INFLUENCES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF SECOND-GENERATION CHILDREN OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership

By
Laura Rodriguez
August 2015
SIGNATURE PAGE

DISSEMINATION: INFLUENCES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF SECOND-GENERATION CHILDREN OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is first and foremost dedicated to my amazing parents, Armando and Amparo Rodriguez. With hopes for a better future for their five children, they immigrated from Tepetongo, Zacatecas, México to the United States to live the American dream. With only a rudimentary education, they knew the value of hard work and a good education. Their morals and firm belief in the goodness of God were the foundation for my brothers’, sisters’, nephews’, nieces’, and my academic success. Their constant love, support, and respect for their children and grandchildren are a testament to the parents who raised them to believe that the family and our heritage is to be honored and cherished. Mami y papi, los quiero con todo mi corazón. Gracias por desear un mejor futuro para sus hijos y nietos. Es un honor ser su hija.

This study is also dedicated to my brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces who never forgot about me when I was unable to attend family functions, go to dinner or to the movies these last three years. Letty, thank you for letting me be a second mother to Joe, Luis, Andrés, Amanda, and Diana; they are the children I never had, and I am so proud of what a wonderful mother you have been to them and what they have accomplished. Thank you, my sister, I love you! Martin, you are one of my role models and one of my mentors who helped me figure out how to study and how to get through college. You set the path for all of us who came after you. Leila is blessed to have you as her father. Thank you, my big brother. I love you! Carlos and Monica, my younger brother and sister, thank you for putting up with my bossiness and for allowing me to take control now and then. Carlos, you gave me my goddaughter Angie, who I love dearly, plus Ben and Elena. Thank you for letting me be the tía who is always involved in
their education. I love you, my brother! Monica, you showed me what it means to be a strong and confident woman. You are a product of what is best in all of us. Thank you for being who you are, I love you, my sister! And lastly, to my two sisters-in-law, Adriana and Amy, thank you for loving my two brothers and for becoming a part of our family. I love you both like sisters.

Lastly, I would also like to dedicate this study to three extraordinary women who were integral throughout my dissertation journey. To Dr. Betty J. Alford, thank you for your patience, positive attitude, and encouraging guidance throughout this journey. Your graciousness was always present as was your wisdom. I am honored and grateful that you were my dissertation chairperson. To Maria and Christine, the best sister-friends anyone could ask for, thank you for your encouragement and sense of humor throughout those never-ending nights of studying and working on our projects. I could not have asked for two more amazing individuals to be by my side throughout these last three years. ¡SAS! We did it!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank God for guiding me through my dissertation journey. It is through His grace that I was able to persevere despite the challenges of learning how to research and understand what scholarly writing entailed. Through this journey, I have grown as an individual and as an educational leader who will always champion the rights of our underprivileged Latino youth. I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Betty J. Alford, Dr. Christina Chávez-Reyes, and Dr. Michael García for believing that a second-generation Mexican-American could achieve her dream of attaining a doctorate. Each one of you was integral in helping me understand the importance of social justice for our Latino community and the importance of preparing future generations of Latinos for a post-secondary degree.

I would like to thank the 14 students of Cal Poly Pomona’s Inaugural Doctoral Cohort One who have shared their stories and expertise as educational leaders for the past three years. It is through your examples that I have grown leaps and bounds as a leader. Also, I would like to express my appreciation for two of the most intelligent women I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, Dr. Betty J. Alford and Dr. Nancy Sanders. Thank you for sharing your amazing knowledge of educational research and the dissertation process; but most importantly, thank you for being our biggest supporters and champions. You made this process seem effortless. I am indebted to both of you for never allowing me to give up.

I want to thank all the individuals who in one way or another helped me through this journey. People such as Michael Bandoni, CPP’s Doctoral Program Support Coordinator, who personifies what it means to be a servant-leader, and Kimberley Clark,
my incredible editor who worked overtime to help me meet my deadlines. Your grace under pressure is commendable. To the students and staff from Vineland Elementary who daily reminded me what it means to believe in our immigrant students’ academic success, thank you. Never stop believing in the dream.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank the second-generation Mexican-American participants of this study for sharing their journey to the attainment of a university degree. Their stories brought to light what it means to be a child of immigrants with a dream of a better future. They demonstrated that through perseverance, hard work, and a desire to honor our parents’ immigrant struggle, the American dream of a better life can become a reality.
ABSTRACT

In today’s society, children of immigrants are the fastest growing youth population in the United States. It is projected that by the year 2040, one of three children will be raised in an immigrant household. First- and second-generation children of immigrants face many challenges, from adapting to a new country to accessing higher education opportunities, due to their limited socioeconomic status and limited social and cultural capital. Despite the many challenges these individuals face, studies demonstrate that these students with at least one foreign-born parent are academically more successful than their third- or later-generation peers, which is a phenomenon researchers identify as the immigrant paradox (Crosnoe & Turley 2011; Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012). This qualitative research study illuminates the college journey of eight second-generation children of Mexican immigrants who successfully attained a post-secondary degree. From the data, four contributing influences to their success were identified: parent involvement, mentoring, college awareness, and supplemental academic support programs.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In today’s society, there are many contextual forces that influence the lives of students who come from an immigrant background, in particular first- and second-generation immigrants. In general, Latino immigrant students live in the lower social strata, often in poverty (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). They face many challenges in life that stem from the need to adjust to a new country, learn a new language, and learn the ways of a new educational system. Recently arrived immigrants frequently are exposed to deprivation, adversity, and discrimination that is part of their everyday lives (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Although faced with so many challenges, studies have shown that students with at least one foreign-born parent are more successful academically and earn grades that are comparable or better than third- or later-generation peers who come from American-born families (Fulgini & Witkow, 2004). According to Crosnoe and Turley (2011):

For Latin American immigrants, the mechanisms that seem to hold the most promise for explaining the immigrant paradox include strong family and community ties that protect from potentially negative peer orientations, as well as support resilience within disadvantaged schools and neighborhoods. (p. 138)

The identification of influences that contributed to the successful attainment of a college degree by first- and second-generation immigrant students will inform educators, administrators, and school systems on how to help later generations of immigrant students experience the same success (Kao & Tienda, 1995).
Background of the Problem

Children of immigrants are the fastest growing youth population group in the United States (Landale & Oropesa, 1995; Rong & Preissle, 1998). As of 2010, 11% of young people growing up in the United States are children of immigrant parents. It is projected by the year 2040, one out of three children will be raised in an immigrant household. Latinos in public schools will make up 48% of the students in California (Noguera, 2008; Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009; Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003).

Within these households, first- and second-generation immigrant students are paradoxically demonstrating a clear advantage as they academically outperform their third- or higher-generation peers. This advantage is often referred to as the “immigrant paradox,” which is a phenomenon whereby first-generation immigrant children academically outperform third- or higher-generation immigrant children (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011).

First- and second-generation students share their parents’ beliefs that the most important path to success is through education (Fuligni, 1997; Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007). Unlike upper middle class parents, many Latino immigrant parents lack the level of education that can help them build social capital and access resources to help their children at school (Noguera, 2008). Nevertheless, the lack of education should not be a barrier for parents to gain access to information about college applications and financial aid. It is essential for school systems to disseminate college preparation information to parents through workshops either at the school site or by sending materials home (Plunkett et al., 2009; Sobel & Kugler, 2007). One of the goals of a college-going culture
is to work towards an increase of parent involvement at the elementary level, which means school districts must work in conjunction with community organizations to fund college-awareness workshops and seminars for immigrant families (Turney & Kao, 2009).

With the ever-growing demands of a global society, it seems that the surest path for upward mobility and well-being for many immigrant students will be access to schooling and a higher education (Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). It is imperative that these students are equipped with the necessary twenty-first century skills to be successful in a global society. They must be prepared to be active, well-educated, cognitively flexible, and culturally sophisticated individuals who can work efficiently in teams as they effectively collaborate with their peers (Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). Rumberger and Larson (1998) write:

A variety of qualitative case studies and quantitative national studies have found what is often referred to as “immigrant optimism,” a factor that helps account for the surprisingly higher educational performance of many immigrant students in comparison to that of their native-born co-ethnic peers….Studies also indicate that parents’ aspirations for their children, students’ own aspirations and motivation to achieve, and some forms of educational achievement tend to decline across generations of immigrants. (p. 74)

The importance of understanding the resilience of immigrant students and learning about their strengths as individuals and as a group will help us understand immigrant adaptation and the immigrant paradox (García Coll & Marks, 2012). It will help inform and encourage policymakers in the United States to initiate shifts in practices to develop ways
we can successfully educate later generations of Latino immigrant students who have become more acculturated to the majority culture and display higher negative outcomes (Driscoll, Russell, & Crockett, 2008).

Studies must look at the disparities between immigrant students at different generational levels especially with the changing economy and changing academic expectations during this era of educational reform (Baum & Flores, 2011). Research is needed on the missing rungs of the educational ladder that once led to middle-class success through simple hard work and perseverance (Baum & Flores, 2011). It is imperative that policy solutions are developed that address how to equalize the playing field by improving elementary, secondary, and post-secondary outcomes for one of the most vulnerable groups in society: our immigrant youth (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify common influences that contributed to the academic success and attainment of a post-secondary degree by second-generation children of Mexican immigrants. Through the identification of shared influences that lead to the academic success of second-generation students, educators, administrators, educational leaders, and academic organizations will derive a basic understanding of practice to consider in ensuring academic success for second generation Latino students.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What influences contributed to the post-secondary academic success of second-generation children of Mexican immigrant parents?
2. What influenced the goals of second-generation Mexican-American students to go to college?

3. What challenges did the participants face in attaining a post-secondary education?

4. How were these challenges, if any, overcome?

**Significance of the Study**

The twenty-first century brings vast opportunities unlike ever before, and the key to economic security will be correlated to education (Baum & Flores, 2011; Crosnoe & Turley, 2011). These opportunities are linked to an education that many immigrant students will not have access to unless post-secondary education is acquired (Brown & Patten, n.d.). Current studies are demonstrating counteracting advantages and disadvantages in immigrant students’ lives that lead to the persistent generational gap in achievement (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005).

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) verify that rarely do immigrant children and youth attend after-school programs or take advantage of mentoring opportunities because of the disconnection between immigrant parents and their child’s school if parents are not involved in their children’s education. This lack of contact may contribute to undercutting immigrant advantages and lost networking opportunities. School and district administrators are well positioned to develop parent education classes that will inform parents of the powerful effects parent involvement can have on their child’s education (Sobel & Kugler, 2007). By providing parents with a variety of opportunities to participate in school functions, schools and districts can reaffirm the importance of being involved as well as echoing a school- and college-going culture at home (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).
Assumptions

For this study, an assumption was made that all individuals interviewed were second-generation Mexican-Americans who successfully completed post-secondary education. Success was described and measured by the successful attainment of a university degree. Another assumption made was that the interviewees had developed positive relationships with adult and peer mentors who were influential in their academic success. An additional assumption was that the participants interviewed for the study had participated in supplemental academic support programs at one of the two high schools that provided them with college awareness workshops and assisted them with college and financial aid applications. The final assumption was that the Latino immigrant students were of Mexican descent with at least one parent born in México.

Delimitations of the Study

The second-generation students in this study were of Mexican origin and had attended public education from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The study was limited to second-generation Latino immigrant students of Mexican descent who had received a college degree from an accredited four-year university. In addition, the students must have attended one of the two comprehensive high schools in Garden View Unified School District and graduated from that district.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout the study and have been defined for the purpose of clarity and understanding:

**Acculturation**: A change in the cultural behavior and thinking of a person or group of people through contact with another culture.
**Assimilation:** The process by which immigrants and their children integrate into society.

**Chicana/o:** A person of Mexican descent or origin.

**Consonant acculturation:** Immigrant parents and children “jointly learn and accommodate to the language and the culture of the host country” (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller, 2009, p. 1081).

**Cultural capital:** The term cultural capital refers to non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. Examples can include education, intellect, and style of speech, dress, or physical appearance. Cultural capital is knowledge and skills that are specific to a particular social class. It is based on class rather than race.

**Dissonant acculturation:** Refers to the “acculturation of youth who lack strong community support where introjection of the values and language of the host society is accompanied by rejection of those brought by and associated with their parents” (Portes et al., 2009, p. 1081).

**Educational capital.** Educational capital refers to the acquisition of capital or qualifications through direct formal schooling which can then be converted into commodities to be traded, consumed and profited from in the educational system. (Kelly, 2009).

**First-generation immigrant students:** For the purpose of this study, first-generation immigrants are identified as those individuals who were born abroad, educated and socialized in their home countries, and then immigrated to the United States (Gandara & Contrera, 2009; Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Portes et al., 2009).
**Hispanic:** A Spanish-speaking individual who resides in the United States who is of Latin American descent.

**Immigrant optimism:** The “immigrant optimism hypothesis” states that immigrants’ attitudes favor upward mobility which is passed on to their children but seems to fade by higher generations (Kao & Tienda, 1995).

**Immigrant paradox:** Phenomenon whereby first-generation immigrant children outperform second- or third-generation immigrant children in school (García Coll & Marks, 2012).

**Intergenerational acculturation:** “The process by which immigrants and their children learn the language and normative lifestyles of a new culture” (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009, p. 272).

**Latino:** An individual who was born or lives in what are considered Latin countries from South America, Central America, or México or a person whose ancestors or parents originate from South America, Central America, or México.

**Mexican-American:** Individuals born in the United States who are of full or partial Mexican descent.

**Locus of control:** Locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to how strongly people believe they have control over the situations and experiences that affect their lives. In education, locus of control typically refers to how students perceive the causes of their academic success or failure in school (The Glossary of Education Reform, n.d.).

**Model minority:** The Asian-American model minority stereotype may convey the sense that all Asian-Americans are at a level of great success and good economic
security. The myth claims Asian-American children are high achievers because of the high value their parents place on education (Pollock, 2008).

Second-generation immigrant students: Second-generation immigrant students are identified as students who were born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent (Gandara & Contrera, 2009; Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Portes et al., 2009).

Segmented Assimilation Theory: Segmented Assimilation Theory explains the “specific role that immigrant parents and their co-ethnic communities play in helping the second generation to confront external obstacles to social mobility” (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009, p. 272).

Selective acculturation: “Immigrants with similar backgrounds and strong co-ethnic community support undergo the learning of English and American ways simultaneously while preserving key elements of the parental culture. Fluent bilingualism is a good indicator of this eclectic acculturation path” (Portes et al., 2009, p. 1081).

Social capital: The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Social capital refers to the connections or networking that can be gained by knowing people who can be of help.

Social justice: Social justice is normally connected with the notion of equality or equal opportunity for all individuals in society (Robinsons, 2013).

Third- or higher-generation immigrant students: Third- and higher-generation are immigrants who were born in the United States with two U.S. born parents (Driscoll et al., 2008; Fuligni & Witkow, 2004; García Coll & Marks, 2012).
Summary

Chapter 1 discussed the background and purpose of the study, the background and statement of the problem, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the definition of terms. In addition, Chapter 1 provided the assumptions and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the literature pertinent to this study. This chapter will discuss common influences shared by successful first- and second-generation Latino immigrant students that led to the successful attainment of a degree in higher education. Chapter 3 will identify the research methodology and methods used by the researcher to obtain the necessary data for the study. Chapter 4 will present the findings gathered from the stories of the eight Mexican-American participants of this narrative inquiry study. Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions derived from the participants’ narratives, the implications of the study, recommendations for future research, and concluding reflections.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

A research study conducted by Hu-DeHart and García Coll (2013) expanded on the paradox of first-generation immigrant students outperforming their peers. They found that students in their study had fewer instances of juvenile delinquency and demonstrated more positive attitudes and respect towards their teachers than third- or later-generation students from immigrant homes. García Coll and Marks (2012) commented that these findings were unusual especially during a time when immigrants are seen as non-contributing citizens who are considered a detriment to our society.

Similarly, in their research study, van Geel and Vedder (2011) examined the role of family obligations and the social adjustment of immigrant adolescents. They wrote about the superior adaptation of immigrant students despite the many obstacles they encountered upon immigrating to a new country and of the success many immigrant students are having despite being faced with challenging issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and poverty. It seems these students are doing as well or even better than native-born students (van Geel & Vedder, 2011). The study conducted involved 20,000 immigrant, 15-year-old students in the United States. They found that although most immigrant families live in lower socioeconomic areas with high levels of crime and drug use, first- and second-generation immigrant students were less likely to participate in delinquent activities or abuse illegal drugs/substances and despite a challenging environment are managing to prevail (van Geel & Vedder, 2011).

In the study discussed in their article, Blom and Severiens (2008) found that immigrant students displayed self-regulated deep learning. They had the motivation to learn, which was measured on an intrinsic and extrinsic goal-orientation model in which
the learner created an appropriate learning environment using peer learning strategies. They found that immigrant students’ underlying attitudes and values were strongly influenced by their background as was the importance they placed on education and learning. According to the authors, successful immigrant students shared that they had many reasons to succeed; in particular, students from families with low socioeconomic status viewed improving their economic condition as a reason to succeed (Blom & Severiens, 2008). A few reasons noted were the goal of getting a better job, the focus on intergenerational mobility, and a desire to support the values of their families.

A positive contributing factor to the immigrant’s desire to succeed was closely linked to positive acculturation experiences in his/her life (Blom & Severiens, 2008). Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999) discovered that immigrant youths from Asian or South American countries displayed a strong reliance on family and family obligations. These traits were closely correlated with their tendencies to obey their parents, do well in school, and resist environmental temptations to join in illegal activities (van Geel & Vedder, 2009).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify common influences that contributed to the academic success of second-generation Latino immigrant students. By analyzing each participant’s journey towards a post-secondary degree, influences were identified that were integral in guiding them through successful completion of high school and college. First-generation immigrants are identified as those individuals who were born abroad, educated and socialized in their home countries, and then immigrated to the United States. Second-generation immigrant students are identified as students who were born in
the United States to at least one foreign-born parent. Third- and higher-generation immigrants were born in the United States with two U.S. born parents (Driscoll et al., 2004; García Coll & Marks, 2012).

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks for this study included resiliency theory, segmented assimilation theory, and social justice theory. Each theory provided a lens for data analysis as well as background for the literature review.

Resiliency Theory

Although faced with a number of life circumstances beyond their control, many first- and second-generation Latino students demonstrate an unparalleled determination to succeed academically even when faced with overwhelming adversity such as language barriers, discrimination, hunger, and poverty, demonstrating a resilient nature that helps them overcome such barriers (Fulgini & Witkow, 2004). Cabrera and Padilla (2004) shared that a resilient behavior can be taught and sustained when caring individuals in schools, home, and the community unite to ensure the success of children. Resilient individuals develop protective factors that utilize internal and external resources. Internal resources include inner strength which develops high self-esteem and self-efficacy, and external resources are the supportive individuals in their lives: family members, mentors, or tutors (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). This framework can assist in explaining how “first-generation Chicana students negotiate all the social, economic, and cultural forces affecting their educational experiences” (Ceja, 2004, p. 356).

The theory of resiliency has its roots in a nine-year longitudinal study conducted by Garmezy, Masten, and Tellegen (1984) on the development of resiliency in children.
and adults. What was discovered from the study was that despite dysfunctional home lives, the children in the study did not become dysfunctional adults but instead demonstrated warm, caring and competent behavior (Garmezy et al., 1984). These individuals displayed effectiveness at work and play (Garmezy et al., 1984). They had high expectations and high self-esteem, had a positive outlook in life, were self-disciplined, and demonstrated great critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The three protective factors, or environmental characteristics, Garmezy et al. (1984) identified as helping to build resilient behavior were (1) biological personality dispositions, (2) environmental conditions such as a supportive family environment, and (3) positive external support systems.

Benard (1991) theorized that when resilient individuals are exposed to severe stress factors, they are able to develop social competencies that help them overcome the odds and ultimately lead productive lives. She further claimed “resiliency research validates prior research and theory in human development that has clearly established the biological imperative for growth and development that exists in the human organism” (para. 1). Inquiry about resiliency emerged from the phenomenological identification of the characteristics survivors display after facing obstacles or when living in high-risk circumstances (Richardson, 2002).

A 30-year longitudinal study conducted by Werner and Smith (1989) about the children of a particular community is seminal in the development of resiliency theory (Richardson, 2002). The participants in the study were a multiracial population of children living at high risk due to factors of poverty, unstable home lives, and prenatal stress. Of the 200 children in the study, 72 were succeeding and prospering despite the
high-risk factors in their lives. Werner and Smith (1989) identified resilient qualities that paralleled those listed by Benard (1991, 1993). The personal characteristics the resilient children displayed were being responsible, adaptable, achievement oriented, good communicators, and having high self-esteem. Werner and Smith (1992) also identified a caregiving environment at home and outside that helped young people overcome any hardships and adversities.

Resiliency theorists describe internal and external resilient qualities that help individuals in high-risk situations cope (Benard, 1991; Richardson, 2002). Richardson (2002) identified three waves of resiliency inquiry (see Table 1) that help people “bounce back’ in the wake of high-risk situations or after set-backs” (p. 308).

Table 1

Three Waves of Resiliency Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Wave: Resilient Qualities</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Resilient qualities of individuals</td>
<td>• Support systems that predict social and personal success</td>
<td>• List of qualities (i.e., self-esteem, self-efficacy, support systems) that help people grow through adversity</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Second Wave: The Resiliency Process</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Begins by learning to cope with stressors (i.e., adversity, change, barriers)</td>
<td>• Leads to the development of protective factors that affect an individual’s resiliency</td>
<td>• Protective factors are the environmental characteristics that help alter or reverse negative experiences and enable individuals to turn adversity into a positive experience which leads to resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resilient integration occurs when there is growth or insight through disruption</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Wave: Innate Resilience</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Motivational forces and creation of experiences that foster the activation of resiliency within individuals</td>
<td>• Resilient reintegration requires increased energy to grow</td>
<td>• The development of four traits found within resilient survivors:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social competence</td>
<td>• Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>• Autonomy</td>
</tr>
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Note: Adapted from Richardson, 2002
The first wave includes the support systems and resilient qualities within an individual that predict success. A resilient student has self-efficacy as well as high self-esteem that helps them rise above the hardship and obstacles they encounter (Richardson, 2002). The second wave defines the resiliency process that develops when an individual learns to deal with adversity with the help of protective factors. Benard (1991) identifies three broad environmental characteristics of protective factors that elicit resiliency in children: (1) caring relationships and safe environments, (2) messages of high expectations, and (3) opportunities for meaningful participation. According to Benard (1991), resiliency research has shown “the blueprint for building a sense of home and place in the cosmos lies in relationships” (para. 9). When students come from dysfunctional situations, they benefit from caring relationships within safe environments such as schools that can provide a safe haven for students (Benard, 1993). Bernard added:

Resilient youth take the opportunity to fulfill the basic human need for social support, caring, and love. If this opportunity is unavailable to them in their immediate family environment, it is imperative that the school give them the chance to develop caring relationships. (p. 46)

Garmezy (1991) stated that schools serve as a “protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect of a stressful world” (p. 421). The second protective factor builds on the power of high expectations that value each individual’s strength. Intrinsic motivation is nurtured by encouraging cooperation instead of competition (Benard, 1993). The third protective factor revolves around providing individuals meaningful participation which will give them opportunities to develop responsibility and to become involved which ultimately gives them a sense of pride and
control over their lives (Benard, 1993). The third wave discusses the innate resiliency that exists in all human organisms’ genetic make-up which is to survive through adverse or difficult circumstances (Benard, 1991; Richardson, 2002).

According to Richardson (2002), “resilient re-integration requires increased energy to grow, and the source of the energy…is a spiritual source or innate resilience” (p. 313). Benard (1993) expanded on the four traits (i.e., social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, sense of purpose, and future) found in the third wave of innate resiliency. She described the first trait, social competence, as individuals having the ability to connect and elicit positive responses from others through empathy, caring, having a sense of humor, and having strong communication skills. The second trait, problem-solving, incorporates being an abstract and reflective thinker who can develop alternative solutions for a problem and being able to plan and to be resourceful when seeking help from others. Benard (1993) described the third trait, autonomy, as an individual’s ability to act independently, having a good sense of identity, and having the ability to exert some control over his or her environment—for example, being able to detach oneself from a dysfunctional family situation. The last trait resilient individuals innately display is having a sense of purpose by having goals and a positive mindset about the future.

**Resiliency in Latinos attending college.** In his study of Chicanas aspiring to attend college, Ceja (2004) suggested that resiliency theory can help us understand how Chicana students can manage to succeed academically despite the educational barriers and external challenges they encounter in their lives. Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) shared, “resiliency becomes associated with a certain kind of consciousness that goes
beyond buffering the individual from ecological forces” (p. 229) that often hinder success in school. The authors continue by outlining resilient characteristics that include “inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning” (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000, p. 229).

Chicana students develop the conscious ability to look at their surrounding environment and lived experiences critically (Ceja, 2004). Being able to do this allows them to survive, thrive, and cope with their realities as they find strength and empowerment within this marginalized environment (Ceja, 2004). Resilient students tend to have a strong sense of who they are and hold a positive outlook that provides them with hope for the future (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004).

The factors that play a role in developing resiliency in individuals faced with adversities are common among most successful Latino students (Cavazos et al., 2010). Cavazos et al. (2010) interviewed resilient Latino college students and found that they demonstrated positive internal factors such as interpersonal relationships and self-efficacy. They had strong family support and high educational goals, were intrinsically motivated, had a strong locus of control that led them to believe that hard work and effort were important, and displayed high self-efficacy. Resiliency is developed through a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which means having strong intrinsic motivation leads to a strong internal locus of control and provides opportunities for Latino students to be successful (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; McMillan & Reed, 1994). According to McMillan and Reed (1994):
Resilient students have clear, realistic goals and are optimistic about the future. They have hope, despite all the negative circumstances in their lives, and confidence that they can achieve their long-range goals. For some students, a particularly difficult experience, either direct or vicarious, reinforces the importance of getting an education. (p. 138)

**Segmented Assimilation Theory**

The early definition of assimilation came from an understanding that immigrants would amalgamate or incorporate into a common American culture in which they had the freedom to contribute to the common ideas, knowledge, and ideals of the culture (Park & Burgess, 1921). This early definition “emphasized the cultural and social dimensions of immigrants adapting and fitting into American culture and society” (Stepick & Stepick, 2010, p. 1150). The first wave of immigrants Park and Burgess (1921) described were individuals who immigrated from European countries during the turn of the century at the onset of the industrial revolution when manual job opportunities abounded (Gans, 1992; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes et al., 2009; Stepick & Stepick, 2010; Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004; Zhou, 1997).

With the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the severe restrictions towards immigration were lifted and a large wave of immigrants arrived from Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean countries (Stepick & Stepick, 2010). The make-up of immigrants coming into the United States shifted from European, “non-Hispanic whites” to “non-European” immigrants consisting of Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics (Portes & Zhou, 1993, pp. 77-78). This new group of immigrants came with a different set of needs that revolved around economic and educational structures which were
“attributed to ‘upward’ or ‘downward’ assimilation… [as well as other barriers] particularly racism and economic opportunity” (Stepick & Stepick, 2010, p. 1151). Their off-spring, the new second generation, are now faced with very different limitations, one being job opportunities that require schooling if they are to access the jobs of an information-age economy (Portes et al., 2009). With the de-industrialization and restructuring of a global society, the opportunities provided during the industrial revolution to move up gradually to middle-class standing through simple hard work are disappearing for our new second generation (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Unlike the conditions present for the first wave of immigrants from the 1940s, current immigrants frequently face more negative experiences upon arriving in the United States due to their race (Portes & Zhou, 1993). To begin with, the children of European immigrants were typically white. Because of their skin color, they encountered less barriers to the American mainstream (Portes & Zhou, 1993). For them, the process of assimilation depended largely on their choice to adopt the new American ways and leave their culture behind (Portes & Zhou, 1993). This advantage does not exist for current Asian, Black, or Hispanic children of immigrants (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Portes and Zhou (1993) held that without a college degree, second-generation immigrants would continue like their first-generation immigrant parents in menial, low-wage jobs. The lack of advancement could ultimately stifle their chances of living the American lifestyle they once aspired towards and instead lead frustrated lives that could lead them to the perils of inner-city life (Gans, 1992; Portes et al., 2009). According to Portes and Zhou (1993), the process of adaptation by the second generation:
can be very different from that of their immigrant parents. For example, it is
generally accepted among immigration theorists that entry-level menial jobs are
performed without hesitation by newly arrived immigrants but are commonly
shunned by their U.S.-reared offspring. (p. 76)

In 1990, Ruben Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes initiated their groundbreaking
Children of Immigrants’ Longitudinal Study (CILS) which focused attention on the new
second-generation children of immigrants after coming to the realization that the first-
generation would have less of a long-term effect on American society than their children
and that the “prognosis for this outcome was not as rosy as the dominant theories of the
time lead us to believe” (Portes et al., 2009, p. 1078). They claimed that first-generation
immigrants were “in” the society but not “of” it, many times returning to their home
countries after a certain amount of years. Conversely, second-generation individuals are
born in the United States and as citizens they are here to stay and deserve the right to
have a say in the United States political system (Portes et al., 2009). The authors
maintained that “in an increasingly knowledge-based economy, children of immigrants
without an advanced education would not be able to access the jobs that would provide
them with a ticket to the upper-middle classes” (Portes et al., 2009, p. 1078).

Historically, for the social and economic advancement of immigrant groups in
American society, “the expectations [were] that the foreign-born and their offspring
[would] first acculturate and then seek entry and acceptance among the native-born”
(Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 82) as a prerequisite to enter the productive strata of
American life. A peculiar form of assimilation has occurred with current second-
generation children in that some are letting go of their parents’ cultural expectations of a
better education to assume the lower social class norms of a later generation just to fit in (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Portes and Zhou (1993) coined the term “segmented assimilation” when the traditionally expected process of immigrant assimilation was showing reverse signs—the outcomes were becoming segmented. There are three parts to the theory of segmented assimilation. The first part identifies the principal resources immigrant families use when their children encounter challenges. For example, one resource is the human capital (i.e., the formal education and occupational skills) the first generation brings with them to the new country. The second part identifies the principal barrier the children of immigrants must face such as the social context in which the host country receives them (i.e., a receptive or neutral reception, a receptive or less hostile reception). The third part of the theory of segmented assimilation is the distinct path expected when these forces interact (i.e., existence of social networks, a well-established and strong co-ethnic community).

Within the seminal CILS study, Portes and Zhou (1993) identified several distinct paths of adaption: upward assimilation, second-generation stagnation/downward assimilation, and simultaneous development of both cultures. Upward assimilation is supported by immigrant parents having strong human and social capital. This is the traditional assimilation path that leads to acculturation and adoption of the white middle-class lifestyle (Stepick & Stepick, 2010). Second-generation stagnation leads to low-wage menial jobs and downward assimilation, which in turn leads to “poverty, unemployment, and deviant lifestyles” (Portes et al., 2009, p. 1080; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Downward assimilation exposes second-generation members to an adversarial subculture led by members of later generations—marginalized individuals who have rejected the host
country’s culture which in turn hinders intergenerational mobility (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Portes et al., 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1993). The third path of immigrant adaptation, simultaneous development of both cultures, leads to strong community support and the advancement of both the native and the host country’s culture, language, and values (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Portes and Zhou (1993) held that assimilation does not lead a straightforward path to adaptation, but instead has become segmented due to the outer environmental influences in second-generation adaptation. They attributed this to the negative stereotypes immigrants face upon entering American society; the decline of manual, working-class job opportunities; and inner-city accessibility to gangs and the drug trade (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Portes et al., 2009).

Due to the pace of acculturation, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) identified three types of intergenerational acculturation: consonant acculturation, selective acculturation, and dissonant acculturation. Consonant acculturation occurs when the children of immigrants arrive to a new country with professional and high cultural capital and are able to readily adapt to the host country’s language and culture experience (Portes et al., 2009). Parents are able to share their common values and retain their role as parents (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). Selective acculturation takes place when immigrants from similar backgrounds, yet with lower levels of cultural capital, arrive to strong co-ethnic communities. Learning English and adopting the host country’s culture is encouraged while simultaneously maintaining the home language and preserving key elements of the parent’s culture. (Portes et al., 2009; Portes & Hao, 2002). On the other hand, second-generation youths experience dissonant acculturation when they lack strong community
support because of migratory family lifestyles due to economic need. The poor connection to community, in turn, leads to the rejection of the parent’s language and traditions and eventually the breakdown of communication between immigrant parents and their children (Portes et al., 2009; Portes & Hao, 2002). Parents are then unable to provide guidance and critical support to their children (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Social Justice Theory

In the book titled *Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971) defines social justice as the “justice of fairness” to answer the question of how a fair and just democratic society can be viewed as free and equal (Blackmore, 2013; Robinson, 2013). Bankston (2010) points out that the concern of social justice is to deal with “those in the least desirable positions: disadvantage is a consequences of social structure, and the just way to proceed is by political action aimed at benefiting those at the bottom through redistribution of goods, opportunities, and power” (p. 174).

In his analysis of Rawls’ *Theory of Justice*, Blackmore (2013) explained that the state’s responsibility is to analyze how social justice affects the provision of education for the individual and for different social groups. A good society encourages social justice through the development of positive conditions that promote communication and cooperation among its individuals (Blackmore, 2013). Social justice focuses on human rights that protect individual freedom “without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion across continents” (Blackmore, 2013, p. 1001). Blackmore explains:

Such a theory would therefore assume each [individual] would desire equal opportunity in terms of access to education, inclusion within but not necessarily equal outcomes [sic], as individuals would like to think that there was some merit
in merit. Rawls’ first principle is that all people are free and equal. The second principle [is] that any social and economic inequalities required first, [that] all offices be open to all under conditions of fair equal opportunity; and second, any decisions were based on the greatest benefit to the least advantaged to society or the difference principle. (Blackmore, 2013, p. 1002)

Bankston (2010) explained that Rawls’ social justice theory rests on two superseding principles: the first principle is improving the situation of the disadvantaged through the redistribution of goods and resources, and the second principle holds that this redistribution should not be seen as a matter of charity or compassion but as the right of the needy and disadvantaged within society. Rawls also proposed that ideally individuals must evolve from the “original position” which he described as a space in which the thought process is placed behind a “veil of ignorance” where one has “no knowledge of one’s place in society, one’s gender, color of skin, social class, profession, abilities, etc.” (Wilson-Strydom, 2015, p. 145). While behind the “veil of ignorance,” society would respect many differences and would extol characteristics that would be fair to everyone (Wilson-Strydom, 2014).

Over the years, criticism of Rawls’ theory of social justice has arisen. Bankston (2010) points out that Robert Nozick’s libertarian critique of Rawls’ redistributive social justice theory states that this process is fundamentally unjust since people have the right to enjoy what they work hard to produce and should not be required to work involuntarily to provide goods and resources for others (Bankston, 2010).

According to Paulo Freire (2000), education can either domesticate or liberate teacher and students. For Freire, education is essential to safeguard every individual’s
right to equality and freedom. Education is the key to social justice. Historically, Latinos have experienced marginalization through the inequalities of a school system that meets the needs of the socially privileged (Kingston, 2001) According to Kingston (2001), the “social stratification of academic performance has troubling implications for the basic fairness of our social arrangements” (p. 88). He stated that “elite children—strongly socialized at home to their class culture—come to school with dispositions that distinctly “fit” the cultural biases of [an] institution and are rewarded in school for their particular cultural orientation (Kingston, 2001, p. 89).

Due to the academic marginalization many Latinos experience in society, third- or later-generation Latinos demonstrate a decline in their academic attainment and remain working class despite evidence of assimilation into American society (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Social justice now includes taking action to meet the academic needs of Latino students to ensure their academic experience is not “unchallenging, neglectful, and uneventful which [results] in an ambivalent, unrecognized or invisible student identity” (Chávez-Reyes, 2010, p. 31). Chávez-Reyes (2010) stated that many later-generation Chicano students experience academic neglect largely due to high school educators’ and counselors’ lack of multicultural competence and some form of racialized treatment. These educators and counselors fail to provide the necessary information that can assist Latino students to make different academic decisions than those of their parents. In Chávez’s (2007) study of five generations of a Mexican-American family in Los Angeles, she shared that family members “who did not ‘demonstrate’ themselves to be college material were placed in general [academic] tracks” (p. 35). She explained that although some later-generation Chicano students display a general understanding of how
the school system works, they do not know enough to figure out how to access college pathways to a higher educational trajectory (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

In a research study regarding principals with a strong sense of social justice who successfully transformed their schools, the author Theoharis (2007) expounded on the importance of social justice in educational leadership. His study followed elementary, middle school, and high school principals as they implemented transformational strategies to change the culture, atmosphere, educational practices, and school priorities at their sites to benefit students from diverse backgrounds and economic status. The principals in the study successfully transformed their schools by ensuring equal and fair treatment of all students. The qualitative data Theoharis (2007) collected established that social justice in schools cannot be enacted if inclusion of marginalized students into the mainstream curriculum does not occur. The school principals who had the most success in raising test scores had implemented transformative practices at their sites. These practices included eliminating tracking by ability, eliminating pull-out programs for English Language Learners, and implementing the mainstreaming of special education students into general education classes.

Theoharis (2007) reported that the principals in his study claimed the inclusion of students was not just a pedagogical intent to raise test scores. They felt it was their moral obligation to ensure social justice for all students. The principals believed that educational systems that promoted separate programs “maintained unequal levels of instruction, maintained the marginalization of particular students, and created a situation in which those particular students received an inferior education (Theoharis, 2007, p. 235).
Influences Relating to Academic Success

Several influences have been identified as relating to the success of second-generation immigrant students. It is important to note that historically there have been various longitudinal studies regarding immigrant students and their academic success rate (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). Studies conducted during the 1990s and 2000s form the basis for a historical review.

The organization of this review was based upon four themes of study: value placed on education, familial factors, influential people in the lives of immigrant students, and supplemental academic support systems that research supports to be common factors in the academic success of immigrant students (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Landale & Oropresa, 1995; Plunkett et al., 2009). The theme of value placed on education addressed how parents’ and students’ social and cultural capital affect academic achievement and the expectations parents and students hold regarding education. The second area researched, familial factors, addressed the significance of a parent’s level of education and the level of parental involvement. The third theme discussed the role influential people play in immigrant students’ lives that contribute to their academic achievement. The fourth theme identified supplemental academic outreach programs that are part of the academic support systems in high schools and colleges.

Value Placed on Education

Immigrant parents’ underlying belief in the American Dream to work hard so that their children can go to school is a testament to their hopefulness of academic success for their children (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Although many Latino immigrant parents
have limited schooling themselves, wanting a better education for their children is often listed as one of the main reasons they immigrated to a new country (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In a similar fashion, immigrant students want to make their parents proud by succeeding academically. First- and second-generation Latino immigrant students display a driving need to succeed so that they can thank their parents for their sacrifices and struggles when they moved to a new country (Easley, Bianco, & Leech, 2012).

**Parents and family.** An immigrant students’ academic success is often attributed to various factors including the family’s and student’s social and cultural capital plus their high expectations. Coleman (1988) stated that it is “social capital that builds young nations, strengthens families by leading family members to act selflessly in the family’s interest, facilitates the development of nascent social movements…and in general leads persons to work for the public good” (p. 105).

**Social and cultural capital.** Social scientists (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman; 1988) have used the term “social capital” to describe the status and benefits individuals derive from their association with particular social networks and organizations. All individuals possess some form of social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Portes, 2000; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). According to Bourdieu (1985), the basis for every group is the existence of institutionalized forms of delegation which allows for the development of social capital. He noted that people tend to build relationships and make connections with individuals who will benefit them later. Portes (2000) writes that “recently arrived foreign groups depend greatly on their networks and bonds of solidarity in order to adapt and move ahead in American Society” (p. 5).
Within our society, members of the middle and upper classes typically carry the social capital that leads to academic success and upward mobility (Coleman, 1988; Noguera, 2008; Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). An individual who possesses the necessary social capital can provide many benefits and resources to family and friends by simply being well connected. Noguera (2008) wrote:

The more connected one is to groups or individuals who have access to resources, the greater the possibility is that one can obtain concrete material and social benefits….Becoming connected to influential social networks is not easy. Access to some networks may be based on family ties, income, religious affiliations, or association with powerful groups that have been cultivated over time. (p. 199)

Gándara and Contreras (2009) defined “cultural capital” as knowing how things in society work (i.e., the United States school system, college awareness, policies) and social capital as having access to people with resources and important social networks.

Historically, Latinos have possessed less social and cultural capital relevant to their new country because of their lower level of formal education and limited access to people within the community with more resources (Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Noguera, 2008; Zhou, 1997). Kao and Rutherford (2007) contend that “children from immigrant and minority households have less access to social capital because immigrant parents are, by definition, marginal members of U.S. society” (p. 28). Middle-class parents possess the cultural capital that matches the expectations and knowledge that is valued by schools, and the more generations a family belongs to the middle class, the more cultural capital they are able to accumulate (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Noguera, 2008). In contrast, working-class and immigrant parents typically possess their own “undervalued”
cultural capital and are aware of the difference between the cultural capital they possess and that of their children’s teachers (Reay, 1998). Children of immigrants fall short of having social capital; yet, despite these drawbacks, they are still able to persevere and succeed academically due largely to the value parents place on education and the support they receive from influential people (De la Cruz, 2008; Fuligni, 1997).

According to Pong et al. (2005), parent-child interaction and communication are home-based social capital, and a parent’s participation in school activities that involve parents in governance and advocacy (i.e., boosters, Parent-Teacher Association, School Site Council) at school and within the local community increases a child’s social capital. Children benefit from supportive parents and families with a strong work ethic and ties to the community (Hernandez, Denton, McCartney, & Blanchard, 2012). Parent expectations and trust are positive boosting agents for academic success (Pong et al., 2005). Therefore, a high level of trust between parents and their children is likely to foster a sense of obligation in children to fulfill parents’ expectations (Pong et al., 2005). This relationship between the level of trust and the child’s sense of obligation aligns with Coleman’s (1988) claim that social capital depends on the trustworthiness of established expectations between the child, the family, and the community.

Coleman (1988) explained social capital within the family as three components found within the dynamics of family background: financial capital, human capital, and social capital. Financial capital is the physical resources that can aid in achievement (i.e., a place to study, tutoring services, financial resources that can minimize family stress). Human capital is measured by a parent’s level of education and the advantages this provides the cognitive growth of their children by providing stimulating interactions and
learning environments. Social capital is described as the access to resources and social networks. Coleman (1988) stressed, “Both social capital in the family and social capital in the community play roles in the creation of human capital in the rising generations” (p. 109). Coleman (1988) continued:

Social capital within the family [is important] for a child’s intellectual development. It is of course true that children are strongly affected by the human capital possessed by their parents. But this human capital is irrelevant to outcomes for children if parents are not an important part of their children’s lives….The social capital of the family is the relation between children and parents and, when families include other members, relationships, with them, as well. (p. 110)

For a child, social capital in the school and community can be facilitated by the social structure within the family and community that “binds children and their parents’ social structure in an enclosed network” (Pong et al., 2005, p. 931). The value of gaining social and cultural capital is an important aspect that immigrant parents must consider as they plan for the future success of their children (Pong et al., 2005).

**High expectations.** Just as important as it is for immigrant parents to understand the value of having social and cultural capital for the advancement of their children, the power of high expectations cannot be overlooked (Kao, 2004b). Immigrant parents move to the United States with aspirations of living the American dream, which promises academic success and economic security (Kao, 2004b). These immigrant parents often used the “rhetoric of sacrificing their lives in their country of origin and accepting limited opportunities in the United States” (Kao, 2004b, p. 173). Kao (2004b) told of the hardship Mexican immigrants endured during their migration to a new country, especially
when low-paying jobs were tolerated in exchange for the success of future generations. Many immigrant parents see better opportunities on the horizon and realize that education is the key to overcoming many economic and social obstacles (García Coll & Marks, 2012). The high aspirations that immigrant parents have for their children “help immigrant children persist in school even when their parents are unable to advocate for their child’s academic success effectively” (Orozco, 2007, p. 8).

High aspirations of academic achievement have been the foundation for the success stories of many Latino children of immigrants. It is common for adolescents from immigrant families to report that their parents have strong values of educational attainment thus engendering in them a deep desire to achieve in order to honor their parent’s struggle and sacrifice when they immigrated to the United States (Easley et al., 2012; Fuligni & Witkow, 2004).

The results of a study of 1,100 immigrant adolescents from Latino, East Asian, Filipino, and European backgrounds that was conducted to determine their academic attitudes and behaviors as well as that of their parents, demonstrated that first- and second-generation students received higher marks in English and mathematics than did their third- or higher-generation peers (Fuligni, 1997). Results also demonstrated that these students and their parents placed a strong emphasis on education which was a factor attributed to their success (Fuligni, 1997). Numerous studies demonstrate similar outcomes and also highlight the value parents and students place on education. Immigrant students tend to reflect a similar resilience to succeed academically when they perceive their parents’ support and strong emphasis on academic success, and a greater family cohesiveness leads to positive educational outcomes for second-generation students.
Fuligni and Witkow’s (2004) study demonstrated that regardless of an immigrant student’s socioeconomic status, their family environment was highly supportive of academic achievement. Many immigrant families believe that education is the only means of improving their status in life. As Fuligni (1997) states, “The encouragement and aspirations of immigrant parents may be the most important ways they can influence their children’s education” (p. 352).

**Students.** As with their parents, immigrant students benefit from having social and cultural capital (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The lack of social capital in a student’s family can contribute to missed opportunities and lack of connections to higher education (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Noguera, 2008).

**Social and cultural capital.** Adults at school can often provide immigrant students the necessary connections to individuals and institutions that will help them build social and cultural capital (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Stanton-Salazar (2004) claimed, “Despite [the] debilitating effects of their class origin, most working-class individuals do find themselves embedded in social networks where they enjoy privileged access to supportive contexts” (p. 21). Stanton-Salazar (2004) highlighted the important role parents, peers, and school personnel play in the academic socialization process which helps students navigate the academic school system and leads to increased accumulation of social and cultural capital.

Stanton-Salazar (2004) discussed the possibility of working-class students being social capital conduits for other students from a similar class status. Studies have shown
that these students often gain social capital from their middle-class peers and by participating in specialized academic classes, such as Honors and Advanced Placement courses (García Coll & Marks, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Although most immigrant students typically tend to socialize with peers of like ethnic and socioeconomic background, the relationships they develop in these college preparatory classes provide opportunities to socialize with students who have middle-class, college-educated parents with the social and cultural capital that is aligned to college pathways (García Coll & Marks, 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Gándara and Gibson (2004) made clear that for certain minority youths to “achieve success in school requires more than…being exposed to the academic values of the ‘others.’ It requires that the social relations of working-class minority students be mobilized as social resources” (p. 179).

Select minority students have more access to social capital than others. For some immigrant groups, the simple fact that they belong to a tightly knit immigrant community can provide extensive networks and support systems (Kao, 2004b). In spite of immigrant youths having limited access to social capital, compared to native born youths, they benefit from the other social connections their families, churches, and immigrant communities can provide (Kao, 2004b).

**High expectations.** In an ethnographic study using student and family interviews as their data source, Easley et al. (2012) found that of the immigrant students who were interviewed, the most common trait they shared was their desire to succeed. For some individuals, the stories of their parents’ struggle to survive in the United States or their traumatic immigration experience, was their impetus to persevere. For others, their desire
to succeed stemmed from their obligation to honor their families’ sacrifices through their achievements (Easley et al., 2012). Many immigrant students are determined to help their families and others in their community (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). At times, their passion to make a difference stemmed from the inequities or overt discrimination they may have witnessed against their parents or experienced for themselves (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Students acquire an appreciation for the value of education through the nonverbal support their parents display for their academic work and the importance their parents place on doing well in school and getting good grades (Ceballo, 2004).

When compared to later-generation immigrant students, many first- and second-generation immigrant students demonstrate a stronger value of the academic system (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004; García Coll & Marks, 2012). In addition, these students reportedly have a stronger sense of family commitment and obligation, in other words, a stronger sense of familial duty (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004). Because of these strong educational values, immigrant students are more academically engaged and stay more focused on acquiring higher grades. They are also more likely to put forth the extra effort required to excel in school and do better academically (Plunkett et al., 2009). Higher academic self-efficacy—the belief that you are competent and in control of your learning—appears to lead to higher academic performance, which is “instrumental in fostering students’ learning as well as relational and academic engagement” (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009, p. 153).

**Familial Factors**

Two familial elements, parent’s level of education and parental involvement, are commonly listed when analyzing the background history of successful immigrant
students. Research repeatedly links the academic success of immigrant students to these family-based factors (García Coll et al., 2002; Niemeyer, Wong, & Westerhaus, 2009; Noguera, 2008).

**Parent’s level of education.** The literature points to varying discrepancies between the educational background of Latino students and the educational level of their parents (Hortaçsu, 1995; Niemeyer et al., 2009; Noguera, 2008). Nearly 40% of Latino students are from homes in which parents have not completed a high school education and/or attained a post-secondary degree (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). A strong indicator of a student’s academic success is attributed to a parents’ level of education, which may exert both direct and indirect influences on a child’s outcomes and achievement on tests, in earning grades, and ultimately in attending college (Lee, Sax, Kim, & Hagedorn, 2004).

Some of the benefits of having parents with higher educational levels, which in the long run places children at an advantage, are the types of resources they can provide and utilize on behalf of their children (Noguera, 2008). These benefits include exhibiting more academic and sophisticated vocabulary, the ability to provide rich literary opportunities and access to technology, the ability to assist in homework assignments and test preparations skills, and having knowledge of college pathways (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). Students with parents who have post-secondary experience have the added benefit of having a parent who understands the commitment necessary for college success. These parents have the funds of knowledge to build social capital as they network and access connections to college (Noguera, 2008; Rumberger & Larson, 1998). They are aware of the time required to study, the expenses associated with college tuition
and textbooks, and the basic sacrifices their child must make to complete college. Parental education level is positively associated with student persistence and a predictor of a student staying in college (Fike & Fike, 2008).

Duncan and Brooks-Gunn’s (1997) analysis of data from several large-scale longitudinal developmental studies outlined the effect parental education had on children’s aspirations for their own educational achievement through adolescence. They concluded that maternal education is significantly linked to children’s intellectual outcomes. The education level of mothers had a direct effect on a child’s perception of external control, child endorsement of insecure-attachment prototypes, and child GPA (Hortaçsu, 1995). Parental education is also linked to the parent providing a stimulating physical, cognitive, and positive emotional environment at home and, in addition, a more accurate understanding of their children’s actual achievement (Dubow, Boxer, & Rowell, 2009).

Considering how the aforementioned studies describe the influence a parent’s level of education has on a child’s academic success, it is important to address the education level of parents who immigrate to the United States. In Buriel’s (1987) work regarding immigrant parents’ level of education before leaving their home country, he noted that parents with six or more years of schooling had well-developed academic and cognitive skills that they transmitted to their children. The percent of high school completion was three times higher for parents immigrating in comparison to parents who did not leave their home country. Although immigrant parents’ high school completion rates may not be high in comparison to United States standards, many immigrant parents have completed more years of schooling prior to immigrating than the prevailing national
average for their countries’ population (Buriel, 2012). Due to the importance some
governments place on preparing citizens with basic skills before entering the labor force,
a sixth grade education may be more academically advanced than one in the United
States (Buriel, 2012). This information reflects the high value immigrant parents place on
education and their compelling drive to immigrate to a new country to seek better
prospects for their children and future generations (Buriel, 2012).

In essence, immigrant parents who do not have higher levels of education can still
provide the necessary educational support for their children by accessing information,
resources, and opportunities from the social, academic, and economic systems in the
United States (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). A parent’s level of education influences his/her
view on whether he/she has sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects
of parent involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Kao (2004a) stated that frequent
discussions between parents and children can effectively communicate their expectations
for educational attainment. This does not require high levels of education, but clearly
allows parents to transmit their ambition to their children. The encouragement of open
communication at home helps develop social skills that will effectively assist students in
communicating with teachers and other students at school. For instance, when immigrant
parents use their own educational experience as a frame of reference, they can encourage
their children to take advantage of the opportunities they did not have (Buriel, 2012).

**Parental involvement.** As do many parents, Latino parents value education and
perceive it as a means for their children to obtain well-paid employment (López,
Hamilton, & Sanchez, 2000). Two studies report that one of the key predictors of
immigrant student achievement is perceived parental engagement in their children’s
education. This allows for parents to serve as educational role models in the home, promoting the high value of education and inspiring motivation to achieve (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Plunkett et al., 2009). Parental participation in their children’s academic life and communication about school activities are features of family life that may influence educational outcomes (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Immigrant parents tend to engage less in school activities such as joining parent-teacher organizations that are visible to school and measurable in quantitative data because of language barriers. Nevertheless, they are involved in other, less obvious, but crucial aspects of their children’s lives that impact academic success such as their endorsement of respect and perseverance as well as the importance of raising their children to be conscientious, responsible, and hardworking individuals (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011).

Monitoring student homework by mothers and fathers is significantly related to academic achievement and grades. From a study of 1,245 adolescents attending high school in the Los Angeles area with 57.5% of the students identified as Latinos, “monitoring by both parents and father’s schoolwork help were positively and significantly related to grades. All the parental engagement variables were positively and significantly related to academic engagement” (Plunkett et al., 2009, p. 262). Nevertheless, parents of immigrant students routinely feel intimidated by an educational system they do not completely understand (Noguera, 2008). Home-school relations can be transformed when parents become involved in their children’s education and school. By gaining knowledge and building a collaborative position with the school, immigrant students benefit from their parents’ leadership roles and augmented social capital (Noguera, 2008, Orozco, 2007).
López et al. (2000) wrote about the outcomes of survey questionnaires given to 393 immigrant and native-born parents regarding their parent-school involvement. From data gathered through the questionnaires sent home, the authors concluded that both immigrant and native-born parents were supportive of their children’s schooling; yet, immigrant parents overwhelmingly engaged more in the parent activities that were the focus of the study. Results also demonstrated that undocumented parents tended to stay away from schools due to their lack of proficiency in English and limited educational background, but these parents managed to stay informed about school matters through other parents (López et al., 2000). Native-born English-Spanish speaking parents, who believed in supporting their child’s education, stayed away due to their lack of confidence in their ability to read and write or speak in public (López et al., 2000). This corroborates the theory that parents who do not complete high school may be afraid to get involved in school. They are particularly reluctant to help their children with homework at the secondary school level since they did not complete high school themselves (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parents without a university degree may also feel inferior to teachers whom they know are better qualified than they are and, therefore, may be reluctant to work closely with teachers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In the study by López et al. (2000), the parents in general held the educational system and their child’s teacher in high regard and believed that both knew what was best for their children. The study also concluded that the Spanish proficiency of school administration and personnel played a key role in parental involvement (López et al., 2000).

Crosnoe and Turley (2011) expressed the importance of “strong family ties and parental attachment and support [as] resources for immigrant youth, providing the
security and assistance they need to meet the challenges of school” (p. 135). This led to their recommendation of having strong culturally grounded home-school connections for immigrant parents. By providing programs, such as Parent Institution for Quality Education (PIQE, Abriendo Puertas, and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund’s (MALDEF) Parents in Action, school districts and sites can help “demystify the American educational process and help parents become home teachers for their children as they learn how to communicate with school personnel” (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011, p. 145).

**Influential People**

Caring and supportive individuals were identified as important influences in an immigrant student’s academic success and adjustment to a new country (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). When immigrant students build instrumental relationships with influential people, such as teachers, administrators, and other mentors within the school system, they are given a necessary resource for school success (Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

**Mentors.** Along with the value placed on education and strong family ties, success can also be attributed to the mentors in immigrant students’ lives (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). According to Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008), carefully planned mentoring programs can benefit all immigrant students, in particular, newly arrived immigrant students. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) further elaborated on the importance of these individuals:

[MENTORS] can act as cultural guides to help newcomers find their way during the turmoil of adolescence in a new country. Caring adults can illuminate the college-admission pathway that native-born middle-class parents find daunting and
immigrant families find incomprehensible. The importance of caring teachers, counselors, and mentors is evident in the portraits of [successful immigrant students]. (p. 373)

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) shared that “behind every successful immigrant youth’s journey we found a mentor—from church, the athletic team, or from the local community center” (p. 374).

In his research, Stanton-Salazar (2004) emphasized the value of developing relationships with positive role models. He stressed that in order for minority youth to achieve success in school, more than simple exposure to the academic values and identities of “others” is needed. Success requires that the social relations of minority students with their middle-class peers be mobilized as social resources. The adults and peers in immigrant students’ lives are among the important influences in their academic achievement (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In the literature regarding successful immigrant youth, positive role models were instrumental figures in students’ academic life (Ceballo, 2004). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010) shared, “In nearly every case of a significant upward shift in performance, an advocate or mentor entered the youth’s life, helping to change the course of his or her academic trajectory” (p. 612).

Gándara and Contreras (2009) discussed Collective Socialization Theory, which claims that the availability of successful role models in more affluent neighborhoods provides a stronger support system that is better aligned to the behavior necessary to be successful at school. It seems “middle-income students are more likely to encounter both adults and peers in their community who are supportive of high educational goals and can even assist young people in achieving them” (Gándara & Contreras, p. 72). Suárez-
Orozco et al. (2010) encouraged newly arrived immigrants to establish formal and informal relationships with supportive adults and mentors, other than family members. This helps immigrant students create a bridge between home and school and helps them navigate through a new environment and school system. Driscoll et al. (2008) discovered that it was possible for first-generation and second-generation youth to experience more control and oversight from other relatives and community members of the extended family because of closer ties within close-knit immigrant communities. These extra-parental sources of control from caring adults or mentors served to protect teens from involvement in risky and unhealthy behaviors and adverse life circumstances (Ceballo, 2004; Driscoll et al., 2008). Ultimately, connections with teachers, counselors, coaches, and other supportive adults in the school are important in the academic and social adaptation of adolescents, in general, and appear to be particularly important to immigrant adolescents (Roffman, Suárez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2003).

**Adult mentors.** The adult mentors in immigrant youths’ lives range from extended family members to teachers, to counselors, to family friends. One of the common denominators Latino youth identify as helping them succeed and go to college is having an adult step up to “encourage them—tell them they are smart and ‘can do it’—and provide guidance for how that might happen” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 233). Although family mentors may not have the social capital or knowledge to help with questions about college, the emotional support they do provide can be a powerful force in encouraging immigrant youth to continue to the next level of their education (De La Cruz, 2008). A network of social relations of “extended family, friends, and church-based relationships help [immigrant youth]…in emotional and tangible ways” (Suárez &
Todorova, 2003, p. 16). This network of social relationships with adult mentors is important for immigrant youth because of the information they can share regarding norms and practices in school. Suárez and Todorova (2003) contend:

Social relationships help immigrant youth and their families in significant ways to navigate the difficult currents and chart a steady course to a better life. They serve a number of functions. Immigrants rely on instrumental social support to provide them with tangible assistance (such as running an errand or making a loan) as well as guidance and advice (including information about jobs and housing leads, cultural expectations in the new context, and the like), which are much needed by disoriented newcomers. (p. 22)

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) shared, “informal mentors can be a source of both tangible and emotional support to immigrant youths” (p. 86).

Adult mentors who are non-family members provide immigrant students opportunities to learn American cultural norms and practices that they would not have had access to otherwise (i.e., high school requirements, college awareness, scholarships, financial aid, etc.), and they provide important information that is vital to success in school (Roffman et al., 2003). Influential teachers can often challenge students intellectually, involve them in extra-curricular activities, and provide assistance with college applications. These teachers clearly care and respect their students and often demonstrate interest in their students’ lives outside of school. They express an interest in the students’ academic accomplishments and assignments (Ceballo, 2004). Gándara and Contreras (2009) stressed the importance of teachers’ perceptions of immigrant students and the important role these perceptions played in being better predictors of a student’s
academic performance, more so than any other measure of ability. Consequently, an immigrant student’s self-perception is directly related to the teacher’s perception and the adults’ appraisal of what a student is able to achieve (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In a study conducted regarding Hispanic students and the mentorship they received in college, De la Cruz (2008) found that even limited mentoring had life-changing results for some students, and the students interviewed spoke positively of having same-ethnicity adult mentors who were already part of the system.

**Peer mentors.** Throughout history, peers have been seen as having great influence in a young adult’s life, and peer group relationships can be a positive influence or negative influence in a student’s academic development (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Choy, Horn, Nunez, and Chen (2000) found that a strong predictor of college enrollment for minority students was having friends with plans to attend college. If a student’s friends had college plans, the odds were four times higher that the student would also attend than if none of his/her friends were attending (Choy et al., 2000). Kao (2004b) advised parents to keep in mind that when their children choose peer support groups, “race, ethnicity and immigrant status can affect the…kinds of peer networks in which the youths are embedded. These characteristics can affect the odds of choosing peer groups that promote or discourage schooling” (p. 174).

Stanton-Salazar (2004) noted that the psychological and emotional support derived from friendships and peer groups can provide immigrant students access to norms that are necessary for school achievement. The feeling of *we-ness* is sustained by the group and is vital for the integration process to academic life at the secondary and post-secondary level (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). To reach post-secondary academic success, it is
to the benefit of immigrant students to surround themselves with co-ethnic peers who have a similar mindset to continue to college (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Having peer mentors who are succeeding academically and who exhibit positive social attitudes and behaviors provide immigrant students with opportunities to identify with others “who model a pro-school, pro-academic identity, and who plan to go to college” (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004, p. 175).

**Supplemental Academic Support Programs**

In order to provide Latino students a strong college-going culture, parents and schools must work together to access and provide supplementary academic support programs for students (Sadowski, 2013). These programs help expand students’ horizons as well as provide them the necessary pathways to build networks of support, especially for students who do not have the cultural or social capital or the financial means to seek assistance (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Sadowski, 2013). Latino students who are the first in their family to go to college benefit from the college preparation guidance provided by supplementary academic support programs such as Upward Bound, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), Puente, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). Sadowski (2013) highlights the importance of “youths having these opportunities to look beyond their immediate surroundings to a range of possibilities both in their environment and within themselves” (Sadowski, 2012, p. 142). These programs help to strengthen students’ college eligibility by focusing students on the final outcome of attending college and showing them the necessary steps to get there (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).
Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that Latino students have limited access to these supplementary academic support programs because awareness is begun too late and few students benefit directly. They urge school systems to implement effective college support programs as early as possible. In addition, they advocate that “effective strategies from such programs be embedded in the routines of schooling rather than simply existing in add-on programs” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 325).

Important features of Upward Bound, AVID, Puente, and GEAR UP are that they include recruitment of Latino students and the development of peer support and study groups. The programs provide guidance beyond the ninth grade, develop important college preparation skills, encourage visits to colleges, and expose students to college and financial aid applications (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Louie, 2012; Sadowski, 2013).

**Upward Bound.** This supplementary academic support program provides students with university mentors who help with financial aid and college applications. Students are provided with college experiences such as visiting college campuses, boarding at the college, doing college level homework, learning about college life, and simply connecting with peer mentors and students from similar backgrounds and with similar goals (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Louie, 2012). According to Louie (2012), “Upward Bound has been shown to have large effects on four-year college enrollment among students with lower educational expectations” (Louie, 2012, pp. 78-79). This program helps by filling in necessary college-awareness gaps, and it gives students a road map that will help make their college dreams a reality (Louie, 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).
**Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID).** AVID provides underachieving junior high and high school students with rigorous college-preparatory lessons that help prepare them for college. Gándara and Contreras (2009) write:

The AVID program selects students who are deemed underachievers by the discrepancy between their grade point average and their test scores….AVID students take daily a one-period class in which they learn specific study skills, receive information about how to prepare for college, are counseled into taking college preparatory courses, go on field trips and hear motivational talks to stimulate their desire for college, and form a supportive college-bound peer group. (p. 325)

An important feature of AVID is that students must enroll in at least one pre-Advanced Placement (AP) or AP course. The emphasis is placed on preparing students for a four-year university.

**Puente.** This unique program is based on the belief that underachieving Latino students would have more success if they were associated with and mentored by Latino members of their community in an attempt to “provide them with the skills and the desire to continue on to college” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 152). Puente is geared specifically for Latino high school students who will be mentored by individuals who come from the community in order to develop a stronger connection between the two. The ideal is for the mentor to speak Spanish so that he/she can directly communicate with parents (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Puente students are nominated by teachers and counselors and are selected based on where they fit in one of four groups. The group
categories are: (1) high-achievers with good grades, (2) high potentials, (3) strong effort but low scores, and (4) low effort and low scores (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

**GEAR UP.** Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federal grant program that was begun in 1999. The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote systemic changes in school practices in order to promote a college-going culture and prepare more students from low-income groups for college success. GEAR UP grants provide opportunities for tutoring, professional development, college awareness activities, and academic student support services (U.S. Department of Education).

**Summary**

Chapter 2 identified influencers that contribute to the success of immigrant students. Immigrant students share their parents’ beliefs that the most important path to success is through education (Fuligni, 1997). Unfortunately, many Latino immigrant parents lack the level of education that will help them build social capital and facilitate the access of resources that can help their children navigate the educational pipeline (Fuligni & Witkow 2004; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Noguera, 2008). A parent’s lack of education should not hinder access to college preparedness information, such as high school requirements, Honors/AP classes, and financial aid for their children. Providing immigrant students and families the support and mentorship to build social and cultural capital will help improve the academic success rates of all Latino students (Baum & Flores, 2011). The influential adults and peers in an immigrant student’s life will help solidify the feeling of being culturally validated which has been associated with successful plans to attend college for this population of students (González et al., 2013).
Chapter 3 provides the methodology of the study, discussing the rationale for using a qualitative narrative inquiry method, data sources used, and the role of the researcher. Data collection procedures included how the participants were recruited, the use of semi-structured interviews, and the development of the interview questions and process. Data analysis incorporated restorying and the use of transcription to code the field text collected. Assurance of confidentiality and provisions of trustworthiness were addressed along with communication of the findings.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose for this study was to identify influences in the lives of second-generation college graduates of Mexican immigrant parents that contributed to their success in attaining a post-secondary degree. The study utilized a qualitative narrative inquiry method to determine the common influences shared by second-generation immigrant students that led to their academic success. Creswell (2012) writes, “Narrative research offers practical specific insights…. [It] is a literary form of qualitative research with strong ties to literature and it provides a qualitative approach in which you can write in a persuasive, literary form” (p. 502). This chapter will outline the qualitative methodology used, the individuals selected to participate, and the process of collecting the necessary data for this study.

Overview of the Study

According to the 2010 United States Census, “33 million (11 %) of the people in the United States were native-born with at least one foreign-born parent in 2009, making one in five people either first- or second-generation U.S. residents (U.S. Census Bureau). García Coll and Marks (2012) speak of the resiliency of first- and second-generation students to achieve despite the challenges they encounter, including language barriers, academic under-preparedness, and lack of financial assistance. This population exemplifies the immigrant paradox, which holds that first- and second-generation students academically outperform third- or higher-generation immigrant students (García Coll & Marks, 2012).

This narrative study examined the experiences of eight second-generation Mexican-American students as a means of identifying influences in their lives that
contributed to their successful attainment of a university degree. The following research
questions were integral in guiding the study:

1. What influences contributed to the post-secondary academic success of second-
generation children of Mexican immigrant parents?
2. What influenced the goals of second-generation Mexican-American students to go
to college?
3. What challenges did the participants face in attaining a post-secondary education?
4. How were these challenges, if any, overcome?

Rationale for Using a Qualitative Narrative Inquiry Method

The narrative inquiry method provides opportunities for the reader to analyze the
research through the stories being told as common influences for educational research
and specific phenomenon. Reissman (2008) shares that narrative inquiries allow the
researcher to engage the audience by inviting them into the discourse through the
researcher’s perspective. By remembering the past, which is most familiar, individuals
can make sense of it. She claims, “Stories can mobilize others into actions for progressive
social change. Commonalities in the stories created group belonging and set the stage for
collective action” (p. 9).

Patton (2002) shares that the translucent quality of narrative inquiry offers a view
into social and cultural experiences through the lens of individual experiences. This type
of qualitative research helps to “discover, capture, present, and preserve the stories of
programs, communities, and families” (p. 116) that can lead to larger meanings. Patton
(2002) affirms that a qualitative analysis entails making sense of “massive amounts of
data...involves sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and
constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (p. 432). Brown (1998) holds that the most effective manner to challenge discrimination is to use personal narrative stories to help organize and mobilize identity groups. Creswell (2012) expounds that the process of narrative studies is:

- to identify a problem suited for narrative research and to select one or more participants to study. Researchers then collect stories from the participant about his or her life experiences and retell the story to form a chronology of events that may include the characters, setting, problem, action, and resolution. (p. 517)

**Data Sources**

Data collection for this study consisted of semi-structured interviews of eight participants in two 50-minute interviews with a third interview scheduled as needed. Individual experiences and stories were audio-recorded during the interview. The recordings were then transcribed. Participants who met the required criteria and who agreed to the parameters required for participating were recruited through a purposeful, snowball sampling method.

**Participants.** The adult individuals who were invited to participate in this study had successfully attained a post-secondary degree, were second-generation Mexican-Americans, and had attended one of the high schools in the selected district. First-generation Latino students are identified as individuals born in another country who immigrated to the United States. Second-generation Latinos are individuals born in the United States with at least one parent born outside the country (Driscoll et al., 2008; Fuligni & Witkow, 2004; García Coll & Marks, 2012).
**Context.** This study took place in a suburban Southern California city. Participants were graduates from two of the high schools located in a low-income neighborhood with a high population of Latino and other minority groups. Braedon High School and Donavon High School are part of a mid-size K-12 school district, which for the purpose of this study was called Garden View School District. (School and district names have been changed to pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.) Currently, only a small percentage of the Latino students who graduate from these two high schools continue to a university and receive a post-secondary degree. As of 2012, the graduation rate for Donavon High School was 92% and Braedon High School’s was 87.8%.

According to the 2010 United States Census, the city that housed Garden View School District had a population of 75,390. The population density was 11,110.3 people per square mile. There were 17,189 households, out of which 10,027 (58.3%) had children under the age of 18 living in the home. The percentage of adults 25 or older who currently have a post-secondary degree is 12.4%. The ethnic makeup of the city is as follows (see Figure 1):

![Figure 1. Makeup by race](image)

I.e., Hispanic/Latino - 60,403 (80.1%); Asian alone - 10,495 (14.2%); White alone - 3,232 (4.3%); Black/African American alone - 662 (1.2%); Two or more races - 346 (0.5%); American Indian alone - 91 (0.9%); other race alone - 95 (0.1%); Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone 66 (0.1%)
Data Collection Procedures

When conducting this qualitative study using a narrative inquiry method, the data gathered was obtained through the collection of participants’ stories. The researcher learned from the experiences of each individual and gathered information through interviews and informal conversations (Creswell, 2012). During the analysis of each narrative, the target was on individual stories which were tape-recorded in order to “get them right” and to “figure out the taken-for-grantedness” of each anecdote (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 77-78).

Participants were recruited by the researcher in person, by telephone, by mail, or via email using purposeful, snowball sampling recommendations from colleagues, friends, and family members. Of the respondents, the eight individuals who met all the necessary criteria for this study were selected. Participants were advised that two separate interview meetings with the researcher would be conducted, with a third meeting scheduled as needed. At the second meeting, a member-check with the participant would occur to confirm that the data collected were accurate. Data collection for this study consisted of two semi-structured interviews with eight participants in 50-minute interview rounds. The interview questions permitted for the collection of necessary demographic data regarding the individuals as well as individual experiences and stories that were audio-recorded during the two sessions.

**Purposeful, snowball sampling.** The use of purposeful sampling provided access to participants who gave insight to the manifestation of the Latino immigrant paradox and not the empirical overview random sampling would have provided. The “logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth”
(Patton, 2002, p. 230). Patton (2002) continues by asserting that a researcher can learn a great deal about issues that are central to the topic of investigation by purposefully selecting individuals who have knowledge of that phenomena. According to Patton (2002):

One may learn a great deal more by focusing in-depth on understanding the needs, interests, and incentives of a small number of carefully selected [individuals]. The purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study. (p. 46)

Recruitment of participants via snowball sampling was effectively achieved by asking participants, colleagues, and friends for recommendations of possible candidates. Snowball sampling typically occurs when the researcher asks the current participants to recommend other individuals who meet the criteria used for this study (Cresswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2014; Patton, 2002).

**Semi-structured interviews.** By conducting semi-structured interviews, the open-ended questions that were generated during the interview provided themes that were explored. Through this process, the interviewer was given the option to tailor the questions to the situation and context. This format provided the interviewees freedom to describe their experiences in a more organic, natural manner. It also provided insight into how participants interpreted the questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Lichtman, 2014). Riessman (2007) asserts that when interviews are sensitively practiced, they are a great source of gathering information about a phenomenon or an experience and help develop ongoing conversations with participants. Reliability of the data will increase through the use of repeated interviews as the interviewees and interviewer develop a “dialogic”
relationship (Riessman, 2007, p. 26). Merriam (2009) stated that “interviews are necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them...when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 88).

**Interview questions.** Riessman (2007) cautioned about the use of interviews being limiting due to the fact that narrative interviewing does not use “a set of ‘techniques,’ nor [is] it exactly natural” (p. 26). A pilot test of the questions was given to individuals with similar characteristics as the participants of this study to identify necessary changes based on their feedback (Creswell, 2012). The individuals interviewed for the pilot test agreed that the questions adequately allowed them to reflect on their college journey and that no further adjustments or rewording for clarification purposes was necessary. The complete list of interview questions utilized in this study appears in

**Data Analysis**

In a narrative inquiry study, the analysis of data is based on the restorying of the narratives collected during the interview process. The commonalities and trends identified from the participants’ stories will be compiled to tell the grand story.

**Restorying.** Through the use of restorying, the researcher retold the stories collected from each participant. Creswell (2012) describes restorying as a retelling of stories gathered then analyzed for commonalities and key elements such as time and place which the researcher then puts in chronological sequence. Restorying provided a chronology of the events occurring from the past to the present (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As shown in Table 2, Ollerenshaw and Creswell’s (2002) *Table of Retranscribing and Restorying a Transcript* was used to “provide a chronological sequence and casual
link among the ideas” (Creswell, 2012, p. 510). The use of this organizational tool also helped organize participant responses by interview questions.

Appendix B.

Table 2

*Example of Retranscribing and Restorying a Transcript by Interview Question*

**Interview question 8: What is your parents’ highest level of education? Where did they receive the majority of their education?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview Date (Raw data collected)</th>
<th>Transcription of Audiotape (Raw data)</th>
<th>Restory by the Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| GL          | 5/04/15                            |                                      | • Father attended until the second grade.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother attended until the sixth grade. |
| GG          | 5/21/15                            |                                      | • Father attended school in México until 12, junior high and high school in U.S., entered the military, Vietnam Vet.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother attended school until the sixth grade. |
| AB          | 5/23/15                            |                                      | • Father attended some grade school.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother was home-schooled by subject’s grandmother. |
| BG          | 5/26/15                            | Represents the multiple pages of each transmitted interview | • Father only finished middle school.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother attended high school but did not finish. |
| AP          | 6/10/15                            |                                      | • Father attended parochial school until about the fifth grade.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother successfully attained her G.E.D. in the United States. |
| AG          | 6/11/15                            |                                      | • Father had to drop out of primary school.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother graduated from high school in México. |
| RG          | 6/15/15                            |                                      | • Father dropped out in the fourth or fifth grade in order to help his family.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother finished high school and received a business accounting certificate from a trade school in México. |
| MG          | 4/30/15                            |                                      | • Father did not go to school.  
|             |                                    |                                      | • Mother’s highest level of education was up to the first few months of third grade. |

Note: Adapted from Creswell (2012); Ollerenshaw & Creswell (2002)
In addition, the five elements of restorying were used during the narrative analysis of the raw data collected and transcribed from the recorded stories. The five elements included: setting, characters, actions, problem, and resolution. Adapted from Creswell’s (2012) table of restorying, this organizational format helped to organize the individual stories and to outline common elements from the study shared by the participants.

**Coding.** The purpose of coding was to organize and describe what had been collected from the field text (stories). The analysis of descriptions led to the interpretive phase as it built a foundation where meaning was extracted from the data which led to comparisons and conclusions (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). After the field texts were transcribed and the responses collected, careful coding of transcriptions and responses allowed for grouping of categories and themes. These steps provided the researcher deeper insight and understanding of the individual experiences. The themes and categories the researcher identified were presented within the final grand story (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002).

**Assurance of Confidentiality**

Participants were assured confidentiality in the signed consent form attached to the letter requesting participation of this study. Prior to the interviews and just before beginning the interviews, participants were informed of the purpose for the study, how the information would be used, how responses would be handled, and the risks and/or benefits of participating in the study (Patton, 2002). Participants were not identified by name but were given pseudonyms. Names of schools and cities were also changed to pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
Provisions of Trustworthiness

Throughout the study and before and after the interview cycle, the researcher communicated with members to nurture positive connections and promote transparency of the process. The intent was to validate all individuals’ voices and perspectives. Individuals were informed how their transcribed stories, journals with notes, audio recordings, and any other items generated during the study were locked and stored for confidentiality purposes in the researcher’s office. At the final meeting, member checking occurred at which time participants were given an opportunity to add anything else to their story. In addition, all participants were provided with a final copy of their story to recheck for accuracy and clarification. Creswell (2012) defines member checking as the process of providing participants opportunities to respond if the accounts being restoryed are accurate and if they would like to make any necessary changes or additional remarks. Throughout the interview process, member checking occurred to verify if correct descriptions were recorded and if interpretations were a fair and true representation of the participants’ story (Creswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2014; Patton, 2002).

Communication of the Findings

Once all the stories were recorded, collected, transcribed, analyzed, and restoryed, communication of the findings entailed reporting back what themes and commonalities were identified. As each individual story was transcribed, the researcher retold each story in narrative format.

Limitations

Limitations in a study are influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher. Due to the use of snowball method of recruiting participants, one limitation for this study
was the type of college awareness programs available to participants at the time they attended one of the two high schools. A second limitation was the age differences between the participants, which provided a different experience for those who graduated in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. This difference included the available technology, internet access, and state college requirements. A final limitation would be the lack of historical insight from the parents’ perspective about their immigrant journey to the United States because parent interviews were not used for this study.

The Role of the Researcher

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that the researcher must work within the three-dimensional inquiry space of the stories being told, moving from each participant’s past stories to the present to help situate personal standpoints influenced by past experiences. They claim that “the importance of acknowledging the centrality of the researcher’s own experience—the researchers’ own livings, telling, retellings, and relivings” (p. 70)—will help the researcher become aware of the many layers emerging within the inquiry space. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further state, “One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher’s own narrative of experience, the researcher’s autobiography” (p. 70).

Insider positionality. When making the transition from field text to research text, the researcher must take into account the positioning of the work in relation to research, trends, and ideologies that are surfacing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Chávez (2008) identified insider scholars as individuals who shared multiple identifying factors such as race, class, ethnicity as “total insiders” and those sharing only one factor as “partial insiders” (p. 475). An insider’s connection to a particular group provides easy access to
the members and better insight of the human behaviors of that group which facilitates the
within one’s own cultural community insider position affords researchers a degree of
social proximity that, paradoxically, increases awareness among both researcher and
participant of the social divisions that structure the interaction between them” (para. 2).

There are clear advantages and complications insiders will encounter as they
“negotiate the subject-object positionality unique to them and of contending with
multiple social identities” (Chávez, 2008, p. 480) making the insider research process
more complicated than most researchers anticipate (Beoku-Betts, 1994). Cautionary
measures must be taken to ensure insider or outsider researchers are not imposing their
“values, beliefs, and perceptions on the lives of participants, which may result in a
positivistic representation and interpretation” (Chávez, 2008, p. 475). Researchers must
reflect on their own intentions and how their background experiences may affect how the
research they are conducting is perceived and interpreted (Miller, 1997).

Insiders must learn to manage being the researcher as well as part of the group
being researched (Chávez, 2008; Labaree, 2002). Indigenous insiders have typically
grown up within the community and are seen as a member of that community. Their
familiarity and closeness to the research group affords the unique opportunity to “provide
a nuanced and unique insight about underrepresented and colonized groups to which they
belonged” (Chávez, 2008, p. 476).

The researcher’s story. While growing up in Baldwin Park, California, in the
mid-1970s, I cannot recall feeling shunned or discriminated by my fellow students,
neighbors or teachers. At school, I recognized that I was inherently different from the
other students in my classroom because of my dark hair, dark eyes, and dark skin, but this
did not seem to matter. We were children, and the world was safe and good. Even though
I grew up in a demographically different Baldwin Park, with the majority of the
neighborhood being Anglo, I attribute being able to keep my cultural identity and pride
for my Mexican heritage intact to my father and mother. The day they took their
American Citizenship oath at the Los Angeles Convention Center is one of their proudest
moments; yet, they claim to have never forgotten the beautiful country where they were
born and raised, a country my father claims he will forever carry in his blood.

My earliest recollection of my father sharing his dreams for his children was
when I was in second grade, and we were on our annual road trip to Tepetongo,
Zacatecas, México to visit our paternal grandparents and relatives for two weeks. We had
stopped at the El Paso-Juarez border to get our permit to proceed into México. As we
waited in line for the next customs agent, some young street vendors approached our
station wagon selling Chiclets and toasted pumpkin seeds. After buying my two brothers
and two sisters a cube of gum, my father turned to my mother and commented that their
children’s lives could have ended up as these poor souls if they had not made the decision
to immigrate to Los Estados Unidos where their children had a chance at a better
education and not have to break their backs working. The reason this stuck in my memory
was because of the sad, yet serious, tone in my father’s voice. As I grew older, I learned
that my father had followed his father-in-law, my maternal grandfather, to Los Angeles
as part of the Bracero (migrant worker, day laborer) program during the early 1960s. My
parent’s strong work ethic and their belief in education was the foundation for their five
children’s educational success.
Although my parents appreciated and respected the opportunities the United States provided their children, they held firmly to the traditions and morals their forefathers had instilled within them in México. Both my parents were raised in ranchos not far from the municipality of Tepetongo, Zacatecas. My paternal grandfather was the manager of a large hacienda, San Felipe, which he later purchased and ran with the help of his six sons. It was Don Manuelito who taught my father the value of respect, hard work, and being a good Catholic. Although my grandfather had a rudimentary education, he taught himself how to read, write, and use basic arithmetic in order to run his ranch. Every now and then, I can still hear my grandfather’s advice and life lessons pop out of my father’s lips whenever he has moral advice for his children and grandchildren. I count my blessings to have the gift of my grandfather’s wisdom through my father and pray that my two brothers, two sisters, nieces, and nephews will carry on this legacy.

As in many households, the kitchen is the heart of the home and in our family, my mother is the heart of everything. Her talent as a cook is well known throughout Tepetongo and Baldwin Park, where she owned a restaurant for 13 years. As the second oldest of 15 children, my mother’s responsibility was to prepare the meals before she went to school and when she returned. Needless to say, because of this, her culinary talents evolved. Once my mother, father, and older sister immigrated to California, she ensured that the traditional Mexican cooking she had learned from her grandmother and great aunt was still part of her household. She recounts that in order to find serrano chiles when they lived in the San Francisco bay area during the late 1960s, she had to take a bus to buy them because the neighborhood they were living in at the time had no ethnic food.
As a teenager, my mother had dreams of becoming a teacher. She went as far as the eleventh grade in high school and got a chance to teach a few classes in the ranch where she was born before her mother sent her to Los Angeles to work. She worked as a nanny and tells stories of how generous the parents were and how she enjoyed working for them. My mother’s love of learning and reading was something I took for granted and never really correlated with my desire to become a teacher. It wasn’t until I wrote a reflective paper in one of my undergraduate literacy classes that I realized that, although we were socioeconomically disadvantaged, my siblings and I never lacked for a literary environment because my mother was always reading her novelas (novels) or revistas (magazines), or periódico (newspaper), and she expected her children to do the same.

My maternal grandfather, Don Manuel, was very similar in character to my paternal grandfather, Don Manuelito. He was a hard-working, generous, and patient man who carried himself with dignity and respect. It is through him that my mother learned so much about management and about respect for our fellow human beings. Unfortunately, he was killed at the age of 54 when I was five years old, so I never had the opportunity to listen to his sage advice or words of wisdom. The life lessons my mother has taught her children and grandchildren and her strong belief in God and family, however, are a testament to the father who raised her.

The first time I heard the word college was when Ms. Julene, my second- and third-grade elementary school teacher, asked the class who was going to college. I remember seeing a few of my fellow classmates raise their hand. The discussion that ensued was one of wonder and awareness for me regarding colleges and universities. Two years later, I remember attending my aunt’s commencement ceremony from a local
community college and making the connection that this was what Ms. Julene had spoken to us about. As I reflect back to what influenced my desire to go to college, I partially credit my aunt, Rosie, who was the first of my family to attain a post-secondary degree.

I was always a quiet, studious student who loved to read and write, and who spent most of the time daydreaming. Teachers enjoyed having me in their classrooms because I always listened, turned in my homework, and stayed out of trouble. I loved school and loved to learn, which is ultimately why I made a pact with one of my second grade friends that when we grew up, we would become teachers.

As I got older, I continued to grow academically but because of my quiet nature, I was often overlooked and never really pushed to my fullest potential. My parents worked long hours and rarely attended school functions. The three times a year I would see my mother rush home from work to change her clothes and rush to school were for our parent conference meetings and our Open House nights. Because I was an average student, my mother and father never worried about my grades, and because they really did not understand how the grading system worked in the United States, they focused their attention on my behavior, which was exemplary.

By the time I got to high school, my average grades were enough to get me through the general education program. I cannot recall knowing about the different educational tracks in high school. What I do recall is that my older brother and sister were always offered advanced placement classes, which I attributed to the fact that they had been identified as gifted students in elementary school, which meant they were always being invited to attend college awareness workshops and fieldtrips. It was through my older brother Martin’s college awareness experiences that I vicariously dreamed of
going to college, just like my Aunt Rosie. I remember that when I was in the eleventh grade, I approached my counselor to ask her what courses I needed to take if I wanted to go to college. She in turn looked up my grades and advised me that I would be better off taking trade school courses offered by the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) to prepare myself for the future. I followed her advice and instead of taking college preparation courses, I registered for ROP classes my junior and senior year which in retrospect was a waste of my precious college preparation years.

My transition to college was difficult at first. I discovered that I was not academically prepared for the college level courses I had to take. I struggled the first year through community college, but with the help of a friend, we figured out which courses to take and learned about the academic advisory office. Those first years in community college, I learned how to persevere and how to ask questions. My older brother Martin was also influential in my decision to seek a college degree. He was the first of my siblings to get a Bachelor’s degree and the first to get his Master’s degree. Martin shared his understanding of how the college system worked, but most importantly, he showed me how to study and take notes. He set the example for me, my other siblings, and our many nephews and nieces who are currently making their way through college.

As a Chicana, Latina, Hispanic, or Mexican-American—whichever label I am given on any particular day—I have come to appreciate the two worlds I live in. The way I see it, it makes me twice as valuable. I have learned to not take the pocha (a person of Mexican descent raised in the United States who speaks limited, accented Spanish) comments to heart whenever I am visiting relatives in México, and I have learned to carry myself with pride whenever I walk into a high-end department store and the sales clerk
gives me *that* look. As an administrator, I have become adept at being the center of the Venn diagram—I can be part of the Latino world as well as the Anglo world. I have come to realize that I must work a little harder as an educational leader to ensure that my work and decisions are not being judged by the color of my skin. I agree with Noguera (2008) who claimed that as Latinos we must “learn to succeed in both worlds by adopting multiple identities” (p. 9).

After 25 years in education, I have discovered that I have a very important responsibility to the children and parents of my community. I must share my moral belief that in order to break the cycles of poverty and repression in our community, our immigrant children and parents must embrace education. We must prepare all generations of Latino students for a post-secondary education, and we must ensure that they are provided with the knowledge and the desire to graduate with a degree. Our future depends on this.

**Summary**

This chapter described the procedures and steps used to investigate the common influences shared by the children of Mexican immigrants that contributed to their success in attaining a post-secondary degree. Through the use of qualitative narrative inquiry methodology, authentic stories were collected about the lives and history of eight second-generation Mexican-Americans who graduated from college. The individuals interviewed were given the opportunity to share their journey to college as a means of gathering data that identified common factors, trends, and patterns that contributed to their educational success. The criteria for participant selection was identified as part of the data source section, and the use of purposeful sampling was discussed. The role of the researcher was
explained and provisions of trustworthiness and confidentiality were assured. Chapter 4 will identify the findings of the study, and through the participants’ narratives regarding their college journey, shared influences that led to the academic success of each individual will be illuminated.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

The purpose for this study was to identify common influences that were present in the lives of eight second-generation college graduates of Mexican immigrant parents as they worked towards successful attainment of a post-secondary degree. Some of the areas identified included the value their parents and family members placed on education, familial factors in their lives such as the parents’ level of education and their involvement in school, the influential adults and peers in the students’ lives, and any academic support systems available to them. (see Table 5, Appendix C). The research questions that guided the study helped to identify influences that contributed to each individual’s successful attainment of a post-secondary degree, positive influencers that were present in their lives, and any challenges they may have encountered and how they were able to overcome these challenges.

One of the fastest growing groups in the United States is the children of immigrants (Landale & Oropesa, 1995; Rong & Preissle, 1998). As of 2010, 11% of the United States population fell within this category (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2010). It is projected that by the year 2040, one out of three children in the United States will be raised in an immigrant home, and Latinos will make up 48% of the students attending public school in California (Noguera, 2008; Plunkett et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003). As we move toward an information age within a global society with economic security dependent upon the education level of each individual, it will be imperative that the youth of today are educated and prepared to carry on the responsibilities of tomorrow (Baum & Flores, 2011; Crosnoe & Turley, 2011).
This chapter will recount the academic journey of eight second-generation Mexican-Americans who were either the first, second, or third member in their family to graduate from a university with a bachelor’s degree and/or a master’s degree. Through the retelling of each individual’s story, four themes of contributing factors that influenced each individual’s academic success will be illuminated.

**Description of the Participants**

A brief description of each individual helped to situate each participant within the parameters of this study. Their stories incorporated their educational paths from the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary level. The retelling of their journeys addressed the initial research questions that helped guide this study.

The eight individuals who were invited to participate in this study eagerly agreed and were excited to share their academic journeys. All participants were born in the United States with parents who were born and immigrated from México, making them second-generation immigrants. Four of the eight participants, Graciela López, Gina González, Adriana Belize, and Maritza García (pseudonyms), attained a teaching degree, hold a master’s degree and are currently working as teachers at the elementary level in Garden View Unified School District (GVUSD). At the onset of this study, Brenda Guzmán had just graduated with a Masters of Social Work and was seeking a position in a non-profit counseling agency for public schools. Analí Galindo graduated with a sociology degree but established her own State Farm Insurance branch. Andrés Pérez graduated with a civil engineering degree. He is working for a company he interned with during his senior year at university. Although Rigo Gaspar graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Education, he is currently working as an executive assistant to the
superintendent and the school board of a local school district. Five of the participants attended Braedon High School, and three participants attended Donavon High School. Both high schools are part of Garden View Unified School District (see Table 3).

Table 3  
Profiles of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Decade Graduated from High School</th>
<th>High School attended</th>
<th>First/Second to graduate from college</th>
<th>Degree Attained</th>
<th>Current job description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graciela López</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Donavan</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Masters of Education</td>
<td>Elementary teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina González</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Braedon</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Masters of Education</td>
<td>Elementary teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana Belize</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Braedon</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Masters of Education</td>
<td>Elementary teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda Guzmán</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Braedon</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Masters of Social Work</td>
<td>Clinical practice with individuals and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andres Pérez</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Donavan</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Bachelors in Engineering</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analí Galindo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Braedon</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Bachelors in Sociology</td>
<td>Insurance agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigo Gaspar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Braedon</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Bachelors of Education</td>
<td>Executive assistant to a public school superintendent and school board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritza García</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Donavan</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Masters of Education and Masters in Educational Counseling</td>
<td>Elementary teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Participants’ Stories

Participant 1: Graciela López

At the start of our first interview, Graciela displayed a friendly and positive attitude. She seemed a bit nervous but eager to share her educational journey with me. After thanking her for meeting with me and for agreeing to share her story, the interview proceeded in a quick fashion. She shared that she liked to stay busy at her school site by volunteering as an after-school tutor, mentoring previous students, leading parent workshops or helping with school events. Her fellow colleagues and administrator perceive her as the historian of the school because she was a student there prior to joining the staff. Parents and students have developed close ties with Graciela, who always goes above and beyond to share the importance of education and explain the many layers of the American school system. Through her guidance, many families have built their cultural capital, which has assisted them in understanding how to navigate through the higher education pathway. In addition, these families have adopted selective acculturation processes that have allowed their children to build strong co-ethnic support in high school and in the community.

When asked when she first recalls knowing she would attend college, Graciela shared that the first time she knew was when she attended a field trip to a local university during her senior year in high school. She recalled seeing, “everybody walk around with books and it looked as if they were having fun learning.” She shared that as she was getting ready to graduate from Donavan High School, she realized that it was either get married or continue her education in college. The high school’s career center offered field trips to the local colleges and she took advantage of this.
**Value placed on education.** Graciela’s parents, who were both born in México, never graduated from high school. For them, seeing her receive her high school diploma was a huge accomplishment since she would be the first in their extended family to have done so. They celebrated her accomplishment of graduating from high school and expected her to get married soon after to her high school boyfriend whom she had been dating for five years. Although they were proud of her, they did not encourage her to go to college due to the cost of tuition and other expenses. In their eyes, she would soon be married, and there was no need to invest money to further her education.

Graciela’s parents were initially hesitant about encouraging her to go to the university, but they recognized the value of an education. According to Graciela, “Education was always important to my parents. Because of their level of education, they wanted us to be able to succeed in this country. So they made sure we never fell behind in school.”

**Familial factors.** Although both her mother and father only have a grade school education—her father attended until the second grade and her mother until the sixth grade—they understood that acquiring good grades and attending school regularly was important. During her elementary years, Graciela’s mother was highly involved with the school’s PTA and event organizing committee. She attended parent meetings as well as conferences, Back to School Nights, and Open House events. Graciela recalled during her early years in elementary school that she was often absent weeks at a time due to chronic asthma. Even though Graciela was bedridden, her mother would go to school every day to pick up and drop off her school work to ensure Graciela would not fall behind in her academics. In addition, whenever her father visited relatives in México, he brought back
Spanish workbooks to have Graciela and her sister continue their learning in Spanish, which was something both parents expected of their daughters in order to keep their heritage, language, and traditions as they became fluent bilingual individuals.

**Influential people.** The two individuals who encouraged her and believed in her dream of attaining a college degree were her godfather and her maternal grandmother. Graciela recalled:

The day of my graduation, my godfather said, “You are going to be the next Gloria Molina” (because at the time she was the only prominent Latina). And although everyone said I would not go to college, he was the only one who said, “Yeah, she’s going to do it.” He always put me as an example for the rest of the family so I felt that I needed to do it and not let him down. He was the one who encouraged me the most.

Graciela shared ways her maternal grandmother also acted as a role model and supported her in many of her college aspirations. She proudly stated that her grandmother is still considered the matriarch of the family. When Graciela’s grandfather was abroad, coming and going, working as a *bracero* (migrant worker, day laborer) in Central California, her grandmother was hard at work raising 12 children in México. Once the family finally immigrated to the United States, Graciela’s grandmother realized her strength as a woman and made the conscious decision to raise her twelve children on her own. Of these children, Graciela’s godfather, who was the eldest, assumed the responsibilities of the man of the family. Once her godfather passed away, her grandmother took on the role of being her mentor by encouraging her to continue with her education. By the time Graciela graduated with her degrees, most of her family
members were proud of her accomplishments and encouraged the later generation of relatives to follow in her footsteps and, like Graciela, to wait to get married until after completing the university.

**Academic support systems.** Graciela could not recall having had any academic support systems in high school or college. Because she was the first in her family to attend college, she lacked the necessary academic knowledge to know there was assistance available at the high school, community college, or university level. In college, she was not aware of the help guidance counselors could provide her.

**Challenges.** When asked about any challenges she may have encountered throughout her journey from high school to community college to university, Graciela shared that as a full-time student and working three jobs to pay for college, the biggest challenge was finding time to do everything. Graciela could not seek tutoring services due to her morning work schedule. She was also unaware of how to access grants and scholarships to pay for her tuition and books, which meant she had to work three jobs to pay for these costs. Consequently, this schedule assisted financially because she accrued very few loans. Graciela attributes her efficient management of money to her parents who always advised their two daughters to save money and to never spend beyond their means. “They taught us how to save money,” she proudly stated.

Her determination to succeed in college helped her persevere even when she was staying up to study until 3:00 a.m. after her third job. At one point, recognizing she was “going nuts, [because] some of the professors were really hard, and the work was really hard, my mom said, ‘You need to slow down. Look, I will help you pay for the next semester,’” Graciela decided to quit one of her jobs and take some courses at a local
community college which were less expensive than the university tuition fees. It was during these struggles that her parents realized that she was serious, and they truly began to support her choice to go to university.

Advice for future Latino generations. When asked what she would advise other second-generation Latino immigrant students and their parents in their journey to the university, Graciela quickly shared that she would advise them to ask questions and “to look for those support systems.” She finalized her advice by stating that she would tell students:

To go out there. To not be afraid to leave their home, even the state. I would share that there is a whole world out there and they need to explore. Another thing I would tell them is to study abroad. That’s something I wish I would have done. Graciela’s biggest satisfaction has been gaining the ability to travel and see new parts of the world due to her financial security as an educator.

Participant 2: Gina González

When I contacted Gina for our interview, she readily agreed and through our brief conversation, it became evident that she is proud to work as an educator and has a strong sense of social justice for all students. When asked to discuss her journey to college, Gina González shared that she attended Braedon High School where she claimed, “I was an average student even though my friends were always taking all these AP classes and they were always more advanced…I wondered how come I don’t get to take these classes?” During her senior year, she met with her guidance counselor who took one look at her GPA and told Gina, “No. You’re not university quality. You’re going to community college.” At the time, Gina did not question this because she thought the counselor was
the professional and knew better about this than she did. Fortunately, Gina’s older brother
was already attending college and was able to guide her in what to do. Her brother was
her role model and guide. She turned to him with questions about school and college.
During this transition period from high school to college, her brother passed away. Gina
stated, “My brother passed away while attending college. He had been my guide. He was
my mentor, and once he was gone, I was lost.” She then decided to attend community
college, after all.

Gina continued her studies at a local community college and knew it was time to
transition to a four-year university when she made the honor roll and was on the Dean’s
List. When she transferred to the university, Gina did not participate in any extra-
curricular clubs or organizations because she had to go to work right after her college
courses until 9:30 p.m. While at the university, Gina wondered how students could afford
to just go to school and not have to work to pay for their tuition. Friends she met in class
shared with her that their parents paid their tuition or that they had received a grant
because a relative told them about it. Gina realized that there were cultural differences
between the different groups of students and that, unlike them, she had to work to pay for
her schooling.

After working as a teacher for a few years and getting displaced year after year
due to student attrition in the district, she decided to get her Master’s Degree in
Educational Leadership at a private university. She joined AmeriCorps to do community
service projects which helped to pay for some of her university fees. She appreciated not
having loans and always worked throughout her schooling to avoid incurring debt.
The first time Gina recalls wanting to attend college was when her brother began to apply for different universities. As an Advanced Placement (AP) student, he was the scholar who was eager to start his university career. At the time Gina was in the eighth grade, and when he began filling out his financial aid forms, the seed for her to attend college was planted. This is also when she realized she wanted to be an educator.

**Value placed on education.** Like Graciela, Gina cannot recall her parents pushing her to go to college. They expected her to graduate from high school, but they never spoke to her about university. Her parents did not have the cultural capital or knowledge to tell her about the application process, about application dates, or what to plan for. In their eyes, she was a girl and she should attend the local community college and stay home. Among her group of six friends, Gina was the only one who continued to college after high school. Because they noted her example of perseverance in attaining her degree, two of her friends returned to school to get their bachelor’s degree. At home, her parents valued education and always reminded Gina to study. Her mother reminded her to pay attention and to respect the teachers. Although her mother did not speak English, every evening, she would sit down with her children to do homework and to ensure it was complete. Gina shared, “She would sit there and demand that we read, even though she did not understand. That’s where having pride in our work began. That’s where I think the foundation for education was set. That’s where that started.”

**Familial factors.** Throughout Gina’s elementary years, her mother was a stay-at-home mother who entered the work force as a school cafeteria worker when her children were older. Both parents always told Gina and her siblings to go to school so that they would not have to work as hard as they did. When asked who instilled the will to
persevere within her, she shared, “My dad and my brother. My dad was always a hard worker. He believed that you work hard and then you played hard. So he always taught us about having a strong work ethic.” Her mother was very supportive of Gina’s studies, and although her parents were not able to attend PTA or school site council meetings, they were extremely involved in their children’s extracurricular activities. According to Gina, her mother and father “were the parents who would look after the leftover kids and either stayed with them until the parents arrived or took them home. Yeah, they were that parent.”

Gina’s father was born and raised in México until the age of 12. Her mother was born in México where she attended school until the sixth grade and immigrated to the U.S. during her early twenties. Although her parents lacked the social and cultural capital to help Gina navigate through the American school system, her father, a Vietnam veteran, was able to build his cultural capital by attending junior high and high school and by learning to speak English. He understood early on that in order to succeed, he had to master the English language and not speak Spanish at school to avoid being hit or placed in a closet as punishment. He vowed that his children would only speak English to avoid these punishments. Gina’s mother, on the other hand, only spoke to her children in Spanish which is how they become bilingual.

Influential people. When it came to mentors, Gina mentioned that her older brother was always the role model who paved the way for her and her siblings. His dedication to the belief in social justice and equal treatment of all individuals was what helped her not to give up her dream of going to college, even after his death. Like Gina, he had also been told by the same counselor at Braedon High School that he was not
university material. Because of this, her brother felt it was important to prove the counselor wrong. Her brother always advised her to:

Stay focused, all through the requirements. You are going to talk to a counselor, and they are going to give you a plan. You are going to follow that plan so that your goal is to leave the community college in two years.

She credits this advice as her guide through university. Her brother was “a go-getter who was the first to go to college. It was all new to my parents; they didn’t know what to do. They didn’t know the process.” He was determined to go see “what was out there.” On his own, her brother learned how to navigate the college application and financial aid process because no one at Braedon High School was available to help.

**Academic support.** Gina remembers the career center but cannot recall ever receiving any guidance regarding college applications or financial aid information. She again brought up the counselor who told her she was not college material and dissuaded her from taking college prep courses because she was just an average student. When asked about support systems at the college level, Gina mentioned that she was strictly a commuter who went to class and then straight to work. She never sought assistance from the university; she just never had time. Gina reflects on having missed out on the college-going culture and wishes she had taken advantage of clubs and associations. The one item that continually resonates in our conversation is the loss of her brother at such an early age. He was her “guide, mentor, and rock.” His death sadly affected the entire family. At first, she was lost but soon realized that by going back to finish school she would be honoring her brother’s memory. In a sense, his legacy became the force in her family that helped all of them get through this tragic time in their lives. Gina shares that in honor of
her older brother’s memory, the family created a nonprofit organization that gives high school students college scholarships that will help them fulfill their dreams. She is proud of the lives they are able to improve. She proudly shared, “Through this organization, we get to talk to students. Interview them. Speak to them. That’s where I am able to touch the students’ lives and speak to them and the staff.”

In our conversation about resiliency and influential people that helped her persevere and continue with her schooling even after her brother’s death, Gina mentions her father. She shares:

My dad was a very hard worker. I think with my brother’s passing, I saw him strive and still continue. Actually, my father went back to school. He went back to get his bachelor’s degree. To just see that he continued to work hard although he had this tragedy in his life. He was the rock in our family. He had the strength to move forward, just to see him work and educate himself in law so that he could fight for the injustice regarding my brother’s death. Seeing that made me want to finish my education.

Gina sees her father’s strength and commitment to go back to college at 55 as one of the pivotal points in her life that made her realize she had a responsibility to finish her education. She quietly reflected that sadly, “My mom was really lost. I didn’t have her during that time.”

Challenges. The biggest challenge Gina faced was continuing through college without her brother’s guidance. She was grateful for her father’s strength and for setting the example of what it meant to continue on after their family’s loss. At times, she regrets not having finished her schooling sooner than she did and commented, “I should have
celebrated my education. That’s something we need to do. I think that we need to celebrate ourselves, especially as Latinos. It’s something we sometimes take for granted.”

**Advice for future Latino generations.** At the end of our interview, when asked what advice she could give first- or second-generation Latino students in their journey through college, Gina commented that there are so many resources that many students are not aware of. They must go out to look for them. She reinforces the importance of having goals, a plan that will help them stay focused. She encourages future Latino college students to research and stay informed about programs and about financial aid. She discourages students from getting too involved in clubs and the whole college social scene without focusing on the purpose for going to college, which is to graduate with a degree. In closing, she reiterates the importance of staying focused. She states, “You need a goal. You need a plan just because it is so easy to get off track. It’s a discipline, right? You need that discipline, because if you don’t have it, you will get lost.” To the parents, documented and undocumented, Gina advises them to educate themselves and to find the necessary resources for their children, such as financial aid. She believes parents should network with others and believes that they are worthy of being heard.

**Participant 3: Adriana Belize**

When I first met with Adriana for our interview, she seemed worried and wondered if she would have anything to contribute. I reassured her that we were only going to go through the journey she took to attain her college degree and that she could ask to skip any questions that made her uncomfortable. With this said, she seemed more at ease, and the interview began with Adriana sharing her story.
Adriana graduated from Braedon High School in 1991 and was accepted into a highly acclaimed state university about two hours away from home. She only attended this university the first term because as Adriana stated, “It was way too expensive for my family, so I came back home.” After that, she attended a local community college for a few years and then transferred to a public university for her bachelor’s degree and a private university for her master’s and teaching credential.

**Value placed on education.** The first time she recalls knowing that she would attend college was in fifth grade when she began to plan her path to college. She reflected, “I was lining up, and I remember thinking ‘Okay, the school year is almost over and I am going to junior high, and then I am going to high school, and then I am going to college.’ I was mentally putting my ducks in a row.” She can’t recall hearing about college from any relatives because none of them had gone to college. She remembers teachers speaking about college as well as learning about it through television programs. She stated, “The way our parents saw it was either they got lucky and their kids wanted to go to college or they didn’t. It was kind of left up to you.” Adriana’s parents supported her decisions of what to do after high school graduation and never asked her to go to work. She remembers talking to four cousins, whom she was close to in age, about what university they were planning to attend and what their plans were after they graduated from high school. The four cousins were very close and motivated each other to continue on to higher education. Of the four, three successfully completed their college courses and received a bachelor’s degree.

As the only girl in a family of four, Adriana realized that she liked making decisions for herself and wanted the autonomy to decide what was right or wrong for her.
She soon recognized that in order to be independent she needed to make enough money to lead her own life, which meant she needed a good job and to get a good job she needed an education. A strong motivating factor for Adriana to continue her studies was seeing an older cousin graduate from a university and continue studying for her master’s degree. She liked her cousin’s independence and admired that she was thriving and obviously happy. Adriana claims, “I knew that was the right path. There are many paths you can take, but I knew that was the right path for me to get to where I wanted to be.”

Throughout her college journey, she knew that she could never stop going to school. Adriana shared:

I was afraid to stop. I put off a lot of things including getting married. I was engaged for eight years before I got married. I was afraid if I got married that I would not complete school. I knew things get thrown at you, and you sometimes don’t finish.

She finally got married after she attained her master’s degree.

**Familial factors.** Adriana shared that both her parents valued education and expected their children to make school their priority. Both parents had a strong work ethic. Her father never missed a day of work, which related to their expectation of their children not missing a day of school. Fortunately, Adriana was a good student who did not rebel or have to be pushed to attend school. As she stated, “I just liked school.” As she got older, her parents trusted that she would do her work and never questioned her grades. However, they monitored her social behavior more closely than before.

Her parents were both born in México. Her father attended some grade school while her mother was home-schooled by Adriana’s grandmother. Although her parents
had a rudimentary education, they were hard-working individuals who opened up their own fruit and vegetable market. Adriana proudly shared:

My father had no schooling, no education, and worked hard to sell fruits and vegetables. My parents opened their own market. I admire my dad, and my mom too. She is amazing. She worked at home and was up early and went to bed late.

She always had warm food prepared for us. She’s a tough little lady.

Because they were busy working, her parents rarely attended parent meetings but always attended parent conferences. They supported Adriana’s extracurricular school activities as a member of the Braedon High School Color Guard and “were supportive in as far as getting me what I needed.” By the time she was in college, Adriana claims her parents were extremely proud of her and very supportive. They never asked her to help support the family and selflessly allowed her to use the money she earned as an instructional aide for her own needs.

Influential people. Adriana credits one of her three cousins as a very influential person in her life. This cousin was taking Honors and Advanced Placement courses in high school which prepared her for the university. Adriana, on the other hand, did not think she was intelligent enough to take these courses because she received average grades.

When asked if she could recall any mentors or influential people in high school or college who helped her get to college, she shared the following anecdote. During her sophomore year at Braedon High School, she recalls telling one of the AP English teachers that she was hoping to take an AP or Honors course. The teacher discouragingly asked her, “Do you think you should do that?” Reflecting on this, Adriana felt that this
was negative and, to date, it still bothers her that the AP teacher implied she was not qualified. After that incident, she never attempted to take any college prep courses. Fortunately, while in college, she proved the teacher wrong by achieving highly in her college courses. She also shared a positive experience with an influential high school teacher in writing class. This teacher praised her writing skills and asked if Adriana wouldn’t mind going to the front of the class to share the satire she had written about *Gulliver’s Travels in México*. Adriana recalled being amazed at achieving this and initially doubted the teacher’s intentions. This particular teacher was integral in giving Adriana back some of the self-esteem the AP English teacher’s careless remark had taken away.

An extremely motivating and influential person in Adriana’s life was a political science teacher, Dr. Perez, at the local community college she attended. She admired the fact that he was a Latino and had his doctorate. She recalls how inspiring he was and ways he encouraged her to believe in her abilities as a student and as a writer. He was pivotal in helping her realize that she would graduate from college. Adriana related, “College was the best time of my life. I love, love, love those years, because that’s when I felt that I just flew with it.” At this same community college, she was able to access the academic counseling services available which helped her to get organized and set goals for transferring to a four-year university.

**Academic support.** When asked about any academic support systems she encountered in high school, college, or within the community, Adriana couldn’t remember any academic resources available at the time. While at Braedon High School, however, she does recall working with a group of college students from Harvey Mudd
College who were instrumental in helping her complete her college applications, letters of intent, and financial aid forms. Adriana states, “I loved these meetings. I started to think, ‘Okay, it’s feeling good! This is feeling good. I can see it. I can see it. I am going to go. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.’” These students were part of the organization Upward Bound. Due to the incredible support she received from the Upward Bound representatives, she and her cousin decided to be part of the peer counseling group for two years at Braedon High School so that they could help incoming freshmen prepare for college. In addition, Upward Bound organized fieldtrips to various public and private university campuses, which Adriana claims solidified her thinking that this is exactly where she wanted to be.

During her time at the community college, Adriana was able to access the state-funded Educational Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) established to help minority students’ transition to college. She stated that the counselors were helpful in assisting her arrange her class schedule and develop a list of the courses she needed in order to transfer to a four-year university. She was invited to join different clubs in college, but she discovered they were too political for her. She would have liked to have joined clubs that focused on career goals and opportunities but at the time, there weren’t any organizations with this emphasis.

**Challenges.** When Adriana was asked about challenges she remembered encountering in college, she couldn’t recall any. She said, “While working towards my bachelor’s it was just awesome. It was a great experience.” While working on her master’s degree, however, the challenge she encountered was paying for tuition. There weren’t many grants available for graduate students, or at least she was not aware of any.
Whenever money was needed to pay for her tuition, Adriana’s older brother was always available to help her. Adriana said she is grateful for the support her parents gave her, but she is especially grateful to her older brother who helped her achieve her dreams and was always her biggest supporter.

**Advice for future Latino generations.** The advice Adriana provided for future generations of Latino immigrant students was to always consider their choices. According to her, there are two paths they can take after high school: the easy path straight to work to earn money (and most likely working two jobs to *make ends meet*) or the longer, harder path towards a college degree in order to acquire money and enjoy the benefits of a better life. She always tells her students:

> I want you to go to college because it’s good for you. You want a good life. You want to enjoy your family. If you want to give back to your family and help your mom so that she doesn’t have to work so hard, then you have to go to college.

The advice she has for parents is “to not be afraid if you don’t have the means to help your student pay for college. There are many avenues to get through college. And, if you want it bad enough for your children, then it is going to happen.”

**Participant 4: Brenda Guzmán**

As I was in the process of recruiting candidates to interview for this study, Brenda had just finished her master’s program and perfectly met all the participant characteristics for this study. Brenda is the eldest of two siblings and at 24 has already attained a bachelor’s and a master’s degree. After Brenda graduated from Braedon High School, she enrolled at a local community college. Although her father works at a prestigious university which pays for four years of tuition for the children of its employees, Brenda
decided to go to a community college and then transfer to a smaller private college in an attempt to save money on tuition fees. Her plan was to later use some of the money for her master’s degree. Unfortunately, by the time she started her master’s program, the prestigious university had changed its policy, and Brenda had to pay without support. She regretted not having taken advantage of the free tuition for four years to pay for the smaller private university.

During her entire time in college, Brenda worked as a retail store manager. She was comfortable going to school full-time and holding a job. By the time she started her master’s program, however, she realized that in order to complete the program in two years, she needed to go to school full time. Brenda decided to take a year away from her studies in order to work full time and save money to pay for the tuition and expenses of her master’s program.

**Value placed on education.** As early as elementary school, Brenda’s parents demonstrated the value they placed on education through their commitment to their children’s academic success. Brenda recounted that every day after school she and her brother were given a snack before they had to sit down to finish their homework without fail. One thing she fondly remembered about her father was that no matter how tired he was or how late he arrived home from work, he always made it a point to review their homework. This practice continued until almost middle school. She remembered that when the homework got harder, her father would go online to look for resources to try to understand the work. Brenda shared that although her parents were not demanding about their children earning good grades, it was just an implicit fact. She recalled the one time she got a C was in second grade and she remembers crying for hours, afraid of what her
father was going to say. When asked what the outcome was, she stated, “My father told me, ‘Well, you have to do better. A grade of C is not acceptable. In this family, we get A’s.’ She continued, “In retrospect, I think that this was a lot of pressure for someone so young, but I am thankful for that now.”

Brenda related, “It was never a question whether or not I was going to go to college. It was just expected. I remember a comment my mom made after my high school graduation. She told me, ‘I don’t know why you want a celebration. It’s just another thing everyone has to do.’” Brenda reflectively added, “In other words, she didn’t understand what the big deal was because we would celebrate when I got out of college. At the time, I was hurt by her comment but now I realize that she had bigger aspirations for me.”

Brenda shared that her parents always had aspirations for her brother and her to attend college, but she personally had two main reasons to attain a university degree. She stated:

Well, obviously the first reason was my family, my parents. I wanted to make them proud. Secondly, I knew I wanted to do something more in life, not just work in retail the rest of my life. I would see friends along the way dropping out, having children at such a young age. I knew my life was not meant for that. I needed more. So, I think it was more my goal as well.

When asked what made her persevere and keep going, she claimed that she wanted to be a positive role model for her younger brother to show him that she had finished what she had begun. Brenda and her brother were close companions while growing up, as the only two children in the family. She shared that as children, someone always engaged in a friendly competition about who would do better academically. Brenda mentioned that
her brother tended to have a different mindset about higher education. Although he was accepted to the university where their father works and had completed up to his junior year in engineering, he decided to take some time off because he believed that he could be as successful as Brenda even without a college degree. Brenda added:

Ever since I graduated with my master’s degree, he has begun to show interest in school again. He recently asked me if I would go with him to see about applying at another university to finish his last year of engineering.

Brenda recalled the many nights she would stay up late studying, at times forgetting to eat. At one time, she had to be hospitalized for anemia which really scared her parents. When they noticed her worrying about a particular project or presentation that was due, her mother would always give her encouraging words and text her during the day to ask how she was doing and how the presentation went. It was during these times that Brenda realized the extent of her parents support and pride for what she was accomplishing.

Familial factors. Brenda’s parents were both born in México where her mother attended high school but did not finish, and her father only finished middle school. Brenda proudly shared that her mother actually got her high school diploma in the United States. When asked if her parents were very involved in her schooling, she shared that her mother stayed at home and always attended meetings, conferences, and other school events. However, by the time she reached high school, her mother was less involved because she began to work. Although Brenda tried to explain to them how the college educational system works, they lacked the cultural capital to understand. She appreciated, however, that they continuously supported her decisions and studies.
The only other family member she recalled encouraging her to continue with her studies was a cousin from her mother’s side of the family. This cousin was the first in the family to receive a bachelor’s degree. Brenda shared:

She’s the only one who prior to me had attained a bachelor’s degree. Other than her, everyone else had dropped out. She was really inspirational to me because I saw her lifestyle, and it was the lifestyle that I wanted. So, she really pushed me. This same cousin encouraged Brenda to continue studying for her master’s degree.

**Influential people.** As previously mentioned, Brenda’s parents and cousin were pivotal in supporting her decision to attend college. In high school, she was automatically placed in the Advanced Placement (AP) track, although she could not remember asking for these classes. “In high school, I was in AP classes. I feel like they just enrolled me in the AP classes. I don’t think anyone really told me,” she claimed. At Donavon High School, Brenda remembered that one of her previous middle school teachers, who was now an assistant principal at the school, was very helpful and available to help her with anything.

**Academic support.** On the subject of academic support programs, Brenda shared that she joined Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) because a friend asked her to join with her. After two years, Brenda dropped AVID because she felt she didn’t need it. She stated, “I felt like it was just a waste of time, because I was already doing everything that they were telling me.” During her freshman, sophomore, and junior years Brenda attended Donavan High School, but she transferred to Braedon High School during her senior year because her brother was starting high school, and he wanted to attend Braedon. She does not recall having much support in high school. The
friends she had were not really interested in going to college. The one friend who she had attended the financial aid workshop with also attended the same community college and together, they tried to figure out how to apply for a four-year college. Brenda recalled, “We were both lost and were trying to figure things out together. But other than that, administrative-wise? No, we had no support.” She reflected that the years she was at Donavan High School, she felt that there was more support but this she attributed to the connection she had with the assistant principal who had been her sixth grade teacher in middle school. “I already had a relationship with him from then. He helped me. He was upset that my parents were transferring me to Braedon High School. In a sense, he was more influential to me than my actual counselor,” she stated.

Brenda confessed that in high school she attended few college awareness workshops or planning sessions, but also said she could not recall hearing of them. She wonders if she just never focused on them or if they weren’t advertised enough. The one workshop she and her friend attended had to do with the financial aid application process. On her own, she found opportunities to attend college informational meetings, especially about colleges she was interested in attending. According to Brenda, “I got most of my college information from them. I got their contact information, whoever was doing the workshop. If I ever had questions, I would contact them directly.”

At college, she felt more support from her professors which she attributed to the smaller class size and the closer relationships between professors and students that a small private university can provide. She shared, “I went to small schools for both undergrad and grad school, so there was a lot of communication back and forth with the professors. They were just really encouraging.” She is grateful that the two private
universities she attended for her undergraduate and graduate degrees afforded her these relationships.

**Challenges.** Brenda does not recall encountering too many challenges during her college career. She was grateful she decided to attend smaller private universities because one of her biggest fears was getting lost among so many students. One challenge she always struggled with was asking for time off from work to study during finals week. She stated, “I am bad at asking for time off, so I guess that was a bit of a challenge, too.”

**Advice for future Latino generations.** Brenda’s advice to other Latino students is to follow their passion. She believes that if they follow their passion and do not let other people dissuade them from their goals, they will accomplish what they set out to do. Money should not deter them from going to the university they would like to attend. In addition, she encourages future students to not be afraid to ask questions, lots of questions. According to Brenda, “It’s important to ask a lot of questions of your professors, the schools, and have an open communication with your parents at all times.”

Her advice to parents of these students is to always stay informed and involved in their children’s educational lives. She encourages parents to, “Be more open to what their children want to study and to be as involved at the school as possible, even though it could be a little intimidating or scary for them.” Her advice for educators is to “always be encouraging and have students work to their highest potential.” And, she added, they should “avoid putting students down.”

**Participant 5: Andrés Pérez**

Andrés is an articulate young man who, according to his own account, has worked hard to learn how to communicate and network with professors and acquaintances to
further himself in his field of study. During his years in a highly recognized school of engineering, Andrés participated in engineering clubs and gave back to the community by volunteering to speak to future engineering students.

**Value placed on education.** By the time Andrés was a sophomore at Donavan High School, his older brother had been accepted to a university and Andrés realized that if he wanted to follow in his footsteps, he had to take the right college track courses in high school, too. He shared that his parents always supported him and his brothers in their education. Andrés stated, “I was always into school from a young age. I felt I was good at it and knew that I was going to go to college.” When asked the earliest time he could recall knowing he was going to college, Andrés answered that it was probably around seventh grade. He remembered his seventh grade teacher assigning projects that required more independent learning that pushed “us to study a little bit out of our league.” He shared, “The group of students with me at the time were all college-bound and I knew that all my friends, everybody around me was going to college.” In middle school, his teachers always encouraged him and his classmates to attend college. In particular, he recalls his language arts teacher, Ms. Jefferson, always coaching her students and telling them, “how this activity would look good in college and how this sort of attitude in high school would lead to college.” Overall, Andrés valued education and knew that to be successful in the future he needed to heed his parent’s and teachers’ advice to go to college. He was always excited to hear about college. Andrés shared:

In high school, you learn a little bit about everything but you don’t always get the concentrated group of people that are really motivated about going to school. In
college, you are around people who are motivated to go to school, and these people want to learn. I was excited to be a part of that environment.

Fortunately Andrés had a group of adults and peers around him who saw his interest in going to college and always reinforced his efforts.

Andrés shared that it was not until third grade that he realized the importance of school because his third grade teacher took the time to speak to him about how well he was doing. Both his parents valued education and knew the importance of acquiring good grades. They would inquire about his grades and held a firm but supportive stance on his studies. Andrés shared that during his sophomore year, when he was participating in wrestling and his grades slipped a bit, his parents spoke to him about education coming first and about prioritizing his time.

Their academic expectations for him shifted in high school, as he said, “In high school, they actually expected me to do better because they knew that it mattered more. They said, ‘You know, you are not going to get to college by being mediocre.’” Andrés knew that if his grades slipped, his parents would speak to him about this. He felt that their expectations were amplified as he got older, “There was more pressure because they knew that I had to get to college.” At times, they eased their pressure especially when it came to applying for college, “Neither of my parents had gone to college nor had any experience with the application process so they left it to me. But, they were always asking ‘Hey, are you applying?’ or ‘What do you need to pass?’” He continued, “Whenever I needed any information for my forms, they quickly provided it. There was always an open dialogue between us. My report cards were never hidden.”
Andrés mentioned that his parents communicated how much they valued education through their constant praise and rewards for good grades, especially their high expectations of him. His mother always had aspirations that her sons would attend college, but his father also emphasized the importance of doing well in school. According to Andrés, his father always stated that he brought his family to the United States to provide them the opportunities to study that weren’t available to him, and he wanted to see his sons succeed. Although his mother was his impetus to continue on to higher education, his father was always in the background telling him to take advantage of these opportunities.

**Familial factors.** Both of Andrés’ parents were born in México where they received the majority of their education. His father attended parochial school until the fifth grade and has told Andrés that he would have liked to have continued studying. His father loved school and was good at it. Although he was unsure how long his mother studied in México, Andrés proudly reported that she successfully attained her G.E.D. in the United States when he was about five or six years old. He fondly remembered, “I was always with her the entire time. While she was studying, I was at a little playground right next door in a day care facility.”

When asked if his parents were involved in his education, he stated, “I knew my mother was always supportive of school because she always attended meetings. She would look at the projects I was making, and I could see she was very happy with the projects.” His mother would attend Back to School Nights and Open House events because, as he stated, “I could see her pride, and she was always looking forward to hearing what the teachers had to say about my brothers and me. She never had to be
behind me to do my work.” Both of his parents worked long hours, but his mother attended these important parent meetings and stayed informed about school. Even as he got older, his mother attended Donavan High School’s Back to School Night and Open House.

**Influential people.** There have been many influential people in Andrés’ life, but the person he mentioned most often as being his greatest supporter and mentor was Mr. Lain, a pawn-shop owner and his first employer. Mr. Lain did not have a college degree but as a self-employed business owner, he helped Andrés develop his business acumen and taught him how to communicate with the public. Mr. Lain consistently encouraged Andrés to do well in his studies. Andrés recalls, “If I needed extra time off, he would always encourage me by saying, ‘Yeah, you are going to take some time off to go and study.’” Another mentor Andrés mentioned was the engineer who owns the engineering firm Andrés interned with as an undergraduate and where he is currently employed. He claimed that this gentleman was integral in helping him understand the intricacies of working as a civil engineer and helping Andrés whenever he was struggling with a formula in school. Andrés shared that the owner would find time to help reinforce his understanding.

Due to Andrés’ open nature and willingness to learn, he was also able to establish positive connections with professors and upper classmates in the engineering department who supported him at all times. Andrés described these relationships:

Whenever they saw me doing well, they acknowledged it by praising my efforts and telling me that I did it much better than they would have. If I was struggling, they would take time to tell me how to fix it in such a way.
One professor Andrés appreciated for his no-nonsense attitude was Dr. Kelly, an individual to whom he always turned for advice and assistance. According to Andrés, “He wouldn’t make decisions for me. He gave me options and would say, ‘Have you thought about this?’ Then he would ask me questions and help me lay out my choices.” Dr. Kelly was not only his advisor but his mentor whom he could ask for advice inside and outside of school.

**Academic support.** While at Donavan High School, Andrés was enrolled in honors courses from the advice of his older brother and mother who knew what courses needed to be taken to be on the college-track. He was a member of Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID). Andrés shared, “AVID was a big one for me. They let me know of the importance of being a professional and how to use the college pathway courses to our advantage.” He recalled attending seminars to learn about colleges, how to fill out college applications and financial aid forms, and when to request letters of recommendation. “We would get together to meet on Saturdays or we would make designated time, so that we could sit down in the computer lab to apply. We would all be applying together,” he recalled. AVID advisors would be available to answer questions, remind them about deadlines, and advise them on which extracurricular courses to take that would be beneficial on university applications.

At the university level, Andrés’ biggest resources were his peers in the Engineering Department. He stated:

Having peers that were older than me was fantastic because I could ask them for advice. I would tell them this was going to be my course schedule, and they
would tell me to wait on this class or tell me if this course load was going to be too heavy.

He was aware of the tutoring services provided by the university and shared that they really benefited some of his peers, but he never really utilized these services. He appreciated having taken Advancement Placement (AP) classes in high school because it placed him above many other students who were having trouble registering for the general education courses he had already passed in his high school AP classes.

**Challenges.** Upon being asked what challenges he encountered in college, Andrés said that a big challenge was having to work to pay for his tuition while finding time for school work and other responsibilities. During his entire time in college, he had to work and go to school. “There was never a point where I was not working and going to school at the same time,” Andrés stated. In spite of the school loans he received, he still had to work to support himself financially.

The second challenge he encountered was time management in order to keep up with his course work and prioritize the extracurricular clubs and associations he belonged to. He eloquently describes the importance of participating in these activities:

Part of my challenge was balancing my time, because in order to be a well-rounded individual, or at least as we are told in college, it’s not just a matter of earning a high GPA, it’s a matter of being involved to show that you have some sort of investment, some sort of self-thoughts, some sort of initiative for yourself. It’s something that is really, really considered in the work force, especially during these recessional times because we are all anxious about not finding a job. We are all trying to be as employable as possible.
The last challenge he mentioned as probably being the hardest to overcome was having to reach out to other professionals. As an engineering major, he discovered that he was required to communicate with other individuals in the field regarding research opportunities, scholarships, or applying for internship positions. His challenge was being able to articulate what he knows as an engineer to individuals who do not necessarily have an engineering background. He stated:

You have to take what you know and be able to convey it in such a way to make people understand what you are saying. You have to show what you know. At the same time, you must present yourself in a professional manner—it’s nerve racking.”

**Advice for future Latino generations.** The advice Andrés provided to future generations of Latinos is to be aware that “there are opportunities and people are willing to help you if you are willing to help yourself.” He shared, “If you’re interested and you’re trying, and you’re making the effort, people around you are going to notice. My mother taught me that whenever you try hard, the people around you will help you.” He advises future generations to not keep their plans to themselves. By gaining other people’s input, they can avoid many stumbles and road blocks so that their plans aren’t “doomed from the start.” He also encourages students to network with high school and college peers who have similar college aspirations because “they can help you and you can help them” get through challenges.

The advice he has for parents of Latino students is to always stay interested in their children’s academics. Parents must show their children how proud they are of them and how much school matters. According to Andrés, if students are taught to “crave to learn,” they will seek higher levels of education.
Teachers should tell their students that a college degree is attainable. Educators of future Latino generations should not only talk about the benefits of an education but help students to realize that, “In reality, an education is a new way of approaching life. It’s a new way of understanding life and experiencing life,” he concluded.

**Participant 6: Analí Galindo**

From the beginning of our meeting, Analí demonstrated a respectful, gentle manner that showed throughout the interview. When I asked Analí about her college journey, she shared that she graduated at the top of her class from Braedon High School in June, 2001, and in the fall of that year was accepted to attend a prestigious Ivy League university on the east coast. She recalled her commitment to getting straight A’s her freshman year in high school. It was not until her junior year that she began to prepare for her college applications. She shared that at her high school there were Braedon alumni who were volunteering to guide students through the college application process by helping students proofread their personal essays, advising them, and encouraging them to continue with their application.

**Value placed on education.** Analí shared that it was probably during her sixth year in elementary school that she knew she was going to go to college. Her brother Tony, who is 11 years older than her and who she claimed, “is like my third parent, especially since there is such a large age gap between us. He was always kind of guiding me.” Tony always encouraged her to participate in extracurricular activities and do community service. “It was Tony who always spoke to me about being a well-rounded student so that I could be a better candidate when applying to colleges.” As soon as she entered junior high school, he began to look into programs for her, such as band and color guard.
“However, even though I was doing all that, I had to maintain my straight A’s,” she recounted.

Anali said that her parents were always encouraging her to think about college. She shared:

Like Tony, my parents were also influencing me to consider college to have a better life, especially since I had more opportunities open to me as a child of immigrants. I think Tony helped to open their eyes that this was a possibility.

In addition, she felt it was her duty to go to college because her parents worked so hard to get to this country. She admired them for raising a family without knowing the English language, for raising their children with good morals, and for showing them by example what it meant to work hard. She reflected, “So I just had to study and be a good student. It was my duty to take advantage of all the opportunities that I had been given because of all the hardship they had gone through.” She remembered that her parents were always so proud of her, and she “liked the fact that my parents were always bragging about me, so that was a motivating factor to persevere, to just make them proud and give them something to brag about.” During her sophomore year at Braedon High School, she made the decision to drop band and color guard because, as she stated, “My academics were suffering. So I decided academics were more important.”

When asked how her parents communicated their expectations to her, Anali stated that it was more through their actions than their words. Their expectations did not really change as she got older. They understood that some of the private universities, especially the Ivy League schools, would be expensive but they encouraged her to apply to any school she wanted and told her, “We will worry about that later.”
**Familial factors.** Both of Analí’s parents were born in México. By the third grade, her father had to drop out of primary school, but her mother graduated from high school in México. Once her parents immigrated to the United States, they took some English classes in Adult Education. She remembered how hard her parents worked yet they always attended her school functions, parent conferences, and other parent-teacher meetings. She recalled:

> Any time there was an invitation from the school, they were always there. I knew they placed high value in my education because even if they were tired or they had to work, they would always be at every function. They were always there for me.

Analí’s parents and older brother were always supportive of her academic endeavors. When she had to take courses to help prepare her for the SAT, “It was never an issue for them. School was always a priority,” she added. The month Analí received all her university acceptance letters, she recalled the family sitting down to discuss which option was best for her. They were not focusing as much on the financial aspect of the packet as they were on what the university had to offer Analí. As a team they wanted to choose a university that was the best fit for her.

She recalled the support she received from her family when she was going to fly to the east coast to look at two Ivy League schools who had accepted her application:

> The Ivy League schools had paid for my flight to go visit their campuses, but my brother’s flight wasn’t covered, so my parents pitched in because they knew this visit to the Ivy Leagues was an important one for me to make an informed decision.
She was grateful to have flown to see the two campuses because it helped her decide which university was the best fit for her. Her brother was able to accompany her on the trip which she recalled was incredible.

**Influential people.** As we began to talk about the influential people in her life, Analí reiterated the pivotal role her brother played in her journey toward college. She repeated how important his guidance was and how his support and the support of her parents was invaluable. When asked about influential people in high school, Analí recalled the incredible support she received from all the Advanced Placement (AP) teachers at Braedon High School. In particular, she recalled Ms. García, her AP Spanish instructor, as the teacher who was always reminding them about deadlines, asking if they had turned in this or that application, and asking about their SAT scores to see if they were high enough, and, if not, advising them to take it again the following year. According to Analí, “My high school had very good AP teachers. They were very dedicated to the high-achieving students. So, without them, I don’t think I could have done it.” She continued, “All the AP teachers were always coordinating these programs to expose us to resources that were in our community.” Analí recalled her junior high school mathematics teacher, Ms. Matthew, as being amazing because once she saw Analí’s ambition to excel in math, she “bent over backward for me to get into the high school summer school geometry class even though I was just in junior high.” In all, she believed that the teachers she worked with went above and beyond their jobs to help ambitious students *get onto the right path.*

In addition to the supportive AP teachers in high school, Analí remembered having a cohesive group of friends “that were nerds like me” who were in her AP classes and
shared the same vision as she did to attend college. She recalled that her group of five was always helping one another with college information such as SAT dates, trips to university campuses, and signing up for workshops to help with college applications and financial aid forms. One of Analí’s friends had a cousin who had recently graduated from an Ivy League university who took the group of friends under her wing to show them the steps to take to prepare for college. Analí described the after-school activities the cousin organized and the incredible support she was able to provide all of them. Analí shared, “She’s the one that started the after-school meetings to help us with our personal statements, helped edit our essays, and gave us ideas of what’s good to mention on our application that makes us special.” Analí proudly shared that all five friends successfully attained their university diploma. They all either attended private universities or Ivy League schools.

**Academic support.** When I asked Analí if she made use of any academic support programs at Braedon High School, she stated that other than the support she received from her AP teachers, she really never utilized any of the academic support programs provided at the school. She recalled Upward Bound, and that some of her friends were part of it, but for some reason, she was never accepted into the program. She believes the program was meant for students who needed improvement, and as a straight A student she just did not qualify.

At the university, she appreciated the support the school provided minority students, especially the Hispanic Scholarship Fund which provided her extra spending money for books and other school needs. In addition, she enjoyed being a part of the work study program in college because it gave her opportunities to help the community. She shared,
I would work about 12 hours a week. So it wasn’t too much but it was enough to keep my mind balanced, and it helped me earn extra money for school or just to have fun.”

**Challenges.** Of the challenges Analí encountered in her four years at university in the east coast, the hardest challenge was being so far away from home when her mother was experiencing serious health problems. She recalled speaking to her mother on the telephone daily, feeling homesick and wanting to come home, but her brother Tony would get on the telephone to tell her, “Transferring is not an option.” He would remind her how far she had come and about all the sacrifices the family had made for her to be where she was. She remembered:

He would tell me to toughen up. “Life is the same here,” he would say. He always protected me by making me believe that I was not missing out on anything. When my mom started having health issues, my family didn’t make me aware of it at first, because they did not want me to panic and leave everything behind. Although it was hard at the time and Analí felt guilty being so far away from her mother when she was so ill, she was thankful to her family for helping her through that. After she graduated, Analí’s mother would tell her how proud she was of her and how she did not see the four years as lost years. Analí remembered fondly:

For my mom to see the way I developed into the adult that I became was priceless for her. She always told me that when she was growing up in México, she never dreamt that she would have a daughter who had graduated from such a prestigious Ivy League university. So, seeing how proud she was of this was worth the sacrifice of not spending time with her.
Analí shared that she is grateful for her family’s support in helping her to concentrate on her studies and not the problems the family was going through at the time.

Another challenge she remembered while at university was the culture shock of going from a mostly Hispanic community to a highly affluent Anglo college town. She commented, “It was difficult going from a community where, I mean, everybody looks like you, it’s your same culture, and then going to a location where you are the minority. I felt like I didn’t know how to act around them.” She claimed it was difficult at first but in time, she learned to adjust. She surrounded herself with the people she met and the groups she joined who became her family away from home.

Advice for future Latino generations. The advice Analí has for future generations of immigrant students and the children of immigrants is to develop a strong base of friends at the university they will be attending. She commented, “They will become your support systems, emotionally and academically.” She advises students to, “Keep up with the demands of the professors because expectations are much higher in college than in high school.” She reminds students to “broaden their world” by being open to learning outside the classroom as well as inside the classroom, because they will meet people from “different backgrounds, with different talents, that are intelligent in different ways.”

The advice she has for parents is to encourage their children to go to college and to not put up obstacles for their children to leave home to go to college. Going away will help them develop into strong adults. As to advice for the educators of Latino students, Analí shared that she really doesn’t have any advice for the educators she had because they had been amazing. For all educators, in general, she reminds them to continue to
help their students to achieve to their highest potential because, as she stated, “There is a higher reward when you help people. Even if it’s something you will not be commended for, I think there is a satisfaction in knowing that you had an influence in somebody’s life.”

**Participant 7: Rigo Gaspar**

When I asked Rigo if he was willing to be interviewed for this study, he eagerly agreed but wanted to make sure his nontraditional path through college would be acceptable. I reassured him that his input would be very valuable to my research.

*Value placed on education.* During his years in elementary and middle school, Rigo enjoyed school and considered himself a good student. As he got older, high school became a little more challenging, and he began to lose interest in his academics. When asked when was the first time he would remember wanting to attend college, Rigo responded that during high school, he knew he wanted to continue studying but not necessarily in a four-year university. After high school, he decided to attend an art institute in Colorado that taught music and video production. After one year, he realized that this was not for him, so he returned home and signed up at a local community college.

In junior high school and high school, he could not remember ever being told about college. He stated, “It was more my parents who talked to me about it and telling my brother and me that they wanted us to attend college.” He recalled that at Braedon High School:

It was more the top students that were always addressed and given information
about attending a college or university. I was definitely not at the top of the list of academics in high school. I guess they were just trying to get us to graduate.

His nontraditional path through college came through registering and attending a variety of local community colleges but never really accumulating enough credits to apply for his associate’s degree or to transfer to a four-year university. He shared:

I exceeded the 10-year plan and attended multiple community colleges for various reasons. I also attended two universities in an attempt to get my bachelor’s degree. I was not aware of the structure, the floor plan, of how the college system worked. After two and a half years at the community college, I pretty much had to start all over again because I wasn’t following what I was supposed to be doing.

After he had attended his second community college, and felt it was a dead-end there, too, he was ready to stop going to college especially because he was disappointed at how poorly he was doing academically. He was almost expelled from one community college because he was “withdrawing from or failing more units than I was accumulating.” When asked why he thought he struggled so much, Rigo stated that it was his lack of structure and poor study skills. He said, “When you have study skills, you create a good study environment where you can go home, do homework, and you know how to study. It’s easier for you to overcome certain challenges of things you don’t know.” After a pause, he added, “You learn where to begin and how to approach new subjects or topics.”

Both of Rigo’s parents understood the value of education and were always urging their two sons and daughter to attend college. His mother, in particular, was very encouraging because in México she had received, according to Rigo, “something like a trade certificate or degree.” Although his father stopped attending school around the age
of ten, Rigo claimed, “My dad still knew the benefits of higher education for us. He was supportive in the sense that he would be a provider as long as we attended college.” He recalled that his parents’ encouragement was mostly verbal. His father would explain to them how difficult it was to be a laborer and it was to Rigo and his siblings’ advantage “to study and find a desk job that didn’t require so much physical labor and that paid more.” Because Rigo’s parents worked, they were not able to participate in school events during the day such as parent workshops, PTA, or School Site Council meetings, but they attended parent conferences, Back to School Nights, and Open House meetings regularly. His parents also attended their children’s extracurricular events.

**Familial factors.** Rigo’s parents were both born in México. His father dropped out of elementary school during the fourth or fifth grade in order to work to help his family. His mother finished high school and afterwards received a business or accounting certificate from a trade school in México. Having some experience with post-secondary schooling, Rigo’s mother had a general idea of how the higher education system worked, which was an advantage in showing him the management side. As the eldest of her sisters, his mother was also the example for her own siblings.

**Influential people.** When asked about the influential people in his life who helped him successfully attain his bachelor’s degree, Rigo mentioned that in high school he had an English teacher, Ms. Bailor, whose unorthodox method of teaching made him realize that there was a different way of learning. He shared:

> Through her, I realized that there isn’t just one specific way to learn. She would use music in her lessons. Just very creative. She was influential in the sense that I knew there was another way but I just did not know what that way was.
In addition to Ms. Bailor, Rigo also had two very close friends who helped him throughout high school. One of these friends was Jessica with whom he later attended a few community college courses. She was willing to explain how to register for college and how to do things. After two years, Jessica transferred to a four-year university while Rigo continued to move from one community college to another. Rigo shared that at Braedon High School, Jessica had high grades and was on the college track. She knew of the resources available in the counseling center. Again, he reiterated that at high school, “If you were at a higher academic level, you got the information about college, and if you weren’t you didn’t.” The second friend he mentioned was Lisa, who at the last minute helped him pass a critical English Literature test in order for him to graduate. Rigo remembered:

Lisa took me to the library for about two weeks, and we went over the questions on the study guide. She helped me to associate the responses with familiar stuff, like musical lyrics, songs, so that I could remember the answers.

He proudly shared that he got 98% on the final, which the teacher questioned and wondered if he had cheated. Needless to say, Rigo graduated and was able to participate in Braedon High School’s commencement ceremony. He appreciated the support he received from his two friends and believes that the breakdown in communication between the school and home was a contributing factor to his struggles, “I am not completely blaming the school system, but there was a lack of communication from the site as far as how I was doing.”
The most influential person in college for him was Ms. Desmond, who was a counselor at one of the community colleges he attended. At a time when he was ready to give up, she asked him what he wanted to do. He recounted:

I remembered meeting with her and I told her I wanted to go into psychology to be a counselor, but then I showed her my grades. After looking at them, she told me not to worry, that there was something called “academic renewal,” which I had never heard of. She gave me hope, which is probably why I recommitted myself to continue with higher education.

Rigo explained that academic renewal allowed him to omit the grades he received for previously completed courses from the final computation of his cumulative grade point average. This gave him a fresh start and a desire to finally get his bachelor’s degree.

Rigo also shared that another group of people he found influential in his life were the individuals he would see on a day-to-day basis at the elementary school and middle school where he worked as a classified employee. He admired the administrators’ and teachers’ professionalism and their real-life efforts to help children, which in turn gave him insight into how the academic system worked.

**Academic support.** Listening to Rigo describe struggling through high school, I asked him if he was able to access any academic support systems at school. He couldn’t recall any support being available to him. He knew that the students with a higher GPA were provided with material about college, but he wasn’t privy to this information. In community college, he would use the tutoring services they provided, recalling that, “Tutoring was pretty awesome. It was a good feeling to be able to go there after class and finish my homework. You would walk out of there and you felt very productive.” Rigo
often visited the advisement office which helped him with his class schedule and with setting up his four-year plan. He reflected on the difference between the support systems available to him during his high school years and those available in high schools now and he stated it was a whole different world. Now that students have electronic access to information about colleges, advisement, and support systems, he is hoping less students will encounter the challenges he had to endure.

**Challenges.** Considering the trials Rigo encountered in college, he claimed that there were so many challenges in his journey through college that he did not know where to begin. His biggest challenge was not knowing what attending college entailed and what the requirements were to get a degree. He did not realize that if you wanted to major in a certain area, there was a course guide of the classes to take for each major. Rigo remembered, “I didn’t know this course list existed. All I knew was that I was interested in psychology so I took every psychology course that was offered at the college.” He was two years into community college before he realized there was a list, and by that time, he had only fulfilled one section of his requirements to transfer to a four year university. At that point, “I basically had to start from scratch,” he said.

Rigo’s second challenge was completing the coursework. He was working part-time, hoping to be a full-time college student, and struggling to keep his grades up. He embarrassingly remembered the letter he received from one of the community colleges he attended informing him he would be expelled if he continued to withdraw or drop classes. It is at that point he felt he hit rock bottom in his studies but thanks to Ms. Desmond, his counselor at the community college, he realized that with academic renewal, if he got at least C’s in his courses, he could have another chance at his college dreams. Through the
tutoring services available at the community college, and the guidance of professors and advisors, Rigo was able to improve his study habits.

The third challenge he mentioned was the financial aspect of paying for tuition. As an older student, having bills and having to work full-time, he really did not qualify for government financial assistance. He had to get loans, which started accruing quickly as he took upper-level undergraduate courses.

**Advice for future Latino generations.** When asked what advice he would give future generations of Latino students regarding going to college, the first thing he said was “Utilize the resources that are available to you, financial and academic support. There are so many within campuses, on and off campus.” He advises students to inform their parents of what it will take to get through college so that they can support them when they encounter challenges. He encourages students to pace themselves and set up a roadmap of where they are going which will help keep them focused. His final word of advice for students is to try to find part-time work or an internship in their field of study. This will provide them with the necessary hands-on experiences that will give them practical knowledge and not just book knowledge.

As for parents, he advises them to heed their children’s request if they are showing interest in going to college. He concluded, “More immigrant parents understand the benefits of higher education and the challenges they must face, but they must be available to their children. They must support them and seek the necessary resources for them.” Rigo concluded that educators must truly believe that their students can attain a college degree. Their belief will become a reality if the students believe it also.
Participant 8: Maritza García

At the start of our interview, Maritza shared that she is one of those dedicated, intense individuals who, according to her, loves to learn and is passionate about her profession. She is the only one of the eight participants who holds two master’s degrees and has been contemplating going back to work on her administrative credential.

Value placed on education. From as early as Maritza could remember she always enjoyed school. She remembered always getting lost in her books, which in retrospect she blames for her poor social skills. She recounted that, for her, school was an escape from her home life. The arguments and volatile environment at home between her parents and siblings would drive her to turn to books because she felt safest in her room reading. Maritza described an incident when she had to leave her home to move in with a friend because her father had threatened to do harm to the entire family. This was particularly noteworthy because it demonstrated Maritza’s resiliency to succeed and continue with her studies even during such chaotic times. At the time, she was enrolled in community college and had a full-time job, yet, was able to get A’s in her two psychology classes.

Maritza could not recall hearing her father or her mother telling her siblings or her that they wanted them to go to college. She does, however, remember her mother always telling her that she did not want Maritza to work as hard as she did and to take advantage of the all sacrifices she had to make to come to the United States. Her mother worked as a seamstress from 4:00 in the morning until late in the evening most days. Because she saw how hard her mother was working, Maritza realized that by continuing her schooling she would not let her mother down. “I knew that one of the reasons my mom moved to this
country was for a better life. She had lost two children before me and I knew that it was a
great sacrifice for her to come here, especially having to put up with my dad.” Her
mother knew that her children needed some type of a career to be successful in the future.
Maritza shared, “My mom never thought I would get a university degree, but she just did
not want us to struggle as much as she had. She always encouraged us to do well in
school, but she did not know how to help us.”

When asked if her parents cared about her education and how they would convey
this to her, she stated that although she and her mother really did not have an open
communication, her mother’s support was always evident in her actions if not her words.
Maritza graduated early from high school. After seven years working as a warehouse
manager, she realized that this was not for her and that she wanted to pursue her dreams
of becoming a teacher. At the age of 24, she enrolled in a local community college.
Maritza was also motivated to continue studying by Marie, a close friend, who has been
an incredibly influential person throughout her life, from elementary school to the
present. This friend had a better understanding of what classes to take in college and
supported Maritza’s efforts.

**Familial factors.** Maritza shared that her mother’s highest level of education was
up to the first months of third grade. Her mother’s parents kept her at home so that she
could take care of her bedridden grandmother. Maritza’s mother’s job was to care for the
farm animals and her grandmother. Maritza proudly stated, “What impressed me about
my mom was that in that short time she was in school she learned to read and write in
Spanish. That was something to be proud of in her case.” Her father did not go to school.
As the second to the youngest in his family, he was not encouraged to go to school. Maritza’s father was only interested in working the ranch.

She remembered that her mother and father were not involved in her education. Her mother’s only visits to school were for parent conferences. Maritza says that the only people who helped her with her homework and other school-related activities were her teachers.

**Influential people.** When asked to think deeply about any influential people in her life Maritza responded, “Nobody.” After some thought, she declared, “I’d say Marie.” She claimed that her close friend, Marie, was probably the most influential person in her life. She shared that, “In high school, there was nobody. That is where I kind of broke apart because of all the things going on at my house. I really didn’t care about school anymore.” The teachers who were supportive and cared for her were at the elementary level, which is when she loved going to school. The only mentors she could identify were Marie and Marie’s husband, who Maritza claimed became like her second father. Maritza described how her dysfunctional home life affected her:

I was so, so shy and so into my own little world with my books being my only escapism, that the only people that could reach me were them. I was very withdrawn. I didn’t let people into my life.

Due to the chaos of her home life and her lack of interest in school, during her sophomore year, she transferred from Donavan High School to the district’s continuation school and graduated with her GED at the end of her sophomore year.

Maritza also named one of her maternal aunts as someone who motivated her and showed her a different way of life. This aunt, who had no children of her own, would
pick her up from home and take Maritza to her house where she and her husband provided a safe and calm environment for her. Despite the jealous remarks from her siblings, Maritza was grateful for those opportunities of normalcy and always looked forward to these outings.

**Academic support.** Maritza was not aware of any academic resources available at Donavan High School, and she claimed that if there were any, she did not know about them. Her second year at a local community college, she heard about Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOP&S). She described her satisfaction with the program: “It had counselors that were really good. Better than the general education counselors available to all the other students.” The counselors provided one-to-one help to the students in the EOP&S program and kept track of her classes and made sure she was on the right pathway for graduation.

**Challenges.** Maritza shared that the main challenge she encountered throughout her college journey was having to survive her home life. Academics were always easy for her. She was always a straight A student in spite of the chaos she was living with at home. In high school and college, Maritza always felt that she would take two steps forward, one step back. Regarding the challenges she faced and how she overcame them, Maritza shared:

Some of the challenges were trying to focus on completing assignments while working full time and dealing with the emotional chaos in my family life. For example, my father was arrested for domestic violence and was furious with my mom. He kept threatening her, and she finally decided to leave our house to him and take out money to buy another house which led us to be homeless for three
months before purchasing our new home. I survived by taking one day at a time and focusing on my classes, school work, my job, and my family.

During this time, Maritza lived with her friend Marie whose home was peaceful and a sanctuary for her.

**Advice for future Latino generations.** When asked what advice she would give future generations of Latino students, Maritza stated that she would advise them not to give up, even when things are overwhelming in their lives. She advises them “to have dreams for a better life and to work hard to make those dreams a reality.”

Her advice to the parents of Latino students is to always support their children’s dreams and endeavors. She encourages them to educate themselves about college, especially how to help them apply for financial aid. She advises parents to “be their children’s rock and to encourage them when thing gets tough and they get discouraged.”

The advice she has for teachers is to be sensitive about how they treat their students and what they say to them. She stated:

Teachers sometimes do not know what their student's family life is like. They need to be encouraging and create a safe learning environment where students can learn and see different possibilities other than what they see in their home life.

She concluded with a poignant example of how her resilient nature helped her to succeed:

For example, I saw a different way of life, a better way, by observing my surroundings and by reading about different lives through the eyes of various characters. That helped me be more determined that my future was going to be different from my childhood.
The Grand Story

Connections, similarities, and differences were identified during the restorying of the participants’ narratives regarding their academic journey that led to their successful attainment of a college degree. Important connections were identified in the value the parents, family, and students placed on education; the familial factors that combined the parents’ level of education and their involvement in their children’s education; the impact influential people had on the participants’ academic success; and the academic support systems available to them. A few similarities noted were the lack of American social and cultural capital the parents and students displayed, the poor awareness of the college system as they entered a post-secondary institution, and the resiliency participants’ displayed. Differences revolved around the parents’ level of education and the academic support systems available to the participants (see Table 4).

Table 4

Resonances and Reverberations Within the Grand Story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Value placed on education</td>
<td>Lack of social capital</td>
<td>Parent’s level of education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Familial Factors</td>
<td>Lack of cultural capital</td>
<td>Challenges were slightly different for each individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influential people</td>
<td>Limited knowledge of college system</td>
<td>Parent involvement in their education</td>
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<td>in their lives</td>
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<td>Academic support</td>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>Academic support available in high school</td>
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<td>systems</td>
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<td>Financial struggles to pay for college tuition</td>
<td>Academic support services utilized in college</td>
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Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) stated that as narrative researchers, we are “seeking resonances and reverberations that help us imagine who we might become” (p. 582). In this study, the resonances in the subtheme of the value placed on education were
that most of the participants lacked the cultural capital to know about college preparation
courses such as Honors and Advanced Placement classes at the high school level, and
they lacked the social capital to network to find school and community resources.

The majority of participants in this study had not heard of any academic support
programs in their schools that could help prepare them for college. These supplemental
academic support programs provide students who are not exposed to a college-going
culture in their homes with important college preparation strategies and an understanding
of higher education expectations (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Noguera, 2008). Most of
the participants experienced what Chavez-Reyes (2010) called academic neglect, which
was due largely to the lack of multicultural competence of their guidance counselors.

The reverberations that were revealed were the participants’ immigrant parents’
lack of social capital, which could have given the family access to important community
connections and networks as seen in other cultures. Of the eight participants only four
had a parent attain a post-secondary degree or certificate. Gina Gonzalez’ father was the
only parent who received a Bachelor’s degree in an American university. The parents of
the other four participants lacked the level of education that could help build the social
and cultural capital necessary to access the higher education pathway (Noguera, 2008).
Most of the parents had little knowledge of the American school system, or the
appropriate cultural capital, that could help them guide their children through the
demands of higher education.

In all the narratives, the participants identified important individuals on their
journey to college who helped them understand who they were as students and the
potential they had to successfully attain a college degree. These pivotal individuals
became the cultural guides that could help newly arrived immigrants and later
generations understand the college-admission pathway, which can be incomprehensible
to immigrant parents (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009).

These mentors were both peers and adults. The peer mentors ranged from
relatives to high school friends who were integral in getting them to sign up for college
awareness workshops or helping them fill out their college applications. The adult
mentors in their lives, from relatives to teachers to counselors to friends, provided them
with support and guidance to believe in themselves as individuals and encouraged them
to continue to higher education. These mentors become positive role models for the
participants in the study who, as Ceballo (2004) claimed, were instrumental figures in
their lives. The formal and informal relationships built with non-family members helped
Rigo, Andres, and Brenda create a bridge between home and school, and it helped them
learn how to navigate through the higher education school system, which Suárez-Orozco
et al. (2010) see as being crucial for the academic adjustment and success of immigrant
students.

Summary

Chapter 4 included an account of the experiences of second-generation children of
Mexican immigrants that contributed to their successful attainment of a post-secondary
degree. It provided their journeys through high school and college, of their parents’ and
mentors’ influences, and of the challenges they encountered along the way. Chapter 5
will address the research questions proposed at the beginning of this study and make
connections with the research literature as the themes derived from the qualitative data
collected during the participants’ interviews as they shared their stories are discussed.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify influences that contributed to the academic success of second-generation children of Mexican immigrants as measured through their successful attainment of a post-secondary degree. With the proper support and effective college awareness systems in place, more generations of Latino students can have the resources to successfully attain a post-secondary degree, which is critical as we move towards an information age with economic security dependent upon the education level of each individual (Baum & Flores, 2011; Crosnoe & Turley, 2011). As the fastest growing youth population in the United States, it is projected that by 2040, one out of three children will be a child of immigrants with Latinos making up 48% of the students in California public schools (Noguera, 2008; Plunkett et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003). As a country, it will be crucial that we educate the Latino children of today to be the leaders of tomorrow.

The researcher sought to identify influences in the lives of eight second-generation children of Mexican immigrants that impacted their decision to attend college and the challenges, if any, they encountered during their college journey and how these challenges were overcome. Among the influencing factors that contributed to the immigrant students’ success were the parents’ belief that education is the key to a successful future. Additional influences identified in the existing research literature were: (1) the value parents and family placed on education, which was integral to this study’s Latino participants’ desire to succeed and persevere; (2) the level of immigrant parent involvement in their children’s education plus the social and cultural capital immigrant parents possessed, which can be linked to the parents’ level of education; (3) the
assistance the immigrant participants from this study received from supplemental academic support programs in high school; and (4) the adult and peer mentors in the Latino students’ lives during their academic journey, which were particularly significant in the educational success of the individuals.

The participants in this study shared their stories regarding their pathway to college and how their parents’ and families’ belief in their ability to succeed helped them persevere during this time of their lives. They shared information about the influential adults and peers in their lives and the pivotal role they played in helping them through high school and/or college. The stories highlighted the challenges the participants encountered during their high school and college years and how they were able to overcome these challenges. Each narrative ended with the participants giving advice to future Latino students and to the parents and educators of these students, as they prevail to successfully attain a university degree.

**Analysis**

Upon analyzing the data, four themes emerged in the grand story from the narrative stories collected. One theme that was present in every one of the eight participants’ lives was the value their parents and family members placed on education. The second emergent theme was the importance of having mentors, which was evident in all eight participants’ stories. Adult and peer mentors played an extremely important role as participants navigated through high school and college life. The third theme that emerged was the need for a more systematic process of educating parents and students about college preparation courses and college awareness as early as the primary grades.
The last theme that emerged was the need for high schools to clearly advertise and provide more students with effective supplemental academic support programs.

**Valuing Education**

The value parents placed on education was integral to the individuals participating in this study. Most of the participants’ parents held no more than an elementary education; yet, they knew the importance of education and held high expectations for their children. Gándara and Contreras (2009) tell of the **hopefulness** immigrant parents have of seeing their children become academically successful. Even when immigrant parents have a rudimentary education, they will often list wanting a better education for their children as the main reason for immigrating to this country (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Participants in this study spoke frequently of how their parents always expected them to study so that they could get a better job and not have to work as hard as they were required to do. The interviewees told of the hardship their parents had to endure upon moving to the United States and of how hard they saw their mother or father work which, in turn, intrinsically motivated them to want to succeed to make their parents proud. Easley et al. (2012) shared that having a high aspiration of academic achievement is the cornerstone for many an immigrant adolescent to want to succeed to honor his/her parents’ struggle and their sacrifice of immigrating to a new country. An immigrant parent’s high aspirations for their offspring help the immigrant children become resilient even at times when their parents could not advocate for their child’s academic needs (Orozco, 2007).
Many of the individuals who participated in this study demonstrated the characteristics found in what resiliency theorist Benard (1991) identified as internal and external resilient qualities that allow individuals to cope in high-stress situations. Of the eight participants, Maritza and Gina demonstrated how resilience in an individual can overcome any obstacle: Gina was faced with a tragic loss in her life at the pivotal point of a young adult’s transition from high school to college, and Maritza’s dysfunctional family life did not hinder her ability to attain two Master’s degrees. All the participants demonstrated self-efficacy as, on their own, they found a way to understand how the college system worked and how to succeed despite the struggle they endured working full time, not understanding the curriculum, or dealing with personal hardship. They all displayed the environmental characteristics of protective factors that Benard (1993) claims elicit resilience in individuals by having caring relationships and safe environments, receiving messages of high expectations from their family, and having opportunities for meaningful participation in college. The participants’ intrinsic motivation was nurtured by their clear and realistic goal of attaining a college degree, which McMillan and Reed (1994) see “as having ‘hope’ despite all the negative circumstances in their lives” (p. 138).

The Importance of Mentors

The second most influential practice the participants discussed which made a difference in their academic journey was the influential people they had in their lives during their time in high school, college, or university. Adults as well as peers were able to affect the decisions the participants made with regards to college. The adult mentors the participants mentioned created a safe environment for the Latina/o participants to ask
questions about college applications and other relevant college awareness topics. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) share that immigrant students’ academic success is closely correlated to the supportive individuals in their lives. By building relationships with teachers, administrators, and other educational mentors, immigrant students are given the necessary resource to have school success (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). These are the necessary first steps to help students and parents broaden their social capital as they begin to build their cultural capital by learning the norms of the American school system from elementary to the college level. Stanton-Salazar (2004) stresses the importance of having minority youth build relationships with positive role models and to go beyond the simple exposure to the others academic values and identities. Significant upward advancement in a youth’s academic trajectory occurs when a mentor or advocate enters the student’s life (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

At the high school level, the innovative teachers and the educators who mentored a student regarding his or her grades or academic choices were inspirational to the participants interviewed. Gándara and Contreras (2009) discussed the important role a teacher’s perceptions have on the student’s academic performance. At the community college level and university level, the guidance counselors who educated students on how the college systems works made a difference in the lives of some of the participants. The professors who encouraged students to believe in themselves were also influential in helping the participants move forward in their college journey. De la Cruz (2008) lauded the benefits that even limited mentoring can have on students. There are more positive mentoring outcomes if the mentors are of the same cultural background as the student (De la Cruz, 2008; Noguera, 2008). The adult relatives and friends—parents, siblings,
cousins, grandparents, employers—were mentors who provided much needed support, academically and emotionally.

In addition, participants shared that the guidance and support peers provided them were instrumental in helping them enroll in the correct college preparation classes in high school or attend an important college workshop with them. Peer mentors provided the needed impetus for some of them to complete a college application as well as helping with homework and projects. In many cases, the peer mentors were at a higher academic level, which came with the added benefit of being able to provide college awareness information during the interviewees’ Honors or AP classes—information that was often not readily available to all students. These high-achieving peers provided important social resources that are typically available to middle-income students who have parents who understand the college system due to the cultural capital they possess (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Choy et al. (2009) found that a good predictor of minority students enrolling in college was if they had friends also enrolling in college. This was the case with some of the study’s participants who either became the example for others to enroll in a university or whose members in their circle of friends all attended college due to one another’s encouragement.

**College Awareness Education for Students and Parents**

College awareness education for students and parents is critical. In the analysis of the narrative stories collected, a recurring challenge kept emerging regarding the students’ and parent/family’s lack of college awareness, which included their limited knowledge of the college system and financial aid. All eight participants at one time or another mentioned their lack of knowledge of how the college educational system worked
and/or how to access the necessary resources (i.e., financial aid and academic counseling) to make their transition from high school to college less traumatic. Due to their limited social and cultural capital, which led to limited educational capital, immigrant parents were unable to seek the resources to help their children during their transition to college. An immigrant parent’s often lower level of formal education limits their cultural capital which, in turn, limits their exposure and understanding of the American school system, of policies, and higher education pathways (Noguera, 2008). Similar to what Noguera (2008) outlined, most of the participants’ parents had minimal social networks that could give them access to resources and social benefits. Social networks are typically based on family ties or association with religious groups or other influential groups that have existed over time (Noguera, 2008). Parents could offer their support by instilling heritage pride in their children, but they were not able to guide students in choosing the proper courses for their area of study or applying for the necessary financial assistance.

One of the benefits first- and second-generation Latino individuals experience is the closeness to their native roots and the pride their immigrant parents have instilled within them to become successful adults in their new country. Even with a limited understanding of college, the parents of the participants in the study inherently knew that by instilling the mindset of working hard and putting school first, they would be helping their children succeed so that they would not be sentenced to working in menial, low-wage jobs as they had been. The second-generation students in this study all had lucrative, well-paid jobs. They did not follow the traditional assimilation path of letting go of their parents’ heritage or cultural expectations, morals, and principles to adopt or acculturate to their new country. All individuals in the study spoke Spanish, were proud
of where their ancestors had come from, and had strong self-efficacy of being bicultural. They were proud of their heritage. The eight participants followed what the research literature identifies as simultaneous or selective acculturation which occurs when both the native and the host country’s values, language, and culture are nurtured and allowed to develop (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Selective acculturation occurs when immigrants from the same country/region, who may have lower levels of cultural capital, arrive to strong co-ethnic communities. The adoption of the host country’s culture and language is encouraged while ensuring to simultaneously maintain the home language and preserve key elements of the parent’s culture. (Portes et al., 2009; Portes & Hao, 2002).

Historically the new second generation has demonstrated characteristics of segmented downward assimilation, which Portes and Zhou (1993) state occurs when the current second generation let go of their parents’ cultural expectations, morals, and principles to adopt the mannerisms and the beliefs of an adversarial subculture led by later generations. The survival instincts of some members of these later generations have led them to reject their heritage culture along with the norms, principles, and culture of the host country (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Portes et al., 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1993). The end result of downward assimilation is the stagnation and hindering of intergenerational mobility.

The narratives analyzed in this study showed the positive outcome of having immigrant parents and children follow the selective acculturation model of assimilation, which was corroborated by the eight participants’ stories. Their parents embraced the educational expectations of their new country but maintained the language, cultural traditions, and morals of their native country. The lack of educational experience did not
hinder the participants’ parents from holding high expectations and valuing education, but with a systematic system of disseminating college awareness to parents and students, less Latino students will fall into the cycle of downward assimilation.

**Increased Supplemental Academic Support Programs**

Traditionally, supplemental academic support programs at the secondary level, such as Upward Bound, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), Puente, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) have been instrumental in helping many Latino students prepare for college (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Louie, 2012; Sadowski, 2013). These programs help fill necessary college-awareness gaps by giving students a road map of what to expect as they move to higher education.

In this study, only three of the eight individuals reported having been part of one of these academic support programs. Two individuals joined AVID, and one joined Upward Bound. These programs did provide the students with the necessary information about college. They felt supported and knew that if they encountered road blocks as they completed college applications or financial aid forms that they could turn to the advisors of these programs for assistance.

The five other Latina/o participants repeatedly stated that they had not heard of any supplemental academic support programs at their high school, and, if they had, they were not eligible to participate. They believed that transitioning to college would have been less stressful if they had a guide or an idea of what to expect. Two participants stated that maybe they would not have wasted so much time if they had a road map from the beginning of their college journey. Some of the participants stated that they were
really not encouraged by their counselors or teachers at their high schools. Four
individuals shared anecdotes of how in high school they were discouraged to take college
preparation courses or apply for university because they did not have the grades or were
not college material, which identifies an injustice many of our Latina/o students must
endure in our schools.

A simple definition of social justice is the treatment of all individuals within our
society in a just and fair manner (Blackmore, 2013; Robinson, 2013). At a time when
Latino immigrants are facing discriminatory obstacles in their lives, educational leaders
need to advocate fairness and respect of all marginalized individuals in our school
systems. Theoharis’ (2007) proclaims that educational leaders must develop inclusion
practices for all students, such as English Language Learners, students with disabilities,
and students who are traditionally segregated from participating in school activities,
which was the case with the Latina/o participants in this study whose academic Grade
Point Average (GPA) impeded their access to college awareness information and from
taking college preparation courses. With proper dissemination of college awareness
information as early as the elementary level, more immigrant students will learn how the
college system works and more students can avoid the community college revolving door
syndrome of transferring from one community college to another. The ease of dropping
out from one community college to enroll in another is perpetuated by the lack of focus
and guidance many students face upon leaving high school and entering college, which in
turn leads to a high number of college drop-outs after the first year (Barefoot, 2004).
Implications

The Latino Achievement Gap continues to grow as more Latino children become eligible to enter higher education (Madrid, 2011). Although within the last three decades, there has been notable improvement in Latino academic ability, these gains have been insignificant when compared to the academic achievement of white students (Madrid, 2011). Recent findings from the California Department of Education (2010) show that while there was a 90% passing rate of the state math test by white classmates, only 68% of Latinos passed the test. In English Language Arts, 90% of the white students passed in comparison to 66% of Latinos who passed. Latinos did not progress as expected: “What is alarming about the academic achievement of Latinos is that in 2009 Latinos had yet to reach the same level of achievement as whites in 2003. Clearly, the gap is not narrowing” (Madrid, 2011, p. 8).

In order for parents, educators, and administrators to fully understand how to better prepare future generation of Latino immigrant youth for success in school and successful attainment of a post-secondary degree they must consider the following: the value of an education, the role of mentors, college awareness, access to supplemental and academic support programs. Each will discussed as follows,

The Value of an Education

Holding high expectations for their children and showing that they, as parents, value education matters in the child’s future success. Immigrant parents’ lack of education should not hinder their ability to participate in their children’s schooling. Participation can range from being a visible entity at the school site by volunteering or regularly attending parent meetings to simply helping with homework or ensuring that
their children have pride in doing well at school. When parents adopt a college-going culture at home that always puts education, good grades, and hard work first, they are promoting an environment that will lead to their children’s academic success. Parents need to advance their understanding of technology and prepare themselves to support and monitor their children’s access to the internet. Educational institutions need to provide parents with workshops on the changing nature of homework and help them understand the different online platforms for learning, social media, and information literature.

Immigrant parents can engender cultural pride in their children by sharing their journey to this country. By doing this, they are promoting co-ethnic pride in their children. Co-ethnic pride develops as adoption of the host country’s language, morals, principles, and culture is encouraged while the heritage country’s language, morals, principles, and culture are retained. As important as the cultural pride immigrant parents can instill in their children is the understanding of gender equity in the Latino family. Latinas should continue to be encouraged to pursue a college degree. In this study, the Latinas that graduated in the early 1990s, who were expected to get married right after high school, faced more gender inequities than the Latinas who graduated in 2000 and 2010. Educating our Latino parents about the opportunities available to their daughters will assist in ensuring gender equity in Latino immigrant homes.

Parents can build self-efficacy in their children by helping them persevere and become resilient individuals. Most immigrant parents have faced hardships and struggles yet have survived. They want to protect their children from reliving these trials, but it is through these experiences and by overcoming adversities that future generations of
Latinos are taught to be resilient. Parents must refrain from making excuses for their children’s lack of interest in school or for not working hard.

**The Role of Mentors**

Mentors are essential for success. All immigrant students, in particular newly arrived immigrant students, benefit from carefully planned mentoring programs (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Adult and peer mentors become the guides for students who lack the cultural capital and social capital to access the college-admission pathway. Dedicated teachers, counselors, or influential adults can share their experiences and their stories with Latino students.

Through the collaborative efforts of school districts and communities, mentoring programs can be established that will benefit all parties. Latina/o students and parents benefit from having resources that can assist with questions about college and can help with financial aid applications. As immigrant parents build their social capital, their children are building their cultural capital, which will benefit future Latino generations of immigrant students and promote intergenerational mobility. The school district benefits from having more students graduate from high school and successfully graduate from a post-secondary institution. The community benefits from having an educated, democratic citizenry who will promote positive change for the good of the community.

Students can strengthen their social capital by participating in mentorship programs and support activities that help them transition from high school to college. Rigo Gaspar’s college journey was a good example of the importance of peer mentors who help in high school. His story also highlighted the need for early identification of
students’ in need of academic guidance to avoid the community college *revolving door syndrome* of transferring from one community college to the next.

**College Awareness**

The importance of providing college awareness courses to immigrant parents and students is a key factor in the academic success of immigrant students. Along with parental support and resiliency, Gandara (1995) listed two types of opportunities as critical factors that lead to a student’s post-secondary success. The first opportunity is a student’s participation in college preparatory classes at the high school level. The second opportunity is accessing information and resources that provide college awareness.

Immigrant families benefit when school districts develop a systemic college awareness program at all school sites that is available to them. It is essential that these courses are provided in the heritage language at varying times of the day so that more parents have access to the information.

High schools can have a system in place that allows counselors and advisors to reach out to Latina/o immigrant students and families as early as the students’ seventh grade year in junior high school. Through these awareness sessions, parents will be informed of the different academic tracks available to their children. Parents will have enough time to access their children’s grades and seek the necessary resources if their child is in need of academic recovery.

**Access to Supplemental Academic Support Programs**

In that leading research shows that Supplemental Academic Support Programs (SASP) are integral in the college preparation of immigrant students (Gándara, 1995; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Louie, 2012; Sadowski, 2013), academic institutions need
to prioritize their funds so that more academic support programs are accessible to more students. Energetic, positive, trained personnel are needed to monitor student engagement and growth. With the assistance of SASP advisors, at-risk Latina/o students can be identified and provided with academic renewal opportunities as early as freshman year and throughout their high school career. In addition, a mandatory SASP introductory information meeting needs to be scheduled for all eighth and ninth grade students so that this information is shared with all students—which includes Honors, Advanced Placement, English Language Learners, Special Education, and at-risk students—upon leaving middle school and immediately upon entering high school.

At the federal and state level, policies need to be developed that require at least 80% of the students in a high school to participate in an effective SASP. High schools will need the funds to hire the personnel to implement one or more of these programs at their site.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The following recommendations for future research emerged during the development of this study, through the participants’ narrative interviews and through the gathering of research theories and ideas:

- As the twenty first century progresses, bringing new challenges of an information age, a study could be conducted to identify the barriers and limitations that the twenty-first century Information Age brings to immigrant children.

- During the rise of the Information Age, what is needed to prepare immigrant students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who have limited access to
technology to be successful in a global society could also be explored. In particular, a question to be considered might be, what do policy makers and educational leaders need to begin doing now to prepare immigrant students more fully for success in the Information Age?

- Another study could investigate whether millennial youth as second-generation Mexican-American students will become less resilient than individuals from earlier time periods.
- Further research is needed to continue to identify successful practices of educational institutions and educational leaders in promoting the academic success of all students.

**Concluding Reflections**

By educating Latino families and their children about college requirements as early as elementary school, families can begin to build their cultural capital. Parents could then be able to guide their children through the proper college preparation channels in high school that would better prepare their sons and daughters for a post-secondary degree. Latino families would be able to broaden their social capital as they learned to network with influential school and community members. In addition to building their social capital in a new country to help their children succeed, immigrant parents must continue with their cultural practices of high expectations and of having family members contribute to the upbringing of a child. This complex process helps to promote familismo which Chavez-Reyes (2010) describes as the bond between family members that promotes personal ties “and gives members a financial and psychological safe place in a world that operates on institutional racism and class discrimination” (p. 153). A parents’
willingness to sit down with their children to do homework, despite perhaps a limited understanding of the work, is what Gándara (1995) identified as one of the supportive factors for instilling motivation within a student.

For many years, studies reported that Latino parents did not value education and discouraged their children from attending college (Valencia, 2002). More recent studies, as outlined in the literature review of this study and in the data collected from the participants’ narratives, confirm that this is not the case. Although Latino immigrant parents are unaware of the resources available to them that can help bridge the expectations from school and home, their strong presence and support of their children’s academic endeavors play key roles in a student’s success, as was evident in the lives of Graciela, Gina, Adriana, Brenda, Andrés, Analí, Rigo and Maritza.

Latinos will soon become a driving force in this country. Our responsibility is to educate all Latino students, immigrants and non-immigrants, so that they can become intelligent, efficient, empathetic, and hard-working members of our democratic society. The academic accomplishments of the eight second-generation Mexican-American individuals who participated in this study are a testament that with the proper systems in place, more generations of Latino students can achieve their dream of acquiring a post-secondary degree. Their resilience and success is a tribute to the parents who raised them as proud descendants of their Mexican ancestry, but also as proud citizens of the United States of America. They are proof that their parents’ sacrifices to come to the United States to live the American dream were not in vain.
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Appendix A: Informed Consent Forms

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Information about Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study about the Influences that Contribute to the Academic Success of Second-Generation Children of Mexican Immigrants: A Narrative Inquiry Study. This form provides you with information about the study. The study has been approved for conduct by the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona Institutional Review Board (IRB), to comply with federal guidelines for ethical research practices.

Laura Rodriguez is conducting the study for a dissertation supervised by Dr. Betty J. Alford, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Laura Rodriguez will describe the study and answer any questions about the study and your rights as a research participant. If you have additional questions, you can contact the researchers using the information below.

If you have any questions about research participants’ rights, complaints about the informed consent process of this research study, or experience an adverse event (something goes wrong), please contact the Compliance Office within California State Polytechnic University, Pomona’s Office of Research. Information is also available at the IRB website.

Researchers

Laura Rodriguez
Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Betty J. Alford
Professor and Dissertation Chair

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
College of Education and Integrative Studies
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
3800 Temple Ave, Pomona, California 91768

Your participation is entirely voluntary and will contribute greatly to this research.

Thank you for your willingness to participate.
You are invited to participate in a study to determine influences that contribute to the academic success of second-generation children of Mexican immigrants.

Purpose of the Study. The overall purpose of this study is to identify key influences that have been present in the lives of academically successful second-generation Mexican immigrant students.

Researchers. The study is being conducted for a dissertation by Laura Rodriguez, as partial fulfillment of a doctorate in the Educational Leadership Program at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, under supervision of Dr. Betty J. Alford, faculty member and dissertation chair.

Study Methods. The study uses interviews of second-generation children of Mexican immigrants who have attained a post-secondary degree. Participants will be asked to reflect on childhood, adolescent and young adult experiences that influenced their successful attainment of a university degree. At the beginning of the first interview meeting, participants will be given a reflective journal that will give the interviewee an opportunity to record information and thoughts that the interview questions may have generated during and/or after the first interview meeting.

Topics Discussed in the Interview. Interview questions will center on familial information regarding parental level of education and parent involvement. In addition, questions will be asked regarding the value placed on education by parents/family and the individual. Participants will be asked about any influential people and programs that may have helped them navigate high school and college that led to post-secondary success.

Voluntary Participation. Your participation in an interview is completely voluntary. At any point you can choose not to answer the questions or to stop the interview. Consent forms and transcripts will be destroyed in three years.

Confidentiality. Your answers will be confidential. Any information about individual respondents and responses obtained in connection with this study will be separated from the data. Pseudonyms will be used for respondent names and other identifiers such as schools or positions. Data will be accessible to Dr. Betty Alford, reported in the study as part of a dissertation, and may be used in future scholarly publications.

Permission to Audio Record. You will be asked for permission to audio record the interview with a digital recorder to supplement written notes. You indicate agreement by initialing the statement on the consent form below. Recordings will be transcribed for
data analysis and will not be used for any other purpose. They will be erased within five years of the interview. You have the right to request that specific responses are removed from recordings and transcripts during the study.

Commitment and Compensation. Your total participation in the study will involve two interviews with a third interview scheduled if necessary. Each session will last approximately 50 minutes. The interviews will take place Spring 2015. You will not receive financial or other compensation for participation in the study.

Possible Benefits and Risks. You will not receive any direct benefits or monetary rewards from participating in this study. Your participation is intended to contribute to research and an increased understanding of how to ensure later generation Latinos achieve the same academic success as first- and second-generation Latino immigrants. Your participation in this study may help you better understand this important topic. The research findings may also benefit school districts by informing administrators, educators, and parents what must be done to ensure higher numbers of their Latino students attain a post-secondary degree. You can ask the researcher for a summary of the study findings.

We expect that there are minimal risks of participating in this study. The results of the study will potentially be published in an academic journal, at a conference, or in a district presentation. Confidentiality means that you will not be revealed as a participant in the study or in any responses that can be attributed to you in a publication or report.

The risk of accidentally disclosing your identity is minimized by careful procedures of data collection, de-identification, and storage. The risk to you of having your identity associated with the study is minimal. No specific answers will be identified with you as a participant. Any information that you want deleted from the interview data will be removed during the study.

Laura Rodriguez as a school employee has no supervisory or reporting responsibilities about information you provide except as required by law. She has designed confidential interviews to get in-depth data according to professional standards for ethical research conduct. The interviews are voluntary and confidential, meaning that the data will be used only to identify influences that have contributed to the post-secondary academic success of Latino immigrant students that attended a local school district. Your individual responses will not be revealed in any way that could affect you as a participant of this study.

If you feel coerced or threatened by the request to participate in the study or respond to questions, you may contact the Compliance Office of Cal Poly Pomona’s Office.

Agreement to Participate in Research Study (Informed Consent)
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
You are being invited to participate in a research study, which the Cal Poly Pomona Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved for conduct by the investigators named here. This form is designed to provide you - as a human subject/participant - with information about this study. The investigator or his/her representative will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. You are entitled to an Experimental Research Subject’s Bill of Rights and a copy of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject or participant, complaints about the informed consent process of this research study, or experience an adverse event (something goes wrong), please contact the Research Compliance Office within Cal Poly Pomona’s Office of Research. More information is available at the IRB website, http://www.cpp.edu/~research/irb/index.shtml.

Consent: I consent to participate in an interview for the study Influences that Contribute to the Academic Success of Second-Generation Children of Mexican Immigrants: A Narrative Inquiry Study (signature line below)

I also consent to audio recording the interview for data analysis purposes.

_____ (participant initial here)

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may decline to answer or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I can ask that specific responses be removed from recordings and transcripts during the study.

I have received a copy of the study information and this form for my records.

Print Participant Name ________________________________

Participant Signature __________________________ Date ______________

I hereby certify that I have given an explanation to the above individual of the study and its risks and protections.

_______________________________________________ Date ______________

Researcher signature

If you have any questions, contact: Laura Rodriguez or Dr. Betty J. Alford.

Copy to be provided to participant
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Round One Interview Questions

Can you please tell me a little about your path to college?

Value Placed on Education:
1. When was the first time you can recall knowing that you would attend college?
2. Who in your family (i.e. mother, father, and family members) had aspirations that you would attain a university degree?
3. Why did you decide to seek a post-secondary degree?
4. What key elements influenced your perseverance?
5. What value did your parents place on education? What made you aware that this was the case?
6. How did they communicate these expectations to you?
7. Did their expectations change as you got older?

Familial Factors:
8. What is your parents’ highest level of education? Where did they receive the majority of their education?
9. How involved were your parents in your education? At the elementary level, secondary level, and college level?
10. Describe ways that your parents or extended family members encouraged you to enroll in college, if any.

Influential People:
11. Who were the influential people in your life that helped you navigate your way through high school and college preparation courses?
12. Did you have adult and/or peer mentors? What role did they play in your path to college?
13. Were there community and/or university resources available to you? How did you learn about them? How did you get involved?

14. How did these resources help you in the attainment of a post-secondary degree?

**Round Two Interview Questions:**

**Academic Support Systems:**

1. How did any community and/or university resources, if any, help you in the attainment of a post-secondary degree?

2. While in college, describe any challenges, if any, that you encountered toward completing your degree and how did you meet this challenges, if any were encountered.

3. In what ways did your parents and family members nurture/develop resiliency in you to work hard to attain a college degree.

4. Based on your experience as a first- or second-generation Latino immigrant college graduate, what advice would you provide future Latino immigrant students as they strive to attain a post-secondary degree?

5. As you reflect on our times together, are there any things that you would like to add?

6. As you have read through the transcriptions of our last interview, did the transcription capture your thoughts accurately or is there additional information that would clarify?

7. If you were providing advice to parents or to educators, what would you advise them to consider when encouraging college attainment for first- or second-generation Latino immigrants?
### Appendix C: Themes of The Grand Story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Value placed on education</th>
<th>Familial Factors</th>
<th>Influential people</th>
<th>Academic Support Systems</th>
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<td>Peer mentors</td>
<td>Outreach programs</td>
<td>Students, Parents, Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1 - GL</strong></td>
<td>Parents hesitant about encouraging her to go to university but Education was always important. Godfather and her maternal grandmother encouraged.</td>
<td>Parents never spoke to her about university. Her father attended up until the second grade. Mother attended until the sixth grade. Father brought back Spanish workbooks from México.</td>
<td>Mother was highly involved in school until went to work when they were in junior high.</td>
<td>Her godfather and her maternal grandmother were influential. None mentioned.</td>
<td>Could not recall. No time for tutoring in college had to work during the day.</td>
<td>Ask questions and “to look for those support systems. Do not be afraid to leave their home.</td>
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<td>Participants 2 - GG</td>
<td>Parents never spoke to her about university but was expected to do well in school.</td>
<td>Parents attended school in México until 12, junior high and high school in U.S., entered the military, Vietnam Vet. Later attained his bachelor's degree. Mother attended school until the sixth grade.</td>
<td>Parents were not able to attend PTA, SSC meetings. Parents extremely involved in their children's extracurricular activities.</td>
<td>My brother had been my guide. He was my mentor. Older brother was always the role model who paved the way. Father influential as well.</td>
<td>She never sought assistance from the university, she just never had time. She was a commuter.</td>
<td>The hardest challenge was continuing through college without her brother’s guidance. So many resources out there, look for them. Research and stay informed about programs, about financial aid. Focusing on the purpose for going to college.</td>
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<td>Parents / Family member</td>
<td>Can’t recall hearing about college from any relatives because none of them had gone to college.</td>
<td>Both her parents valued education and expected their children to make school their priority.</td>
<td>One of her three cousins was a very influential person in her life. Motivated by seeing her older cousin graduate from university. Influential high school teacher in writing class. Political Science teacher, Dr. Perez, from the local community college.</td>
<td>College students from Harvey Mudd College part of the organization Upward Bound. Participated in the Educational Opportunity Program &amp; Services (EOPS) at the community college.</td>
<td>Working towards my bachelor’s was just awesome. It was a great experience. Master’s degree, the challenge she encountered was the financial aspects of paying for tuition.</td>
<td>For students to always consider their choices. For parents is “to not be afraid if you don’t have the means to help your student pay for college.”</td>
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<td>Communications of expectations</td>
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<td>Father attended some grade school. Mother was homeschooled by Adriana’s grandmother. Parents rarely attended parent meetings but always attended parent conferences.</td>
<td>She had four cousins close to her age who encourage each other.</td>
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<td>Parents’ level of education</td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Value they placed on education through their commitment to their children's academic success.</td>
<td>Never a question whether or not I was going to college. It was just expected.</td>
<td>Her father only finished middle school. Her mother attended high school but did not finish.</td>
<td>Cousin was the first in the family to receive a bachelor’s degree. An assistant principal at DHS really helped her.</td>
<td>None mentioned.</td>
<td>Joined Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID). After two years, Brenda dropped AVID because she felt she didn’t need it. She does not recall having much support in high school.</td>
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<td><strong>Participant 5 - AP</strong></td>
<td>Parents always supported his brothers and him in their education. My mother was always supportive of school because she always attended meetings.</td>
<td>They would inquire about his grades and held a firm but supportive stance on his studies. Parents communicated how they valued education through their constant praise and rewards for good grades. Father came to this country to provide them the opportunities to study that weren’t available to him and he wanted to see his sons succeed.</td>
<td>Father attended parochial school until about the fifth grade. Can’t remember how far mother went to school in México. She successfully attained her G.E.D. in the United States.</td>
<td>Mother attended important parent meetings and stayed informed about school.</td>
<td>Mr. Lain, a pawn-shop owner and his first employer. An engineer who is the owner of the engineering firm he interned. Dr. Kelly, whom he always turned to for advice and assistance.</td>
<td>Having peers that were older than me was fantastic. My peers in college because I could ask them for advice.</td>
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- Being able to eloquently convey what he knows as an engineer to individuals who do not necessarily have an engineering background.
- Parents should always stay interested in their children’s academics.
- Educators should talk about the benefits of an education and help students realize that a college degree is attainable.
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<td>Participant 6 - AG</td>
<td>Her parents were always encouraging her to think about college.</td>
<td>By the third grade, her father had to drop out of primary school.</td>
<td>Her parents worked yet they always attended her school functions, parent conferences and other parent-teacher meetings.</td>
<td>Tony was always kind of guiding me.</td>
<td>The peer she had were a cohesive group of five friends always helping one another with college information.</td>
<td>She really never utilized any of the academic support programs provided at the school.</td>
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<td>It was my duty to take advantage of all the opportunities that I had been given because of all the hardship they had gone through.</td>
<td>Her mother graduated from high school in México.</td>
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<td>Recalled pivotal role her brother played in her journey toward college.</td>
<td>She did not qualify for Upward Bound due to high grades.</td>
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<td>Parents and older brother were always supportive. Of her academic endeavors.</td>
<td>Parents communicated their expectations to her, through their actions than their words.</td>
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<td>She received incredible support from all the Advanced Placement (AP) teachers.</td>
<td>She appreciated the support the university provided minority students.</td>
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<td><strong>Participant 7 - RG</strong></td>
<td>Parents understood the value of education and were always urging their two sons and daughter to attend college.</td>
<td>Communication of expectations</td>
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<td><strong>Parents / Family member</strong></td>
<td>My parents talked to me about college and would tell my siblings and me that they wanted us to attend college.</td>
<td><strong>Parents’ level of education</strong></td>
<td>Parents were not able to participate in school events during the day because of work.</td>
<td>English teacher, Ms. Baylor, whose unorthodox method of teaching made him realize that there was a different way of learning.</td>
<td><strong>He couldn’t recall any support systems being available to him in high school.</strong></td>
<td>Not knowing what attending college entailed.</td>
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<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
<td>His father would explain to them how difficult it was to be a laborer.</td>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>They attended parent conferences Back to School Night and Open House and any extracurricular activities regularly.</td>
<td>Ms. Desmond who was a counselor at one of the community colleges he attended.</td>
<td><strong>Lisa helped him pass a critical English Literature test for him to graduate.</strong></td>
<td>Completing the coursework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother</strong></td>
<td>Father wanted him to study and find a desk job that didn’t require so much physical labor and that paid more.</td>
<td><strong>Parents’ level of education</strong></td>
<td>Father dropped out of elementary school during the fourth or fifth grade in order to work to help his family.</td>
<td>Jessica who was willing to explain how college worked and how to do things.</td>
<td><strong>He couldn’t recall any support systems being available to him in high school.</strong></td>
<td>Not knowing what attending college entailed.</td>
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<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
<td>Mother finished high school and after received a business or accounting certificate from a trade school in México.</td>
<td><strong>Parents’ level of education</strong></td>
<td>Mother finished high school and after received a business or accounting certificate from a trade school in México.</td>
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<td><strong>Participant 8 - MG</strong></td>
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<td>Mother knew that her children needed some type of a career to be successful in the future. She always encouraged us to go do well in school.</td>
<td>Mother always told her that she did not want Maritza to work as hard as she did and to take advantage of the all sacrifices she had to do to come to the United States.</td>
<td>Her father did not go to school. Mother’s highest level of education was up to the first months of third grade.</td>
<td>Her maternal aunt was the only adult who motivated her and showed her a different way of life.</td>
<td>Her close friend, Marie, was probably the most influential person in her life.</td>
<td>Not aware of any academic resources available at Donavan High School. She was part of Extended Opportunity Program &amp; Services (EOP&amp;S) at the community college.</td>
<td>Having to survive her home life. Completing assignments while working full time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>