et al., p. 579).

Data analyzed from the Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) study built a predictive strategy that could be utilized by educators to foresee students who are at-risk for dropping out of high school. Students who 1) underachieve academically (GPA, test scores, retention), 2) exhibit deviant behavior (trips to the principal's office), 3) associate with peers who exhibit deviant behavior while shunning peers who do not exhibit deviant behavior were at high risk levels of dropping out of school. Different levels of risk could be traced to students who came from "at-risk" family situations such as single-parent, and divorced parents or parents who used drugs, low academic expectations from parents. In addition, Battin-Pearson et al. found that other household demographic factors created an additional strain for students. These factors consisted of poverty, ethnic or racial minority group and male gender (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000).

As helpful as the Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) study was for grasping the predictive variables for high school dropouts, there were some limitations to the study. The authors did not note whether the sample was random thus making the study vulnerable in its validity. Also, since the study focused on an urban, multiethnic population in a high crime neighborhood, the results may only be generalized to a similar urban population.

Among those who have researched the dropout phenomenon, Rumberger (1987) and Grier (2000) have mentioned speculation regarding the type of dropout. Grier differentiated dropouts into two different categories: students who are "pushed out" and students who are "pulled-out." Regarding the former term, Grier noted that many students who are pushed out of high school feel unwanted and lacking in academic

success. Consequently, the student copes by reducing the amount of time spent on academic work (Grier, 2000). The sensation of being pushed out, according to Grier, many times results in poor attendance, disruptive behavior and rebelliousness to school teachers and administrators. The latter category referred to by Grier (2000) refers to external factors outside the school itself. Dynamics that hinder a teenager's academic success in high school may include financial stability of the family, the necessity of taking care of a family member who is disabled, and struggles at home with a parent or stepparent (Grier, 2000).

In the Chicago Public Schools, the primary challenges for educators were factors like: 1) a diverse student population, 2) prior achievement, 3) a link with attendance and failure rates, 4) the possible connection with the characteristics of the students themselves in regards to achievement and how much achievement is affected by the individual schools, 5) the relationship between failure and success and its perpetuation once a student established that pattern (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). Even though attendance alone did not account for the probability of course failure, poor attendance did factor in as increasing the likelihood that a student would fail (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). Holmes and Matthews (1984) found that students who had failed a grade or been retained possessed a lower self-esteem than that of their peers who had not been retained and were more likely to drop out of high school.

Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (2000) created four categories of high school dropouts that distinguish among student profiles such as: quiet, disengaged, low-achieving and maladjusted types. Based on data they had collected in their 1997



longitudinal study of at-risk Montreal area youths, Janosz et al. stated that the quiet dropouts did not show evidence of misbehavior at school and they possessed a moderate to high commitment to education. However, the disengaged, dropouts exhibited an average to low level of misbehavior at school, low commitment to education in general, and average grades (Janosz et al., 2000). The authors claimed the crucial distinction between the quiet and the disengaged students was that the quiet ones possessed a moderate commitment to school unlike the disengaged students who simply disliked school.

Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (2000) labeled the third group as the low-achievers; they were described as having a fragile commitment to education, average to low levels of misbehavior at school, and deficient grades (usually below 60%). The maladjusted comprised the last group in the study. They possessed deficient grades and weak commitment to education; however, the maladjusted group was set apart from the others due to the high levels of misbehavior at school. The crux of the Janosz study directed attention at the maladjusted and quiet categories of students because they comprised the largest number of dropouts. Referring to the maladjusted, Janosz et al. stated:

Not only do they encounter academic and behavioral difficulties at school, but also every social dimension of their life is affected. They come from disadvantaged families with poor management practices are highly involved with deviant peers, do not adhere to conventional beliefs, engage in mainly passive leisure activities, and display varied deviant behavior. (p. 184)

One might expect the next largest category of dropout in the Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (2000) study to be the low achievers; however, the quiet dropouts emerged with the second highest percentage. Upon revisiting the data generated from the 1997 study, Janosz et al. commented:

These students are more likely to drop out of school because they experience greater academic difficulties, but they also display more commitment to school and fewer behavior problems than the average graduating student. Like other dropouts, they come from more deprived families, but on some family processes they do better than the graduates, reporting more family attachment, more supervision and rules, and less rebelliousness. They have more friends, but the friends are not deviants. They report more positive beliefs regarding the police, although more of them than graduates have been arrested. On the whole, their vulnerabilities are specifically limited to school failure and a deprived family environment. Contrary to maladjusted dropouts, their family functioning and peer network do not appear to foster problem behaviors. (p. 184)

Compared to other research and stereotypes of dropouts, the large number of students identified by Janosz et al. as quiet presents itself as an aberration. The quiet may best be explained from a purely academic arbitration perspective. However, it was not clear if teacher expectations may have played a part in the quiet's failure to succeed; and one can only presume that since quiet possessed a strong commitment to school that their self-fulfilling prophecy did not play a major determinant in their failure at school.

In summary, researchers have attempted to identify what factors predict whether or not a student will drop out of school. Issues such as: 1) attendance rate, 2) maladjustment, 3) prior failure or grade retention, 4) poverty, 5) ethnicity, 6) gender, 7) family socialization, and 8) school discipline are all useful when educators devise strategies to address the dropout phenomenon. It has also been noted that two categories of dropouts have emerged. Some students are "pushed out" of the educational system by administrative discipline and a certain disengagement from the school, which results in high absenteeism. The second category of dropout is called a "pulled out" because the teenager may have familial financial obligations or other difficulties at home. However, many teenagers graduate from high school every year even when faced with extreme hardships. Educators and society as a whole would benefit in learning how these students persevered.

### **Academic Success or Failure in the Ninth Grade**

Ninth grade students are often described as disorganized, embarrassed easily, impressionable, influenced by the media, emotionally explosive, focused on sexuality, living for the moment, moldable, dependent on peers, desperate for independence, self-centered, social and testing the limits (Wagner, 2001). It is possible these traits have bearing on the recent dropout trend in American high schools. In the 1970's, it was more typical for students to drop out in the last two years of their high school career; whereas, now students have a difficult time acquiring enough credits to move from the ninth grade to the tenth grade (Hauser, Simmons & Pager, 2000). This phenomenon of repeat ninth graders has created a "freshmen bulge" in certain high schools. Barton (2005) discovered

440,000 more students enrolled in the freshman class than in the previous year cohort as when they were eighth graders, revealing the increase in retention rates of ninth grade students. Walsh (2002) suggested that among other high school students, ninth graders have the lowest grade point averages and comprise the greatest number of discipline referrals. Further, Walsh contends that this is the most important year to focus on academics to prevent the overwhelming feelings of hopelessness associated to students once they begin to fail.

Factors that play a part in student's grade point average in high school are prior academic challenges, ethnicity, gender, discipline records, literacy rate, attendance, mobility rate (number of schools attended during K-12 career), and the student's involvement with extracurricular activities (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Sum, 2003). In reality many students perceive a lack of academic preparedness for the rigors of high school in addition to the factors mentioned above (Bridgeland et al., 2006). The vast majority of students entering high school have never coped with the high school credit system whereby they must earn credits before moving on to the next required class. Additionally, the concept of acquiring a set number of credits before graduating from high school is an unfamiliar set of circumstances. Moreover, students are faced with passing a standardized state assessment to graduate from high school, not to mention standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT for college admission. Typically, in the grades preceding high school, students who do not misbehave, have regular attendance and complete most class work will be successful. This may not always be the case in high school even though it is a prudent start to academic success.

Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), reported academic unpreparedness when researchers questioned high school graduates from 25 different locations that were between the ages of 16 and 24. Failing school in the early years of high school was the primary reason stated by respondents who did not complete high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). This issue of student success or failure may also be compounded by research, which alleges that some students may be predetermined to fail school. In other words, because educators believe there is no way particular students will be successful, young people will fulfill this prophecy (Weinstein, Madison & Kuklinksi, 1995).

Urban and Title I schools may present another list of issues connected to student failure. McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan and Legters (1998) studied the major contributing factors in a failing urban high school. Factors such as, “student anonymity, apathy and diversity” (McPartland et al., 1998) were the primary problems for administrators and teachers at Patterson High School in Baltimore (McPartland et al., 1998). The size of the school created an impersonal bureaucracy for students, parents, and faculty (McPartland et al., 1998). Consequently, there was little or no rapport among students and faculty/staff. In addition, diversity proved challenging since students came to the school from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and academic preparations (McPartland et al., 1998). The longitudinal study outlined the project a year before it was implemented to seek faculty and community input into the program (McPartland et al., 1998). A Talent Development Model was implemented by the federally funded Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), which targeted the ninth graders, created smaller teams or families within the school and also trained

teachers on different instructional styles (McPartland et al., 1998). The authors reported that after targeting ninth grade students, overall failure rates for the ninth grade was dramatically decreased and the collegiality among staff and students was markedly improved.

Ninth grade is a critical year in the quest for a high school diploma (Fulk, 2003). Students are faced with earning credits for graduation versus the elementary and junior high requirement of passing three-quarters of the curriculum. In addition, students who were previously at-risk of failing may have been helped by attentive monitoring that may not be possible in the larger high schools (Fulk, 2003). Moreover, students who start failing classes may begin to lose confidence in their academic abilities, develop a disinterest in school and have difficulty in building relationships and rapport with faculty at the school (Fulk, 2003). Studies have shown that ninth grade students who are involved in extracurricular activities like band and athletics are more likely to succeed in school (Rysewyk, 2008). Additionally, female student generally maintain a higher GPA during their freshman year than their male counterparts (Rysewyk, 2008). Moreover, African American students have greater failing rates than other ethnicities during their ninth grade year (Rysewyk, 2008).

Student and teacher perspectives often differ as to why students are not being successful. Research conducted by Fulk (2003) stated that teachers believed the biggest problems for ninth grade students were completing homework, motivation, and management of time. In a survey, the students stated that their study habits, test anxiety and self-regulation were their biggest weaknesses in school (Fulk, 2003). The

compelling difference in the perspectives of the teachers and students was the fact that ninth grade students believed they were not equipped with the skills necessary to be successful, while teachers felt that students did have the academic skills but did not combine them with organizational skills and work ethic (Fulk, 2003). This perception by students of not being academically ready for high school correlates with the finding from Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morrison (2006). In addition, Fulk (2003) discovered that ninth grade females rated themselves higher on cognitive abilities and motivation and were generally more attuned to school and academic success. The only area where ninth grade males scored themselves higher than their female counterparts in the survey was in the area of self-regulation (Fulk, 2003).

In summary, ninth grade is a crucial year in determining whether or not the student is directed towards high school graduation or a statistic in the dropout data. Ninth grade students are typically described by teachers as unmotivated, lacking organizational skills, clueless about the high school credit system, self-absorbed, and lacking in work ethic. Paradoxically, students perceive they lack the skills essential to succeed in high school and reported being overwhelmed by the high school experience. Added to these concerns is the size of urban and suburban high schools. Many students have a difficult time establishing a personal connection with the faculty and staff in the large campus setting. If ninth graders do not find a club or extracurricular activity in which to associate, they have a tendency to fall through the cracks. To be sure, the path to dropping out of high school may begin at many different levels but the ninth grade transition into high school is one of the major hurdles for students.

### **Transitioning the Eighth Grade Student to the Ninth Grade**

Moving from one level of schooling to the next is a normative transition that takes place every year for most students. Typically, this is not traumatic for most children and is usually exciting at the beginning of the school year. However, when the grade level transition involves students' moving to a new or strange building, this can be a cause of undue stress and anxiety for the students. If the move becomes extremely stressful, it can sometimes cause students to withdraw from participating in school activities. Alspaugh (1998), found that students who came from the grade organization of a 6-8 middle school suffer more academic losses than students who entered high school from the K-8 configuration.

The Middle School Movement occurred during the 1960's and 1970's in order to reorganize the middle grades and create an improved transition for students to succeed in high school. According to Akos and Galassi (2004), the necessity for a successful transition process for students was imperative to ensure academic success at the high school. Some schools have grade configurations of 6-8 or 7-8 or even K-8 depending on the facility needs of different school districts or geographic locations of particular buildings. The different types of grade configurations in the schools suggest a lack of consensus in the best placement of the middle grades and ninth grade in the organizational framework of the K-12 education.

According to Neild, Stoner-Eby and Furstenberg (2008), the decision to have ninth grade housed in the same building with the tenth through twelfth graders was typically made for practical financial reasons rather than a student's need for academic



success or socialization. Overcrowding was one of the main concerns cited by school leaders when making the decision for placement of ninth grade students. Additionally, there were other factors cited such as more specialized curriculum for the sixth through eighth graders as well as athletic and extracurricular programs located at the high school campus in which ninth graders participate. Hertzog and Morgan (1998) noted that sometimes the relationship between educators at the middle school and high school deteriorates as one campus or department blames the other for the challenges that ninth grade students face when arriving to high school.

Hertzog and Morgan (1998) documented that one of the greatest disparities that exists in K-12 organizations is the transition from middle school eighth grade to high school's ninth grade. The authors claimed that throughout the K-12 system, the other grade transitions are much more straightforward. Indeed, preschool to kindergarten has similar organization and goals for students; fifth grade is similar to sixth grade; even their senior year in high school students may elect to take classes to better prepare them for college. However, in many school systems throughout the nation, there is very little to prepare students transitioning from the eighth grade in middle school to the ninth grade in high school (Hertzog & Morgan, 1998). The differences between middle school and high school are a source of tension and challenges for the student, especially when one considers the expectations of high school teachers versus the middle school teachers. High school instruction commands a definite shift from focusing on the well-being of the whole child to subject content of the academic courses (Smith, 1997).

Rice (2001) reported that a critical factor in whether or not a student has an academically successful freshman year is if the transition from eighth grade was done without a great deal of difficulty. The point at which a student moved from one grade to the next in organized schooling was how Rice (2001) chose to define the term transition. Hertzog and Morgan (1998) stated that high schools with nominal or no plan for transitioning ninth graders (two or fewer strategies), incurred a ninth grade retention rate of 40% or greater; schools who were more aggressive in their ninth grade transition programs reported retention rates of less than 40%. Alspaugh (1998) conducted a study on school transitioning of students where he compared 48 school districts' academic performance based on the amount or number of transitions a student completed from kindergarten to twelfth grade. With each case and transition, Alspaugh's study reported that students lost academic achievement. The highest losses were recorded in the subjects of science and reading (Alspaugh, 1998). Naturally, one could presume that the traditional American agricultural schedule with ten weeks off in the summer could also play a role in the transition process.

Alspaugh's (1998) study also recognized that school and grade transitions were particularly demanding for those students who grapple with identity issues, independence, uncertainty regarding high school academic expectations, and a deficiency of academic preparedness. Hertzog and Morgan (1998) stated:

The transition to high school comes at an inopportune time for new teenagers developmentally. They are no longer mentally and physiologically children and their minds and bodies have become awakened to new stimuli. Even their social

status changes drastically upon entering high school. In the spring of students' eighth grade year, they have been transformed into seniors of their school. Their actions, speech, and overall air are similar to those of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade counterparts. These same students, however, attempt to be unseen during the fall of their entry year at the high school. (p. 94)

Hertzog and Morgan (1999) conducted a study in Georgia that investigated the self-perception of ninth grade students. Students reported a decline in five areas as they made the transition from eighth to ninth grades: physical appearance, romantic appeal, overall behavior, job competence and self-worth (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). When students were asked what issue was most essential to them, the predominant response was a desire to increase focus on close personal relationships with their peers, confirming the significance and influence of peer relationships in the ninth grade (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999).

Students who already possessed fragile self images and poor self confidence can be tremendously overwhelmed when leaving middle school and entering high school. During the ninth grade year, students who are in the 9-12 grade configuration can face immense peer anxiety while also struggling academically. If students have been somewhat disillusioned with school before entering the ninth grade, their experiences in their freshman year may be the critical factor in whether or not they graduate from high school (Walsh, 2002). Contradictory to Fulk's (2003) findings, Walsh found that many high school math and science teachers reported that incoming freshman students are not prepared for the rigors of high school.

In an additional transition study, Eanes (2005) focused on the subject of high school transition, concentrating on the resilience of a transition plan connected to student attendance, discipline and grades. Students who were identified by the middle school faculty team as at-risk due to concerns in one to five areas that included attendance, behavior, social interaction, academics and retention were included in Eanes' sample. Eanes presented a transition plan to concentrate on three particular areas of attendance, grades and discipline with the objective of supporting the students in their pursuit to graduate from high school.

Throughout the study, Eanes (2005) also believed it was important to include qualitative data from the students' perspectives regarding their emotions in the transition from middle school to high school. The comments from students in the study validate the need for transition assistance in order to ease anxiety. Although Eanes' study utilized a limited number of students, her findings and conclusions are consistent with other researchers and studies on the need for transition programs for ninth graders upon entering high school (Eanes, 2005; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Smith, 1997; Walsh, 2002).

Educators, parents, and researchers agree that children require assistance with transitioning in order to be successful in their high school career. Smith (1997) defined transition as "traveling between definable and different points" (p. 2). The two points examined for Smith's study were childhood and adulthood. Even though no particular age of adolescence was given, Smith (1997) identified the area between childhood and adulthood as adolescence. Smith observed that adolescents required help since they are

in the middle of physical, educational and emotional transformation as they shift between childhood and adulthood.

Chapman and Sawyer (2001) focused on the necessity for ninth grade transition plans, and analogous to the findings of Eanes (2005), acknowledged the need of teenagers' social adjustment to high school. The authors advocated that schools educating different grade levels must work mutually to achieve improved high school preparedness. The authors reminded readers that concerns faced by students in high school include but are not limited to the following: 1) interacting with a larger number of peers, 2) increased interaction with authoritative adults, 3) and understanding how maintain a balance between the innate need for social validation with the need to increase independence. Chapman and Sawyer (2001) pointed out information from a report from the National Center for Education Statistics (1992) which claimed that "four out of five students reported the academic challenge was greater in ninth grade" than in any other previous grade, combined with, "one out of five reporting increase feelings of isolation during the ninth grade year" (p. 1). Data such as these highlight the magnitude of analyzing the research and suggesting plans for successful student transition.

Cadwallader, Farmer, and Cairns (2003) explained the entry into high school as typically connected with, "the initiation of romantic relationships, part-time employment, and learning to drive an automobile" when describing challenges related to teenagers outside of the academic realm (64). Cadwallader et al. (2003) matched children who had been classified as exceptionally aggressive or at-risk with a sample who had not been identified as aggressive. The longitudinal study covered the ages of

ten to twenty and targeted the age of fifteen (Cadwallader et al., 2003). Findings from the study suggested that some of the students labeled at-risk or aggressive were able to improve their functioning and coping strategies while the others who were classified as non-risk or unaggressive showed a marked deterioration in social adjustment in their first year of high school (Cadwallader et al., 2003). Although the Cadwallader et al. (2003) study utilized a limited sample, remarkably, the outcome revealed that both groups of students were challenged by the transition to high school.

Several conclusions have been made regarding the differences in organizational structure of ninth grade students from the older tenth through twelfth grade students. Ninth graders consistently had the highest number of tardies and also the poorest attendance percentages compared with other grade levels. One explanation of this phenomenon is the fact that many of these attendance and tardy problems belong to the retained ninth graders. These students are usually in the second or third year of the ninth grade. Since students may not move up to the next grade classification until they achieve a certain number of credits, they are classified as ninth or tenth grade until they are able to achieve the grade credit formality.

While it appears that the original establishment of middle schools was designed to concentrate on the needs of the young teenager, including ninth graders as they entered high school, ninth graders have been caught in the crossfire of financial practicalities, extracurricular driven mentality and the content focus of the high school. Careful planning by educators has not taken place for ninth graders by educators at either the middle school or high school levels.

Educators continue to ponder the best place for ninth grade placement in the organizational school framework (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004). Notwithstanding the current problems of the 9-12 school models, it is the predominant choice for many school systems in the United States. However, in the past decade more and more educators are taking a hard look at the 9-12 model and changing it to house ninth graders in a separate campus to isolate them from the younger adolescents as well as the older teenagers in the 10-12 grades. Nevertheless, one can argue that the answer is far more complex than simply isolating ninth graders. Educators must continue to respond to the needs of the whole child who is in the ninth grade rather than specializing and focusing completely on subject content.

In summary, placement of ninth graders has presented a conundrum for K-12 educators. Economic practicality, content specialization and athletics have driven facility placement of ninth graders in most school districts. Data has revealed that high schools with little or no plan to transition eighth graders to the ninth grade have a much higher ninth grade retention rate. Students entering the ninth grade reported tremendous anxiety involving peer relationships while also feeling as though they were lacking in academic skills. High schools that possess a cohesive plan to assist students with coping strategies during the eighth to ninth grade transition phase experience lower retention rates in their ninth grade cohort.

### **Male Student Success or Failure**

Researchers who have analyzed the dropout dilemma more specifically have discovered that the high failure rate of ninth graders is attributed to males since they are

more likely to fail core classes than females (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). The reasons for failure of males in high school may be 1) males are more likely to be targeted for gang recruitment, 2) males are more typically disciplined due to teacher disruption referrals; therefore, they miss more instruction time, 3) in some urban or large high schools, teachers perceive males as threats, 4) coping skills utilized by males may include acting out or hostility to deal with adversity rather than asking for help (Roderick & Camburn, 1999).

Researchers have determined that males are more likely to drop out than females (Tremblay, 2000). However, the dropout dilemma is complex and multi-faceted. Added to that complexity is the differentiation of gender. There are some predictive components to particular variables of the male dropout such as academic, familial obligations, social reasons and economics (Rumberger, 1987). Nevertheless, none of these variables examined individually or in combination can actually predict whether a student will fail to obtain his high school diploma (Rumberger, 1983; Hymel, Comfort, Schonert-Reichelk & McDougall, 1996).

Studies have concentrated on characteristics of schools and schooling to comprehend why boys are not performing as well as girls in the academic setting. A primary contention for male underachievement is that schools as institutions are regarded as feminine establishments (Parry, 2000). For instance, the lack of male role models in schools, irrelevancy of the curriculum, and gender stereotyping by educators combine to produce the reasons why men may consider that education is a feminine endeavor (Jha & Kelleher, 2006; Parry, 2000). The literature on socialization has



investigated how early in life, boys are directly and indirectly being formed by the cultural standard of what it means to be a man. These societal implications of manhood occur in schools, with educators assessing boys in an inferior manner and recommending them for special education classes. Additionally, male peers pressure each other to cultivate behaviors such as apathy to school and high absenteeism. Taylor and Graham's (2007) study determined that by the seventh grade Latino and African American boys were more likely to respect and value other male acquaintances that were underachieving in school.

Research maintains the findings which imply that the antidote to disengagement is created by a nurturing climate that cultivates relationships, personal connections, or the feeling that the individual is a viable member of the community (Pollack, 2000; Rotundo, 1983). Pollack (2000) worked extensively with adolescent males and found that when these young men were misunderstood, disengaged and distressed, they wore a mask of cool invincibility. In his research, Pollack disclosed that the portrayal of the adolescent boy as "one obsessed with himself, sports, cars, sex and being cool," is a myth (p. 3). The fictional depiction of being strong, not following rules, surliness to teachers, and spending time with his cool friends is not actually either the purpose or objective of adolescent males. Pollack (1999) contends that such fictional stories are not only inexact but are overwhelmingly and unfavorably manipulating the male adolescent's ability to perform by reducing the breadth of emotional and or behavioral expectations.

Society has cultural expectations of independence from boys who are only five or six years old when they enter school and again during their adolescent years. The expectation from American society is that parents must “cut the apron strings” when enrolling the boy in school, sports, jobs, and dating, thereby forcing an early severance from the parents or other family members (Pollack, 2000). The dilemma is not in turning adolescent boys loose on the world but launching them with a lack of understanding for true life realities, a lack of nurturing support, an inability to articulate their feelings, and usually with no opportunity of returning home or altering their route (Pollack, 2000). Therefore, young men are coerced into disassociation which is depicted as self-reliance and necessary for boys to make the break from family and become men (Pollack, 2000). Pollack (2000) stated that adolescent boys may at times feel humiliated at their own vulnerability, so they mask their feelings. Adolescent boys who remain bonded to their family, receiving emotional support and guidance, will generally manage better knowing that the family network is there to catch him if he stumbles (Pollack, 2000).

Teenage boys learn to camouflage vulnerable feelings, even continual depression or consideration of suicide (Pollack, 2000). The depressed male may behave in a sullen or withdrawn manner, or he may become easily agitated, extremely aggressive, and possess rage (Pollack, 2000). Pollack further articulated that adolescent males may get in trouble at school or experiment with drugs or alcohol; thus, teenage males who suppress the need for family nurturing while increasing emotional disengagement may develop serious depression (Pollack, 2000). Additionally, many young men conceal their needs for affection and love and subconsciously choose to hide “behind the mask of masculine

autonomy and strength” (Pollack, 1999, p. 13). In his studies of boys, Pollack (1999) discovered that some boys suffer in silence, giving people around them the impression that close personal relationships were not needed. However, increasing knowledge of the adolescent male gender stereotyping will promote open dialogue in hopes of turning disengagement to reattachment (Pollack, 1999).

While studying adolescent depression, Navarrete (1999) found that indications for female depression were symptoms such as being quiet or withdrawn. However, indications for adolescent male depression were more likely symptoms such as aggressiveness, disruption, and oppositional defiance (Navarrete, 1999). Indeed, Navarrete compared the depressed teenage male to that of a disobedient child, which typically resulted in disciplinary action. Unfortunately, this type of reaction leaves the young man untreated for depression (Navarrete, 1999).

In summary, there are many different reasons why males are more likely to drop out of high school than females. Typically, males are more likely to be a discipline problem in the classroom. Therefore, they miss significant instructional time when sent to the principal's office or disciplined with In School Suspension or Out of School Suspension. Even more profound is the societal expectation of boys and young men to appear self-reliant without a need for familial nurturing. As Pollack (2000) stated, boys who are suffering will oftentimes hide behind a mask of indifference or defiance. This mask perpetuates discipline in the school and a feeling by authoritative adults that young men must be disciplined rather than nurtured. Some educators refer to heavy handed discipline as the "pipeline to dropout" since these male students miss an extraordinary

amount of instructional time with their classmates. Additionally, once the pattern of misbehavior is set, teachers and administrators may subconsciously set limited academic and behavioral expectations on these particular male students.

According to the data, males tend to have higher failure rates in high schools than their female counterparts. It is compelling to reflect upon the obstacles males have when navigating the traditional academic classroom. It is more remarkable when one layers other challenges to male academic success – difficulties like ethnicity, poverty, language fluency, and a general lack of understanding about the American educational culture. Issues and problems effecting Latino students in public schools are numerous. Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, and Rosales (2005) outline the several different areas that impact Latino students in American schools such as a language barrier, the need to work, and the need to attend to family matters like childcare. The aforementioned topics discussed in this review of literature were critical in order to frame the overall problem of male underachievement in U.S. schools. Nonetheless, the latter portion of this literature review will now focus on Latino generational characteristics, acculturation, linguistic concerns and issues, familism, academic identity, Latino historical perspectives, stereotypes, and teacher expectations in the classroom to help the reader better understand the specificity of Latino culture orientations and obstacles to academic achievement in U.S. schools.

### **Latino Generational Characteristics and Acculturation**

United States citizens of Latino descent are the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic minority group in North America. Indeed, Latinos are responsible for 49% of the

United States population growth between 2004-2005 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Moreover, predictions by the United States census forecast that in the period from 2008-

2050, the Latino/Hispanic population will triple from 46.7 million to 132.8 million.

Thus, one in every three Americans will be of Latino/Hispanic descent. By 2050, the

children of America will include 62% faces of color up from 44% today (U. S. Census

Bureau, 2010). Latinos will comprise 39% of the faces of color, which is up from 22% in

2008.

In the United States' Eurocentric culture immigrant youth typically have difficulty with identity development. Many challenges face schools with the growth explosion of the Latino population. More than 25 percent of Latinos students live in poverty and more than one third have parents who have not completed a high school education. However, the optimistic side of these data is the fact that registered Latino voters ranked education as one of their highest priorities according to a poll taken by the Pew Hispanic Center (2009).

Added to the dilemma of explosive growth and underachievement in school, minimal research has been dedicated to the study of within-group diversity. For the most part, comparison studies scrutinized the topic of between-group differences (Schneider, Smith, Poisson, & Kwan, 1997), such as Latino/Hispanic contrasted to Whites or Asians versus Europeans. Buriel and Cardoza (1988), however, did investigate Mexican American immigrant residents in the United States, and suggested the identification of particular distinctions amid first and second generations. In their account, the first generation consists of persons born in Mexico who in due course immigrated to the

United States. Their immigration was completed when they were children, young adults or adults. The second generation consists typically of persons born in the United States whose mother or father was born in Mexico. The second generation family members do not speak Spanish as frequently as the first generation, and are more integrated into conventional American society. It is plausible this classification also pertains to immigrants from other Latin American countries.

Valenzuela (1999) perceived definite variations in identity development across generational status (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. born) and level of cultural assimilation. Their generational status, extent of segregation within their personal ethnic peer groups, and collective differences amid immigrant and U.S. born Latino students are all aspects that mold their schooling experiences. Meanwhile, the U.S. school system diminishes Latino culture by rejecting a multicultural curriculum and defends mainstream students' misconceptions of their identity and cohesion. Thus, immigrant and U.S. born Latino students lose the appreciation of their experiences and camaraderie within their own peer groups while also participating in a school system that does not foster their culture. For example, educators and policymakers encourage assimilation and losing one's original culture, consequently distancing students' experiential knowledge.

Umana-Taylor and Bacama-Gomez (2003) stated that teenagers in the United States said they spend more time with their peers than with adults. Most teenagers' ages 14 to 18 years of age in the United States spend the majority of their time with classmates and other friends at such locations as schools, malls, game rooms or entertainment parks. In contrast, Umana-Taylor and Bacama-Gomez (2003) contend that

teenagers in Mexico are counted on to help support the family economically alluding to the depressed economic condition of the country. Reports from the Mexican Public Education Ministry (Secretaria de Education Publica, 2001) emphasized that in 2000-2001, 46.8% of youth in Mexico attended high school. This could indicate that there is less intermingling between teenagers in educational surroundings and possibly an elevated network between teenagers and adults in employment situations.

Empirical substantiation on the subject of generation status indicates that first generation Latino adolescents demonstrated a reduced amount of unsafe behaviors and a higher level of social interaction along with educational achievement. Various researchers suggested that first generation Latinos are likely to involve themselves in conduct connected to maximum scholastic accomplishment. First generation teenagers appeared to be more impervious to peer pressure, and are less likely to get involved using illegal drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. Umana-Taylor and Bacama-Gomez (2003) investigated the within-group diversity of immigrant Latinos with family members born in the United States as those variations associated to refusal to go along with peer pressure. The researchers conveyed that generational status was a substantial forecaster of the effects of peer pressure among this population. They inferred that teenagers who have resided in the United States for longer periods of time and who had a family member born in the U.S. were less resilient to peer pressure, while other immigrants who had resided in America for a lesser amount of time, and did not have family members born in the U.S. were better able to resist peer pressure. The researchers theorized that

their discoveries could be the product of the various expectations within U.S. and Latino/Hispanic cultures concerning teenagers' behaviors.

For immigrants and particularly for their children, acculturation to the United States is unavoidable over a period of time, but the stages of acculturation throughout generations and how individuals acculturate differ by immigrant group, location in the U.S., prior level of education and socioeconomic status. Whereas duration of time in the U.S. is not particularly an obstacle, duration of time one resides in the U.S. and amplified contact to the majority culture are likely to reduce academic ambitions (Rodriguez, & Kolowki, 1998). In Central and Latin America, the majority of teenagers are not relating to peers in high school, rather they are working to help support their families.

In her research on Mexican youth in American schools, Valenzuela (1999) argues that one consequence of subtractive schooling is the erosion of students' social capital. Valenzuela contends that within a span of two generations, the "social de-capitalization" of Mexican youth was changed, pervasive, and insidious. Coleman (1988) defines social capital as a function of a group. This kind of capital occurs when social interaction takes advantage and utilizes the resources "residing within the web of the social relationship" (p. 27). This give and take relationship generates social capital when they facilitate the realization of goals that cannot be accomplished independently. Therefore, for some of the research participants in Valenzuela's study, "academic achievement is not an individual attribute but a collective process and specifically one that issues from non-rational, emotional commitment among individuals who are



embedded in a supportive network” (p. 7). Valenzuela cites examples of social capital playing out in her study. For example, when students were in study groups tutoring one another and ex-teachers from Mexico who were parents of one of the study participants. Valenzuela found no such social capital for the US born youth. The existence or lack of social capital did have a consequence on academic identity and academic achievement according to this study’s results.

Despite federal mandates that attempt to narrow the achievement gap between minority students and their non-minority peers, educational achievement among Latino students remains as a persistent dilemma in United States education. According to Valenzuela (1999), minority students typically receive a smaller amount of quality instruction and an additional amount of test preparation instruction. Regardless of government mandates that attempt to close the achievement gap, these policies may actually perpetuate instructional practices that focus on teaching to the specific standardized test instead of higher-level thinking skills that are needed to master concepts. Teachers and administrators are so focused on students passing the state standardized test that sometimes the bigger picture of critical thinking and processing are lost in the instructional frenzy.

Along with the generational and acculturation concerns, language emerges as a significant barrier in attaining an education in the U.S. Many of these English Language Learners enter U.S. schools with varying levels of fluency in their native language. Research confirms that teachers in the junior high and high school levels assume ELL students have already acquired a certain level of study skills required to succeed in

learning new content in the classroom. Additionally, the language barrier not only affects the Spanish speaking children but also affects the interactions of Spanish speaking parents with their children's schools. Many parents, especially immigrant parents, may face language barriers when attempting to communicate with faculty at their child's school.

**Language.** Spanish is the preferred language spoken in the homes of many Latino students even if the student was born in the United States (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwantoro, 2005). There were 5.1 million English Language Learners (ELLs) in Pre-K through twelfth grades during the 2004-05 school year, which is a 56% increase in the previous decade (NCELA, 2009). To complicate matters further, many ELLs enter U.S. public schools at different language fluency levels depending on the type of school attended previously. Most of the ELLs are at the elementary levels; however, the majority of ELL elementary students were not foreign born (Buriel, 1993). According to Capps, in the year 2000, 18% of ELLs were U.S. born with U.S. born parents (third generation), while 24% were foreign born, and 59% were U.S. born with foreign born parents (second generation). In the secondary grades, 27% of the ELLs were second generation, while 29% were third generation, and 44% were first generation (Capps).

Research has concentrated on variables such as language use, proficiency, and bilingualism to elucidate the academic underachievement of Latino students (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Latino children comprise the largest group of limited English proficient students in the United States (Garcia, 2001). Difficulties associated

with language use epitomize a frequent and rather weighty acculturation stressor challenging Latino adolescents within formal school settings (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). The acquisition of academic language in a second language can take up to seven years (Cummins, 1989), which must be considered when teaching a sequential and conceptual curriculum such as mathematics (Khisty, 2006). Regrettably, Spanish speaking students are often scheduled in English only classrooms at the secondary level, with a negligible amount of English as a second language instruction, and even those who are bilingual are not essentially literate in both English and Spanish (Khisty, 2006).

Specifically, it has been discovered that students who speak the language of the test typically have an elevated academic achievement compared to those that do not (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). This discovery has repercussions for education, particularly when drawing on test results for making choices about student placement, teacher effectiveness, and schooling success.

Adequate schooling in the first language literacy skills is crucial to acquiring academic success in the English language curriculum (Allender, 1998; Collier, 1995; Krashen, 2000). Frequently, ELLs do not have the cognitive foundation because they have not previously grasped academic vernacular or attained essential proficiency that permits them to utilize what they already know (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1989). Furthermore, high school educators assume that most ELLs have acquired these basic proficiencies, and teachers continue to teach at a level that sets the EL student on the path of failure (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1989). Because of these traditional teaching styles, alienation of the ELLs from classroom work and from their

peers further intensifies the friction that usually exists between the ELL's from school and home life, thus broadening the gap between high school academic demands and cultural and familial support (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Krashen (2000) reports that bilingual education for Latino students in the United States refers to the acquisition of English and the preservation and or loss of Spanish. Additionally, Krashen argued that there are three elements for educating students to assist with their acquisition of an additional language. First, by having the chance to learn instructional content in their native language (Spanish for Latinos), students will understand and read at an elevated comprehensible level in the second language. Second, improving student's literacy abilities in their first language will facilitate transfer to the second language and make it less complicated in their second language. Third, teaching students in English in understandable ways through the straightforward reinforcement of English language development, such as English as a second language classes and sheltered subject matter teaching. These elements are established on the belief that it is easier for students to acquire a language they already comprehend, and after these students are taught to read in one language, they can transfer those reading abilities to acquire a second language.

According to Krashen (1996), programs that have the three elements described above have a high degree of success. Cummins (1989) and Greene (1997) have reported that there is a relationship between well-designed bilingual programs and higher acquisition of academic English. Furthermore, Hakuta (2001) testified to the United States Commission on Civil Rights and stated that bilingual education models utilizing

transfer of knowledge, contextualized language, and affective and cognitive variables, produced significantly improved outcomes in academic achievement. Hakuta's argument relied on three components: First, learned abilities in the first language can be transferred to a second language. Second, by teaching students in their first language, contextualized language can be expedited and enriched. Third, confidence, reassurance, and self-efficacy of accomplishment in educational settings are acquired when a student's native language is valued and used in instruction.

On the contrary, advocates of English only curriculums have claimed that English immersion programs are better than bilingual education. One of the strongest contentions claims that many immigrants achieve in school without bilingual education. However, Krashen (1996), maintained that most of the first generation immigrant children placed in English immersion curriculums have some familiarity of subject matter, particularly those who have already had some education in Mexico or other Latin countries. Therefore, they may possess some literacy in Spanish. Additionally, Hakuta (2001) advocates that Latino students who have had academic success in English only curriculums typically come from homes in which there is a high level of education. They also are in schools where teachers possess the proficiency to converse in the language of the students. Also, there is a school-wide environment sustaining a high level of learning. Furthermore, Hakuta contended that these programs tend to be the exception instead of the rule.

In addition to the language difficulties experienced by many Latino students, studies have established that secondary teachers habitually conduct class under the belief

that students have already attained particular levels of learning skills and these skills can be accessed to make the lesson content achievable (Newell & Smith, 1999). Spanos (2000) stated that many teachers in different disciplines presume that ELLs have already developed note-taking and paraphrasing skills that will enable them to succeed in learning new material in a self-sufficient manner. Indeed, Newell and Smith (1999) conducted a case study of a successful high school program for ELLs and discovered that instruction accentuated these higher level learning skills to prepare the ELLs for success in the classroom.

**Thomas and Collier.** Thomas and Collier (2002) conducted a comprehensive, longitudinal study that is commonly cited in English Language Learner (ELL) literature. Their study included both quantitative and qualitative data collected from twenty-three schools in fifteen states (Thomas & Collier, 2002). The quantitative data consisted of norm-referenced achievement tests from 1982-2003 and examined socioeconomic status, primary language proficiency, previous education experience, and second language proficiency. Thomas and Collier (2002) discovered that English Language Learners who were involved in a 90/10 Two-Way Immersion curriculum exceeded their grade level in English. Additionally, ELL's who participated in an English only immersion program, decreased achievement in math and reading by the fifth grade by almost 1 standard deviation. Even more alarming was the fact that this group had the largest number of dropouts (Thomas & Collier, 2002). The findings from this research was that academic achievement of ELLs was higher in the two way immersion curriculum than those of students in other programs by the end of sixth grade (Thomas & Collier, 2002). As stated

later by Rossell (2004) a limitation of this study was that the differences in student groups were not controlled. Students could have moved in or out of the study group.

When examining research that explains techniques using English for teaching ELL students, a number of dilemmas are brought to light. First, the age of the participants and their experience to the academic world in their native language and in English is unique to each individual (Slavin & Cheung, 2004). What is the adequate amount of time for these students to learn the subject matter in English to be successful on the standardized tests? Additionally, students who are participating in longitudinal studies could create a characteristic bias. They may start in an English only curriculum and move into a two way immersion program, therefore the research findings may be skewed (Christian, 1995; Lopez & Tashakkori, 2004; Slavin & Cheung, 2004). Because of these variables, drawing conclusions from many of the studies is difficult for several reasons: (a) program variation; (b) assessment instrument variation; (c) data collection variation; and (d) variations in participant sample selection.

Two way immersion curriculums are typically initiated in schools where populations of English speaking students are in very high proportion to the English language learner. Ramirez, Pasta, Yuen, Billings, and Ramey (1991) found that the exit percentages of ELLs had a direct connection to the size of the Spanish speaking student population. In Addition, schools with English only curriculums had smaller populations of Spanish speaking students than schools with two way immersion programs. The ratio of students in English only classrooms and two way immersion classrooms may reflect the particular placement of students according to their reading capability in their native

language. Indicating that if an ELL can read fluently in their native language they may be scheduled automatically in an English only immersion classroom with the expectation that learning to read in English will not be difficult. This practice could distort research findings (Lopez & Tashakkori, 2004; Ramirez, et al., 1991).

**The sheltered instruction observation protocol.** Research concerning effective instruction for English language learners has recently been published, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), portrays sheltered instruction as a successful program for teaching ELLs. Sheltered instruction is described as making subject matter understandable for ELLs while they are also learning to be proficient in English (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). SIOP is a researched based, articulate, practical model of instructional strategies for ELLs that includes teacher preparation and instructional indicators. In addition, SIOP was developed in a national research project, "The Effects of Sheltered Instruction on the Achievement of Limited English Proficient Students" from 1996-2003. The project was supported by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE). The goal of this model is to train teachers and administrators in quality instruction by providing a framework that connects instructional strategies and methods to facilitate effective pedagogy.

Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008) emphasize the necessity for ELLs to process not only the academic language, social language and subject matter curriculum but they also acknowledge that academic achievement is developed from "explicit socialization and implicit cultural expectations" (p. 5). Educators must engage students in culturally responsive teaching and incorporate cultural differences in teaching strategies, social



interaction and language usage (Bartolome, 1994; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2008). The SIOP self assessment offers concrete examples of sheltered instruction that enrich and expand instructional approaches. SIOP research focused on four large urban schools in which teachers were trained in the implementation of effective strategies in their classrooms. Echevarria, Vogt, and Powers (2005) found that in order to make a profound difference in classroom instruction, teacher professional development must be ongoing and meaningful. It is not adequate for teachers to employ random approaches for ELLs; although those strategies help they do not perpetuate student development of academic literacy, which is crucial for their academic success (Echevarria, Vogt, & Powers, 2005). Ultimately, many bilingual and linguistic scholars believe that the acquisition of English and the retention and loss of Spanish among bilingual Latino students relies on educational programs in which Spanish is highly valued and part of the curriculum.

**Language brokering and transmission.** Language brokering is an expression used to depict translation and interpreting between linguistically and culturally different groups. There is a rapidly increasing quantity of research on language brokering and the effect of the experience, particularly on language minority children. Tse (1995) introduces her work by saying,

People who broker, unlike formal translators, influence the contents and nature of the messages they convey, and ultimately affect the perceptions and decisions of the agents for whom they act. The brokers, in turn, are affected linguistically and affectively in different manners and degrees by brokering experiences. (p. 181)

Children who broker (usually for their parents or extended family) acquire the real world skill that interpreter training programs attempt to provide and cultivate. From the explanation above, Tse (1995) frames her work in a social perspective of language (Gumperz, 1971), and turns to a discussion of language minority children and research that has directed work with language brokers. She references Malakiff and Hafuta's (1991) research on translation skills and awareness, and presents her research as an attempt to explore their suggestion that "brokering is an innate ability of all bilinguals."

Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, and Moran (1998) utilized Tse's (1995) findings and examined the effect of brokering on some particular characteristics of bilingual Latino youth. The investigation centered on Spanish speaking adolescents in the greater Los Angeles area. The research examined the connection of language brokering with four variables that the authors hypothesized would be positively impacted by the experiences offered by actively translating and interpreting in diverse settings. These variables include academic performance, biculturalism, academic self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy. They used a review of the literature to theorize, "The many adult-like experiences of children who broker on a regular basis suggest that their cognitive and socio-emotional development may be accelerated relative to children of immigrant families who broker infrequently or not at all." (p. 286)

Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, and Moran (1998) investigated the effect of brokering on certain characteristics of adolescent development. The analyses in their results explored some of the affective suggestions of their findings with the correlations between language brokering, biculturalism, and social self-efficacy, inferring that

interpersonal experiences with two languages and two cultures may positively impact feelings of self-confidence in social interactions. This discovery appears to get more at the core of the impact that brokering can have on adolescent's lives. The manner in which this self-assurance emerges in school is likely to affect factors far beyond academic performance.

The consequences of language brokering depend a great deal on the environment in the home (Valdes, 2003). In one framework, language brokering may be a more positive experience because of factors like a supportive school and community. In other situations, language brokering may be a more negative experience due to factors such as poverty-stricken neighborhood or a generally negative community attitude towards immigrant populations. Meanwhile, families that encourage their language-brokering children will probably make it a more positive experience whereas the opposite may also occur when the family is not supportive. In order to objectively study the effects of language brokering, environmental and family pressures need to be held in account.

### **Latino Family Structure or Familism**

The family structure and traditions in the Latino family are important ingredients in shaping the Latino educational experience (Murillo, 1971). Merriam Webster (2010) defines familism as a social pattern in which the family accepts a place of supremacy over individual benefits within the family. Familism is multi-faceted and consists of shared commitment, reciprocity, and unity within one's own family entity (Rodriguez & Kolowki, 1998). Other researchers have described familism as possessing a strong sense of self-awareness and bond of relatives with both immediate and extended families. It

has been discussed that Latino families demonstrate stronger familism, solidarity, intergenerational exchange, and family support than their Anglo counterparts (Sabogal, Marin & Otero-Sabogal, 1987).

Keefe and Padilla (1987) propose that the immediate family is the most important family unit for Latinos. However, there is significant interaction in social settings with the extended family and they are often expected to be available for support when others are in need of help. In addition, the distinction continues even when taking into consideration professional level, completed education level, and years of residence in a particular city (Keefe, Padilla & Carlos, 1979).

Mexican-Americans are believed to place a higher value on familism than Anglos, to have more interactions with family members, and to rely on relatives more extensively for reciprocated assistance. In a study of European Americans, African American, and Mexican American families, Mindel (1980) discovered that Mexican-American families have the prevalent and most socially integrated family networks of all three ethnic groups. Montiel (1973) stated that among Latinos, the family is a supportive and protective unit, which is more valuable collectively than any of its single entities. Support within the Latino families operates as both the emotional resource and also delivers financial support for members in periods of anxiety and need.

Some critics have claimed that the Latino family is to blame for minimal educational attainment among Latino young people (Heller, 1966). Heller asserted that Latino families do not comprehend the full significance of a formal education, and they do not cultivate self-sufficiency and independence, which are key components to gaining

academic achievement. Heller's assertion is similar to work by McClelland and his colleagues, which propose that achievement inspiration is more intense when children are taught to be self-reliant (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953).

Nevertheless, many Latino youths with dominant family bonds persist in their academic achievement even though they possess dedicated mutually supporting inclinations.

Successive research indicates the positive relationship between self-sufficiency and achievement inspiration to be flawed within a Latino population (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Additionally, the authors insinuated that Latinos embrace world viewpoints which concentrate more on familiarizing oneself to others instead of focusing on individuality and self-sufficiency. Therefore, McClelland's model of achievement motivation may be inadequate in terms of its pertinence to faces of color as members of these groups may gain academic achievement for reasons dissimilar to their European American counterparts (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco (1995) stated that the Mexican American cultural circumstances stress success and the concept that hard work is the means to accomplishment while also positioning an elevated meaning on interdependence, familism, and aiding and obtaining assistance within the family. Investigation from a study performed by these researchers (1989) defends this thought. They executed a trial that evaluated responses on the first card of the Thematic Apperception Test (Murray, 1943). Findings advocated amounts of achievement motivation to be comparable for Anglo and Central American subjects. However, Anglo participant narratives concentrated on departing from the family in order to accomplish for oneself while

Central American subjects' narratives concentrated on working hard to become someone and then returning to help the family. This is characteristic of the Latino family with the cooperative disposition of this population. Within the Latino family unit, the necessities of the collective unit supplant those of the individual, whereas the European American culture emphasizes and teaches competition, self-sufficiency, and autonomy (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Thus, while Anglo Americans tend to value individualism, achievement, and competence, Latinos value the well-being of the family unit over those of the individual person (Falicov, 1982).

In her study on Latino adolescents, Suarez-Orozco (1995) asserted that most Mexican American students consider formal education as valuable and important to a high-quality life and opportunity in careers. First generation immigrants tend to demonstrate the highest levels of optimism and anticipation that schooling will facilitate them to accomplish upward mobility. On the other hand, it has been mentioned that succeeding generations may be less hopeful about formal education as the gateway to success. This same research affirms that elevated levels of acculturation have been related to a decline in viewpoints that formal schooling will be advantageous in advancing to a lucrative future.

### **Academic Identity**

A straightforward description of an academic identity is how one perceives himself as intellectual beings or learners. Essentially, an individual's formal educational experiences reconcile their academic identity. Ogbu (1998) contemplated why some Latinos are not successful in our American school system. Even though Ogbu's studies

were carried out a couple of decades ago, he discovered distinctions among different ethnicities' academic achievement to assist us in empathizing the diverse schooling experiences of the groups studied. Ogbu (1998) classified ethnic groups into voluntary (immigrant) and involuntary (non-immigrant). Voluntary minorities decided to immigrate to the U.S. dreaming of improved prospects, and they did not perceive their assimilation into the U.S. culture as being compulsory by Anglos. An example of this type of minority would be Mexican immigrants. Involuntary minorities, alternatively, are those who have been dominated, colonized and confined. Examples of this type of minority would be Mexican-Americans and/or Chicanos. Ogbu (1998) argued that his categories are based on a group's past and not their race.

In his study, Ogbu (1998) determined that each of these minority populations held related deficit opinions of their culture and language, minimal hope of educational achievement and discrimination from the majority of educators. However, it was the reactions to these deficit viewpoints that varied. Specifically, he concluded that voluntary and involuntary immigrants retain dissimilar insights, orientations, associations and symbolic ideas concerning formal schooling. Voluntary immigrants distinguished their education in the U.S. to be much improved in comparison to their native country. Thus, this contrast or binary form of orientation concerning schooling encounters directed the voluntary minorities to perceive U.S. education as superior to what they had experienced in their immediate history. Naturally, this comparison or binary orientation led them to diminish and consequently endure the cultural and language obstacles that they encountered in school. On the other hand, involuntary

minorities did not have such contrasts to formulate and accordingly their viewpoints were in comparison to their Anglo peers' educational opportunities. As a result, this classification of students perceived formal education more negatively than the voluntary minorities did. An additional factor that varies for each of these ethnic groups is how they defined educational accomplishment. The voluntary minorities believed that a respectable work ethic, earning respectable grades, and acting in a courteous manner to adults was the path to academic achievement. On the contrary, involuntary minorities were much more indifferent about the possibility of achievement. Even though they considered work ethic as a key to academic success, they did not think they would be able to rise above the inequities and marginalization they had encountered in school.

The positive and negative influences of peers and peer communities on the educational accomplishment of minority and immigrant students have been acknowledged by many researchers and academicians (Anderson, 1988; Cooper, Cooper, Azmitia, Chavira & Gullatt, 2002; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004; Gunn Morris & Morris, 2000; Moreno, 1999; Siddle-Walker, 1996). It has been established that Black and Latino students motivate each other to excel academically. According to Walker (2006):

Successful urban high school students benefit from attentive and interested parents, committed and caring teachers, and supportive peers who express in various ways that they share students' commitment and interest in education.

(p. 50)



In 1984, Lee identified a number of psychosocial factors that assist in academic achievement. One of the three main classifications pinpointed was linked to relationships and collective supports. This discovery implied that students with solid friendships providing elevated assistance and encouragement are bolstered by those friendships in attaining educational achievement. Therefore, if voluntary immigrants are not as easily pressured in a negative way, this could be one of the influential factors in their academic success.

Valenzuela's (1999) research examines how three different groups of literature; 1) subtractive assimilationist schooling; 2) caring and education; and 3) the lack of social capital for U. S. born Mexican youth, clarify the lack of academic achievement among Latinos students. Examining the "subtractive" assimilationist characteristic of formal education, Valenzuela (1999) contends that schools take away cultural 'resources' from students in various ways. Subtractive schooling includes subtractive assimilationist policies, uncaring school-based associations, and organizational configurations and customs. Additionally, subtractive schooling takes on a characteristic of assimilationist because it is designed to expunge student's culture and remove distinctiveness, thus trading a diverse cultural identity with an "Americanized" one. This subtraction and subsequent identity replacement deteriorates or prevents supportive collective bonds and depletes cultural resources important to academic success (Valenzuela, 1999).

Subtractive schooling rejects a Mexican-oriented student's description of education, which is grounded in Mexican culture. "Mexicanidad" or Mexican-ness is personified in the expression, *educación*. The parameters of *educación* have inferences

for pedagogy in that this established cultural concept “provides instructions on how one should live in the world. With its emphasis on respect, responsibility, and sociality, it provides a benchmark against which all humans are judged, formally educated or not” (p. 21). Particularly, immigrants assess themselves as “educated” concerning the degree in which they are caring, responsible, well-mannered and respectful human beings. For the Mexican immigrants in Valenzuela’s research – this durable Mexican ethnic distinctiveness surrounded in this cultural structure was a resource that aided immigrant students to rise above their subtractive schooling experiences, create an academic individuality and sustain academic achievement in school. For the second generation immigrant, this cultural resource had been subtracted or weakened by a history of assimilation procedures (Valenzuela, 1999). Subtractive schooling has great expense in educational, social and ambition capital. This subtractive nature of schools almost always guarantees that students, who start the year with minimal level of skills, as do the typical U.S. born youth, will struggle in academic success. However, students who arrive at school with more positive points of reference or greater skills, as do Mexican-born children, are better prepared to counteract the more negative elements of subtractive, assimilationist schooling” (pgs. 5-6). Thus, Valenzuela (1999) describes that what is commonly referred to as a dilemma of generational deterioration in school success is more accurately recognized as a quandary with subtractive schooling. For “Mexican American students, (or Chicano students) generational status plays an influential role in schooling experiences; first and often second generation students academically outperform their third and later generation counterparts” (p. 4).

Even though Mexican immigrant youth frequently encountered more blatant inequity at school and in U.S. communities, this discrimination was often from U.S. born youth (Valenzuela, 1999). Nonetheless, the immigrant student's perception of advancement and family improvement while still immersed in their culture and the appreciation of their schooling opportunity drove them to academic achievement. However, U.S. born youth expressed their entitlement to an educación when they questioned a more benevolent adaptation of schooling, which included caring relationships with their teachers. Regardless of their acculturation, these students still preserved a comprehension of education that is predominantly Mexican oriented (Valenzuela, 1999).

Consequently, what is commonly described as a problem of "generational decline in academic achievement" found in the Ogbu (1998) study was also discovered in Valenzuela's study. However, Valenzuela (1999) targeted the school practices behind the various perceptions, orientations, relationships and symbolic ideas about school than in the Ogbu study. This underachievement was due to the school's assimilationist procedures, uncaring school-based interactions, and institutional constructs and practices. All of which are characteristics of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999).

### **Historical Perspective of Latino Education**

In order to fully comprehend the historical ramifications of Latino education, one must go back several centuries to examine the experiences of Latinos as the United States was settled. Starting with the Spanish conquest of Mexico in the 1500's, Menchaca (1999) reports that racialization of Mexican-origin people began the

institutionalization of a racial order that designated inferior rights to Indians and mestizos (Menchaca, 1999). Racialization is an institutionally sanctioned racial order that assigns inferior legal and civil rights to Indians, afro-mestizos and mestizos (Menchaca, 1999). Beginning with Spain, education has been used to maintain and entrench these respective racial orders (Menchaca, 1999). As the Spanish army continued its expansion to what is presently the Southwest United States, they conquered, stole the land and racialized the indigenous peoples. Menchaca contends that ensuing societal stratification persisted until Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. The Mexican people living in what is now the Southwest area of the United States did encounter a short-lived reprieve from racialization customs until the Mexican-American War of 1846. By 1848, when the United States won the war, it started its own tradition of treating the Mexican original settlers as racially and intellectually substandard people with few civil or political rights (Menchaca, 1999).

Traditionally, education has been an arena in which the constitutional guarantee of liberty and justice for all was intended to be established. However, the United States court system has unfailingly demonstrated itself as a willing collaborator in education inequality. The courts have endorsed segregation, which has steadily delivered inferior education for generations of Mexican-origin students. San Miguel (1999) states that examples of the courts duplicitous endorsement of school inequities lie in court cases like *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1895, in which the court ruled that "separate but equal" was constitutional. Additionally, in 1918, Texas made it illegal to use any language other than English for instructional purposes (Spring, 2001). Further, in 1935, California law

allowed for the continued segregation of Mexican Americans based on the reasoning that they were racially "Indians" (Spring, 2001). As a final point, even though segregation had been outlawed for Mexican students in 1946 and 1948 in the court cases of *Mendez v. Westminster* and *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District*, these rulings were purposefully ignored throughout the Southwest area of the United States (Delgado-Bernal, 1998). Ultimately, the *de jure* segregation of Mexican students based on language needs in schools halted in the Southwest, but not before educational procedures fortifying socioeconomic inequity seriously oppressed generations of Mexican children (Gonzalez, 1990). The tradition of segregation and consequently substandard education continues to be the objectionable culprit in public education.

**Education in the Spanish-Mexican Era, 1519-1821.** The Catholic Church established the educational system after the Aztec schools were dismantled following the Spanish Conquest of the early 1500's (Menchaca, 1999). The Catholic school system was intended to acculturate, evangelize and educate the students of superior Spanish culture compared to the indigenous people (Menchaca, 1999). By 1575, The Spaniards were the dominant military and political power throughout Mexico (Menchaca, 1999). And, over time, formal education became less of a concern for the indigenous people. An increasing number of private schools were opened and available only to Spanish children. "Schooling Indians became the exception and catechism became the main mode of instructing them. Thus, the denial of education became entrenched as a mechanism of social control and a means by which the system of discrimination replicated itself" (Menchaca, 1999, p. 8).

In 1575, antimiscegenation laws were passed to prevent Spaniards from marrying indigenous peoples of the Mexico region, which further perpetuated racialization (Menchaca, 1999). Originally, the law was specifically targeted to higher government officials such as viceroys, presidents, mayors, fiscal officers and their families. However, a few years later the law was expanded to include all municipal employees and only the military personnel were exempted. Later, in 1592, it was dictated that only native European marriages were recognized by law. If a citizen decided to violate the law, they would be dismissed from employment immediately (Menchaca, 1999).

By the early 1600's a structured caste system was put in place by the Spanish government (Spring, 2001). This social structure divided people on the basis of inherited social status. The races identified by the government were: 1) *penisulares* or those born in Spain and who benefitted from the maximum societal, official and economic opportunities; 2) *criollos* or those who were full European descent but born in Mexico and appointed to less prominent positions than *penisulares*. However, the *criollos* still enjoyed the maximum societal, official and economic opportunities as the *penisulares*; 3) native people were those of full indigenous descent and could own land so they enjoyed more rights than the *mestizos* but they were at the bottom of the social ladder; 4) *mestizos* were those with both Spanish and indigenous descent. Even though *mestizos* were considered substandard to the Spaniards, they enjoyed more social influence than the natives. However, the *mestizos* were generally snubbed by the others and did not possess certain legal rights like owning property, which limited their economic

opportunity. *Mestizos* viewed migration as a way to overcome racialization and lack of opportunity (Menchaca, 1999).

By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, thousands of Spanish missionaries, military personnel, government workers, merchants, farmers and mestizos migrated to what is now the southwest portion of the United States (Spring, 2001). The Native American population was systematically removed by the Spanish army, enabling settlements and missions to be established. Educational centers were created in these missions and served the settlers needs as well as indoctrinating the indigenous people with the Spanish language, religion and culture. It was not until the late 1700's that local officials in the Southwest U.S. were able to establish public education. The first official public school was created in San Antonio, Texas when the Spanish Government issued a decree ordering mandatory attendance for all children at public school, paid for by local taxes. These schools were open to Christianized indigenous people and the children of settlers. However, the curriculum was taught in Spanish, and the indigenous children were not allowed to speak in their native language (Menchaca, 1999).

The caste system was beginning to cause major conflicts in Mexico, and revolution was brewing, so the Spanish Government abolished the caste system and gave the indigenous people and *mestizos* the same legal rights as those of whites (Menchaca, 1999). Public education was available to all free children. Gradually, public schools began to open with scant resources and limited qualified teachers (Spring, 2001).

**Latinos and public education of 1800's.** After the Mexicans won independence from Spain, the Mexican government set up public primary schools. Government

officials considered free public education as a way to flatten the economic stratification that had flourished under the Spanish caste system (Spring, 2001). In 1836, the Mexican federal government passed laws that required all Mexican towns to establish schools for mandatory primary education (San Miguel, 1999). Meanwhile, more schools were cropping up in southwestern areas like Texas and California. The governments in these southwestern areas passed laws similar to those of the Mexican government; however, school quality was limited due to scarcity of resources and few qualified teachers (Menchaca, 1999).

In the mid 1800's with the unwritten policy of Manifest Destiny urging Americans to colonize further west to the Pacific, Mexico eventually surrendered one-third of its original land to the United States (Weber, 2006). In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was ratified. At this time, there were more than 75,000 Mexicans who were living on land taken over by the United States (Weber, 2006). Ultimately, they were given the option to either return to Mexico and remain Mexican citizens or stay and become Americans (Spring, 2001). If no decision was made within one year, the native Mexicans automatically became American citizens. However, native Mexicans soon discovered that their citizenship was "second-class" and that American laws did not pertain in an equal manner to them (Weber, 2006). In the end, Mexicans located in the Texas and California territories lost their properties, and so the racialization of Mexicans began in the United States.

After the Mexican-American War, the Southwest became part of the United States. Because the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was breached, Mexicans who remained



in the area had little political, official or societal power (Menchaca, 1999). Before the Mexican-American war, formal schooling was set up by the Catholic Church and ethnic Mexicans. After the war, the Anglo politicians and protestant religious leaders started their own schools (San Miguel, 1999). White politicians established schools to indoctrinate “religious, secular and linguistic traditions, and to learn American customs and more readily integrate into the developing social order,” (San Miguel, 1999, p. 4). The protestant religious leaders had an agenda of evangelizing and converting all Native Americans, Mormons and Mexicans to protestant Christianity.

Both the Catholic and Protestant model schools assumed a considerable role in the social order of the southwest (San Miguel, 1999). Additionally, both schools taught the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Furthermore, not all of them included religion in their studies. Historians have noted differences in the Catholic schools’ utilization of the Spanish language, Mexican history and culture while attempting to assist the Mexican people's amalgamation into the Anglo society; whereas the Anglo schools’ focus appeared to be the eradication of non-English languages and non-American cultures (San Miguel, 1999). The white community was opposed to the involvement of the Mexicans and Catholic Church in the administration of schools (San Miguel, 1999). Ultimately, the Anglos united in their political control of the schools and conformity rather than diversity became the norm in the schools.

**Latinos and American education in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.** In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, schools became institutions dominated by the American cultural values. All people from different racial and ethnic groups were

allowed to participate in public school from first to twelfth grades. Because of the immense societal change in America, one-room schoolhouses began to give way to the standardized “factory” education program (San Miguel, 1999). During this period, there was also an increase in *de jure* segregation that lasted until the mid 20th century (Gonzalez, 1990). *De jure* segregation was an educational policy enacted by educators to modify educational programs and curriculum based on language and cultural capabilities of the students (Gonzalez, 1990). There were no formal laws that authorized this type of segregation, but educators utilized authority under state law to modify curriculum to the special needs of students (Gonzalez, 1990). Scarce resources, dilapidated facilities and minimally qualified teachers were the norm for generations of Latino students. During the mid 1930’s, 85% of the school districts in the Southwest were segregated (Gonzalez, 1990). Segregation in the schools served many purposes in the community social context as well as reinforcing the ideology that whites were superior and Latinos were inferior (Gonzalez, 1990).

Almost fifty years ago, the Supreme Court handed down the decision of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* that outlawed government imposed segregation of schools. The intent of this historic ruling was to advance educational achievement for all children especially the children of color. The expectation was to equalize education and close achievement gaps among African American students as well as other students of color. Although racial and ethnic gaps in educational achievement have narrowed over the past three decades, considerable gaps still exist with African American and Latino students as compared to white students (Kao & Thompson, 2003).

Latino students in large urban schools typically cope with difficult academic barriers. Badillo (2006) found that Latinos have the highest dropout and poverty rate in the United States and only 50% of Latinos living in America have a high school diploma. Consequently, it explains that only 19% of Latinos are enrolled in higher education either full time or part time (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Moreover, Ravitch (2000) reported that 64% of Latino children are below basic reading skills in the fourth grade as opposed to their white counterparts who are 27% below basic reading level in the fourth grade. Some critics have linked this gap to "educational tracking" of children, which sorts them into different groups for different levels of instruction (Thompson, 2002). Tracking practices in K-12 education, according to Thompson, is characteristically detrimental to children of color because they are more frequently placed in lower level instructional tracks rather than the college preparatory track of white middle class children. Anyon (1995) maintains that the curriculum in the lower level track utilizes knowledge-based pedagogy on the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy rather than the higher thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis needed for college readiness.

Education in high poverty areas is often considered as remediation rather than the synthesis and application of knowledge (Rose, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings (1994), many educators in high poverty areas are not inclined to see racial and ethnic differences among their students. As a result, these teachers do not recognize their students' needs and they do not recognize their students' individual characteristics (Rose, 1995). Therefore, educators are not free of bias and are not capable of meeting their

students' instructional needs. Regrettably, urban schools need the brightest and best teachers, yet they are not successful recruiting them in large numbers. Additionally, retention of their effective teachers is also a struggle (Rosenholz, 1985).

Altshuler and Schmautz (2006) report that lowered academic self-concept is a result of under-achievement and high-stakes testing. Because high-stakes tests have a substantial impact on academic achievement, Altshuler and Schmautz (2006) assert that the standardized tests require students to acculturate to school customs and mores. Therefore, high stakes testing is an example of systemic discrimination in the educational system (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006). Further, Altshuler and Schmautz explain that cultural norms influence how students perceive their strengths. Consequently, a lowered academic self-concept may be intensified if students preserve their native cultural values. Many Latinos who speak Spanish as their first language are more prone to be negatively impacted by high stakes standardized testing (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006).

Besides high stakes standardized tests to determine student success, another systemic dilemma exists in teacher preparation programs. Most colleges and universities are typically controlled by white, middle class professors who are neither experienced in teaching at the K-12 level of education nor in the pedagogy of low socio-economic students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Some experts believe that teachers who grew up in middle class privilege are not as effective in teaching students low socio-economic students or students of color (Song, 2006). Brophy and Good (2000) reported that students of poverty who may be "struggling, anxious, or alienated" (p. 341) are taught by

teachers who cannot or will not relate to their students' situations (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

In many urban schools, less qualified teachers utilize an inadequate curriculum, which contributes to student apathy and ultimately the achievement gap (Song, 2006). According to Darling-Hammond's (2000) findings, the difference in academic achievement between African American and Latino students and white students could in large part be explained by the disparity in the qualifications of their teachers. In addition, Song's (2006) findings clarify that the curriculum must be academically sound and taught by teachers who have high expectations for all students, especially African Americans and Latinos. Holmes (2006) identified the problem of low-performing students associated with the makeup of faculty since nationally 42% of students are from minority groups, but faculty is made up of only 16% of the minority population. Holmes concluded that teachers typically determine the outcome of minority students and are often the only source of encouragement to these students.

There are many problems contributing to the lack of quality educational opportunities for Latino students (Lynn, 2006). Cuban (2006) states that many educators see the quandary as rooted in existing policy and federal mandates that many educators believe they spend an inordinate amount of time preparing their students for standardized tests (Cuban, 2006). However, Chenoweth (2007) states that educators may not care for NCLB, but it is the first time in America's history that schools are accountable to educate every child. For the first time, the national public is informed about schools that excel in teaching all children (Chenoweth, 2007).

## **Cultural Deficiency**

Schools have customarily explained any lack of educational success as due to the deficiencies of the students and their families (Cuban, 1989). Frequently, this is used to explain Latino failure. This "cultural deficit" model, assumes that students' deficiencies commence from "low income or culturally diverse home environments which lack appropriate linguistic, cognitive, and social stimulation" (Hidalgo, 1992, p. 17). Conventionally, researchers have relied on the "cultural deficit" model as a credible justification for the lack of educational accomplishment of low socio-economic and minority children (Ceballo, 2004).

Lewis (1966) contended that lack of community participation, inadequate organization within communities, households lacking a male father figure, and unrefined values formed the design for this "cultural deficit" model. Many researchers and scholars opposed Lewis' model and vehemently disputed his line of reasoning. Solorzano (1992) expressed,

A major criticism of the cultural deficit model is that it focuses on individual and group characteristics and avoids institutional or social structural factors, thereby shifting the responsibility for education and occupational attainment away from the school and onto family and student background characteristics. (p. 31)

Hidalgo (1992) agreed with Solorzano's assessment of the cultural deficit model and suggested that society appears to view the Latino family as socially second-rate and Latinos as to blame for their own lack of achievement, thus eradicating the need to scrutinize the embedded and institutional causes of failure. Implementing remediation

curriculums and other negligible public service programs therefore absolves organizations and society from any additional liability.

More importantly, the cultural deficit model has also influenced young teachers graduating from higher learning institutions. As Persell (1977) described,

...the deficit model gets transferred to the classroom and to students by teachers who are professionally trained in colleges, and specifically in a teacher education curriculum that is geared to reflect an individualistic and cultural deficit explanation of low minority educational attainment. (p. 43)

Rothstein, (1995) construed that educational policy based on the principles of the cultural deficit model places importance on Latino acculturation, discarding and positioning negative connotations on their Latino cultural customs, morals, behaviors and norms.

An example of possible perpetuation of the cultural deficit model is post industrial revolution style of educating American students. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American formal education shifted to a Tayloristic style of factory education in which students became widgets in the factory. Schools embraced a standardized and non-personal priority of content first versus focusing on a student's personal learning and caring relationships (Noddings, 1988). Caring and education relates to the degree of rapport a teacher has with his or her students. In this context, the caring teacher's responsibility is to cultivate interaction with students and express concern in the student's wellbeing. When the student realizes that the teacher has genuine interest in his welfare, a healthy rapport can be established between the teacher and student. This teacher/student rapport

is important for Latino students in order to trust that teachers care for and about them. In Valenzuela's (1999) study "teachers tended to be concerned first with form and non-personal content and only secondarily, if at all, with their students' subjective reality" (p. 22). Furthermore, at Valenzuela's school, teachers typically emphasized the U. S. born youths' clothing and stand-offish behavior as an indication of insubordination that signaled these students "don't care" about education. Because of this, some teachers did not attempt in cultivating caring relationships with this group. However, immigrant students were much more likely to garner teachers' support. Immigrant students wore clothes that were more old-fashioned and they appeared to be more respectful to adults. Additionally, immigrant students seemed to possess a pro-school philosophy that was interpreted as a positive sign that they, unlike the some of the other Latino students did care about academics (Valenzuela, 1999).

Valencia (2002) asserts that the origin of the belief – Mexican Americans do not value education – rests in deficit thinking, which refers to the suggestion that students, principally of low socio economic circumstances and of color, underachieve in school due to internally defective families or they are deficient in the learning process.

According to Moreno and Valencia (2002):

The basis of the myth that Mexican Americans do not value education stems from the general model of deficit thinking, and from the specific variant of familial deficits. The argument goes as follows: Given that Mexican Americans (allegedly) do not hold education high in their value hierarchy, this leads to inadequate familial socialization for academic competence, which in turn,



contributes to the school failure of Mexican American children and youths. (p. 228)

Moreover, Hernandez (as cited in Valencia, 2002) asserts that the belief that Mexican Americans' possess an apathetic view of education can be more implicit when perceived as a fragment of institutional deficit thinking in which Mexican Americans are portrayed under the "Mexican American cultural model (stereotype)" in which their cultural values are submitted as the basic source of their social problems, which also includes academic achievement. Further, the Mexican-American stereotype model is grounded in the long-standing myth that behavior is equated to values (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997). Allan (as cited in Valencia, 2002) asserted:

Behavior cannot be equated with values. In other words, simply because a person behaves in a certain way does not mean he desires to do so because of his beliefs or values. Another problem is that the concept is tautological: values inferred from behavior are used to explain behavior. To be useful for explaining behavior, values should be used to measure independently of the behavior to be explained, or no advantage can be claimed for the gratuitous labeling of the behavior. (pp. 372-373)

### **Stereotypes**

Along with the cultural deficit model, Latinos continue to be stereotypically portrayed in the news media as being dysfunctional lawbreakers living in destitution (Mendez-Mendez & Alverio, 2003). Because of recent concerns with immigration policy, most Latino illegal immigrants are depicted as a hazard to United States national

security. Marin (1984) substantiated that Anglos described Hispanics as aggressive, poor, and lazy. However, this study also showed that Hispanics were considered to be family-oriented, loyal, and proud. Jackson (1995) sought to discover the perception of Hispanics by Anglos. More than 30 separate traits were considered, with only four that could be thought of as positive traits: strong family, tradition-loving, religious and old-fashioned. As for the negative traits, when compared to Anglos, Latinos were considered inferior in the following areas: productivity, optimism, ambition, athleticism, business-wise, dependability, independence, self-discipline, efficiency, intelligence, sophistication, physical attractiveness, well-adjusted, patriotic, industrious, prosperous, knowledgeable, and prompt. In addition, they were perceived as more: uneducated, poor, rebellious, violent, dirty, noisy and criminally inclined. Ultimately, in comparison to Anglos, they were perceived as placing less value on physical fitness, mature love, recognition by the community, a good life for others, national greatness, delaying pleasure to achieve success, the pursuit of knowledge, good health, economic prosperity, and financial independence.

The perception of Latinos by Anglos and others can play a crucial role in the student's academic achievement and learning. Researchers have discussed how the perceptions of others have vital repercussions for self-perceptions and ensuing actions (Jussim, 1986; Miller & Turnbull, 1986). Negative perceptions may sometimes be to blame for the development of self-fulfilling prophecies, in that these harmful attributes are internalized and become part of the self-identification of the Latino student. Steele's (1997) theory of "stereotype threat" speculates that a student's learning attempts can be

genuinely harmed by downbeat surroundings and a school or classroom environment where stereotyping occurs.

### **Teacher Expectations and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies**

Several decades of research have revealed the consequence of teacher expectancy on an assortment of student outcomes. Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) publication of *Pygmalion in the Classroom* initiated dialogue relating the extent to which teacher expectations generate self-fulfilling prophecies on their students. This breakthrough study entailed testing all elementary age children in a particular school. Teachers were notified that the test pinpointed students who would exhibit remarkable intellectual development during the school year. The names of the higher achieving students were given to the teachers; however, in reality the names given to the teachers were randomly selected students from the general school population. Eight months later, the higher achieving students were retested and it was found they had gained significantly in IQ and analysis than the control group. By the end of the study, teachers depicted the experimental students as more content and more inquisitive than their peers.

Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski (1995) conducted a case study and framed it with two primary questions. First, are there psychological and organizational barriers observed by educators on changing strategies with low achievement students (Weinstein et al., 1995)? Second, does collaborative intervention change the perceived barriers to deficit thinking (Weinstein et al., 1995)? The authors used a narrative process to outline changing dynamics of the identified obstacles in eliciting change for student success. First, there is an assertion that teacher expectations for their students create a self-

fulfilling prophecy (Weinstein et al., 1995). When the classroom instructor believes that certain students cannot attain a particular level of scholarly rigor, the low expectations are confirmed by low student achievement thus confirming the instructor's beliefs (Weinstein et al., 1995). Further, African-American, Latino and low socio-economic children are the primary targets of low expectations by educators (Rumberger, 1987). Second, a change in a person's belief system is successful when that person synthesizes the persuading information (Weinstein et al., 1995). Entrenched stereotypes are changed by making personal connections that are cooperative, meaningful and lack conflict with the person or people to whom the stereotypes were directed (Weinstein et al., 1995).

At the beginning of the Weinstein et al. (1995) study, the researchers found similarities in the teachers' beliefs regarding the capacity for their students to succeed and with constraints regarding themselves, other teachers and the school system in general. The staff voiced both internal and external barriers that maintained a dysfunctional system of tracking students and made it difficult to collaborate among the staff (Weinstein et al., 1995). The participating teachers saw themselves as inadequate to bring about change to an indifferent administration and colleagues who were satisfied with the status quo (Weinstein et al., 1995). Collaborative staff meetings provided the teachers with a nurturing environment to share ideas and plan for the success of their students (Weinstein et al., 1995). Because of the weekly meetings, teachers reflected about alternative instructional approaches in the classroom and offered each other feedback (Weinstein et al., 1995). In addition, Weinstein et al. (1995) observed that over time teachers involved in the project were able to see some of the positive characteristics

of their students replace negative beliefs as students assumed more responsibility for their education. In the second year, the participants voiced fewer constraints and those constraints that were stated were predicted with a strategy to implement student success (Weinstein et al., 1995). The authors stated that networking by teachers in a collaborative atmosphere was the sustenance of the project and its perceived success (Weinstein et al., 1995). Students who were part of the sample group recorded higher GPAs during the project years and had fewer disciplinary referrals (Weinstein et al., 1995). However, Weinstein et al. (1995) noted that there was no significant change in absenteeism among the students. During the post-intervention year, there were fewer dropouts recorded for those sample tenth graders when contrasted with the comparison students (Weinstein et al., 1995).

Antithesis to the Weinstein et al. (1995) study, Brophy (1983) contended that the data published in Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, whereby the authors asserted a relationship between teachers' expectations and student achievement, has never been replicated. In fact, Brophy (1983) argued that teacher expectations in their classrooms are generally accurate concerning content area assignments. In addition, teachers are usually open to corrective feedback. However, Brophy (1983) did maintain that in certain cases particular personal characteristics of teachers may negatively impact some of their students. Brophy (1983) also made some recommendations for teachers to have heightened success in their classrooms besides high expectations for their students. First, teachers should focus on teaching the content to the class group as a whole and reteaching the material when necessary (Brophy,

1983). The reteaching should be a differentiated style rather than repeating the same manner of instruction (Brophy, 1983). Further, monitoring the class and individuals to stress continuous progress from previous levels of mastery is important (Brophy, 1983). Moreover, Brophy (1983) asserted that students will benefit when teachers encourage and stimulate students' minds. Teachers should not think in terms of protecting students from embarrassment or failure (Brophy, 1983).

Another realm of student success and successful school programs is the type of training received by faculty and staff. Faculty must be involved with dynamic staff development to embrace different styles of teaching methods for different learners in the classroom (Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski, 1995). Continual follow up must be prioritized by the administration to facilitate necessary pedagogy changes (McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan & Legters, 1998). The faculty and staff will embrace change if they are included in the planning and follow up of organizational and instructional improvement (McPartland et al., 1998).

In summary, the school is where most children spend the greatest amount of developmental time with their teachers and peers. Indeed, at the elementary level, students spend an inordinate amount of time with just one or two teachers. The "luck of the draw" has a whole new meaning when children are assigned to their elementary teachers. However, even at the middle school and high school level where the student sees several teachers in one day, good teachers are paramount to the relational needs of the adolescent. Many educators believe that no significant learning occurs without a

significant relationship first. The classroom is where some students share a sense of personal connections with their teachers, while others feel isolated and marginalized.

*Pygmalion in the Classroom* established that teachers who have pre-conceived judgments concerning their students directly impact the academic success of their students. When teachers do not have high expectations for classroom success, students will mirror that expectation and perform at a subpar level. Other researchers have attempted to duplicate the Pygmalion study to reinforce the belief that high expectations of all students is paramount to their success. Conversely, Brophy (1983) argued that most teachers possess an accurate awareness of their students' abilities and teachers are generally open to constructive criticism for differentiating instruction. The debate regarding teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies will certainly continue among educators and policy-makers. Educational leaders and policy-makers must examine theoretical frameworks for policy decisions to facilitate student success in the learning organization.

### **Summary**

This chapter examined research and literature that illuminated the causes of the dropout epidemic in the American public schools. Additionally, the review of literature attempted to clarify the difficulties adolescent students face when transitioning from the middle school configuration to the 9-12 model. Moreover, the added challenges that Latino male students face during adolescence were addressed to educate the reader about the societal expectations of boys and their difficulties with formal schooling. Furthermore, the expectations from educators of Latino male students in the classroom

or even the perception of minimal expectations from the teacher may play a role in students developing their own negative self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are many obstacles and difficulties to academic success in a traditional school setting for students of any ethnicity, gender or background. However, immigrant families come to the United States in hopes of a better life and an improved education for their children. Indeed, immigrant children are entering the United States in exceptional numbers, making them the fastest growing portion of the school-age population. An education is especially essential for immigrant youth if they desire to pursue the "American" dream.

The next plausible steps for high school dropout study, according to Roderick (1994), could be the alternative approaches to classroom instruction and grouping of students to improve academic success for all students. In addition, identification of instructional strategies by educators to promote student success rates and decrease the chances of students dropping out of school is critical to any successful reform in a high school (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). Quantitative numbers drives most of the research in the area of high school dropouts and ninth grade success. And, the few studies that are qualitative are from the teachers' perspectives about why students are failing. The purpose of this study is to examine perspectives from Latino male students to determine what factors were obstacles to their academic success and while also identifying some positive aspects when they were successful. Additionally, identifying the different perspectives from the students' viewpoint will illuminate possible strategies and policies to assist students in acquiring success in high school and throughout their educational



careers. More importantly, it could point educators in a productive direction to better understand Latino male success and either enhance programs already offered on their campus or possibly initiate new strategies to foster student academic achievement.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explains the methodology and process that will be utilized to investigate the perceptions of Latino male students who have overcome significant adversity in their personal lives, but were successful in their pursuit of a high school diploma. The first section of this chapter describes the qualitative methodology chosen by the researcher. Second, research design is outlined including data selection, data content, and analysis. Also, a section is included that describes the pilot study conducted by the researcher to formulate inquiry strategies that facilitated rich discussions with participants. The final section of this chapter explains procedures performed by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness.

#### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Latino male students who have succeeded in a traditional school setting in spite of significant hardships in their personal lives. For this study, success will be defined as achieving high school graduation, and hardships will be defined as those students who are coded “at-risk” by their counselor. Most traditional public schools are dominated by white teachers, counselors and administrators. Moreover, the majority of educators are female. The No Child Left Behind Act, 2001 (NCLB) has forced many public school educators to engage in conversations concerning the achievement gaps among our students of

color. Before NCLB was passed and enforced with the Average Yearly Progress (AYP) data, my experience was that these conversations and concerns did not exist by the dominant white culture. Indeed, it was usually a small number of Latino faculty who taught students of color in their English as a Second Language (ESL) class who would openly discuss strategies to engage these types of students (Song, 2006). In my experience, these concerned faculty members may have been heard by administration, but there was no significant pressure or focus to target some of the marginalized students in the high school setting. Additionally, high schools are notorious in having faculty who are more concerned about the subject area in which they teach rather than the whole student (Walker, 2006). Elementary schools are light years ahead of the secondary educators in this regard.

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study because it provided the researcher with an in depth exploratory process for participants to reflect upon their own complex experiences in public education. Naturalistic inquiry paradigm will allow the student's voice to be heard in order for the researcher and readers to empathize with the thoughts and feelings of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than using prediction as the guiding principle in making each methodological decision, naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to understand each individual's story (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, most of the studies regarding high school dropouts have been quantitative in design. These studies typically focus on the quantitative data generated from the school or Likert-type questionnaires completed by educators or students. The qualitative paradigm was chosen for this study could utilize herself as the primary

instrument to gain data. Additionally, in interpretative epistemology, understanding is expected to occur as the research unfolds and guides the researcher into new avenues rather than beginning the study with a set hypothesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interpretative epistemology is utilized to investigate the participants' feelings and understand their perceptions. In addition, interpretative epistemology concentrates attention on human actions and relationships (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research necessitates recording human action through describing, documenting, observing, and analyzing how participants have sense making of a circumstance or experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2002; Mishler, 1979). Deciphering the data accumulated during the study, the researcher utilizes an inductive approach to determine meaning and comprehension of the experience under study (Merriam, 2002). Rich, descriptive accounts of the findings are portrayed by the patterns and themes that emerge from the analysis of data (Glesne, 1999).

**Relevance.** The capacity of qualitative data to better portray a phenomenon is a vital consideration not only from the researcher's viewpoint, but also from the reader's perspective as well. "If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 120). Qualitative research reports, characteristically rich with detail and insights into participants' experiences of the world, "may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience" (Stake, 1978, p. 5) and thus more meaningful.

Several researchers have acknowledged what they consider to be the foremost attribute of qualitative, or naturalistic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2001).

The following list embodies a combination of these researchers' depiction of qualitative research: 1) Qualitative researchers prefer natural surroundings rather than a sterile lab atmosphere (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2001). The researcher attempts to observe, illustrate and interpret settings as they are, preserving what Patton (2001) labels an "empathic neutrality" (1990, p. 55); 2) The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); 3) Qualitative researchers principally utilize inductive data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); 4) Accounts from qualitative researchers are descriptive, integrating expressive vernacular and the "presence of voice in the text" (Eisner, 1991, p. 36); 5) Qualitative research possesses an interpretive quality, intended to discover the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them, and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); 6) Qualitative researchers take notice of the peculiar as well as the pervasive, seeking the uniqueness of each case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); 7) Qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predestined) design, and researchers concentrate on this emerging method to maintain flexibility to guide the outcomes of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); 8) Qualitative research is evaluated employing special criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Patton (2001) asserts that these are not "absolute characteristics of qualitative inquiry, but rather strategies that offer a course and a framework for developing particular designs and concrete data collection tactics" (p. 59). These characteristics are considered to be "interconnected" (Patton, 2001, p. 40) and "mutually reinforcing" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). It is essential to underscore the emergent characteristic

of qualitative research design. Because the researcher seeks to study and clarify meanings in context, it is neither probable nor appropriate to determine research strategies before data collection has begun (Patton, 2001). Qualitative research proposals should, however, denote initial questions to be investigated and strategies for data collection.

The actual design of a qualitative study is determined by the identified purpose of the investigation, what information will be most valuable, and what information will have the most credibility. There are no stringent standards for sample size (Patton, 2001). "Qualitative studies typically employ multiple forms of evidence....[and] there is no statistical test of significance to determine if results 'count'" (Eisner, 1991, p. 39). Decisions about usefulness and credibility are sustained by the researcher and the reader.

**Emergent design.** Naturalistic inquiry designs cannot typically be specified before the fieldwork takes place. Although the design will identify a preliminary topic, proposed observations, and preliminary essential interview questions, the naturalistic and inductive type of inquiry makes it not possible and unacceptable to enumerate operational variables, disclose testable hypotheses, or decide instrumentation or sampling schemes. A research phenomenon opens up or materializes as fieldwork commences (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Lincoln and Guba (1985) prepared a wide-ranging contrast of the design characteristics of naturalistic inquiry in comparison to experimental methods. They construed:

What these considerations add up to is that the design of a naturalistic inquiry (whether research, evaluation, or policy analysis) *cannot* be given in advance; it

must emerge, develop, unfold...The call for an emergent design by naturalists is not simply an effort on their part to get around the "hard thinking" that is supposed to precede an inquiry; the desire to permit events to unfold is not merely a way of rationalizing what is at bottom "sloppy inquiry." The design specifications of the conventional paradigm form a procrustean bed of such a nature as to make it impossible for the naturalist to lie in it --not only uncomfortably, *but at all*. (p. 225)

Qualitative research procedures vary in the amount of predetermined, or prespecified, configuration and strategy that frames the research process (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). These prespecified configurations and strategies vary from theory, concepts, and operational definitions directing data collection to analytical methods driving data analysis. In much qualitative research, these configurations and strategies are considered suggestive and flexible rather than as directive and inflexible (Erlandson et al., 1993). Understanding is anticipated to materialize as part of the research progression and guide the adaptation of prespecified structures and strategies or the formation of new ones. The process is a recurring one, where provisional understandings - sometimes called "hypotheses" -- are articulated and then "tested" against the data (Schwandt, 2007). Testing and expanding these new understandings may also necessitate a return to the field for additional data.

**Truth.** All research aims to reveal something of the truth about the area of inquiry, yet striving for truth through research is a meaningless exercise. Research is not a process of uncovering a truth that exists independent of the researcher. Pragmatists say

that we cannot possibly discern whether our elucidation or conjecture is close to reality. Thus, pragmatists find meaning in its end result, “Our choice simply means that one approach is better than another at producing anticipated or desired outcomes” (Cherryholmes, 1992, p. 15). For pragmatists, there is no real meaning assigned to items or to thoughts. The goal of investigation becomes the result of practice rather than whether the outcomes of the inquiry relate to a set reality (Garrison, 1994).

Assuming that knowledge from research is constrained to the context where it is produced, Deweyan pragmatist tradition can still deliberate about partial truth, about knowledge that is contextual, and yet this partial truth and contextual knowledge can lead to comprehension and conversion. Extracting on these traditions, comprehension is perceived as formulated in the moment rather than a depiction of a secure reality.

Although some qualitative researchers with a realist epistemological point of view may regard comprehension as objectively determining what individuals contemplate of their realities on their own terms, “for virtually all postempiricist philosophies of the human sciences, understanding is interpretation all the way down” (Schwandt, 2003, p. 312).

Truth, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is encapsulated into four different types of truth. T4 is the empirical truth of science meaning the claim is true if it is consistent with nature. T3 claims it is true if it is logically consistent with another claim known to be true. T2 is true if the person who asserts it is acting in conformity with accepted standards of conduct. T1 is the metaphysical truth and cannot be tested against some external standard. It is a basic belief about whose truth must be taken for granted. As Stake pointed out (1977):



There is too great a temptation to suppose that truth is to be found in words and to suppose that intuitions are only poor facsimiles of truth. In practical matters, what is in fact true is that which is understood...In any circumstance the truth might be but a single truth -- but evaluators are certain not to find it. What they can find are multiple truths, multiple understandings, some contradictory to others. Evaluators should seek to resolve the contradictions and misunderstandings but should expect that they will have to portray the multiple realities they find. (p. 19)

**Researcher as the primary instrument.** Before performing a qualitative study, a researcher must do three things. First, adopt the perspective recommended by the characteristics of the naturalist paradigm. Second, the researcher must cultivate the amount of aptitude needed for a human instrument, or the channel through which information will be gathered and interpreted. Finally, the researcher must organize a research design that employs established strategies for naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to what they label the "theoretical sensitivity" of the researcher. This is an effective idea with which to assess a researcher's skill and readiness to attempt a qualitative inquiry. Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal trait of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. "...[It] refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). Strauss and Corbin reason that theoretical sensitivity comes from various sources, including scholarly literature,

occupational experiences, and personal experiences. The integrity of a qualitative research study relies on the trust readers have in the researcher's capacity to be insightful with the data and make appropriate decisions in the natural setting (Eisner, 1991).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the characteristics that make humans the "instrument of choice" for naturalistic inquiry. Humans are responsive to environmental cues, and able to interact with the situation; they have the ability to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously; they are able to perceive situations holistically; they are able to process data as soon as they become available; they can provide immediate feedback and request verification of data; and they can explore atypical or unexpected responses.

The suggestion of an objective researcher is questionable. To be human is to infer or to assign meaning to experience and consider that meaning as unbiased. Many theorists discuss different characteristics of this "social construction of reality." Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1966), *The Social Construction of Reality* is a landmark explanation of the way that individuals acting together create collective interpretation of reality, which are then passed on to other individuals through the dynamics of socialization. Another classic, *Symbolic Interaction* by Harold Blumer (1969), concentrates on interaction between people as an ongoing process of clarification and formation of reality. Many qualitative concerns and practices occur within the context of the inevitable interpretive activity of all humans including researchers. The emphasis in naturalistic inquiry on understanding reality as the participant perceives it -- the participants' interpretation -- is an example of one such qualitative concern. The

disclosure of interview transcripts with the participants is an example of a practice that addresses this concern, by permitting the participants an opportunity to read and respond to their own interpretation. Truth and reality will be discussed in more depth later in this paper.

The expressions of "preunderstanding" and "understanding," derived from hermeneutics, can help conceptualize the researcher's interpretive activity. "Preunderstanding" is the blending of facts, preparation, encounters, interpretation, and ways of assessing and conveying that individuals bring to any situation. The preunderstanding of the researcher can be viewed as the whole of what the researcher brings to the inquiry. "Understanding" is the comprehension and rumination that the researcher cultivates throughout the research process. That understanding then becomes preunderstanding for the next series of seeking new understanding, and repetitive process described as the "hermeneutic circle" or "hermeneutic spiral." The connection between preunderstanding and understanding is well put by a hermeneutic maxim, "No understanding without preunderstanding" (Gummesson, 1991, p. 61). In other words, all understanding develops from preunderstanding.

There already exists a broad knowledge concerning high school dropouts identifying some of the causes and predictors for students who do not complete their K-12 education. The data from this study will not replace information gathered from the previous quantitative studies, but it will provide rich and thick descriptions of individual Hispanic male students and their journey through the education system. It is expected

that the information gleaned from the students will advance the knowledge and empathy that educators have for this particular population of students.

### **Participants**

Four Hispanic male students, classified as seniors, were chosen by random purposeful sampling method. The study took place at a high school with a diverse population of students with a sizeable number who are at-risk for not completing high school within the expected four-year time period. In addition, the high school is cognizant of the students who were at-risk when transitioning from eighth to ninth grade. After obtaining input from faculty and administrators, the researcher placed ten names of students who fit the criteria in a container. Four names were drawn from the list of ten students to generate a randomized purposeful sample of the students to be interviewed (Creswell, 2007). Criteria to determine the data sources include: 1) male students, 2) Latino, 3) students who failed one or more courses in junior high or high school, 4) students who failed one subject area of the TAKS test while in high school, and 5) students who qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. Three interviews were conducted with each of the participants.

Purposeful sampling is a non-random way of selecting participants for a study (Patton, 2001). According to Patton, participants are selected in conjunction with the research question because the researcher believes they may have relevant experience to the topic of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that purposeful sampling gives the researcher distinctive information on the subject studied or questions asked. Lincoln and Guba asserted that another reason for purposeful sampling is “to generate the

information upon which the emergent design and grounded theory can be based” (p. 201).

### **Research Design and Data Collection**

I served as the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 2002). I met with each of the students privately for a 60 to 90 minute individual semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted at Apex High School after school or if the student had a late arrival or early release period, they were held during that time. Based on the data collected from the initial interview, we met again for a second interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Questions used during the second interview were based on data collected and analyzed from the first round of interviews. Third interviews were conducted after data collected from the second round of interviews were analyzed and questions were derived from the information gleaned in those interviews. Thus, there were three phases of data collection and analysis with analysis after each phase of interviewing so as to prepare the questions for the next phase. This led to more in-depth exploration with the students.

In order to stimulate discussion from the participants, I developed several open-ended questions to begin the interviews after initial introductions and the explanation of the research. The open-ended questions were 1) My biggest problem when moving from junior high to high school was...2) My biggest problem during my senior year was...3) The most positive thing that helped me to complete high school was...4) The person I think was/is most influential in helping me completed high school is...5) One aspect I like most about high school is...6) One aspect I dislike most about high school is...7) I

like and respect this teacher/administrator/counselor the most...8) I like/respect him or her because... 9) The best thing that teachers did to help me complete high school was.....and 10) The best thing that school administrators did that helped me to complete high school was....

Before initiating contact with the research participants, the researcher conducted an informal pilot study with students on a different high school campus. The pilot study was meant as an introductory investigation into the perceptions of why the student was being academically successful in high school in the face of adversity in his life. The three students selected for the pilot study fit within the boundaries of the selection criteria for the study: 1) Latino male, 2) qualified for free and reduced lunch, and 3) had failed one or more subjects in junior high or high school. Additionally, the purpose of the pilot study was for the researcher to enhance the quality of data collection by improving upon interviewing skills associated with the research.

The review of literature assisted in framing questions that were appropriate to academic success in spite of considerable hardship endured by the students. Moreover, the questions enabled students to articulate their answers in order for the researcher and readers to better understand the adversity encountered by the student. The semi-structured interviews with the students were audio-taped for later transcription. In addition, field notes were taken throughout the interview. Time was given immediately after the interviews for the researcher to journal field notes and any other relevant data. Transcription of the audio-tape was done on a word processing program and copies were provided to the pilot study participants. The participants then returned the documents to

me with their thoughts and clarifications regarding the information. Additionally, feedback was encouraged from the participants concerning the nature of the questions and possibilities for enrichment of the inquiry.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from the audiotapes and field notes were transcribed in a word processor format. Transcripts and audio-tapes were compared and checked for accuracy. Member checking (Boyatzis, 1995, Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, & Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was performed in two different ways. Initially, the researcher asked the students for clarification during the interviews and summarized the main points in the field notes. In addition, students were given the opportunity to read the transcribed version to offer changes or additions to the data in the original interview. Open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was employed to identify and categorize the data collected from student interviews. Raw data was categorized and coded on a regular basis throughout the study (Boyatzis, 1995). Furthermore, participants were updated on a continuous basis as to the progress of the study.

The transcribed interviews were categorized and printed on index cards. Ideas that emerge from the data analysis were given code words (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). According to Strauss and Corbin, broad themes will emerge from the code words. Constant comparative analysis was utilized in order to gather and organize data based on similarities and differences (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Themes or patterns were derived from the data to construct a coded category or concept (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Concepts emerged on their own, permitting the researcher to determine which

recognized theory may assist in producing a hypothesis (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Utilization of the constant comparative method provided a framework to compare cards and sort them based on similarities and patterns (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Axial coding was utilized to make associations between the categorized coded words or concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Subcategories were created after the main themes were identified from the data. Integration of categories and subcategories shaped a theoretical framework to serve as a common thread or theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

### **Trustworthiness**

Unlike the traditional epistemic criteria of judging research studies with internal and external validity, naturalistic inquiry utilizes trustworthiness to critique the purity of qualitative research (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The fundamental issue addressed by the concept of trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is straightforward, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (p. 290). When assessing qualitative work, Strauss and Corbin (1990) deem that the "usual canons of 'good science'...require redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research" (p. 250). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 300) have acknowledged one alternative set of norms that match up to those characteristically utilized to evaluate quantitative work (see Table 1).



**Table 1.** Comparison of criteria for judging the quality of quantitative versus qualitative research

Criterion	Conventional term	Naturalistic term	Naturalistic Techniques
Truth Value	Internal validity	Credibility	Prolonged engagement; Persistent observation; Triangulation; Referential adequacy; Peer debriefing; member checks; Reflexive Journal
Applicability	External validity	Transferability	Thick description; Purposive sampling; Reflexive Journal
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability	Dependability audit; Reflexive Journal
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability	Confirmability audit; Reflexive Journal

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993

All researchers are concerned about the link between the idea that they hypothesize and their interpretations of the empirical world that shape the foundations of these ideas. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that the criteria appropriate for quantitative practices develop from positivist conjecture. They perform detailed explorations about how these assumptions are unacceptable for assessing research that is performed within paradigms that have different assumptions, such as the naturalistic paradigm. Literature about qualitative research involves itself with the criteria that are suitable for judging qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four "trustworthiness" criteria for qualitative research that include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the sufficient illustration of the formations of the social world that is being studied and can be measured by both the process applied in obtaining those representative accounts and by the credibility of those illustrations for the

community being studied. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) catalog of activities that succeed in establishing credibility include an extended stay in the natural setting, continual observations, triangulation, the formation of holistic context by setting apart some section of the data for analysis of findings, dialogue or debriefing with peers, and inspection of results with participants under study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993).

In traditional investigation, internal validity refers to the degree to which the findings precisely portray reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that "the determination of such isomorphism is in principle impossible" (p. 294), because one would have to know the "precise nature of that reality" and, if one knew this already, there would be no need to test it (p. 295). The traditional researcher must hypothesize associations and then test them; the hypothesis cannot be confirmed, but only proven false. The naturalistic researcher, on the other hand, believes there is an existence of several realities and endeavors to represent these realities sufficiently (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility is less contingent on size of the population sample than on the richness of the information collected and on the analytical capabilities of the researcher (Patton, 2001). It can be enriched through triangulation of data. Patton classified four types of triangulation: 1) methods triangulation; 2) data triangulation; 3) triangulation through multiple analysts; and 4) theory triangulation. Other procedures for addressing credibility include assembling portions of the raw data offered for others to scrutinize, and the utilization of "member checks," in which participants included in the study are invited to confirm findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In traditional research, the capability to generalize findings across dissimilar environments is labeled external validity. Formulating generalizations entails a trade-off between internal and external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specifically, in order to make generalizable assertions that are relevant to various contexts, one can include only limited facets of each local situation. Transferability refers to the degree that the researchers' working hypothesis about one circumstance applies to another. This is an assessment that can be made only by contrasting the two situations, the responsibilities of which falls on those who wish to make the comparison rather than the original researcher. The researcher's responsibility is to supply enough information, with thorough and abundant depiction, to permit these conclusions to be made. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that generalizability is "an appealing concept," because it allows an appearance of prediction and regulation over circumstances (pp. 110-110). However, they contend that the presence of unique, local surroundings "makes it impossible to generalize" (p. 124). Cronbach (1975) discusses the problem by saying:

The trouble, as I see it, is that we cannot store up generalizations and constructs for ultimate assembly into a network. It is as if we needed a gross of dry cells to power an engine and could only make one a month. The energy would leak out of the first cells before we had half the battery completed (p. 123).

According to Cronbach, "when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion" (p. 125).

The transferability of a working hypothesis to other situations is reliant on the extent of connection between the original environment and the environment to which it

is transferred. The researcher cannot enumerate the transferability of conclusions; he or she can only present adequate information that can then be used by the reader to ascertain whether the conclusions are relevant to the new situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Other researchers employ analogous vernacular to depict transferability, if not the word itself. For example, Stake (1978) refers to what he labels "naturalistic generalization" (p. 6). Patton asserts that "extrapolation" is an suitable expression for this process (2001, p. 489). Eisner says it is a type of "retrospective generalization" that can permit us to comprehend our previous (and future) experiences in a different way (2001, p. 205).

The third norm, dependability, refers both to the uniformity of the internal process, addressed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), mainly through the notion of an internal assessment, and to the way the researcher explains changing conditions in the phenomena. Kirk and Miller (1986) distinguish three kinds of reliability referred to in conventional research, which connect to: 1) the extent to which a measurement, performed repeatedly, stays constant; 2) the stability of a measurement over time; and 3) the likeness of measurements within a certain time period (pp. 41-42). They remark that "issues of reliability have received little attention" from qualitative researchers, who have instead focused on achieving greater validity in their work (p. 42). Although they give numerous instances of how reliability might be regarded in qualitative work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) sum up the spirit of these examples by stating, "Since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter" (p. 316). Nevertheless,

Lincoln and Guba do suggest one strategy which might enrich the dependability of qualitative research. That is the utilization of an "inquiry audit," in which a critic or critics examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (1985, p. 317).

Lincoln and Guba's fourth criterion, confirmability, refers to the degree to which the attributes of the data, as put forward by the researcher, can be corroborated by others who examine or review the research results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) opt to refer to the "confirmability" of the research. Indeed, they mention the extent to which the researcher can explain the neutrality of the research interpretations, through a "confirmability audit." This means availability of an audit trail composed of 1) raw information or data; 2) investigation notes; 3) reconstruction and synthesis products; 4) procedure notes; 5) personal notes; and 6) initial applicable information (pp. 320-321).

Ely et al. offers a depiction of the means qualitative researchers endeavor for trustworthiness that moves beyond procedures (Ely, Anzul, Friedmen, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991):

Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means at the least that the processes of the research are carried out fairly, that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studies. The entire endeavor must be grounded in ethical principles about how data are collected and analyzed, how one's own assumptions and conclusions are checked, how participants are involved and how results are communicated. Trustworthiness is more than a set

of procedures. To my mind, it is a personal belief system that shapes the procedures in process. (p. 93)

As additional researchers work within qualitative conventions, the standards for trustworthy research are being refined and continually discussed. Seeking to perform research in trustworthy approaches that are confirmable and comprehensible to others is a continuing process in qualitative conventions.

Empirical researchers assert that studies, which rely on quantitative measures to define a situation, are virtually value-free, and consequently, objective. Qualitative research is regarded as subjective because it relies on interpretations and is admittedly bound by values. In the world of traditional quantitative research, subjectivity leads to outcomes that are both erratic and invalid. There are many researchers, nevertheless, who question the true impartiality of statistical measures and, indeed, the likelihood of ever achieving pure objectivity at all (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Eisner, 1991). Patton (2001) considers that the words objectivity and subjectivity have become "ideological ammunition in the paradigms debate." He prefers to "avoid using either word and to stay out of futile debates about subjectivity versus objectivity." Instead, he strives for "empathic neutrality" (p. 55). While acknowledging that these two words seem to be paradoxical, Patton emphasizes that empathy "is a stance toward the people one encounters, while neutrality is a stance toward the findings" (p. 58). A researcher who is unbiased attempts to be non-judgmental, and endeavors to convey findings in an impartial way.

With consideration to objectivity in qualitative research, it may be helpful to turn to Phillips (1990), who questions whether there is really much difference between quantitative and qualitative research:

Bad work of either kind is equally to be deplored; and good work of either kind is still-at best-only tentative. But the good work in both cases will be objective, in the sense that it has been opened up to criticism, and the reasons and evidence offered in both cases will have withstood serious scrutiny. The works will have faced potential refutation, and insofar as they have survived, they will be regarded as worthy of further investigation (p. 35).

Peer debriefing, member checks, purposive sampling, reflexive journaling, thick description and K-12 experience of the researcher were utilized to triangulate the data and ensure credibility (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Mertens (1998) stated that the researcher “should engage in an extended discussion with a disinterested peer, of findings, conclusions, analysis, and hypothesis. The peer posed searching questions to help the researcher confront his or her own values and to guide next steps in the study” (p. 182). Peer debriefing was used by engaging a fellow Latina doctoral student to assist as an inquiry auditor. The peer reviewed transcripts and provided methodological feedback as well as input for coding of data. In addition, interrater reliability was used by having the peer listen to the audio recording and apply the codes to another sample of data to check consistency of the code developed (Boyzatis, 1998).

Member checking was performed consistently throughout the study. “Member checking is both informal and formal, and it occurs continuously” (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, p. 314). Member checking gives credibility to the study by giving participants the opportunity to determine if the researchers interpretation of given information is recognizable to the participants (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Throughout the interview process, students were asked for clarification to ensure students' thoughts were clearly interpreted. After the interviews were transcribed, students were asked to review for clarity of intent.

Purposive sampling requires the researcher to employ a system of emerging dynamics in individuals that possess relevance to the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Purposive sampling was utilized to select the four Hispanic male students who fit the criteria established in the study. The researcher met with administrators and counselors to determine the four students who fit the criteria of the study and had the highest probability of providing useful information to the researcher. Furthermore, reflexive journaling was completed by the researcher to document logistics, scheduling, insights, and musings. Reflexive Journaling is a technique for critically scrutinizing the research process and the development of interpretations by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Another component to ensure credibility of this study was the educational experience of the researcher. I have worked in the K-12 environment for twenty years – nine years as a classroom teacher and twelve years as an administrator in grades seven through twelve. Therefore, I am aware of the personalities and characteristics of the age of student studied in this research. Furthermore, I am at ease in discussions with them and with the language they use when expressing themselves to their peers or adults. My



administrative focus the past six years has been strategies to promote student success, especially in the ninth grade transition year.

Transferability is one of the elements identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for trustworthiness. Thick description is a technique utilized by qualitative researchers to give the reader pertinent information on the topic studied with the intention that the reader may consider the transferability of the data to his or her own unique situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description is not focused on amassing facts, but rather on interpretative characteristics of the topic being studied that differentiate a particular phenomenon (Geertz, 1973). In this study, Latino students were interviewed in depth to provide a thorough portrayal of different types of adversity experienced by these young males. In addition, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to record researcher bias, feelings, first impression of students interviewed, tardiness, body language during interview, conversations before and after the interview, and the researcher's overall perceptions as the research progressed.

In order to complete this qualitative study, the researcher developed all interview questions; conducted the interviews of participants, and recorded field notes. The ethical issues included, gaining appropriate access to juveniles with the responsible entities and prevention of any harm to the identities of the students or misuse of data collected about them. Naturally, pseudonyms were used.

### **My Racial and Gender Positionality**

It is essential to disclose to the reader the lens of the researcher. I am a white, middle-aged female doctoral student who has worked in the public school system for 21

years. I was raised in a middle class home and my parents divorced at an early age. In nine of the 21 years in K-12 education, I taught in the classroom at the secondary level and 12 of those years I have been an administrator at the secondary level. I have limited experience in working with Hispanic males even though I did begin my teaching career in the southern area of San Antonio, which was approximately 90% Hispanic/Latino. However, after one year teaching in this culturally rich school, I was offered a position in the Houston area, which was much closer to my family.

The only other close experience I have with Latinos was my beloved roommate of two years who is Latino and was raised in the barrio of Houston. She is a terrific success story with a Masters in Education when no one else in her family has acquired these credentials. We had many discussions about why she took the education path, and she often reminisced about her upbringing. Naturally, we spent some limited time with her many brothers and sisters, but this was certainly a surface relationship and lacked depth to give me a cohesive understanding of Latino culture. One can presume that these Latino participants were not comfortable disclosing certain aspects of the challenges they faced during their high school years to a white, middle-class, and middle-aged female who has been entrenched in public education for 21 years. Moreover, there could even be some nuances or coded language in their discourse with the researcher that I may not have deciphered because of my lack of experience interacting with the Latino community. The peer debriefing was essential to translate these implications hidden within the dialogue of interviews.

## Summary

The determination to employ qualitative methodologies should be contemplated conscientiously. Because of its particular characteristics, qualitative research can be emotionally demanding and extremely time consuming. However, qualitative inquiry can generate abundant information that cannot be obtained through statistical sampling methodology. Moreover, qualitative researchers have a unique duty to their participants and their readers. Since there are no statistical checks for significance in qualitative studies, the researcher accepts the responsibility of detecting and deciphering the value of what is examined, and of determining a probable relationship between what is examined and the inferences derived in the research report. To do all of this deftly necessitates a sound comprehension of the research paradigm and, ideally, preparation and training in the use of qualitative observation and analysis skills.

A qualitative methodology provides the researcher with an in depth exploratory process for participants to reflect upon their own complex experiences. Additionally, naturalistic inquiry paradigm allows the student's voice to be heard in order for the researcher and readers to empathize with the thoughts and feelings of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than using prediction as the guiding principle in making each methodological decision, naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to understand each individual's story (Lincoln & Guba). This chapter explored some of the key characteristics of naturalistic inquiry in the qualitative paradigm. In addition, the purpose of this chapter was to explain the methodology and process that was used to explore the perceptions of Latino male students who have been academically successful in high

school in spite of adversity in their lives. The beginning of the chapter began with an explanation of qualitative study as it relates to naturalistic inquiry. Additionally, the research design was clarified along with the trustworthiness of data analysis. The major themes of the research study findings will be presented in Chapter IV.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate why some Latino male students are successful in high school despite substantial hardships in their lives. This chapter presents the data from this student population, who were in danger of dropping out of high school but persevered. One-on-one interviews were conducted with participants, who shared their experiences and insights as to why they struggled early in high school and then became successful enough to graduate with a high school diploma. The interviews generated three major themes: 1) school environment, 2) family environment, and 3) societal environment. Each theme contained several subthemes.

The first theme, school environment, refers to the role of the school with each participant and the success of these students. This theme describes how teachers, counselors and administrators fostered academic success of their students. In addition, within the school environment, school climate played a role in whether or not students were successful. Within the school environment theme, three subthemes emerged: a) staff, b) school climate and, c) personal. The second theme, family environment, describes the involvement of the participants' family with the students' academic success. Words of encouragement by family members, attendance at school, and expectations for an educational future were examined. Four subthemes emerged within this category: a) familism, b) support for school success, c) encouragement of personal

and professional goals, and d) role models. The last theme was societal environment, which examined the element of acculturation and its impact on academic success for Latino students.

Before the findings are outlined and reviewed, I feel it is important to communicate the context of the city, high school, school district and participants. Therefore, I will describe the school, Apex High School and its community, and history to give perspective to the students' stories. In addition, I will include other relevant information that will enhance the participants' account of schooling in Apex.

### **Apex**

Apex is a city of approximately 46,000 people. It is located about 40 miles north of a major urban city located in Southeast Texas. As an old oil and logging community, many of Apex's long standing residents still envision Apex as a predominantly European American blue-collar town. However, the demographics of Apex now place the Latino population at 32%. This is a rapid change from the demographics of just fifteen years ago when Latinos comprised only 14% of the population. The town itself houses pockets of both poverty and affluence. With a recreational lake only minutes away, Apex has also blossomed with middle and upper class workers who want to escape the large urban city less than an hour away.

The Apex Independent School District has changed significantly since its birth, in 1886, when classes were first opened in a one-room school. That Apex school operated each year for a five month term. The first African American school, located in the Apex area, was built on the other side of town at a Baptist Church. In 1892, the

twelve common schools in the area were consolidated by the County Commissioner's Court, and Apex ISD was born. The area covered 25 square miles but was enlarged, in 1925 by the state legislature, to include more surrounding areas. This made Apex ISD grow to 333 square miles. In 1992, another 7,781 acres was annexed to grow the district to 348 square miles.

Presently, Apex ISD occupies 55 campuses over the 348 square miles that the district encompasses. There are 30 elementary schools, 10 intermediate schools, 6 junior high schools, 6 high schools, and two magnet academies. Apex Independent School District has made major strides, since 1886 with its rural beginning, to become one of the fastest growing school districts in the nation. Currently AISD has over 48,700 students and 5,900+ full time employees. Given the growing and the increasing diversity of the district, meeting the needs of the students is a top priority, as evidenced by the passage of a bond referendum in May, 2008. Currently, the student population is comprised of 6.7% African American, 26.1% Hispanic, 63% European American, and 3.8% other. Thirty-two percent of the district's population is economic disadvantaged and the district has a 98.2% completion rate.

Apex ISD has varying and diverse pockets of student populations. The starkest comparison is two particular high school feeder zones. Highpoint High School and its feeder zone schools are comprised primarily of European American middle class families. Indeed, Highpoint's demographics are 82.6% European American and less than three percent low socio economic. Conversely, Apex High School has a much more

diverse student population, with 42.1% European American, 43.5% Hispanic, and 12.5% African American. At Apex High School, 46% of the students are on free/reduced lunch.

### **Participants**

Initially, a purposeful sample of ten students who fit the study's criteria were chosen and then four participants were randomly drawn from the ten initially selected. One student who was chosen and agreed to participate never returned the consent form. Therefore, I went back to the original pool of students and drew a fifth name. The four participants, 1) Antonio, 2) Carlos, 3) Eduardo, and 4) Xavier come from dissimilar backgrounds and immigrant generational status. Antonio is a second generation Latino whose mom was born in Mexico and then moved to California as a young girl to be a migrant worker. Antonio was born and raised in Apex and completed all of his formal education in the Apex ISD. Even though the primary language used in Antonio's home is Spanish, Antonio reported that he was never in the bilingual or ESL program. However, when examining his cumulative academic folder, I discovered that Antonio was indeed in the bilingual program during his pre-k education, and then his mom waived him out of bilingual for his kindergarten year. This appeared to be appropriate because of his aptitude scores.

Antonio was raised by his mom and stepfather. Both mom and stepdad were educated in Mexico and neither mom nor stepdad has a high school diploma. When I first met Antonio, to describe the study and find out if he might be interested in participating, he did not make eye contact with me. I worried that he might hold back information or he might be too shy to share fine points about his family or concerns in



high school. Indeed, he was one of the last students to turn in his consent form. I made a home visit to his mom's house to meet her and drop off another copy of the form after Antonio did not turn it in. She was not home, so I left it on the porch with a note. The neighborhood struck me as fairly middle class. The street in which his mom's home was located had small brick homes, with several cars in the driveway or parked on the street. I could hear the sounds of a social gathering next door to Antonio's home. Laughter and comments both in Spanish and English were tossed around in a party atmosphere. In addition, the smell of Bar-B-Q wafted through the air. Antonio's mom did sign and return the consent the following week.

Carlos was the second participant. He is a second generation immigrant who was born in a large urban city and raised in Apex by his father. His mother still lives in the city, and he occasionally visits her. Both mom and dad were educated in Mexico and attained a middle school education. Carlos' father and mother speak to him in Spanish, but Carlos prefers speaking English. While he reported to me that he had never been in a bilingual or ESL program, his cumulative folder showed that he was enrolled in a pre-k bilingual program and remained there until fourth grade. He was moved out of bilingual at the end of fourth grade and carried under the ESL program during fifth grade before he was released into the general education curriculum. Carlos seemed at ease with our first meeting. His counselor had already called him to her office and explained the study to him. Carlos is a wiry young man who appeared fairly self confident. He was the first person to return the consent form.

Eduardo was the third participant. He is a third generation immigrant who was born and raised in Apex and completed all of his formal schooling in Apex ISD. As a small child, Eduardo and his twin brother were turned over to be raised by his grandparents. Both grandparents were educated in Mexico, but did not attain a high school education. Eduardo's mom lives in New Mexico and he has never met his father. Eduardo said his mother did not complete her high school education. In addition, Eduardo and his twin brother will be the first in the family to acquire a high school diploma. Eduardo's grandparents speak to him in Spanish at home, and he was enrolled in Apex's pre-k bilingual program and tested out in second grade. Eduardo is a smart looking athletic young man with a flat top haircut and impeccable manners as well. When I explained the nature of the study, during our initial meeting, Eduardo never hesitated about participating and gave me the impression that he was eager to share his story. During the interviews, there were many responses with, "ma'am" attached.

Xavier was the final participant. Xavier is a first generation immigrant, who moved here from El Salvador with his mother and three siblings five years ago. He has been in the ESL program at the high school. Xavier's mother attained an elementary education in El Salvador. Xavier was agreeable to the study and appeared to be a quiet and well-mannered young man. He is short in stature at about 5' 5" tall and well dressed and groomed. However, I was concerned there might be a language barrier between the two of us. Like Antonio, Xavier was also slow to return the consent form, so I visited his home. Xavier lives on the outskirts of Apex in a row of mobile homes. As we drove down his street, I must admit that as a middle aged white woman, with a fair

complexion, I was actually relieved to have my Spanish-speaking husband with me to socially dialogue with Xavier. There were several single-wide mobile homes in a state of disrepair and a couple of dogs roaming the street that seemed harmless enough. I noticed, with amusement, that one of them was a breed similar to a Chihuahua. When we approached Xavier's trailer, it was difficult to figure out where the front door was, because it was located around the back and there was a make-shift fence around a landing, with a dilapidated gate. At first, we were apprehensive to enter through the gate because it looked like a dog was being kept there. It seemed like a slight invasion of privacy, but we decided to enter and Xavier answered the door. Even though Xavier's mom was not home, he promised to get her to sign the form and bring it to school the following day. Indeed, the consent form was returned the next day.

There was an additional home visit conducted with a student, Miguel, who had agreed to participate in the study but did not return his consent form. My husband and I drove out to his home and, fortunately, we decided to drive the four-wheel drive truck, because soon after turning off the main road, the pavement ended, and it was very difficult to see addresses of the homes located about 50 to 75 yards off the dirt road. At first, we passed up Miguel's home, and realized, when we hit the end of the dirt road that we had driven too far. After turning around and more carefully examining the homes and faint addresses, we saw Miguel's double-wide mobile home. He was outside with another Latino man burning some brush. When we drove up to speak with him, we were greeted by a pack of large dogs barking and jumping up on us. Miguel came over and shoed them away. I talked to him again about the study and had a consent form in hand

so he could give it to his parents for their approval. However, Miguel said he was not interested in participating and did not want to bother with it. I thanked him for his time and was glad to know that I needed to acquire another participant in the study. Eduardo became that alternate participant.

The major themes have been delineated below. However, the subthemes are not completely mutually exclusive within each theme, as there inevitably is some overlap. Furthermore, the themes are interdependent with one another; therefore, the lines of categorization are sometimes blurred.

### **School Environment**

School environment refers to the environment and climate of the school, to ideally nurture student learning and academic success. Factors such as faculty, instructional strategies, academic rigor, staff rapport with students, and high expectations are just a few of the dynamics that play a part in fostering student success in school. During the individual interviews, three subthemes emerged as identified by the participants. The subthemes within school environment are: 1) staff, 2) school climate, and 3) personal. Within the staff subtheme, treatment of the students was a consistent topic that made both positive and negative impacts on the students' academic success. Indeed, positive relationships established with teachers, counselors, coaches, and mentors appeared to be an extremely powerful influence for the students to succeed in school. In addition, pedagogy emerged as another topic on which students commented as either helpful or detrimental in their academic achievement. Transition of students from the junior high to high school, language barrier, and safety were the main topics in the

second subtheme, school climate. The transition of students from eighth to ninth grade appeared to have mostly negative comments. Language barrier was negative only to Xavier, who is a first generation immigrant. Safety was typically a positive topic, with the exception of a few comments from two of the participants. Within the personal subtheme, the main focus was on the students' academic commitment and relationship with male peers.

**Staff.** As an educator and eternal optimist about public education in general, I will begin with the positive comments offered by the participants concerning their teachers in high school. Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, schools adopted a regimented and impersonal priority of subject content foremost, versus concentrating on a student's individual learning and personal rapport between teacher and student (Noddings, 1988). Caring and education relates to the rapport a teacher has with students. In secondary schools, teachers have more students, and therefore, often do not know them as well as elementary teachers know their students. High school teachers place more emphasis on teaching subject matter, and some tend to place less emphasis on serving as coach, mentor, counselor, or cultural mediator. The lack of opportunity to develop personal relationships and the variety of teacher and student personalities may create alienation. Students want to be listened to and respected as human beings with wants, desires, fears, and emotions (Valenzuela, 1999).

**Staff treatment.** Antonio stated the only reason he will venture on to college is because of a relationship with a district counselor who does not work in the high school building. Sometimes staff members other than teachers have an important role in a

student's success or lack of success in school. Out of the four participants, Antonio was the most vocal about a mentor assigned by the district who played a key role in his graduation and subsequent college goals. Antonio said:

Ms. Simon, my mentor, really motivated me to go to college. She kept on visiting with me and pushing me. She took me to the community college for a visit. I owe it all to her. The only reason I want to go to college is because of Ms. Simon.

When Ms. Simon took me to the community college, I met Dr. Rodriguez and he motivated me to get a college education. Yeah. I think it was her (Ms. Simon) for sure. If it wasn't for her, I probably wouldn't have passed, to tell you the truth.

Well, I would have passed, but I wouldn't have been college motivated. I would still be saying, if they would, if they would ask, what I was gonna do after high school, I would be saying – work. Go find a job. Because of her I can say that I want to go to college. I want to learn, cause I know that the economy is real bad right now. The recession and people are being let go by companies and its better, you know, to have a degree than a high school diploma, you know than somebody who doesn't.

Antonio felt as though he probably would have graduated without the district mentor, but he never would have seriously considered college. In addition, his mentor helped him complete the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) report needed for financial aid in college. Antonio plans to attend the local community college and get an Associate's Degree in Computer Numerical Control (CNC), so that he may work in a high tech career and keep his options open to pursue a Bachelor's Degree. Even though

Antonio worked many jobs during his tenure at high school, he did not work this year, to focus on graduating from high school. He is currently seeking a job for the summer and upcoming fall semester to help out with college expenses.

Antonio also mentioned some of his teachers who encouraged him with classroom assignments. Antonio said, “My math teacher last year really pushed me. She singled me out and really helped me. She would nag me in a nice way about my homework.” Antonio believed this math models teacher along with his geometry teacher, who also asked him daily about assignments, were essential in his ability to pick up the math credits he needed for graduation and pass the Math TAKS test.

Carlos described his tech systems and physics class as his favorites this year, because he perceived the teachers cared about him. Carlos stated that these teachers stayed in constant contact with him about assignments and graduation. Carlos said, “He’s the kind of teacher (physics teacher) who just keeps talking to you. Ms. Bingham (tech systems teacher) also tries to keep me going and encouraging me to graduate.” Carlos said the teacher who made the biggest impact on him was a co-teacher in his math models class his senior year. He said Ms. Thompson was the main reason he finally passed the Math TAKS test. Carlos stated:

She’s always helping me too and asking me if I need help with other classes. She will like always bring me gifts and stuff like food. She gave me like – well, the first time she gave me; she made me some cookies. She gave me a box of cookies – that was for Christmas. And then she gave me pencils. You know, candy, a lot of stuff – notebooks.

Carlos summed up his thoughts about teachers who made a connection with him by saying, “I’m better with the teachers who talk to me. I feel like they care.” Carlos also felt that his counselor was an essential factor in helping him graduate. She called him in on a regular basis, and let him know what credits he was missing, so he could work on them in CHOOSE (a self-paced computer based instruction class for students who are deficient in credits). When talking about his counselor, Carlos said:

She keeps me updated about my credits. What I need to do, you know. If she wouldn't then I wouldn't know about – you know – how many CHOOSE I gotta do or I wouldn't have even tried to check what I needed to do.

In addition, Carlos liked his grade level principal because Mr. Brandt did not get mad or excited. He would just tell Carlos how many hours were needed to make up his absences. Carlos stated:

Mr. Manger – he makes a big deal out of everything, you know. But Brandt he doesn't you know – like – it's not like he doesn't care, but he doesn't make a big deal out of it, but says you got to get to class, you know. He doesn't get mad about it. It's like – he's calm.

When I asked Eduardo the best thing teachers did to help him succeed in high school, Eduardo responded, “Help me with my work. Like, learning the material. Pushing me, like telling me you can do it.” Eduardo also mentioned the same geometry teacher as Antonio and said that she was friendly, but would push him in class. Eduardo did have some more resources than the other participants because of his involvement with football. Eduardo stated:



Yeah and that's one thing too because the coaches are like, they tell you like if you want to play you have to pass the classes. It was kinda a good thing that I was in football too because it kept me like doing my stuff, my homework and last minute projects and stuff. It was a good thing I was in football – not that I wouldn't do it, but I was motivated because I loved football. All the coaches, they like help me. Coach Billings is a science teacher, and I had problems in science so he helped me. I asked him lots of questions, and he would help me out. I think he's a pretty nice coach.

Eduardo shared that he was initially worried about completing high school. Not only was he worried about the increased numbers of students but also the perseverance required in the four years of high school. Eduardo commented:

So like my big concern was like if I could maintain all four years. To be honest, like last year I asked myself, you made it this far – like last semester, I knew a few more months and I'm outta here. I was just sitting in my room doing homework and it hit me that I'm almost done.

Unlike Antonio and Carlos, Eduardo did not have a mentor or anyone special on the high school staff who was a big motivator. He did know his counselor Mr. Sanchez who graduated from a local four year university. Eduardo thought it would be "cool" if he also attended the same university as Mr. Sanchez.

As a first generation immigrant to the United States, Xavier's response to this prompt was somewhat different to the other three participants. According to Valenzuela (1999), the generational status of immigrants plays a part in cultural assimilation,

academic achievement, and peer pressure. First generation immigrants are generally happy to be in the United States and, therefore, do not perceive certain nuances of American behavior, such as racism, social capital, and collective differences. Xavier's responses aligned with Valenzuela's literature. Xavier said that in his old school, in El Salvador, the teachers did not help him as much as they do here at this high school in the United States. Xavier said there have been many caring teachers who have helped him along the way. They stayed after school for tutorials and helped him with assignments. Perhaps the telling part of Xavier's generational status was that he could not recall any perception of negativity by the faculty or staff at Apex High School. One would be hard pressed to find any American twelfth grader in a public school who could not recall a negative experience with a staff member in his respective high school.

Even though Xavier could not recall any negative experiences, the other three participants certainly did. Carlos was probably the most vocal and gave some specific circumstances of faculty who appeared to be apathetic, negative, or inflexible. Carlos said:

Sometimes to me, it's like they don't care, you know. Like, I failed my communications class because of the teacher. I would just go in there and argue with her every day. She just like tried to be too controlling, you know. She couldn't let us do assignments another way, you know. Like something that might be easier but still do the assignment. It just always had to be her way.

It appears what Carlos is explaining is a faculty member who got caught up in a power struggle with a teenager. In addition, the way Carlos talked about the assignment gave

the impression that the teacher did not differentiate classroom work. (We will examine this particular teacher and class later in the subtheme of academic commitment.) Another recollection from Carlos communicated complete apathy by a teacher. Carlos stated:

I remember my freshmen year, I would just go into algebra – I had her for two periods – I would just go in there, and I would sleep, or I would just talk to everybody. I had her for two periods so it would just be do-no-work for two periods in the day.

It's difficult for professional educators to imagine that an algebra I teacher would allow any student to sleep through most of the class. It's no wonder Carlos failed algebra I his ninth grade year. To make matters worse, he was double blocked for math in an effort to adequately schedule time for reviews and re-teaching when needed during class time. Therefore, he missed out on two credits when he failed the course. When asked about other negative teachers, Carlos said, "I can't remember. I know there was. It probably was because the teacher just didn't like me or didn't care. Like some just let me not do my work." Carlos seemed to equate teachers who allowed him to sleep in class as those who did not care about him.

Antonio was not as vocal about negative staff members in the school. He attributed his failures in the ninth and tenth grades to his apathy and failure to complete assignments. He did, however, make one statement about educators in the high school setting. Antonio said, "Teachers and staff need to be slow to judge and get to know the student before labeling them bad or lazy."

When pressed more for any particular occurrence, he couldn't recall specifics, but just the general sense that some of the students were being judged before the adults really knew them and understood what was going on in the student's personal life.

The students were also questioned about staff or faculty racism in the school and any episode in which they perceived racism from the faculty or staff at Apex. Valencia (2002) maintains that the basis of the idea – Latinos do not value education – lies in deficit thinking, which refers to the implication that students, primarily of low socio economic status and of color, perform poorly in school because of flawed families or because they are inadequate in their ability to learn. Carlos did have one specific incident that he shared:

Some teachers - like yesterday, I got here late and I was sitting on the benches with some other two Hispanics and there were some white people around us too.

There was a lady who walked up to us and told us to go to class. I told her I just got here and she said, 'Well you need to go get a pass and go to class.' She didn't tell the other (white) kids to get a pass.

I pressed Carlos for any other occurrences he could recall at school, but he said that was the only thing he could remember. He said he did not perceive racism as a major factor at the high school. However, he did say it was more common in the community. He related an episode at the local movie theater when the managers were telling the Latinos and African Americans to leave the property or come in the building. However, the white teenagers were allowed to stay outside the building and socialize.

Eduardo stated that he really didn't have any negative encounters with teachers, but that his twin brother had experienced what he perceived as racism. A certain English teacher made some comments to Eduardo's twin about being lazy. And when several students were in the hall after the tardy bell, Eduardo said his brother was targeted to get to class while the white students were not instructed to move. Such a view of Latinos, by European Americans and others, can play an essential part in students' educational achievement and learning. Researchers have deliberated about how the perceptions of others have fundamental consequences for self-perceptions and subsequent behaviors (Jussim, 1986; Miller & Turnbull, 1986).

***Pedagogy.*** Merriam-Webster (2010) defines pedagogy as the art, science, or profession of teaching. Apex ISD advocates and trains faculty in numerous differentiated teaching strategies to educate all diverse learners in the classroom. One of the differentiated teaching strategies Apex ISD has embraced is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). The goal of this model is to train teachers and administrators in quality instruction by providing a framework that connects instructional strategies and methods to facilitate effective pedagogy (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Supported by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, SIOP targets the English Language Learner (ELL) in an English speaking classroom (Echevarria et al.). Even though SIOP targets the ELL learner, most of the strategies employed may be used for any type of learner who may not excel with traditional instructional methods.

Two of the participants indicated the curriculum and instruction at the high school level was rigorous, but they were up to the challenge as long as they focused and completed their work. Eduardo said, “But I mean, some (teachers) tell you and you got to do what they ask you to do, you know. If you cooperate they'll work with you, you know.” Eduardo stated several times that if students showed they cared about the assignments and their work, then the teachers generally did everything possible to help those students’ complete assignments and pass the class. Additionally, Antonio articulated some of the differentiated instruction that took place in the classroom.

Antonio said:

My math teacher last year would ask me to get in front of everybody and write the problem on the board and show my work. Most teachers don’t do that. They just call on you for answers. Her name was Ms. Knock. I think she moved somewhere to work with church missions. But, it was her class that really helped me pass my Math TAKS because she really pushed me like she singled me out of everybody to help me. That’s what really helped me to the most with my Math TAKS. She was one of my favorite teachers.

Antonio also talked about the classes with two teachers that were the most helpful. He said that between the two teachers, he usually got along with one of them, and it seemed as though there was more help when he needed it because there were two teachers in the room.

Xavier, however, was clear when describing some of the difficulties he had with the curriculum. Even though Xavier was cooperative and willing to complete

assignments, he struggled with the English vocabulary and grammar. Xavier said, "Teachers are good, and they teach very fast. They have a very fast kind of teacher here." Pedagogy is undoubtedly a crucial piece of the education puzzle with students, especially those who are at-risk of dropping out of high school. However, rapport with school personnel emerged as a theme that may be more essential to academic success. If participants perceived the teacher cared about them and encouraged them, they indicated that was extremely important motivator to attend class and complete assignments.

**School climate.** The personality of the school is portrayed in its climate. Moos (1979) defines school climate as the social surroundings of a setting or "learning environment" (p. 81) in which students have distinctive experiences, depending upon the procedures created by the teachers and administrators. Peterson and Skiba (2001) characterize climate as the feelings students and staff have about the school environment. These feelings could relate to how at ease each person feels in a setting and whether he or she believes the environment is beneficial to teaching and learning, suitably structured, and safe. Climate may also refer to other positive or negative feelings concerning the school environment; for example, these authors imply that when students feel relaxed and supported, it sustains effective and efficient learning and pedagogy as well as constructive student conduct and attitudes. On the contrary, negative feelings such as fear, frustration, anxiety, and isolation may be considered as having a negative effect on both academics and behavior, or be tantamount to a negative school climate. Therefore, it may be surmised, from their line of reasoning that school climate is a mirror image of the positive or negative feelings regarding the school

environment and likely has an impact on an array of learning outcomes either directly or indirectly.

*Transition from junior high to high school.* When students transition from eighth to ninth grade, they are faced with a completely different set of circumstances at the high school level than junior high or middle school. Students are typically faced with considerably more people in the building, a complex credit system, increased difficulty on high stakes standardized tests, and balancing a more demanding curriculum with their social aspirations. Research has shown that high schools with little or no plan to transition eighth graders to the ninth grade have a much higher ninth grade failure rate (Eanes, 2005).

Eduardo and Carlos definitely felt the increase in numbers with peers and faculty at the high school level. Eduardo said:

When I first came to Apex High, I didn't think there was going to be this many people, you know. The first couple of weeks it was just kinda confusing, you know. It's not the same as junior high. It's real different. It's totally true what the teachers at junior high were telling us. You've got a whole bunch of classes and some teachers don't care like whether you turn your work in or not.

Carlos related that the most difficult thing when coming from eighth grade was the new experience and more people. He was worried about the size of the high school. Carlos also worried about graduating from high school while he was in the eighth grade. Additionally, Carlos cannot remember anyone at the junior high who talked to him about graduating from high school. He felt there was nothing to help the transition from eighth



to ninth grade. Carlos thought the work was going to be harder in high school, but said that he didn't think the work was more difficult; however students must complete assignments. He said he does his work in class now. Carlos said:

Well, ninth grade - really, I was just acting a fool. I was in ninth grade for two years. I felt bad about that. I do more work in class now. Way more work than when I was in ninth grade. I don't goof around that much anymore.

In ninth grade, Carlos shared that he was off task more and enjoyed talking to friends in class instead of working on the assignments.

Antonio remembers the transition from junior high to high school as more problematic in respect to his academics. Antonio commented:

High school seemed harder than junior high. Junior high you just showed up and passed. In high school, you really have to do the work. I felt like I had to work a lot harder in high school. I wasn't prepared for the work here in high school. I thought it would be like eighth grade and I could just sit there in class and get a grade, but it's not like that. You need to be prepared to work for your grades.

Antonio recalled junior high as a place where students could pass as long as they showed up to class and made some type of effort. When he arrived at high school, the credit system was confusing and he was not used to working at a higher academic level.

Antonio said he didn't feel prepared academically for the rigors of high school curriculum. As a result, Antonio shut down in class. In his ninth grade year, Antonio failed algebra I and biology. He barely passed English I with a 70 average for the year.

Xavier's reflections were different than the other three participants because he entered public school in the United States as a ninth grader at Apex High School. Xavier said his greatest obstacle was the language barrier. He was confused by such a large building and the numbers of people, but he was far more concerned with understanding basic things like how to get to class and where to eat lunch.

*Language barriers.* Complexities related with language use characterize and exemplify a common and substantial acculturation pressure confronting Latino students within formal school settings (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). The fluency of academic language in a second language can take up to seven years, which must be contemplated when teaching a sequential and abstract curriculum such as math (Khisty, 2006). Although three out of the four participants stated they were more comfortable speaking in English than Spanish, all four admitted to language brokering at home. In other words, their parents or guardians spoke to them in Spanish and the students would respond in English, Spanish or both. Additionally, they all said they did some interpretation of written documents at home for their parents or guardians. Xavier speaks Spanish at home and struggles with the language barrier at the high school. He said he could learn easier if the teachers could teach in Spanish rather than English. This is not surprising since Khisty's research indicated that it takes up to seven years to develop an academic fluency in a second language. Xavier has only been in the United States for five years. In addition to his current struggles, one can assume he probably developed some learning gaps during his first couple of years in a U.S. school.

Eduardo's grandparents speak to him in Spanish at home. Eduardo says he replies in both Spanish and English. However, Eduardo says he's more comfortable with English, because he has a more extensive vocabulary in English than Spanish, but he's learning to appreciate his bilingual capabilities more and more. Antonio's response was similar to Eduardo's. Antonio stated:

Yeah, she (mom) talks to me mostly in Spanish and I answer in Spanish or English. It depends because my English is better than my Spanish. I still speak decent Spanish. Good enough to understand it. I like a little bit of both. I mean, I used to be just comfortable with English, but I think now that I'm getting older I like Spanish too. I want to learn more about it. I mean, I know it pretty well but I would like to use it more.

Eduardo, Carlos and Antonio acknowledged the importance of the Spanish language to their culture and future opportunities after they graduate from high school.

**Safety.** The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) conducted a study on bullying and determined that 29.9% of students in the United States or three out of every ten were either victims or perpetrators of bullying. Roughly one of every five students was classified as a bully, and almost one of every six was identified as a victim of bullying (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton & Scheidt, 2001). The research study characterized harmfulness, peer status, and frequency as standards that described bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). Along with the bullying dilemma, five percent of students in grades 9-12 reported using marijuana on school property within the past 30 days. Males were more likely than females to have used marijuana on the school

campus (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Remarkably, the numbers of students who reported using marihuana on school grounds rose from six to nine percent between 1993 and 1995 and then decreased to five percent in 2001 where it remained through 2005 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

Both bullying and drug use emerged as a concern for both Carlos and Eduardo. Carlos mentioned that he was bullied his ninth grade year because he was so small. One of the fights he was involved in was because he felt he needed to send a message to some of the other students that he would fight if they bullied him. However, Carlos was in a fight his senior year because another Latino student kept looking at him and Carlos wanted him to stop. When asked why this student was staring at him in a threatening manner, Carlos believed it was gang related. I asked Carlos if he was in a gang but he said he was not in one. In addition, I asked Carlos if he thought gang activity was a big problem at Apex High School, but he didn't think it was a problem in the school. He said it was more prevalent outside of school than within the school itself. It was interesting that Carlos said he was bullied his ninth grade year, because Ms. Hill reported that Carlos was bullying a Special Education student in her classroom.

Eduardo, on the other hand, talked about drugs as the biggest problem at Apex High School. When asked what he disliked most in high school, Eduardo said, "I really don't like the alcohol and drugs and stuff." I asked Eduardo how bad the drug problem is at Apex High School and he replied, "Nowadays, it's pretty bad here." We both agreed that it was bad in all high schools in the United States. I asked Eduardo if it was easier to get street drugs like marijuana, meth and crack than alcohol and tobacco. Eduardo said,

“I think both are easy, but drugs now you can get them anywhere.” Eduardo also talked about a specific time when another student whom he thought was his friend approached him about taking drugs. That discussion will be disclosed later in the social aspects section.

Antonio said he always felt safe at the high school especially after his ninth grade year. He did indicate he was afraid initially in ninth grade when a major hurricane hit and there were many displaced students in the building; tempers flared and some fights broke out. Antonio said, “There was a riot a couple of years ago. It was my freshman year and all the kids from Hurricane Katrina came over here. That happened when they were here.” Antonio said he realized a couple of months later that this was not the norm for Apex High School and he didn’t perceive safety as a problem for him or other students.

Xavier did not think safety was a big problem for him at the high school. However, he said, “I don't like the black people trying to fight the Spanish people and everything. Sometimes the Spanish people say colored in Spanish and the blacks take it the wrong way. They get mad and everything.” Xavier went on to explain it was a misunderstanding. He had never been in trouble himself, but he has seen trouble start between the African Americans and the Latinos.

**Personal.** Academic commitment demands connecting one's personal individuality to the responsibility of student and learner (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994), exhibiting persistent inquisitiveness and attention in class, and demonstrating concentrated endeavors in learning (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Skinner &

Belmont, 1993). Adolescents' academic identity has been linked to social identities that are made salient in the academic domain (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994). Within the academic commitment sub-theme, an examination of the participants' attendance, discipline, grades, TAKS results, teacher and or staff support, college plans, and involvement in school activities were investigated.

***Academic commitment.*** Two out of the four participants were not in compliance with the state law of 90% attendance. Therefore, they were assigned makeup hours after school and on Saturdays. All four of the participants expressed difficulty in staying motivated to attend school, especially after they passed the exit level TAKS test. Only one student, Carlos, had any discipline on his record. He had been suspended a couple of times for fighting. One of those suspensions occurred during his senior year. When asked what happened, Carlos said that another male student kept looking at him in an aggressive way. When he thought no one was looking, Carlos hit the student. The students were caught by faculty and administration because of the bruising and red marks on their faces. Carlos said he did have regrets about acting bad with some of his teachers in ninth grade. When he reflected on his ninth grade year, he wished he would have been more diligent about completing assignments and that he had not fought with anyone.

Earlier, in the sub-theme of staff treatment, Carlos reported that he was frustrated with his speech communications teacher because she was inflexible and he argued with her all this time. When examining Carlos' discipline records, this teacher had written several disciplinary referrals to the grade level principal. Some of her statements shed a

certain light on the frustration she was having in this particular class. More importantly, the inclusion of her comments gives the reader a more well-balanced view of both sides of the story. Ms. Hill wrote:

Carlos often has his head down in class and has to be redirected to his assignments which he gives little attention to. Today, he had his phone out, and when I said something to him, he told me he was checking the time and it was none of my business. When I told him there were 2 clocks in my room, he said they are wrong and I could not tell him what to do with his phone especially since he was just checking the time. In addition, as we were discussing our group problem solving activity, he asked me if he can work by himself and I said the purpose was to work in a group and he very rudely told me, 'I ain't doing it then.' I have spoken to his dad.

In a subsequent discipline incident written a week later, Ms. Hill stated:

Mr. Brandt, I have already informed you of Carlos' attitude in class and it is getting worse. I cannot say ANYTHING (focus, do work, etc.) to him without him smarting back with a comment to the affect of 'you can't make me do anything.' Today was no exception AGAIN and I told him if he was not going to take my direction, then I would find someone who could. In a very threatening way, he said, 'you just do that then.' This is becoming a classroom problem.

What used to be a very pleasant class is beginning to be more discipline issues than instruction. A lot of this is due to other students encouraging or laughing, or chiming in when Carlos makes his comments. If I just let him sit in class like a

lump and go to sleep or not do any work, there would be no problem, but I do not think that is how I am supposed to be doing my job and it would undermine discipline in the classroom. Thank you for your attention in helping resolve this issue.

On the same day, Ms. Hill wrote an addendum to the previous discipline incident:

Mr. Brandt, as a follow up to my referrals on Carlos, he has been picking on a Special Service student in my class by taking his paperwork and pencils away. I just realized this issue and thought you should know. The SS student is afraid to report it and asked me not to because he is afraid he will be picked on more.

And still another discipline incident written within a week of the previous one, Ms. Hill stated:

Mr. Brandt, Carlos has generally been uncooperative all year, but has become increasingly more so lately and becoming verbally disrespectful to me as the referral on 10/29 states. Today, I was telling the class I would not see them tomorrow and he blurted out, 'GOOD!' I ignored that but then he started arguing with another student and I told both of them to stop and Carlos told me that I can't tell him what to do. I directed him to start his assignments and he again smarted off to me by telling me he isn't doing anything I say. I then told him he was out of here and he told me he isn't going anywhere and at first he refused to go out of class. In addition, he always has a look of hatred on his face. Thank you for taking action on this referral and the one on 10/29.



Clearly, one can sense the frustration of the teacher with Carlos. Additionally, one may even perceive frustration with administration in dealing with the situation. Even though the inclusion of Ms. Hill's comments presents another side of the picture from Carlos' initial statement of inflexible teachers, it also presents more questions as to how the rapport between Ms. Hill and Carlos deteriorated to this point. Was Ms. Hill inflexible and unfriendly at the beginning of the semester and then Carlos spiraled to his looks of "hatred" as she described them? Or did Carlos enter the classroom with the poor attitude and Ms. Hill was not able to win him over?

Another interesting aspect about this situation is that this occurred during Carlos' third year of high school. He was only classified as a tenth grader, was 16 years old and, one would expect that he would have more maturity at this point in his education. However, upon further examination of his cumulative academic folder, there were notes from the elementary teachers that communicated his lack of self-discipline and focus. Overwhelmingly, the comments state that Carlos was underachieving because the teachers believed he was not applying himself. More questions come to the surface as to Carlos' home life and things happening that could cause this behavior to manifest in the school.

When asked what their grade point averages were, none of the four participants knew that information. Xavier and Carlos did not know what a GPA was and asked about it. Eduardo and Antonio seemed to know what it meant, but they did not know theirs. Eduardo was the only one of the four participants who passed all four of the standardized TAKS test during the first administration, in the spring of his junior year. A

scale score of 2100 is needed to pass each of the tests. 2400 is recognized as a commended effort by the state. Eduardo scored a 2100 on the English, Language Arts (ELA), 2180 on the Math, 2251 on Social Studies and 2114 on the Science portion.

Antonio failed the science TAKS during his junior year with a score of 2012. However, he did pass the other three subjects. When asked about the science TAKS and why it was so hard, Antonio stated:

I guess I wasn't – like reading the questions. Like, I was just scanning and then scanning answers. But like when I took it last time and I passed it, I actually sat there and read every question through and eliminated answer choices that were wrong. That really helped me out.

In ELA, Antonio scored a 2233, Math was a 2138, and his Social Studies score was a 2260. Antonio passed the Science TAKS during the fall retest of his senior year. He admitted that science had been a real struggle. He failed Biology twice and failed Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC) once. After passing Biology the third time he took the course, Antonio then had to double up on science this year with Physics and Chemistry to acquire the required number of state credits in science for high school graduation.

Carlos passed three out of the four tests his junior year. He failed Math with a 2028 scale score. However, he did attain a 2239 on the ELA, a 2100 in Science and a 2215 in Social Studies. Carlos took the Math TAKS two more times before passing it the spring of his senior year.

Xavier passed two out of the four TAKS tests his junior year. He scored commended on the Science test with a 2532, and attained a 2226 on the Social Studies test. However, he failed the ELA with a 2019 and the Math with a 1995. He was able to pass the Math test in the fall of his senior year and passed the ELA during the spring of his senior year. Xavier said the ELA TAKS caused him a lot of stress and was a possible roadblock to graduating from high school.

Eduardo was a different type of student than the other participants because of his involvement in football. In Texas, a student must pass all content areas in order to participate in any extra-curricular activity. Since Eduardo was on the football team, the dynamics of his motivation to pass all subjects was different than the other three participants. Additionally, an activity like football can completely change the behavior of the student since many football coaches will discipline their athletes if the students are behavioral problems in the classroom. However, the pattern of positive caring by teachers is evident with Eduardo as it was with the other participants.

According to Xavier, he did not have a mentor and he did not meet with his counselor often. The last time he met with the counselor, it was to notify him that he did not pass the TAKS ELA. He contradicted himself and later said that his counselor had done a lot to help him and even made sure he attended tutorials. Xavier said he would like to attend the local community college, but he had not completed a FAFSA yet and didn't know what a FAFSA was. And even though Xavier works at local fast food restaurant, making \$7.50 an hour, he is not interested in building a career in restaurant management.

Eduardo was the only one of the four participants who was involved in extracurricular activities. Eduardo played football from tenth through twelfth grades. He also participated in track and field and powerlifting. However, the only sport he participated in his senior year was football. Eduardo said:

I mean, my freshman year I didn't really play. Like, I was trying to look for a job and then I was like, nah, I'll just pay attention to school. So like the second semester came around and I was in P.E. and we'd go out to the stadium and play football and then I'd see the football players and wish I could be out there. So we (Eduardo and his brother) talked to Coach Williams and said we wanted to get back into football. And he talked to us like okay, you know. He said to wait until this certain amount of time, you know. And, time came and we changed our schedule and we were enrolled in there the second semester. So we joined football, 10th and 11th grade and then this past semester as a senior, I was on Varsity and made second team all-district.

Eduardo said that football helped motivate him in the classroom so he could maintain eligibility. Research has revealed that high school students who participate in extracurricular activities like band and athletics are more likely to succeed in school (Rysewyk, 2008). Because of his extracurricular activities at school, Eduardo did not work throughout high school. However, he did have an upcoming interview with a local hardware store for summer employment.

At the beginning of his ninth grade year, Carlos said he signed up for cross country and the track teams, but the school lost his physical. When he was told to go get

another physical, Carlos didn't bother, so he never was on the team. Carlos was in the choir in junior high, but did not sign up for that activity in high school. Even though he plans to pursue a career in music, he was not interested in learning an instrument in band because of the cost and time involved. Additionally, Carlos did not have a job while in high school.

***Relationship with male peers.*** Both constructive and harmful pressures of peers and peer groups impact the educational achievements of minority and immigrant students and have been recognized by many researchers (Anderson, 1988; Cooper, Cooper, Azmitia, Chavira & Gullatt, 2002; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004; Gunn-Morris & Morris, 2000; Moreno, 1999; Siddle-Walker, 1996). One of the three main categories identified was tied to relationships and collective supports. This finding determined that students with stable friendships, which impart additional support and encouragement, are reinforced by those friendships in realizing academic achievement (Lee, 1984).

When Antonio saw his friends graduate from high school last year, he was determined that he would get his act together and graduate this year. Even if it was one year behind his cohort, Antonio decided it was better than not graduating at all. Antonio has many friends and they hang out together going to parties and going out to eat together. Antonio said:

Like, I grew up in Apex and I know everyone here. That's what I like the most. I pretty much knew everybody when they were here. It was like real friendly for me. I got along with everyone real well.

Many of Antonio's friends graduated last year and that was an uncomfortable feeling for him. Antonio has one friend who dropped out after not graduating with his cohort last year. He has an okay job but nothing that Antonio wants to do for the rest of his life. Antonio said he thought high school would be much more difficult socially with so many more people but it really wasn't. After getting over his initial shyness the first year, he did not have a problem making new friends in high school while keeping some of his old friends from junior high.

Several of Eduardo's Latino friends are graduating from high school and have plans to go to college. When asked why he liked these particular boys, Eduardo said that they are good people who aren't into drugs. They go to parties and hang out together, but nothing bad is going on at the parties to get them into trouble. Eduardo did have a negative experience with one of his friends. Eduardo commented:

I mean I used to have a friend – two friends – they got into drugs and they offered me some. I stopped talking to them little by little and like now I don't really talk to them anymore. I hear about them every once in awhile but I don't talk to them no more.

Eduardo said these students were seniors this year and should graduate, but he thinks one of them dropped out now because he got into some trouble with the law. Eduardo indicated that when these friends offered him drugs, he simply stopped being their friend. I asked him if these friends pressured him by saying he would be cool if he just tried the drugs. Eduardo replied:

Yeah. They were like, 'C'mon man try this.' and I was like, 'No man that's not cool.' And I know that's not a real friend to pressure me like that. A real friend would tell you not to do that. Or a real friend wouldn't offer that to me.

When Eduardo was asked if the drugs were to be given to him or sold to him, he said they were to be given to him. Eduardo indicated he was aware that drug pushers give drugs to people initially to get them hooked on the drug and create a healthy market. Eduardo's reaction to this peer pressure to try drugs clearly showed discernment as to who his real friends were. He was confident enough to decline the offer and then exhibited cleverness in avoiding this peer who was pushing drugs.

Carlos' favorite part about high school was socializing with his friends, both male and female. Carlos was concerned about graduating from high school, while in eighth grade, because of the friends he had. He said that most of his friends from junior high had dropped out of school. However, one of Carlos' high school friends is going to the local community college and wants to teach physical education. When asked why he liked the friends he had now, Carlos responded, "They're more straight up than other people, you know. They're more real to me. They won't lie behind my back."

Xavier said he hangs out with some Latino male friends and they play cards together. He said when he asks them what they are going to do after high school some have mentioned college, but they have not said specifically what they want to do as a career.

## **Family Environment**

The second major theme is family environment. Merriam Webster (2010) defines familism as a social pattern in which the family accepts a place of supremacy over individual benefits within the family. Familism is intricate and embraces concepts such as loyalty, give-and-take, and unity within one's own family unit (Rodriguez & Kolowki, 1998). Other researchers have described familism as enjoying a resilient feeling of self-awareness and connection of relatives with both immediate and extended families (Sabogal, Marin & Otero-Sabogal, 1987). Words of encouragement and support from family members related to success in formal education affect children of all races, ethnicities and socio economics. However, studies have revealed that support from the Latino family may be even more influential for student success in the classroom. Under this theme, the sub-themes also considered are: a) familism, b) support for school success, c) encouragement of personal and professional goals, and d) role models.

**Familism.** Two out of the four participants were second generation immigrants. One was a third generation immigrant and another was a first generation immigrant and had only been in the United States for five years. All participants lived in a home without both biological parents present. As some might describe, they are non-traditional homes in the sense of the nostalgic 'Leave It to Beaver' Hollywood Americana where June and Ward Cleaver were the litmus test for capable parents. But many educators will agree that these non-traditional families are becoming more the norm than the exception. Each participant has a unique set of circumstances in his immediate family framework. For instance, Antonio lives with his mom and stepdad. He has never met his real father



and, in the interview, he shared that his stepfather had essentially raised him and there was mutual love between the two. Conversely, Carlos lives with his dad while his mom lives in Houston. He visits his mom occasionally. Xavier lives with his mom, but conveyed that he does not know his father. Furthermore, there is no stepfather living in Xavier's home. Eduardo lives with his grandparents while his mom resides in New Mexico. He sees her sporadically, but had just seen her recently for Mother's Day. Eduardo said he had never met his father.

Among the four participants, two appeared to have exceptionally strong family ties with their immediate family as well as the extended family. Interestingly, these two appeared to have their future goals carefully planned and were confident they would achieve them. Antonio regularly goes out with family members and they have routine Bar-B-Q's at his mom's house. He is very close to extended family of uncle, aunt and cousins. Antonio said his uncle helped raise him and so they are close. In addition, Antonio now lives with his cousin after he and his mom had a falling out and she kicked him out. Antonio said:

I really didn't think she thought I was hanging out in the streets with my friends. I was out with them and she (mom) said come home right now. I told her I can't, I'm all the way over here in Summerville. I can't tell my friend to bring me home, we just got here. So she said, 'Just don't come home at all, you know. Your stuff will be outside.' So I ended up calling my cousin that night – she's like a sister to me – she took care of me when I was a baby. She said, 'Yeah, you better come spend the night with me.' And then that next day, my mom and I

were talking and I was being serious. She didn't think I would move out. But I actually did, you know. She thought I wasn't serious. Mom and Antonio have since reconciled, but he has decided to stay at his cousin's house because his brother and girlfriend are going to have a baby and move in at mom's house.

Antonio commented:

I was planning to go back, but I found out last week that my brother's having a baby with his girlfriend. He just got married yesterday actually by the court. She's going to be moving into our house. So, I might be staying with my cousin for a little bit.

Antonio's cousin has also offered him a place to stay after he graduates from high school and enrolls in the community college.

Eduardo is the other participant who appeared to have strong familism present.

Eduardo said:

Like, my brother and I, this is the first generation to graduate from high school. I live with my grandparents and they didn't graduate from high school and my mom didn't either. I wanted to graduate for my grandparents because they've been there for me all my life so I'm just going to finish high school and go on to college and get me a career that I want to do like architecture or engineering.

When Eduardo was asked if he was motivated to graduate from high school and attend college for his grandparents, he said, "Yeah, because they've been there for me. Like – they help me with everything. For me to not do something that they wanted me to do and like it's the first generation to graduate." Eduardo also talked about routine family

gatherings with aunts, uncles and cousins. He stated that his mom was driving over from New Mexico to see him graduate in a few weeks.

Neither Carlos nor Xavier talked as much about family time with the immediate and extended families. Xavier shared that his mom worked a lot and was not home much. Xavier's mom works in a restaurant and is there many hours. A grandmother was mentioned, but she lives in El Salvador and Xavier said he loved her but didn't see her too often. Similarly, Carlos said his dad was not home much because he was a manager of a restaurant that was about 30 miles away from their home. Additionally, Carlos' dad gets one day off each week so he does not see him much. Carlos also talked about a grandmother who lives in Mexico and would come to visit during Christmas, but that is the only time he sees her.

**Support for school success.** All four participants reported varying degrees of parental and family pressure to succeed academically in school. Antonio's cousin has achieved a bachelor's degree in education and is an elementary teacher. She regularly encouraged Antonio to graduate from high school and to go on to college. She has even told him that he can live in her home while he is in college. She supports him in attaining a degree in order to pursue a career. Antonio's mom gets on to him about school work and attendance issues, while his stepdad stays out of the fray. Antonio said, "They've (mom and stepdad) told me that you've got to get good grades and graduate. They never told me from personal experience because my mom didn't go to high school." Mom attempted to punish Antonio a couple of years ago when his grades were really bad. She took away his cell phone and grounded him, but Antonio said it didn't change his

behavior. Antonio couldn't remember the exact instance that he decided to work in school and invest in education. He said:

Last year like at the end of the year I started getting my act together and getting my grades up. I knew when I came back this year I was going to graduate and pass, you know. I'm gonna do all my work. Yeah, and I already knew that I wasn't going to get a good job without graduating from high school but I still Q kinda got lazy.

When Antonio was asked about a "lightning bolt" moment when he knew he needed to graduate from high school, he replied:

I don't know...maybe because I saw all my friends graduate. I knew I wasn't going to get a good job so I guess I had a little bit into it, like I need to get a good job, you know. I want to start a career. Then, after I talked to Dr. Rodriguez at the community college, he told me this job is a career – you can buy yourself a house and car. You can do a lot of stuff with this job. That's something else that motivated me.

When Eduardo was asked who was the most influential in his attainment of a high school education, he responded:

My grandparents, my grandma and my grandpa. Also, my aunts – They pushed me realhard. If I didn't go to school, they'd call me. Because at the beginning of the year, my aunt came up and talked to my Assistant Principal and told him that if there was any problem to give her a call. So every time I miss school, they call

my aunt. She comes over here or goes to my house and she's like where were you at today? And then she tells me to go to school, go to school.

I asked Eduardo if his grandparents talk to him about what it takes to do well in high school or if they talk to him about doing well in school. Eduard said:

Yeah...they tell me don't quit. Try hard. Hang in there you're almost done and all that. And they really want me to go to college, so...I mean I want to go to college too, it's not that I don't want to, I do really want to go.

When Eduardo was asked again if his grandparents were the main encouraging factor for going to college, he affirmed they were the main reason he was going to college. However, Eduardo also mentioned that he would like to have nicer stuff like a better car and live in a nicer neighborhood. Eduardo stated, "Living in a good environment. You know, like, my car's not all that great, you know. I'd rather live in a nicer place." When I asked Eduardo what neighborhood he lived in, I was familiar with that area. It's interesting to note this would not be thought of as the slums or a terribly deficient neighborhood, but Eduardo was aware there are nicer neighborhoods in Apex and he would rather live in one of those areas regarded as upper middle class.

Carlos indicated that his mom did not take an active role in academic encouragement but his dad did talk to him about the importance of school in a positive way. In addition, Xavier said his mom encouraged him to do well in school and expected good attendance, behavior and high school graduation. Xavier's mom wanted him to do well in school so he would have a better job than hers, and thus a better life.

**Encouragement of personal and professional goals.** Antonio has a clear plan to attend college at the local community college. He even has his FAFSA completed and his education is funded. Antonio wants to major in Computer Numerical Control (CNC) and graduate with an associate's degree. After he attains that goal, he will reevaluate going into the workforce or continuing with a bachelor's degree at a four year university. Antonio believes he will marry someday and have children, because family is a big part of his life. He says he will stress the importance of education to his children and will work to set up a college fund for them.

Eduardo is planning on starting at a local community college and then transferring to a four year university after he gets finished with his basics. Additionally, Eduardo wants to major in computer engineering. He has already completed his FAFSA, will live with his grandparents while he goes to community college, and then try to move out on his own when he transfers to a four year university for his bachelor's degree. Eduardo conveyed that he would like to marry and have a family one day after he gets his degree and a career in engineering. He wants to impress upon his children the value of education and setup a college fund for them.

After graduating from high school, Carlos plans to move to San Antonio and record rap music with a band. Carlos' friend in San Antonio has found a house to rent for \$700 a month. When they are not playing or recording, he will work with his friend cutting down trees. He has never done this before, but is confident that everything will work out. If the plans in San Antonio do not work out, Carlos said he would consider college, but does not know what his major would be. He would go and get his basics and

then figure that part out later. When Carlos was asked about family, marriage and the importance of stressing college education to his children, Carlos indicated that he might have children but he didn't think he needed to marry the mother of his children. In addition, he did not think he needed to stress education or college to his children.

Xavier said that after he graduates from high school he would like to get a different job than the one he has at a fast food restaurant. When asked if he could move up in the restaurant business and go into management, he was not interested in pursuing that path. Instead he would like to be a mechanic and work on cars. He is interested in attending college but he has not completed a FAFSA and has not made the immediate plans necessary to gain entry like Eduardo and Antonio have done. Xavier plans on getting married and having children. He said that he plans on stressing the importance of education to his children.

**Role models.** The cousin that Antonio lives with is his role model. She went to college and is now an elementary teacher. She tells Antonio all the time that he needs a college education and she has offered for Antonio to live at her house while he completes his education. When asked about role models, Antonio said:

I do but they're like doing their own thing. They're not doing what I want to do but I still look up to them because they made it, you know. My cousin that I live with. She went to college all four years. She told me, you know, that you have to do a lot of crazy work like essays and all that. I know I probably couldn't do that kind of work. You know, she did it. She got her Master's and all that. She's a teacher now.

Conversely, Eduardo does not really have any role models except NFL players like Reggie Bush. He did mention that he interviewed an engineer last year for an English assignment on careers. He enjoyed talking to the man but does not remember his name and has not spoken to him since the interview. Carlos said his cousin, James, is his role model and stated:

Because even when things look bad for him, things turn out good in the end. He was pretty much in this position at this school too and thought he wasn't going to graduate and then he did...we never argue or fight. We're always on the same page. I hang out with him a lot. I never have any trouble with him.

When Xavier was asked about his role model, he said it was his mom because she is a hard worker and he admires her for that.

### **Societal Environment**

In his study of immigrants, Ogbu (1998) determined that voluntary and involuntary immigrants maintain different considerations, orientations, relationships and representational thoughts regarding formal education. Voluntary immigrants perceived their education in the U.S. as superior to their native country. Thus, this comparison of orientation regarding educational experiences guided the voluntary minorities to sense U.S. education as exceptional to what they had encountered in their past (Ogbu, 1998). Conversely, involuntary minorities did not have those past experiences in their native country to contemplate and naturally their perceptions were in comparison to their European American peers' educational circumstances. Consequently, this categorization of students possessed a more negative perception of formal education than their



voluntary immigrant counterparts (Ogbu, 1998). Additionally, acculturation plays a role in predicting how young Latinos may respond to academics. According to Valenzuela (1999), first generation immigrants are likely to exhibit maximum degrees of optimism and eagerness that education will enable them to achieve the American dream. However, there are indications that subsequent generations may be less confident about formal education as the opportunity to success (Valenzuela, 1999). This same research upholds the findings that increased degrees of acculturation have been linked to deteriorating attitudes that formal schooling will be beneficial in progressing to a profitable future (Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Antonio is a second generation immigrant who was born and raised in Apex and attended Apex ISD schools from pre-k through graduation. His mom was born in Mexico and relocated to California as a migrant worker in the grape fields. Antonio's stepdad was also born in Mexico. Antonio thinks his mom's education stopped at the end of elementary school while his stepdad did complete some high school education in Mexico. Antonio said he is religious but does not attend church. He believes spirituality or religion has had a positive impact on in his life. As a second generation immigrant, Antonio struggled to engage in his formal education. Factors such as strong familism, connection to a school mentor, a strong role model, and a certain sense of peer pressure appeared to play an important role in his graduation from high school, along with subsequent enrollment at the local junior college.

Eduardo is a third generation immigrant who was born and raised in Apex. He has spent his pre-k through twelfth grade education in the Apex ISD. Eduardo's

grandparents moved here from Mexico. His grandfather completed an eighth grade education in Mexico, while his grandmother completed the sixth or seventh grade in Mexico. Eduardo's mom dropped out of high school. Eduardo believes that religion has played a part in his academic success and well-being. His grandparents regularly attend the local Catholic Church. Eduardo either attends church with them or goes to a different church with his friend. His friend's church is a Spanish Baptist Church. As a third generation immigrant, Eduardo described a high school experience with a high level of involvement with extra-curricular activities and genuine dedication for his academic achievement. Factors such as solid familism, rapport with school staff, and sound peer relationships were key to his success in high school and future plans of obtaining a higher education.

Carlos is a second generation immigrant who was born in a large urban city and has spent his entire pre-k through twelfth grade education in the Apex ISD. Carlos' dad moved here from Mexico and does not have a high school education. Moreover, his mom was also born in Mexico and did not obtain a high school education. Carlos conveyed that even though he is Catholic, religion did not play a major role in his education. Carlos struggled early and was behind in school credits at the beginning of his fourth year of high school. Along with his academic concerns, Carlos had attendance and discipline troubles to overcome as well before graduating from high school. Elements such as rapport with school staff, high expectations from teachers, and strong ties with his peers supported Carlos' ultimate success in high school.

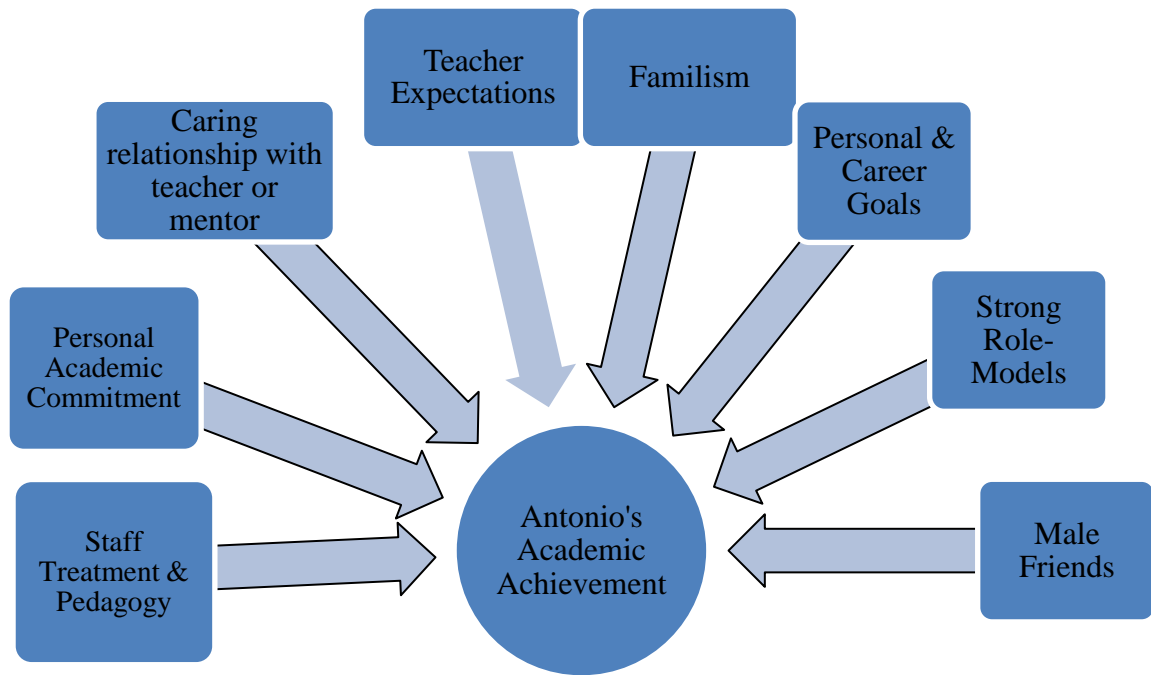
Xavier is a first generation immigrant and moved to Texas from El Salvador five years ago. His mother may have attended elementary school in El Salvador, but Xavier was not sure if she had completed elementary school. Xavier said his mom didn't really talk to him about school, but she expected him to go to school and do his work. Xavier's mom did tell him to go to college, so he could earn more money and not work as hard as she does. Religion has not played a role in Xavier's education. Xavier rarely goes to church and he says his mom never goes but he thinks she used to go a long time ago. As a first generation immigrant, Xavier fits the description in the review of literature of a voluntary immigrant who is aware that the United States has more to offer than his home country. Even though he is lacking in academic tools, Xavier is willing to do whatever it takes to experience academic success and a better standard of living. Familism, pedagogy, caring teachers, and acculturation played a significant part in Xavier's outcome of achieving a high school diploma.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented three primary themes: school environment, family environment, and societal environment. School environment explored the function of the school in nurturing the academic success of each participant. Within the school environment theme, several subthemes have emerged including: staff, school climate, and personal. The second theme of family environment investigated the connection of family with the participants' success in school. Subthemes that emerged were, familism, support for school success, and encouragement of personal and career goals, and role

models. The final theme examined is societal environment, which explored the impact of generational status and acculturation on Latino students' academic success.

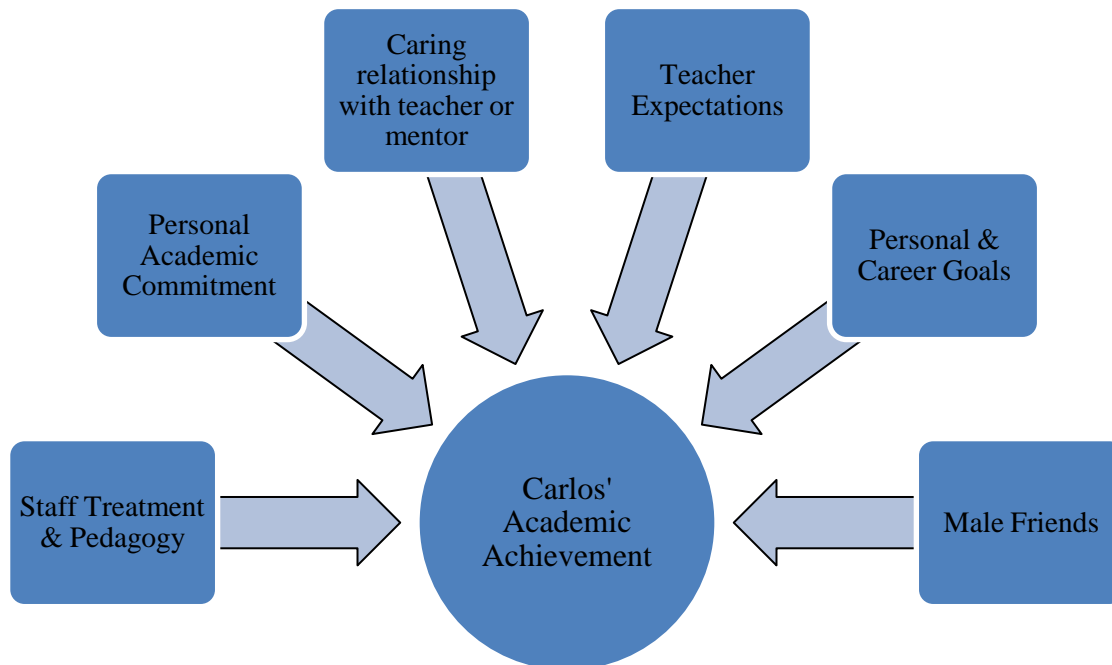
To recap the strongest themes and sub-themes in each of the participants, I devised a visual for each member. I included pedagogy in each of the charts because, at some point, one must consider that curriculum and instruction played an essential role in the students' success in school. However, Antonio provided some specific descriptors of differentiated instruction that occurred in the classroom. In the personal sub-theme, his academic commitment was strong with no history of disciplinary infractions and minimal attendance issues. In addition, his mom seemed to be involved in actively encouraging him to complete high school by attempting to hold him accountable when Antonio was not taking care of his school work. Antonio had the strongest testimony of a district mentor, who visited him on a regular basis for two years and even arranged for a private tour of the local community college so he could visualize opportunities available to him. Below, in Figure 1, is Antonio's chart with his strongest themes.



**Figure 1.** Antonio's Relational Theme Chart to Academic Success

Antonio described nurturing familism within his immediate and extended family, since he regularly participated in social gatherings with them and many had encouraged his education. Along with the strong family ties, Antonio had specific educational and career goals. Furthermore, he had taken detailed steps like completing the FAFSA to make sure these goals would be realized. His cousin was his role model and, even though Antonio does not want to teach school, his cousin does have a college education and has made a better life for herself. These goals essentially align with Antonio's. Finally, Antonio described the defining moment of wanting to graduate from high school when he saw his friends from his cohort walk across the stage the previous year. The

seven predominant themes made a substantial impact on Antonio's eventual success in acquiring his high school education and moving on to higher education.

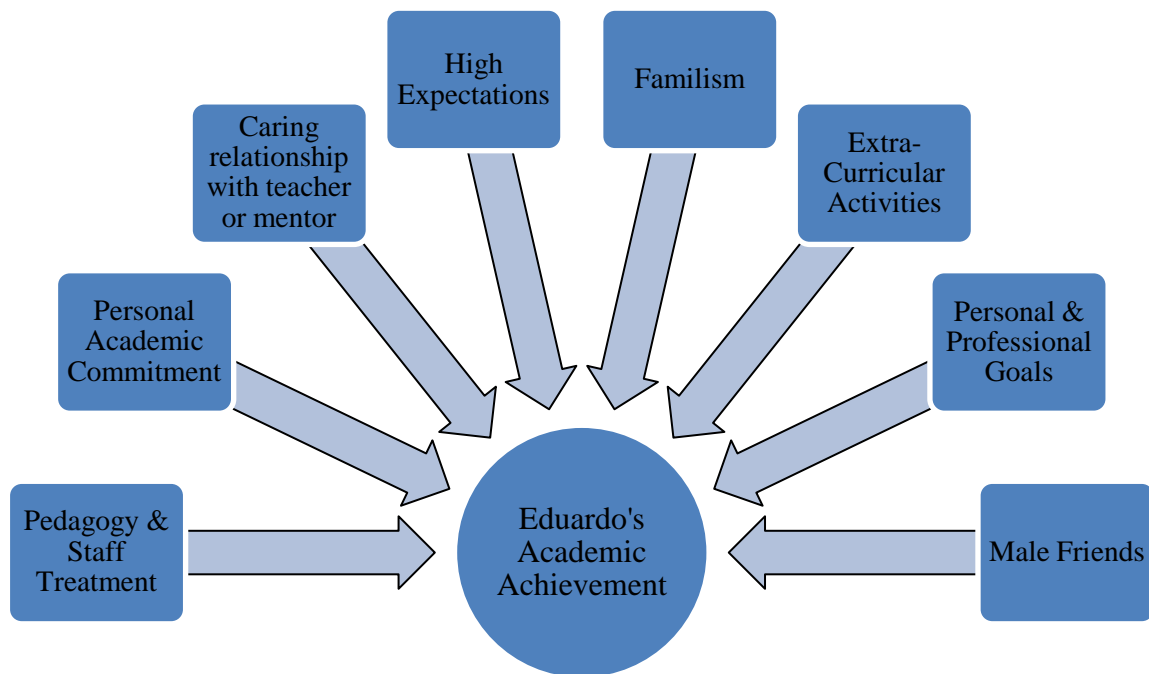


**Figure 2.** Carlos' Relational Theme Chart to Academic Success

Carlos' strongest themes and sub-themes are located in Figure 2 above. Even though Carlos had substantial disciplinary problems in high school, he did turn that around in a significant fashion during his twelfth grade year, which is why academic commitment is included on his strength chart. He was in a self-paced program whereby he could make up credits during first period everyday and he managed to regain several credits he had lost his first two years of high school. Teacher expectations and caring

relationship with a teacher were included because Carlos dwelled on the emotional impact of teachers. He never shared a comment about the way a lesson was delivered by the teacher, but instead emphasized how the teacher made him feel. Carlos had some specific personal and career goals and had made particular plans after his graduation from high school. Even though those plans do not include higher education, he has prepared for his next phase of life. In addition, Carlos portrayed a certain strategy in choosing his friends. The five themes emerged and were considerable reasons to Carlos' completion of high school despite adversity in his personal life.

Eduardo described the teacher expectations and curriculum that motivated him to complete assignments and maintain his grades. In addition, Eduardo had no discipline while in high school and even though he was having trouble motivating himself to go to school after football season of his senior year he still maintained the state required 90% attendance. Furthermore, he wanted to be the first in his family to graduate from high school, because he knew his grandparents and extended family would be proud of him. Eduardo described the caring he received from the football coaches in tutoring him in subjects that were difficult like math and science. He perceived they went the extra mile to help him even after football season was over. Seven themes and sub-themes emerged in Eduardo's chart in Figure 3.



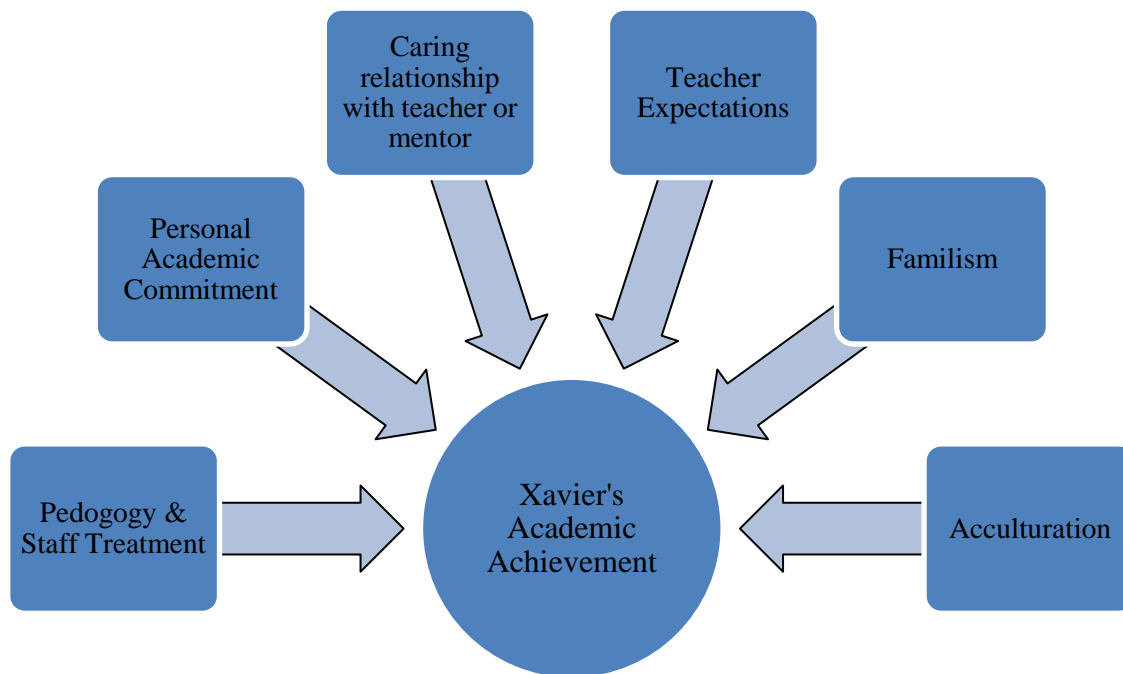
**Figure 3.** Eduardo's Relational Theme Chart to Academic Success

Eduardo's guardians were his grandparents, while his aunts were very involved. One aunt even visited the school at the beginning of the year to make sure someone called her if Eduardo or his twin was absent, so she could address it with them. The one aspect that separated Eduardo from the other three participants was his involvement with extra-curricular activities like football, track and powerlifting. Eduardo described career goals of attending the community college and then acquiring his bachelor's degree in engineering. In addition, he had taken the steps necessary, like completing the FAFSA and gaining admission to the community college. Along with his other themes and sub-themes, the friends category was especially strong, since he sought out other teenagers who abstained from drugs and were all going to college after they graduated from high



school. Eduardo's themes attributed to his success in high school and a fairly good chance of success in higher education.

The final participant, Xavier possessed six dominant themes or sub-themes. The first was pedagogy and staff treatment. Xavier articulated how much the teachers had helped him and stressed that the teachers helped much more than in his home country, El Salvador. The second dominant theme was his personal academic commitment. Xavier had never been in trouble at all and had zero attendance problems. The third was a caring relationship with a teacher or mentor. Even though Xavier said he did not have a mentor, he described a mentor relationship with his counselor who set up tutorials for him and dialogued with him about his TAKS scores and credits. Even though Xavier didn't have an extended family in town, he said his mom expected him to do well and encouraged him to go on to college so he could have better job opportunities. Xavier's final theme was his first generation status and acculturation. He gave the impression that he was grateful for the resources at a US school and knew that his school in his native country did not possess the quality Apex possessed. Xavier's themes and subthemes are illustrated below in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Xavier's Relational Theme Chart to Academic Success

The narratives of four Latino male students were given voice to express their perceptions, likes, dislikes, and attitudes about their school, family and social life. Even though they come from different backgrounds with different family structures, they have found a way to be academically successful in high school. A discussion of the findings will be explored in Chapter V.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The final chapter of this study concludes with an explanation of recommendations for policy, practice, and potential study evident through research findings. This study examined why some Latino male students successfully attained a high school diploma despite considerable adversity in their lives. The study sought to identify factors that facilitated or hindered these students in their quest for a formal education. If educators can understand the reasons why particular students are successful or not successful in the classroom, then related policies and procedures may be born from this information. Thus, increasing data and knowledge about successful academic strategies can help create and develop methods used by schools to improve the completion rates of their students. The study addressed the following questions: What do twelfth-grade male students, who had difficulty passing core subjects in the ninth grade, perceive about the hardships or difficulties they had to overcome to succeed in school? Was there a significant event(s) perceived by the students that changed the course of formal education from difficulty and failure to academic success? What important roles do the students perceive that school leaders, teachers, or other professional staff played in assisting the students in being successful in high school? Do the students perceive that they had role models outside of the educational institution who positively impacted them in acquiring a high school education?

The qualitative interviews generated rich data about how Latino males were successful in high school despite considerable hardships in their personal lives. This

chapter will present a summary of the study's findings and conclusions, supported by the literature. In addition, this chapter will analyze the conclusions in order to understand the factors involved in the participants' success in high school. Finally, this chapter will outline research implications and suggestions for future research.

Revealed in this study were three fundamental themes, which emerged from the interviews of four Latino males who had been successful in Apex High School after having a difficult start in the ninth grade. These themes were: school environment, family environment, and societal environment. The first theme, school environment, described the school's role in nurturing student success. Aspects such as staff, school climate, and personal issues were examined to determine how they benefitted or impeded the participants as they pursued their high school education. There is speculation in the research literature that some students who drop out of high school are "pushed out" by the school or sometimes leave due to personal difficulties (Rumberger, 1987; Grier, 2000). Grier acknowledged that many students who were pushed out of high school felt unwelcome and deficient in academic success. Consequently, the student coped by decreasing time expended on academic work (Grier, 2000). The perception of being pushed out, according to Grier, often caused poor attendance, disruptive behavior and noncompliance to teachers and administrators. In addition, Taylor and Graham (2007) argue that males exert peer pressure to each other, which manifests in behaviors such as apathy towards school and poor attendance. Indeed, Taylor and Graham's study established that, by junior high, Latino and African American boys were more likely to

admire and respect other male friends or acquaintances that were not succeeding in school.

The second theme, family environment, detailed the ways in which parents, guardians and extended family expressed their encouragement and expectations for their children's academic achievement. Four sub-themes emerged within the family environment theme including: a) familism, b) support for school success, c) encouragement of personal and professional goals, and d) role models. While European Americans are predisposed to value individualism, achievement, and competence, Latinos treasure the comfort and welfare of the family unit over the individual (Falicov, 1982). In addition, Montiel (1973) determined that Mexican American families have the most established and collectively unified family networks when compared to the family dynamics of European American families and African families. Moreover, Suarez-Orozco (1995) maintained that most Latino students and their parents believe formal education is beneficial and essential to increased opportunities in future careers. Parry (2000) supported Suarez-Orozco's research and argued that schools are a feministic organization because they lack role models, utilize a mundane curriculum, and engage in negative stereotyping of male students.

The third theme, societal environment, focused on the acculturation effect and its impact on the students' educational success and how Latinos might respond to academics. First generation immigrants are the most hopeful and eager in thinking that formal schooling will assist them with a better standard of living. Succeeding Latino generations may be less optimistic about education as the key to upward mobility

(Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). The Latino cultural circumstances emphasize success and the belief that hard work is the way to realize success while also stressing interdependence, familism and assistance within the family (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). In addition, the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) reported that registered Latino voters ranked education as a top priority in a recent poll.

### **The Relationship of This Research to the Research Literature**

**School environment.** The review of literature identified many factors caused by the school, school staff, and climate of the building that can contribute to students' dropping out of school. Researchers identified the following specific topics linked to the school environment: 1) large campus size, 2) awkward transition from the eighth grade to ninth grade, 3) lack of academic preparedness for high school curriculum, 4) disciplinary action that removed the student from the instruction, 5) language barriers, 6) minimal teacher expectations, 7) uncaring teachers who focus on the content rather than the whole student, 8) deficit thinking about particular students, 9) poor choice of peers by male students, 10) and a lack of male role models. These topics are all prevalent in the literature as some of the biggest obstacles to students who want to graduate from high school. Overall, this study supported the research literature concerning the school environment and student academic achievement. The school environment could be a negative force in pushing students out of school, or as in the case of Apex and these participants, school can be a fairly positive experience providing assistance for students who are motivated to graduate.

The four participants cited the largeness of Apex High School as a negative factor in their success. Their feelings of being overwhelmed with the size of the school, and social aspects when entering high school, also contributed to difficulties. The participants of this study supported the research findings by McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan & Legters (1998) when the high school dropout phenomenon was examined. McPartland et al. documented the difficulties in the school system and especially at the high school level. Large high schools have unique challenges that include: large campus size, credit system, student anonymity among faculty, social pressures, increased freedom, and increased diversity. Carlos specifically stated that one of the improvements the school could make would be to lock down the parking lot so students did not have the freedom to leave during the day without documentation of approval from the administrative office. In addition, the vast majority of students entering high school have never coped with the high school credit system whereby they must earn credits before moving on to the next required class. Antonio, one of the four participants, talked about the credit system as being confusing, and difficult to understand.

All of the participants commented that not only was size a great source of angst for their high school freshman year, but the lack of any type of transition from the junior high to the high school was problematic, which upheld the research conducted by Hertzog and Morgan (1998) whose literature claimed there is very little to prepare students transitioning from the eighth grade in junior high to the ninth grade in high school. The differentiation between junior high school and high school can be a cause of stress and increased challenges for students, especially when one contemplates the

expectations of high school teachers versus middle school teachers. Study participants, Antonio, Carlos and Eduardo all commented about the transition from junior high to high school. It was interesting to note their perceptions of transition difficulties were somewhat different from one another. Antonio thought junior high was much easier than high school. Therefore, he did not think he was prepared for the challenges of the high school curriculum and the demands of the teachers. Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), maintained that when researchers questioned high school graduates, it was reported that academic unpreparedness was a major dilemma. Therefore, many students perceive a lack of academic preparedness for the rigors of high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Student and teacher viewpoints frequently vary in explaining why students are not successful in grades nine through twelve. The remarkable distinction in the perspectives of the teachers and students was that ninth grade students believed they were ill-equipped with the necessary academic skills to be successful, while teachers believed that students did possess the academic skills but did not bring them together with organizational skills and work ethic (Fulk, 2003). As a result, the information obtained from Antonio supports Bridgeland et al.'s contention that students were not academically prepared for the rigors of the high school content.

This study supported Fulk's (2003) research, on the one hand, because two of the participants said they did feel as though they were academically prepared for high school. They believed their attitude was the primary predictor in determining their success. However, Xavier did not feel prepared for a high school, but since he was a first generation immigrant who came to the U.S. at the beginning of ninth grade, his



difficulties appeared to rest more with language barriers and culture shock rather than academics per se.

Carlos confided that he did not think the high school work was that much harder than the work at the junior high level. Therefore, the data generated from his responses did not support Fulk's findings that students felt academically unprepared. Carlos believed his need to socialize was a bigger barrier to learning in the classroom. Instead of completing work in class, Carlos would talk to his friends or sleep. If the teacher did not engage him consistently about completing assignments, Carlos interpreted this as an apathetic teacher. Or, if the teacher did talk to him, regarding assignments, in a way that Carlos interpreted as uncaring, he rebelled and did not work.

Researchers have pointed out the elevated failure rate of ninth graders. They have linked the high failure rates to males since they fail more core classes than their female counterparts (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). The explanation for academic underachievement of males in high school may be 1) males are more likely to be pursued to become members of gangs, 2) males are more habitually punished due to teacher discipline referrals; therefore, they miss more classroom time, 3) in some urban and large high schools, the female faculty perceive males as intimidating characters, 4) coping ability utilized by males may involve acting out or aggression to manage adversity rather than requesting help (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). All four of the participants failed classes during their ninth grade year. On the one hand, their stories and data support Roderick and Camburn's (1999) literature in regards to their difficulties in the ninth grade. Nevertheless, they were able to overcome their struggles and

complete their high school education. Roderick and Camburn's (1999) argument concerning gang recruitment was not sustained in this study with the four successful participants. None of the participants stated that gang activity was problematic for them. In fact, the participants said gang activity was not an issue at Apex High School.

None of the participants, except for Carlos, had any type of disciplinary history. He had one fight during his senior year as well as a fight and some classroom disruption disciplinary referrals in tenth grade. At one point, during tenth grade, Carlos was placed in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) for ten days. The fact that three out of four participants never had any discipline issues that would remove them from classroom instruction, would actually support Roderick and Camburn's (1999) research linking chronic disciplinary problems with underachievement. Their success could have been, in part, because of positive rapport with faculty or overall decent social skills.

The data generated from this study upheld Rysewyk's (2008) research that showed ninth grade students that are involved in extracurricular activities like band and athletics are more likely to succeed in school. Eduardo shared his apprehension with the increased numbers in high school but also his failure to register for football because he wanted to get a job and make some money. He and his brother had played football in junior high but did not attend the practices in August. After starting school for the fall semester, Eduardo realized his mistake, but football season had already begun. Eduardo sat out his ninth grade year. Even though he went on to have a successful football and academic career at Apex, he wondered if it could have been better had he been wise enough to play his ninth grade year. Eduardo was the only participant actively engaged

in extra-curricular activities. Even though the other three participants were not involved in extra-curricular activities, they were still successful in high school.

Xavier's experience was somewhat different than the other three participants who had been in the Apex school system since kindergarten. Instead of transitioning from an American junior high to high school, Xavier moved from El Salvador. He shared that it was very difficult because of the language barrier but also said the teachers at Apex were more helpful than his teachers in his home country. Studies further confirm that teachers at the secondary level assume ELL students have already attained a particular aptitude of study skills essential to their success in learning the latest subject matter in the classroom (Valenzuela, 1999). The research shows that language is a substantial obstacle in acquiring an education in the U.S. Many of these English Language Learners enter U.S. schools with different stages of fluency in their native language. Xavier's comments about teachers teaching "very fast" and his lack of confidence to keep up with the content in the classrooms support Valenzuela's literature concerning the language barrier in U.S. high schools in regards to students understanding academic language at a fluent level in science and math classes.

Several decades of research have examined the outcome of teacher expectancy with a variety of student results. For example, Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) *Pygmalion in the Classroom* journaled conversation involving the degree to which teacher expectations produce self-fulfilling predictions on their students. In the study, elementary teachers were given the results of an IQ test with the children who scored the lowest but who were represented as though they had the top scores. At the end of the

eight month study, the control group of students scored appreciably higher on the IQ test, and teachers reported that these students were more inquisitive than their peers. One could ponder if the teacher who allowed Carlos to sleep in class would do the same for the European American student. In other words, was it low expectations on the teacher's part that justified allowing a Latino male student to sleep during a double blocked Algebra I class? Or, was it sheer laziness on the part of the teacher herself? Since this occurred four years ago, it would be almost impossible to determine. Nevertheless, when examining the literature and this study, I believe this was a case in which the study supported the Rosenthal and Jacobsen's literature. Carlos' Algebra I teacher had low expectations for him and allowed him to sleep in class. The opinion of Latinos by European Americans and others can play a critical part in the student's educational success and learning. Researchers have argued how the perceptions of others have essential consequences for self-perceptions and subsequent actions (Jussim, 1986; Miller & Turnbull, 1986). Negative perceptions may sometimes be blamed for the development of self-fulfilling prophecies. These detrimental aspects are internalized by the student and become a piece of the self-identification of the Latino student. Steele's (1997) theory of "stereotype threat" contemplates that a student's attempt at learning can be legitimately damaged by pessimistic surroundings and a school or classroom atmosphere where stereotyping occurs.

Based upon the data collected from the interviews, this study confirmed that educators play a crucial role in steering certain students to academic achievement. Valenzuela (1999) maintained that teachers must first address the caring relationship

cultivated between the teacher and student and then follow with the mandated instruction. Moreover, Song (2006) clarified that the curriculum must be academically sound and taught by teachers who have high expectations for all students, especially African Americans and Latinos. Carlos articulated the concern he felt from Ms. Thompson about his math achievement both in the math models class as well as the Math TAKS test. In addition, he was aware and appreciative of his counselor who called him in on a regular basis to provide updates about his credits and what he needed to do in order to graduate with his cohort. During the three interviews with Carlos, I did not hear him speak of the value of pedagogy and instructional delivery. Moreover, he never spoke about the intelligence of his teachers. Carlos' primary concern was whether or not a particular teacher, counselor or administrator cared about him. Valenzuela disclosed that building a relationship of mutual trust and concern between the teacher and student can be challenging even when both parties are well-intentioned. Often the issue is a misunderstanding of how the student exhibits a caring attitude about school. Antonio clearly articulated that certain teachers who worked with him and utilized differentiated teaching techniques made a significant difference in his academic achievement, especially in math. He was also clear about the extra assistance in his math co-teach classes when there were two teachers in the room to help the students. Besides the extra help on assignments, he said that he could typically form a bond with one of the teachers in the class.

High school curriculum mandates a well-defined change from concentrating on the welfare of the complete child to specific content of the academic courses (Smith,

1997). Carlos was outspoken about some of the teachers who were negative or apathetic. He described two different types of negative teachers. The first type was the apathetic teacher who allowed Carlos to sleep during class and did not appear to care if Carlos turned in his work. The second type was the teacher who engaged in power struggles with Carlos. Instead of having some accommodations with assignments and working with Carlos in a differentiated curriculum, this type of teacher drew a “line in the sand” and remained inflexible. The result with Carlos was arguments in class about assignments.

Perhaps the most compelling statement from any of the participants was Antonio’s comments about the Apex ISD’s lead counselor who mentored him for two years. Antonio said he might have graduated from high school without their relationship, but he was convinced he would not be focused on a college education without Ms. Simon’s visits and the tour of the community college. The mentor program Antonio spoke of is a district wide initiative started five years ago to focus on the psycho-social aspect of the students rather than the academic component. Faculty, staff and district administrators sign up to be a mentor to a student who is experiencing academic difficulty. The role of the mentor is to periodically check up on the student and give the student a friendly face to seek out for help. The mentor’s role is to form a caring relationship and hook the student up with needed academic help such as tutorials, peer tutoring, or study groups.

Eduardo believed football was a big part of his success in high school. He said the coaches helped him with his homework, and he described a mentor relationship with

them. Eduardo had never been in any kind of trouble, so he was not familiar with his assistant principal. He had met with his counselor and thought it would be cool to acquire a bachelor's degree from the same university as Mr. Sanchez. Eduardo clearly communicated that he thought all the teachers were helpful at Apex High School as long as the student appeared to care about his school work and was polite to the teacher.

Eduardo and the other three participants were particular about their friends and with whom they spent time. If drug or alcohol use was suspected by certain students, Eduardo stayed away from those individuals. When one of his friends approached Eduardo to give him some type of drug, Eduardo refused the drug and subsequently avoided that student. The four participants spoke about choosing their friends carefully, which is contradictory to Taylor and Graham's (2007) determination that by the seventh grade Latino and African American boys were more likely to respect and value other male acquaintances that were underachieving in school.

The final major topic in the literature pertained to an absence of male role models in high schools. None of the four participants had any role models within the school much less of the male gender, which definitely supports the literature by Parry (2000). A crucial argument for male underachievement is that schools, as an organization, are regarded as feminine institutions. Further, the lack of male role models in schools, traditional pedagogy, and gender stereotyping by educators combine to construct the explanations of why men may determine that education is a feminine endeavor (Jha & Kelleher, 2006; Parry, 2000). Remarkably, even Eduardo who played football for three

years did not name one of the coaches as his role model. I asked this question more than once to give him the opportunity and time to reflect about role models within the school.

Within the school environment theme, the study predominantly supported the literature. Participants discussed the expansiveness of Apex High School and the feeling of intimidation when coming from the smaller junior high setting. The most remarkable information collected from the participants was the role of caring staff members who formed relationships with the students in order to help them pass the TAKS test and their classes. Caring staff materialized from different areas of the school building and district. Participants shared their feelings about teachers, counselors, and a district guidance counselor who was assigned as a mentor. Their relationships had considerable impact on these Latino students. When examining the topic of academic preparedness, within the school environment theme, the study was mixed in its support of the literature. Two participants reported not being prepared for the rigors of high school while two reported that they were academically prepared for high school.

**Family environment.** As is the case of school environment and its impact on student achievement, the research literature asserts that family support of educational goals exerts a powerful influence on student success. This study overwhelmingly supported the literature that claimed Latinos value education and want their children to academically achieve in school. Historically, Moreno and Valencia (2002) claimed there were two competing conceptualizations of parental involvement. The first perspective, parent education, believed low socioeconomic status parents as deficient in parenting skills. It was the absence of parenting ability that was the challenge with low



socioeconomic students (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). A great deal of this speculation was based on cultural and environmental deficit models, especially insufficient socialization of children by their parents (Pearl, 1997). Therefore, educators placed the emphasis on providing the correct skills for parents to effectively interact with their children and ensure school success (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). The goal was to fix the parents.

The second perspective, parental control, viewed parental involvement in a political sense (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). The emphasis was for parents to be decision makers, and to change the structural surroundings that perpetuated poverty (Valentine & Stark, 1979). However, the deficit-oriented parental education point of view advanced in prominence and developed as the leading tenet for creating parenting programs (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). A fundamental view of this deficit-oriented philosophy was the principle that Mexican Americans do not value education (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). Because they do not value education, they are not engaged in their children's education. Conversely, an increasing amount of research has emerged proving this is not the case. Indeed, this study showed that family encouragement and familism played a crucial role in these Latino males who succeeded in school.

Throughout my interviews and discussions with Antonio, it was apparent that strong family ties were a norm in his life. His information affirmed Keefe and Padilla's (1987) research that even though the immediate family is the most important family unit for Latinos, there is considerable socializing with the extended family. Latinos are expected to assist family members when they are in need of help. Antonio described

social outings with extended family on a regular basis. In addition, his mom had stressed the importance of education even though she did not have a high school education.

When Antonio was not doing well in school, his mom disciplined him at home by taking his cell phone away and grounding him at the house. Antonio was also fortunate to have the positive influence his cousin, who had worked her way through college after she was married. His cousin served as a strong role model for Antonio to graduate from high school and go on to college. She offered her house as a place for Antonio to stay while he pursued a college education and pushed him to achieve in education so he would have a better job.

Eduardo was not raised by his mom and dad but by his grandparents. He did not answer any direct questions about why he was raised by his grandparents, but he did say that he saw his mom on a sporadic basis. Eduardo's story about attaining his high school diploma and college degree confirms the research literature of Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (1995) who claimed that most Latino students consider formal education as valuable and important to a high-quality life and opportunity in careers. Eduardo said his main motivation to graduate from high school and pursue a college education was for his grandparents. He knew how much they wanted him to succeed in school, and he felt he owed it to them to make them proud. Even though neither one of his grandparents possessed a high school diploma, they clearly valued education and knew it was the key to future opportunities for their grandson. In addition, Eduardo's aunt was fairly involved with him and his brother. She had visited the assistant principal at the school before the year started to tell him to call her if Eduardo or his brother were ever absent

from school so she could follow up on the reason for their absence. Moreover, when Eduardo needed to interview an engineer for an English paper, his aunt set up the interview with an engineer she knew through work.

As a first generation immigrant, Xavier did not have extended family that lived in the United States. It was just his mom and his two sisters and brother. He talked about the long hours his mom worked and he did not see her often because she was not home when he got out of school. Xavier worked his night job when his mom was home taking care of the younger brother and sisters. Even though Xavier did not see his mom often, he said she talked to him about the importance of school and that she wanted him to do well so he would get a good job.

Carlos lived with his father and saw his mom occasionally. Even though he said his mom did not speak to him about school and education, Carlos said his father did talk about doing well in school and taking care of his business. Just like Xavier, Carlos did not see his father that often because his dad was a manager of a restaurant located about 30 miles away from Apex. However, Carlos felt as though his dad wanted him to do well in school and would be disappointed in him if he did not graduate from high school.

Historically, there have been various allegations in scholarly literature and in the mass media that Latino parents, especially of the low socio economic classification, do not value formal education (Valencia & Black, 2002). Therefore, they fail to instill this value in their children through academic socialization, and rarely join in the parental involvement endeavors in their home or the school (Valencia & Black, 2002). Consequently, Latino children are inclined to underachieve in school. These assertions

cannot be taken lightly, as there is considerable substantiation that, in general, “when parents are involved in their youths’ schooling, children do better in school” (Marburger, 1990, p. 82).

Valencia and Black (2002) assert that the source of the myth, Latinos do not value education, rests in the mistaken theory of deficit thinking. Deficit thinking aligns with the belief that students, predominantly of low socio economic circumstances and of color, underachieve in school because they and their families have internal flaws, or deficits that impede learning (Valencia, 1997). Several explanations shed some light on the lack of parent involvement in regards to Latino children. First, Moreno and Valencia (2002) report that many Latino parents may believe that they are not capable of helping their children with their lessons. This may be a result of the reality that many Latino parents do not have the same level of schooling as African Americans and European Americans (Chapa & Valencia, 1993). Therefore, Latino parents may feel as though they do not have adequate skills necessary to instruct their children, especially in secondary curriculum levels (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). Second, Latino parents vary in their familiarity with their children’s schools and their roles as parents within these schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Some Latino parents have reported that in Mexico, the school only contacted home in a dire situation. According to this information, parents are not encouraged to participate with the schools in Mexico. Therefore, the parents’ knowledge about school activities, procedures, and policies is an important factor in increased involvement in school activities (Moreno & Valencia, 2002).

The participants in this study conveyed varying degrees of familism and family support of education. Nevertheless, the essential conclusion is that the parents and families of these Latino male students valued education and wanted their sons to excel in school and go on to have a better standard of living than previous generations. Deficit thinking is still present in the way some educators may view parents and students of color, but there was little overt evidence of that at Apex High School. Even though these parents and guardians were not visible at school on a regular basis, the students seemed to know that there was an expectation to attend school, behave, and make progress towards high school graduation.

**Societal environment.** There have been minimal studies concerning comparisons of particular groups of Latinos. And, for the most part, this study affirmed the research literature on immigrant generational status and acculturation. Typically, research literature has focused on similarities and differences of Latinos and African Americans compared to European Americans (Schneider, Smith, Poisson, & Kwan, 1997). Buriel and Cardoza (1988) examined Mexican American immigrants who reside in the United States, and identified specific characteristics among first and second generations. Buriel and Cardoza found that second generation family members do not speak Spanish as frequently as the first generation, and are more integrated into conventional American society. In addition, Umana-Taylor and Bacama-Gomez (2003) studied the within-group diversity of Latino immigrants and reported that generational status was a substantial predictor of the effects of peer pressure within this population. They concluded that teenagers who have lived in the United States for extended periods

of time and who had family members born in the U.S. were less resistant to peer pressure, whereas other immigrants who had lived in the U.S. for less extended time, and did not have family members born in the U.S., were more apt to withstand peer pressure (Umana-Taylor & Bacama-Gomez, 2003).

Xavier was the only first generation Latino who participated in this study. His demeanor and attitude about the education he received at Apex High School mirrored the literature. He stated several times that he knew he was getting a better education in the U.S. than he would have received in his home country. He was aware that education was the gateway to further opportunity so he could have a better job and lifestyle. Xavier stated that his mom was always saying that she wanted him to be successful in school so he could have a better job and an increased standard of living. In addition, Xavier could not remember any negativity from a staff member directed at him. Anyone who is familiar with American teenagers at this age is aware that most high school students could easily recall a negative incident or negative teacher.

Carlos and Antonio are both second generation Latinos and were concerned about the possibility of not finishing their high school education. Antonio articulated a specific moment when he knew what needed to be done in order to graduate from high school. He stated that when he watched his high school cohort friends walk across the stage the previous year, he knew he needed to get busy with his studies and graduate from high school. He said he was determined from that point on to apply himself and finish his high school education. Although this may seem as an epiphany moment for Antonio, one could argue the groundwork was already done with his family ties and the

work of his district mentor, Ms. Simon. In addition, Antonio had a fairly strong academic foundation in elementary and junior high. He started Apex ISD in a bilingual pre-K class and then tested out of the bilingual curriculum. Furthermore, Antonio maintained B's and C's in the seventh and eighth grades. On the other hand, Carlos did not have a moment when he knew he needed to achieve a high school diploma. He made it clear that school personnel like his counselor and some caring teachers assisted him with encouragement and kept him informed about his high school credits. Carlos struggled academically from the time he entered the bilingual pre-K program at Apex until he was dismissed from the ESL program in sixth grade. In addition, teachers commented that his behavior had a negative impact on his learning. Indeed, Carlos struggled with behavioral problems in high school. He was not interested in attempting college work and stated that he would not emphasize that to his own children.

Eduardo is a third generation Latino and diverged somewhat from the literature about third generation immigrants. He seemed to be highly motivated to attend the community college and move on to acquire a bachelor's degree. He had already completed his FAFSA and had been accepted to the college. He stated that he and his brother were the first in their family to graduate from high school, much less attend college. Eduardo conveyed that he wanted to get his bachelor's degree and make his grandparents proud. He said he owed everything to them, and they had done so much for him that he wanted to please them. Besides being the only third generation participant in this study, Eduardo was also the only participant who played high school football. He stated many times that playing football helped him on many different levels. First, the

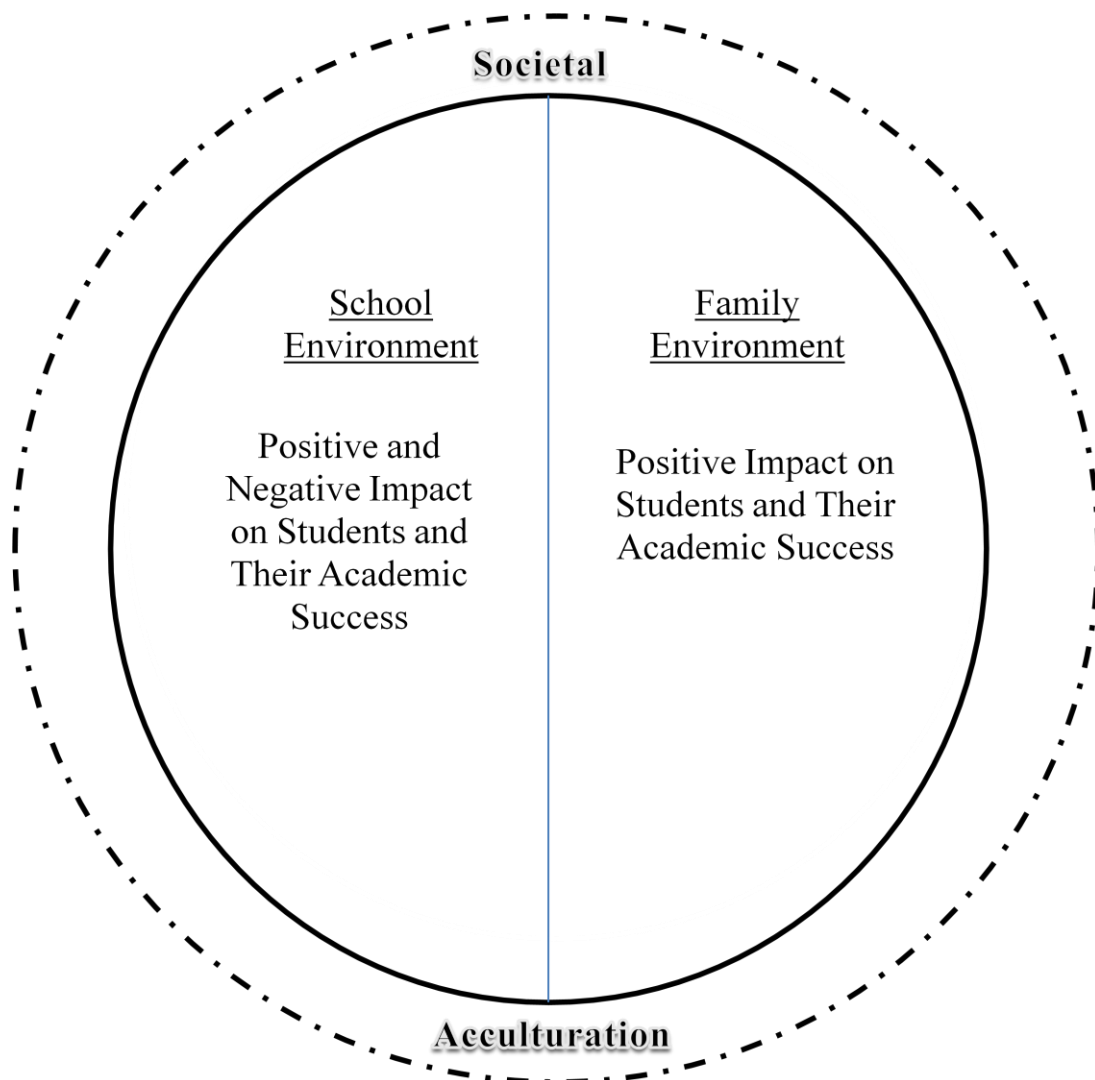
coaches watched out for their players and made sure the players stayed eligible. If a football player was in danger of failing a class, his coach made sure the student player attended tutorials. In addition, the coaches made it clear to the team that misbehavior would not be tolerated. If a football player was a classroom disruption or was disrespectful to a faculty member, the player would be severely disciplined during the athletic period and possibly suspended from playing the next game. Probably, the most important aspect of Eduardo's involvement with the football program was his sense of belonging to a group within the school. He stated several times that he knew the coaches cared about him because they helped tutor him when he was having difficulty. He also said he would feel comfortable going to some of the coaches if he needed non-academic help.

In most respects, the acculturation literature was affirmed in this study. First generation Xavier was just happy to be here and stated that he thought he was getting a better education in the U.S. than his home country. Additionally, both second generation participants also affirmed the literature. They had more criticisms of their high school and struggled early before finally reaching success. However, the one participant who was a third generation immigrant, Eduardo, was anti-thesis to the literature. According to research, Eduardo should have been the least motivated and more vulnerable to negative peer relations. Instead, he appeared as the most motivated to go on to a four year college and graduate with a bachelor's degree. In addition, he was the most articulate when sharing why he befriended some peers and not others. He was very clear about staying away from negative influences.



## **General Implications**

When examining the major themes, it became apparent that the school environment includes both negative and positive factors that may affect a student's success or failure. The sub-themes included were: a) staff, b) school climate, and c) personal issues. All three sub-themes contained constructive elements which assist students in academic achievement as well as destructive elements which hinder students from attaining school success. On the other hand, family environment was overwhelmingly positive for the participants in the study. Although parents may not have exhibited participation in school activities, all participants conveyed that parents and family talked about school and wanted their children to succeed in school. The societal environment was not evaluated as either constructive or destructive to the participants; however, it played a role in the participants' identity, attitude and perceptions. Figure 5 below presents a visual to the larger picture of the three themes.



**Figure 5.** Relational Dynamics of School Environment, Family Environment, and Societal Acculturation

When embarking on this study, it became apparent that most of the research literature focused not only on why some students fail to succeed in high school, but the majority of research was framed from the teacher or educator perspective. Indeed, there is negligible information and research that gives voice from the Latino male perspective.

Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski (1995) examined teacher expectations as they relate to a self-fulfilling prophecy with their students. Classrooms were observed and teachers were interviewed to ascertain if a relationship existed. However, no data was collected from the students. Additionally, Fulk (2003) investigated the phenomenon of low academic achievement among ninth graders. Unlike Weinstein et al., Fulk (2003) performed quantitative research and collected data from the students utilizing surveys. Even though this is a distinct move to gain knowledge of student perspectives, a deeper understanding of students' perception of their academic success is needed to build upon instructional strategies and attitudes within academia. Thick descriptions of individual circumstances provide a wealth of information and data to initiate positive changes within schools.

The findings of this study lead to some essential inferences, which confirm previous research on parent and family involvement in their children's education and the support of family to succeed in school. Their family's expectations and encouragement clearly played a role in their success. Even though none of the parents or guardians had achieved a high school education, they understood the importance of formal education and wanted their child to obtain a high school diploma and have increased job opportunities. However, the construct of family support is often not clearly defined, and typically, it is presented in dominant European American, middle class social values. Parent and family impact must be recognized in the research literature and internalized by politicians and educators in order to move forward in the success of all students. Valencia and Black (2002) stated:

In the final analysis, it is important for scholars to be steadfast in debunking the myth that Mexican Americans don't value education. Although such debunking may be deemed reactive, it is necessary. In the production of scholarship dealing with Mexican Americans, we often have to deconstruct inaccurate and unsound writings before we can construct new works. Without acknowledging this reality, it is difficult to continue the ongoing proactive scholarship on the Mexican American family and its rich, varied, and positive expressions regarding the importance of the institution of education. (p. 99).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has ushered in an unprecedented spotlight on educational reform and closing the achievement gap. This movement has been mostly silent about the concentrated Americanization and racializing procedures in schools (Olsen, Chang, De La Rosa Salazar, Leong, Perez, McClain, & Raffel, 1994). However, an assurance to serving all students is reiterated over and over. The "all" is intended as an adequate word to denote inclusion. Olsen et al. claim there has been scant leadership or unequivocal reform discourse addressing exclusion, equity, and the educational needs of students associated with language and culture. This links from an insidious and resolute color-blindness, framed as a moral posture indicating a conclusion to prejudice and racism. In this representation, all students are viewed as the same. Therefore, there is no necessity to scrutinize the particulars of language and cultures or how race and ethnicity shape children's experiences in school and society. In fact, focus on such distinctions is regarded as divisive or not relevant to the general care and welfare of the student.

The people whose color-blindness and refusal to inspect issues of diverse needs, and their emphasis on supporting “all” children as the same, have claimed the moral high ground (Olsen, Chang, De La Rosa Salazar, Leong, Perez, McClain, & Raffel, 1994). Their stance is founded on a language and framework that utilizes the standards and words of civil rights to reason a status quo that essentially inhibits complete inclusion and access. The innovative way to do things in school reform is compared to what is delineated as the old standard of doing things.

Olsen et al. (1994) probably articulated it best:

Every day we open the newspapers or tune in to talk shows, and we hear the latest manifestation of this struggle. In the past few years, these struggles have followed right after one another: angry debates over Western civilization requirements on college campuses and the adoption of social studies textbooks for K-12 public schools, fight over bilingual – education policy, new initiatives to declare English the official language of this nation, proposals to exclude undocumented immigrant children from schools, new policies to deny legal immigrants public services, policy battles over maintaining or destroying affirmative action. These are the manifestations of our era’s struggle in what has been an ongoing battle throughout the history of these United States over our diversity, over language and cultural relations, over racial exclusion, over who will be drawn within the circle and who will be drawn outside. These battle are always more intense at times of large-scale immigration, economic recession, and changes in the labor market. This is undeniably such a time. (p. 12)

As compelling as this statement is, the most remarkable sentence is the last one. Olsen et al. wrote this in 1994, but it fits 2010 perfectly. This makes me wonder where our country and educational system will be in another thirteen years.

When I lead staff development on my campus, I attempt to appeal to teachers in a humanistic approach that we must do whatever it takes to reach all types of learners. However, I have learned that another strategy may work even better. I appeal to their sense of financial security and that by educating all students successfully we are ensuring that America will continue as a world economic power. If we do not educate the proverbial “all” students with differentiated strategies, these young people will eventually dropout and their earning potential will be greatly reduced. Thus, they will pay less in taxes and Social Security and may even be on social entitlement programs.

### **Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research**

**Policy.** Research and literature on high school dropouts recommend two primary ways that schools affect student alienation and subsequent withdrawal (Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2002). One way is due to common implicit policies and practices that are implemented to advance the general success of the school. The characteristics of the school, like size and demographics along with these policies and procedures, might play a part to voluntary withdrawal by shaping the environment that maintains student involvement in school (Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2002). Many researchers believe that student disengagement is the precursor to the dropout decision (Finn, 1989; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernandez, 1989).

The authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to assess the academic achievement of diverse student subgroups, shines a light at the gap in the students of color versus their white counterparts. The elucidation of this information forces policymakers and educators to examine high stakes testing and the detriments it can cause in the classroom, such as teaching lower order thinking skills in remedial classes instead of critical thinking and synthesis of information. NCLB has had a positive impact on schools overall, but there is concern that high stakes standardized testing penalizes faces of color far more than whites when the requirement is to pass the test in order to graduate from high school. It is especially difficult when one considers that if a student moves from a foreign country at the beginning of his ninth grade year and enters with a specific cohort of students, the school must bring him to exit level testing within four years. This can be an incredibly challenging task when said student enters the U.S. with a second or third grade education from his home country.

In addition to the high stakes testing conundrum, policy makers need to take a hard look at the size of many high schools in Texas and in the U.S. Besides the financial benefits of large high schools for staffing and building needs, what positives and negatives are present in high schools with more than 1500 students? It seems as though the negatives outweigh the positives when one considers individual academic achievement, anonymity, and staff relationships with students.

Another debated policy in local politics is the possibility of open enrollment for students and families to choose the school they want to attend. This may also be known as the voucher system, whereby families would be issued vouchers by the state or local

government. The student could choose which school he wanted to attend, and use the voucher as his tuition. Use of vouchers would be considered a system-changing policy instrument. School choice would shift the decision-making authority from local public school districts to parents. This ideological debate has unified many who are typically on the opposite end of the spectrum with most political issues. Liberals see school choice as a way to encourage diversity of options and increase school effectiveness.

Conservatives, on the other hand, view school choice as a way to reassert parental influence and promote particular values.

A final consideration by policymakers is the direct manner that schools impact turnover due to unequivocal policies and deliberate decisions that initiate involuntary student withdrawal from school. These policies may include low grades, poor attendance, and misconduct. This type of withdrawal is school-initiated and differs from the student-initiated withdrawal. A metaphor used to portray this progression is discharge: “students drop out of school, schools discharge students” (Riehl, 1999, p. 231).

**Practice.** School districts, individual campuses, and educators must value the role that Latino parents and family contribute in the lives of their children. The efforts of parents and schools relative to the formal education of the children they serve are often isolated from each other. Because of the private realm of the parent-child relationship and the public realm of the school-student relationship, parents and schools are often act in a paradoxical manner to each other, although they work to accomplish the same goals. Schools must respect parents’ efforts at home to assist with homework or just encourage



their children. Even though some families may lack the means to assist their children in the college enrollment procedure, they are sensitive to the importance of education and the advantages it can possibly bring to their children.

There are other strategies schools have utilized to make their campus friendlier for Latino students. One idea is to post all signs within the building in English and Spanish. This would be very helpful for first generation immigrants who have a high level of language barrier. If funding for new signs is an obstacle, then paper signs could be posted the first three to six weeks of school until the new students are acclimated to the building. In addition, many schools have parent social nights at the beginning of the school year when Latino parents bring a dish and have a potluck dinner with the ESL teachers, administrators and counselors. Parents can get acquainted with friendly faces and then have a familiar face to contact when they need assistance. This can also serve as a parent education night for educators to share American culture and customs with the parents.

Another strategy utilized by Apex High School is called the Newcomers Center. This center was established for non-English speaking students and families who need assistance with school and community services to help with their transition to a foreign country. Apex ISD also has a migrant education program to ensure that migratory children throughout the district have access to high quality, comprehensive instructional, and support services that enable them to meet the same challenging state performance standards that all children are expected to meet.

A practice not utilized by Apex ISD, but has been implemented by other school districts, is the utilization of business partnerships to mentor the school and individual students. When speaking with Eduardo, it seemed as though he wanted a role model in the business community, but he did not have access to one. If Apex High School could put him in contact with a local engineer and set up times for Eduardo to shadow this person at his workplace, this activity might be conducive to fostering future success with Eduardo and other students.

**Future research.** As a high school educator, I have been intrigued for many years about the high failure and dropout rates of male students. Initially, when framing this study, I wanted to study high school ninth graders and investigate why some are not successful. However, after hearing peer feedback about the reflections abilities of fourteen and fifteen year old adolescents and my own realization of Latino numbers in the southwest U.S., this study morphed to the present topic. When reading the literature and related studies, it became clear that a missing piece in the literature was the student voice, especially from students who had been successful in achieving their high school diploma.

This study could be further expanded at the post-secondary level. Illumination of Latino achievement in college after high school could elucidate their academic preparedness for the next step in academia. Moreover, another component in academic preparation could be the psycho-social aspect of college readiness in the affective domain. Several years after graduating from high school, students would have a more mature reflection of the rigors of high school curriculum and how they were prepared for

the next step in their educational journey. Open-ended interviews with participants would give the researcher rich data to compile not only for the academic piece, but also the psycho-social viewpoint for college readiness.

Another future research topic could be the study of the role of race, class, and gender in the public school classroom. This would enhance the literature about the Latino parents' role in their children's education and their characterization of valuing education versus the European American's expectation of the value of education. Gathering data from parents of second and third generation Latinos could open the dialogue and awareness levels among educators who may still have misguided beliefs about Latino parents and their commitment to their children's education. A study like this would be valuable in eliminating the marginalization of this group of learners in public schools.

### **What I Learned in Conducting This Study**

As a white, middle class female who has worked in education for 21 years, it became apparent that the power of relationships with all students is crucial to their success in school. More importantly, all educators need to exercise some type of reflection about subconscious behaviors towards students, especially the students of color in our classrooms and in the halls of our schools. I was raised in a middle class home and attended public school in a fairly progressive area of Texas. Even though the schools were integrated, there were only a handful of African American and Latino students in our elementary school. Naturally, this number grew as I progressed to the larger secondary schools. Even though my home and family did not embrace or tolerate

racist tendencies (racial slurs were never used or allowed), it does make me stop and consider subconscious deficit thinking of people who look different than myself or family. Awareness is typically the first step in changing behavior, but it makes me wonder what action is qualified as the next step to internalize the effect of subconscious behavior with others who do not look like me.

Since staff treatment had a considerable impact on these participants, one can speculate that it is crucial for every educator to examine biases that may affect how we treat our students' everyday in the classrooms and halls of our schools. The fact that staff treatment was an important aspect of these participants' success was not necessarily a surprise. As an administrator and someone who has led many staff developments, I have preached that students do not care what you know until they know you care about them. However, the consistency of the staff treatment theme, the profoundness of its effect, and the way it was articulated by these participants was eye opening even to me.

Just as staff treatment and rapport with students was a major theme, familism and the support of family in academic achievement was also a key player in the participants' responses. The main factor I must consider is that every culture has different ways of exhibiting their value and support of education. Latinos often are not aware of the unwritten rules established by the dominant American culture concerning overt parent involvement in school activities. Whether Latino parents are working long hours to keep their family fed, or they do not feel welcome in the school and believe educators know what's best for their children, this does not necessarily mean Latino parents do not value education.

In many ways, the journey in researching the literature, conducting the study, and reflecting on the findings has changed me and caused me to grow intellectually and spiritually. On the one hand, I have always been an empathetic person and sensitive to others' challenges and difficulties. Nevertheless, the study itself has made a considerable impact not only on the affective domain, but also on the cognitive level. When I consider the amount of time spent researching the literature and reflecting on the historical and cultural aspects of the Latino culture, it deepens my understanding of their plight when navigating the American schools. The idea that deficit thinking is prevalent in schools and society is disturbing. However, I feel empowered to help educate others in my school about the possibilities of reaching out to Latinos and welcoming students of color and their families to school.

As a Christian educator, I must ask myself some important questions. How are we in public schools to respond to our diverse brothers and sisters in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Will we welcome the differences of cultures and languages, creating a resilient, inclusive, and cohesive community? Or will we become more narrow and exclusive out of fear and ignorance about other ethnicities and cultures? As a professional on the battlefield of public education, my commitment is to discovering the differences in all of our stakeholders. This study is a springboard for me, as an educational learner and leader, to ensure that the diversity of our students is recognized and honored. Most importantly, I must reflect what I am willing to do on a daily basis to support students of color in achieving academic success and enjoying all of the opportunities the U.S. has to offer.

## **Conclusion**

It is widely accepted by educators and business leaders that a high school diploma is a minimum requirement to any hope of a quality standard of living in the U.S. Furthermore, it is widely recognized that a college education brings even more economic advantages to both the individual and society. College graduates enjoy other advantages, such as lower unemployment, increased choice of jobs, enhanced work benefits, and better overall health. The depleted numbers of African American and Latino males in college affects several areas of society, including the country's economic growth and advancement in the quality of life of individuals and society. According to Greene and Winters (2005), 49% of Latino males graduate high school compared to 58% of Latino females. Furthermore, Latino males have the highest dropout rates of all ethnic groups.

From 2005 to 2006, the Latino population was responsible for 49% of the total U.S. population growth, and they were the fastest growing minority group in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As the number of Latinos increase, the demographic profile of the U.S. will dramatically change. The U.S. Census Bureau stated that by 2050, the Latino population is predicted to comprise almost one-third of the entire U.S. population.

Regrettably, the lack of academic achievement and transition to higher education within the Latino male population will have a harmful impact on the level of production and economic development for our country. Latinos must be prepared to step into the jobs that require higher order thinking skills and technological training. The position of the U.S., both economically, and as a world leader, relies on citizens that are highly

intellectual, educated, innovative, and creative in searching for answers to the challenges in the private sector as well as the problems of the country and the world.

An effective free and appropriate education is a cornerstone of American democracy. If our educational system is failing such a large group of Americans, then educators and policymakers must take a hard look at the current system and determine what is not working in the American schools. By 2050, the children in American schools will include 62% faces of color, which is up from 44% today (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Policymakers and educators understand that to preserve the American standard of living, public education must provide a quality education to all students to prepare them to higher education or a skilled craft. Deficit thinking, negative stereotypes, racism, and poor pedagogy will not sustain the United States as a hegemonic power. The future of our country rests with the multi-cultural, faces of color students that are in our public schools. The Tayloristic widget approach with students is not working and will continue to fail. Students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century require differentiated instruction, caring teachers, caring administrators, strong role models, and community partnerships in order to succeed in school. The states must change their traditional approach to education. Without change, the United States will ultimately pay a huge price in the world economic order, and it will have a negative impact on the standard of living for all Americans.

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**APPENDIX**First Interview

- 1) Tell me a little bit about yourself
- 2) Do you live with both parents?
- 3) Where were you born?
- 4) How long have you been in Apex ISD?
- 5) How do you like Apex High School?
- 6) When you came here from junior high, what was the most difficult thing about coming to AHS from 8th grade?
- 7) Do you feel that high school is a lot harder than junior high? What are some differences and similarities?
- 8) Do you think AHS could have done anything to make it easier coming to a large high school?
- 9) Was there any kind of Fish Camp here or anything to transition like a 9th grade orientation?
- 10) What was your biggest problem during your senior year this year?
- 11) What was the most positive thing that helped you complete high school?
- 12) Was there a person who was/is most influential in helping you complete high school?
- 13) What about in 9<sup>th</sup> grade? Do you remember any teacher then that stood out for you?
- 14) Is there anyone who helped in the transition from freshmen to this year?
- 15) What do you like most about high school?

- 16) What do you dislike the most about high school?
- 17) Which teacher/administrator or counselor do you like and respect the most at AHS?
- 18) What are some reasons or examples of why you like him/her?
- 19) What was the best thing that teachers did to help you complete high school?
- 20) What was your favorite subject?
- 21) When you took the TAKS test, was it difficult? Which content area was the hardest?
- 22) Have you passed all four areas of the TAKS?
- 23) What was the best thing that school administrators did that helped you to complete high school?
- 24) When you graduate, what are your plans?

### Second Interview

- 1) What elementary did you attend?
- 2) Were you in bilingual or ESL programs?
- 3) Did you go to Pre-K?
- 4) Tell me about the excitement here last week. What happened?
- 5) When you see a lot of students getting into a fight, what do you do?
- 6) What do you think your senior teachers think about you?
- 7) What do you think your Junior High teachers thought about you?
- 8) What would you share or tell school people to help guys like you be successful? Like what's something that could be improved in the school to help you guys.



- 9) What would you want your teachers this year to know about you? Or, even your teachers from 9<sup>th</sup> grade?
- 10) How have you changed since your freshmen year?
- 11) What do you think the school thinks is an ideal student?
- 12) Do you think there is any difference in the way white students are treated?
- 13) Do you think there is racism in the community of Apex?
- 14) Can you think of anything else that's happened that you felt like hey if I was white they wouldn't be giving me a hard time?
- 15) If you knew someone who was coming from Washington Jr. High and he's kinda like you, what would you say to him about high school that you wish you had known?
- 16) Your experiences at Apex High, have they differed than what you thought the school was going to be about when you got here? Like how is it different than what you thought it would be?
- 17) Remind me again what you plan to do when you graduate?
- 18) What do your parents think about your plans?
- 19) Do you have a Plan B?
- 20) Do you plan to marry and have children someday?
- 21) Do you think you will create a college fund for your children?

Interview Three

- 1) Were there any activities outside of school that you participated in?
- 2) Do you know what your grade point average is?
- 3) Do you care about your grade point average?
- 4) What is your preferred language? Would you rather speak in Spanish or English?
- 5) Would you rather school be taught in English or Spanish?
- 6) What language is spoken at home?
- 7) Do your parents talk to you about making good grades in school or about being successful in school?
- 8) Do your parents/guardians ever try to punish you or take something away if you don't make certain grades?
- 9) Do your parents/guardians ever reward you if you bring home a good report card?
- 10) Do you know what level of education your mom and dad attained? Did they receive their high school diploma?
- 11) Were your parents born in the United States?
- 12) What do your parents/guardians do now for a job or career?
- 13) Have they spoken to you about what they would like for you to do after graduating from high school?
- 14) What if your mom and dad came up to you now and said, "Hey we want you to go to college and we'll pay for it." What would you say?
- 15) Who do you think was most influential in you completing high school?
- 16) How many brothers and sisters live at home? What are their ages?

- 17) Has anyone else in your immediate or extended family gone to college?
- 18) Tell me about a couple of your closest guy friends here at school. Are they going to graduate this year?
- 19) When y'all just hang out and spend time together, what do you do?
- 20) Why do you pick the friends you hang out with?
- 21) Has religion or spirituality helped with your success at AHS?
- 22) Have the experiences here at Conroe helped you or hurt you?
- 23) When you walk across the stage on May 29th, that will be a very exciting day, who will you be as a result of the experiences here at Apex High? How has it made a difference?

**CONSENT FORM**  
**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL LATINO MALES WHO**  
**WERE IN DANGER OF DROPPING OUT BUT PERSEVERED**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying Latino male success in high school. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Latino male students who have succeeded in a traditional school setting despite significant hardships in their personal lives. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are a Latino male who has been successful in your pursuit of a high school diploma. This study is not funded by any agency.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in three personal interviews with the researcher. The interviews will last 60-90 minutes each. The study will be completed by the first week in June.

Your participation will be audio recorded.

**What are the risks involved in this study?**

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

**What are the possible benefits of this study?**

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, if teachers, counselors and principals can understand the reasons certain students are successful or not successful in the classroom, then new policies and procedures could be developed from this information. Thus, increasing the number of Latino students who are academically successful in school.

**Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

**Who will know about my participation in this research study?**

This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Jan Nell or Dr. Jim Scheurich will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Jan Nell will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for 3 years and then erased.

**Whom do I contact with questions about the research?**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Jan Nell @ xxx-xxx-xxx or jnell@xxx.net.

**Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

**Signature**

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be audio recorded

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to be audio recorded

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **D.O.B.** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO**  
**UNA INVESTIGACIÓN DE LA PERCEPCIÓN DE ALTA ESCUELA HOMBRES LATINOS QUE**  
**ESTABAN EN PELIGRO DE ABANDONAR LA ESCUELA PERO PERSEVERAMO**

**Introducción**

El propósito de este formulario es para proporcionarle la información que pueda afectar su decisión de si participar o no en este estudio de investigación. Si usted decide participar en este estudio, esta forma también se utiliza para grabar su consentimiento.

Se le ha pedido participar en un proyecto de investigación que estudia el éxito varones latinos en la secundaria. El propósito de este estudio es investigar las percepciones de los estudiantes latinos de sexo masculino que han tenido éxito en establecer una escuela tradicional a pesar de dificultades significativas en su vida personal. Usted fue seleccionado para ser un participante posible porque usted es un hombre latino que ha tenido éxito en su búsqueda de un diploma de escuela secundaria. Este estudio no está financiado por ninguna agencia.

**¿Qué me pedirán hacer?**

Si está de acuerdo en participar en este estudio, se le pedirá a participar en tres entrevistas personales con el investigador. Las entrevistas duran 60-90 minutos cada uno. El estudio se completará la primera semana de junio.

Su participación será grabada en audio.

**¿Cuáles son los riesgos involucrados en este estudio?**

Los riesgos asociados en este estudio son mínimas, y no son mayores que los riesgos de ordinario de la vida cotidiana.

**¿Cuáles son los posibles beneficios de este estudio?**

Usted no recibirá ningún beneficio directo de la participación en este estudio; Sin embargo, si los maestros, consejeros y directores pueden comprender las razones algunos estudiantes tienen éxito o no éxito en el aula, a continuación, las nuevas políticas y procedimientos podrían desarrollarse a partir de esta información. Por lo tanto, aumentar el número de estudiantes latinos que son el éxito académico en la escuela.

**¿Tengo que participar?**

No. Su participación es voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no participar o retirarse en cualquier momento sin su relación actual o futura con Texas A & M University se vea afectado

**¿Quién sabe sobre mi participación en este estudio de investigación?**

Este estudio es confidencial y los registros de este estudio se mantendrá en privado. Ningún identificador que le vincule a este estudio se incluirá en ningún tipo de informe que pueda ser publicado. registros La investigación se almacenan de forma segura y sólo Nell Jan o el Dr. Jim Scheurich tendrán acceso a los registros.

Si decide participar en este estudio, que será grabada en audio. Cualquier grabaciones de audio se almacenan de forma segura y sólo Jan Nell tendrán acceso a las grabaciones. Cualquier registro se mantendrá durante 3 años y borrar.

**¿A quién contacto con preguntas sobre la investigación?**

Si usted tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio, puede comunicarse con Jan Nell @ xxx-xxx-xxx jnell@xxx.net.

**¿Con quién debo contactar acerca de mis derechos como participante en la investigación?**

Este estudio de investigación ha sido revisado por la Protección de Sujetos Humanos "del Programa y / o la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Texas A & M University. Para los problemas relacionados con la investigación o formular preguntas acerca de sus derechos como participante en la investigación, puede ponerse en contacto en estas oficinas (979) 458-4067 o irb@tamu.edu.

**Firma**

Por favor, asegúrese de haber leído la información anterior, las preguntas y respuestas recibidas a su satisfacción. Se le entregará una copia del formulario de consentimiento para su archivo. Al firmar este documento, usted da su consentimiento para participar en este estudio.

\_\_\_\_\_ Estoy de acuerdo en que se audio grabado

\_\_\_\_\_ No estoy de acuerdo que se audio grabado

**Firma del participante:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fecha:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nombre impreso:** \_\_\_\_\_ **fecha de nacimiento:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Firma del padre:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fecha:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nombre impreso:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fecha:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nombre impreso:** \_\_\_\_\_

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