SPOKEN TRUTH: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS of the SUCCESSFUL PRE-TRANSFER MECHANISMS of LATINO MALES at a TWO-YEAR HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

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By

Jesus Vega

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The Dissertation of Jesus Vega is approved:

Ramiro Sanchez, M.S.  

Date

Tracy Lachica Buenavista, Ph.D.  

Date

Miguel Ceja, Ph.D., Chair  

Date

California State University, Northridge
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Dedication

Ubuntu: I am because of you

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ABSTRACT

SPOKEN TRUTH: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESSFUL PRE-TRANSFER MECHANISMS OF LATINO MALES AT A TWO-YEAR HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

By

Jesus Vega

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Latino men in California who successfully graduate high school and transition to higher education are excessively matriculating in the state’s community college system. These students are more likely to be the first in their family to attend college and may lack the necessary cultural capital to navigate the higher education system. As a result, a high number of Latino men phase out of post-secondary education. By utilizing Critical Race Theory as a conceptual framework, this phenomenological qualitative study analyzes the experiential knowledge of ten Latino men as they prepare to successfully transition from a California two-year Hispanic Serving Institution to a four-year university. The impact of external and institutional factors are examined to provide a systematic understanding of how these demands influenced the experiences of the students at the two-year institution. Findings demonstrate the importance of family for the first generation students and the significance their familial experiential knowledge had on their education. The participants were successful in the navigation of their educational pathway at the two-year institution; however, one obstacle remained. The participants had to decide whether they wanted to transfer to a local four-year institution.
or transfer away and jeopardize the economic stability of their family and their role within their family dynamic. The study concludes with practical recommendations for the research site. The proposals pertain to curriculum alignment with their secondary partners to better prepare students with the assessments and alleviate the number of students who enter the site that require developmental education. Other recommendations concentrate on the development or enhancement of student support services to assist a higher number of Latino men succeed in their educational transition from this two-year institution.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Educational inequality has existed in the United States since the inception of the nation, and is a phenomenon that continues to plague minorities. According to Malcolm (1990) if we want to “understand the reasons for the mere trickle at the end of the pipeline, we must go all the way back to the headwater” (p. 249) to understand why minorities, Latino males in particular, continue to struggle in making the transition into four-year universities. We need to comprehend how their educational paths have been obstructed historically. The educational segregation of minority students has transformed into different configurations from the exclusion of a formal education, to the implementation of separate but equal facilities, the manipulation of the school day by school boards in order to have students harvest crops, and specific task oriented education that would prepare minority students to join the workforce (Gonzalez, 1985; Hendrick, 1977).

Politicians, Civil Rights leaders and student activists have attempted to level the educational environment by eliminating the stratified educational system that continues to exist. Unfortunately, their efforts have not been entirely successful. Minorities in the United States have contested the battle of educational inequality since the Supreme Court decided on Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896. The court ruled “if one race be inferior to others socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane” (Thomas, 1997, p. 5). While the predominant racial binary during the period was White and African American, legislators and local governments interpreted the law as one that...
affected all of the nation’s people of color. The segregation of America’s ethnic minorities was legal as long as separate but equal facilities were made available for them.

Educational segregation did not become an issue for Latino students until the early 1900s. The educational system did not comprehend how to teach Mexican children because they did not have prior knowledge of them as students. As a result, educators turned to previously created beliefs regarding Mexicans. Gonzalez (2004) states “following the example of academicians, [educators] assumed that Mexican children and their parents together posed a Mexican problem for the schools to resolve” (p. 156).

Moreover, the educational segregation of Mexican students was grounded on social constructs. Gould (1932) claimed Mexicans posed a problem to the schools due to their recent conquest, subsequent suppression at the hand of a tyrannical leader, lack of culture and unfortunate racial experiences (as cited in Gonzalez, 2004, p. 153).

Prior to the decade of social upheaval, Latino students were close to nonexistent in the colleges and universities of the United States. Acuña (2004) notes “colleges could count the number of Chicano students in the dozens” (p. 317). Governmental actions to redress the discriminatory social, educational, and employment practices in America did not take place until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C § 2000 et seq.), which included affirmative action policies that required that Blacks and other minorities have the same opportunities in admissions, scholarships, and financial aid that had once been “the nearly exclusive province of whites” (Acuña, 2004). Congress clearly defined the terms desegregation and public schools so local governments and school districts could not formulate their own connotation of the terms. According to Title IV, “Desegregation means the assignment of students to public schools and within such schools without
regards to race, color, religion, or national origin” (42 U.S.C. §2000c), and a public school was considered to be “any educational institution whether it is elementary, secondary, collegiate, technical, or vocational that received funding from the government” (42 U.S.C. §2000c). The integration of schools in the Southwest meant that Mexican schools would cease to exist. Latino students would now be able to receive a standard education.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000 et seq) eliminated segregation from educational institutions and instituted affirmative action policies to assist in the inclusion of minorities into federally assisted programs. Furthermore, the act created the first educational outreach programs to assist underrepresented minority students in their transition from secondary education to college. The main purpose for the creation of these programs was to provide minority students with college going information and student success services at the national and state levels so they could successfully complete their high school education and enter college. While the original educational untracking programs and the ensuing iterations have been successful in assisting minority students enter higher education, there are thousands that cannot escape the damage that was caused by years of inferior educational practices.

Ethnic minorities currently attend secondary educational institutions that have poor organizational habitus, which is the capacity of high schools’ “to academically prepare and to frame students’ perceptions and knowledge about various college options” (Núñez & Bowers, 2011, p. 1291). These schools have unprepared instructors, a high staff turnover rate, a high student dropout rate, and a nonexistent college going culture (Kozol, 1991; Moore & Shulock, 2010; Orfield & Frankenburg, 2008; Pérez-Huber,
Huidor, Malagón, Sanchez, & Solórzano, 2006). Additionally, the resegregation of the public educational system for Latinos has increased since the 1980s (Orfield & Lee, 2005; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2008). Orfield and Lee (2005) state, “a third of the high schools that were more than 50 percent minority graduated less than half of their class” (p. 6). Racism and segregation continue to affect the educational aspirations of Latinos. As a result of their inferior education, underrepresented minority students enter colleges and universities inadequately prepared academically and socially.

In its current state, the educational system continues to fail Latino males. Covarrubias (2007) finds that for every one hundred Latino students in the educational pipeline (male and female), male students are pushed out of high school at the rate of 45% compared to 43% for Latinas. They also obtain high school diplomas and higher education degrees at lower rates (Covarrubias, 2007). The lack of academic success for Latino males is based on the fact that Latinos continue to disproportionately attend elementary and secondary schools that are segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Saenz (2010) contends that the schools that Latino students attend “are among the most under resourced, most understaffed, most poverty-stricken, and most neglected schools in the country” (p. 4). There is a direct correlation between the institutional neglect and substandard education Latino students receive. Latinos in these schools are denied access to advanced science and math courses, have lower proficiency in math and language arts (Moore & Shulock, 2010), have been tracked into non-college preparatory coursework (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005), and have not had adequate college going counseling afforded to them or their families (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solórzano, 2007). With the exclusion of Latino male students
from the necessary habitus, they “often come to the university in the role of intruders—who have been granted special permission to be there” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 60). As a result, Latino students are not cognizant of the educational and career opportunities afforded to them in California’s higher education system.

**Problem Statement**

Graduating high school students in California can matriculate into three systems of public higher education as a result of the Master Plan for Higher Education, which was created by the Liaison Committee of the State Board of Education and the Regents of the University of California after the California Legislature commissioned it in 1959. The committee recommended that, “Public higher education shall consist of the junior colleges, the State College System, and the University of California” (California Liaison Committee, 1960, pp.1-2). The three strands were to accommodate the graduating classes with the University of California accepting the top 12% of the students; the State College System would accept 33%, and the junior colleges would absorb the remaining students. The grandiose scheme by the committee promised to provide an entry point for California students into higher education.

On account of Latino males attending secondary schools that do not provide an adequate organizational habitus, they are not academically prepared to matriculate into four-year institutions let alone selective universities (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009), because of their high entrance standards (Solórzano, et al., 2005). In conjunction with the lack of knowledge they possess with regards to higher education, Núñez, Crisp, and Elizondo (2012) claim that Latinos are also more likely to be the first in their family to attend college. Being the first in their family to attempt higher education can make them “less
familiar with how to navigate the college environment” (p. 5). As a result, Latino males disproportionately enroll in two-year community colleges (Hall & Rowan, 2001; Núñez & Bowers, 2011; Sengupta & Jepsen, 2000).

Academically unprepared and often unaware of the cultural capital required to navigate the community college system, Latino males become discouraged and phase out of higher education (Tinto, 1975; Rosenbaum, Deli-Amen, & Person, 2006). Without the opportunity to obtain a degree or acquire the necessary skills to be competitive in the job market Latino men will enter the workforce in entry-level positions with minimal possibility of upward mobility, which will have an effect on their social and economic conditions. As stated by Bensimon and Dowd (2009), the overrepresentation of Latinos at two-year institutions impacts the gap in degree attainment at all three levels of higher education which correlates to Latinos being denied access to positions of power and leadership. With the California Community College system being the entry point to higher education for Latino males, the leakage point in their transfer pathway continues to be an issue that stems from the de facto segregation and inferior education they receive in secondary schools.

California Community Colleges

The California Community College system is a “distinct institution in size, missions, and student composition” (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006, p. 19) and is comprised of 112 campuses that are geographically dispersed throughout the state and easily accessible to students. Due to their multi-faceted mission, community colleges are required to offer liberal arts classes, transferrable courses to senior institutions, vocational classes that prepare students for a career and non-credit offerings for community members. The
outcome of their attempt to meet the educational, vocational, and enrichment needs of California’s students is that individuals interested in the transfer pathway do not acquire the necessary institutional support to make the transition from the two-year setting to a four-year institution; thus, resulting in low transfer rates for Latinos (Nora & Rendon, 1990; O’Connor, 2009; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004; Rivas et al., 2007). Moreover, community colleges have begun to emphasize vocational programs to prepare students for the workforce instead of catapulting them to the University of California or California State University systems (Boggs, 2011; Brint, 2003; Dowd, 2007; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004; Perez-Huber et al., 2006, Nora and Rendon, 1990; O’Connor, 2009; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004; Wilmer, 2008).

Nonetheless, the California Community College system attracts Latino males at high rates because of the proximity to their homes, low tuition, less stringent admission policies, flexible scheduling, part-time enrollment (Arbona, & Nora, 2007; Fike & Fike, 2008; Fry, 2004; Karen, 2002; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011) and the influence of their social networks, which consist of family, friends, and community networks (Ceja, 2006; Núñez et al., 2012). As a result of these institutions being “beacons of access and educational opportunity” (Saenz, 2004, p. 97) for Latino students, critical mass has been reached at many of the colleges in the system. According to Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, and McClain (2007) critical mass provides Latino students with a “level of representation that brings comfort or familiarity within the education environment” (p. 74); thus, assisting with the retention and persistence of the students. Hagedorn and colleagues (2007) found that the higher level of critical mass achieved by an institution positively affects the success of the students. In spite of the critical mass of Latino students at many California
Community Colleges, the overall transfer and completion rates of the student subgroup remain low.

With the influx of Latino students that matriculate at their local community college, many of these institutions are designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI). The distinction is based on the reauthorization of Title V which stipulates that a degree granting public or private institution with a Latino student body composed of 25% or higher can apply to be classified as such (Benitez and DeAro, 2004; Laden, 2004; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2011) and receive designated monetary allotments by Congress. Approximately 8% of all institutions of higher education are designated as HSIs and enroll more than 50% of Latina/o college students (White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2011) and on average receive less than half of the per student allocation that other colleges and universities receive (Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010; Stearns, Wantanabe & Snyder, 2002). The lack of funding for HSIs is worrisome because they serve a high-risk student population which enter their institutions with a substandard secondary education; thus, making it more likely that this student population will not complete college (Laden, 2004; Núñez, Sparks & Hernández, 2011).

Empirical studies focused on the completion rates of Latinos enrolled at HSIs have demonstrated varied results. Contreras, Malcolm, and Bensimon (2008) and Malcolm (2010) found that HSIs provide equitable access to Latinos. However, HSIs do not award a high rate of degrees. According to Malcolm (2010) HSIs that reach critical mass higher than 33% have lower graduation rates than HSIs with a lower percentage of Latinos enrolled. Contrary to the findings in Malcolm (2010), Laden (2004) and Stearns
et al. (2002) found that two-year institutions that have attained critical mass grant 39.8% of the associates degrees conferred to Latino students compared to 9.1% at other community colleges where ethnic saturation has not been reached. Furthermore, the transfer rates for Latino students enrolled in California’s community colleges are higher if they attend a Hispanic Serving community college.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission reports (2011a & 2011b) that during the 2009-2010 academic year, 586,483 Latino students matriculated into the California Community College system, which accounted for 33% of the total student population. That same academic year, 61,074 students transferred to a four-year public institution; however, only 14,723 (24%) Latinos (male and female) made the transition. Moore and Shulock (2010) report that 80% of the Latino students who register in the community college system will not have completed a certificate or degree six years after their initial enrollment, and only 35% of the Latino population reach 30 college level credits, which Moore and Shulock (2010) identify as a milestone for the completion an educational program. The Community College and the four-year university are two different worlds with such different cultures that Bensimon and Dowd (2009) liken the transfer from one to the other as akin to that of “cross[ing] the border” (p. 637). The students may not always know what to expect. They may feel lost, may not have a grasp of the academic language, and may experience challenges as they search for assistance to navigate their new educational world.

**Purpose and Significance**

There are a myriad of factors that have a negative impact on the transfer process of Latino males between the community college system and universities. Such factors
include, but are not limited to, the lack of academic preparation at the high school level, consequent developmental coursework in community college, family expectations, the necessity to work, part-time enrollment, changes in their educational goals, and their lack of cultural capital (Alexander, Garcia, Gonzalez, Grimes, & O’Brien, 2007; Keim, McDermott & Gerard, 2010; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004; Pérez & Ceja, 2010; O’Connor, 2009; Rosenbaum, Deli-Amen, & Person, 2006). Furthermore, under the California Master Plan, California Community Colleges are charged with offering associate degrees, vocational education, career development, and certificated programs. These external challenges in conjunction with the multi-oriented missions of community colleges complicate the educational progress of Latino males who may be the first in their family to attend an institution of higher education. According to Wassmer, Moore, and Shulock (2004), “As the functions of community colleges expanded, the percentage of enrolled students transferring to a 4-year institution to pursue a bachelor’s degree declined” (p. 652). The result is the low transfer rates for Latinos in California (Rivas, Pérez, Alvarez, & Solórzano, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of the study seeks to examine the successful pre-transfer mechanisms of Latino males at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution. By investigating both extrinsic and intrinsic factors that shape their pre-transfer process, the study will shed light and deepen our understanding of the factors that impede and facilitate the transfer experience for these students.

Transfer

For the purpose of the study, the definition for transfer will consist of the students who complete sixty or more designated transferrable units at their community college. According to Moore and Shulock (2010), the educational transfer process means, “the
movement of students from the CCC to the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) after earning two years of credit toward a bachelor’s degree” (p. 6). The original definition of the term has been challenged because community college students are no longer following the traditional vertical path to transfer (Townsend, 2001). The UCs and CSUs are impacted with the increase in the amount of students who matriculate each year, and with the increase in cost of attendance, students now avoid these public institutions. Most students prefer to transfer to private and other institutions since they do not require the two-year college credit requirement prior to their enrollment at their colleges (Moore & Shulock, 2010; Wassmer, Moore & Shulock, 2004). Founded on the new developments in the transfer process and choice of students, the debate has begun on how to best define the transfer rate of institutions.

As a result of the new trend, community colleges and researchers alike have changed the definition of transfer. The drawback to the process is that different entities create and employ definitions that suit them best. In her article, Castañeda (2002) provides her audience with six different iterations of the word, which have been used in different studies. The definitions range from the amount of time it took a student to graduate from the two-year institution based on their start date while another definition provided by Castañeda (2002) only focused on who students enrolled full time in community college and at their receiving institution. Contrary to the definitions provided by Castañeda (2002), Wassmer et al (2004) utilize two different definitions of transfer rate in their study. The first divides the number of transfer students who transfer by the number of the entering cohort. The other divides the number of students in a cohort who transfer over six years by those that completed twelve units and enrolled in transfer level
math and English courses. As a result of the various interpretations of the term, the transfer rate will be skewed (positively or negatively) depending on the definition is utilized by the institution or researcher.

**Research Questions**

Latino males continue to be affected educationally as a result of the inequalities in their education. Numerous studies have been conducted which analyze the genetic and cultural deficiencies that obstruct the education of Latino students. However, there are Latino males who are successful in making the transition between the community college and universities. Unfortunately, there are not many studies that focus on Latino males and their successes (Perez & Ceja, 2009; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). The lack of interest in the subject is disheartening since the majority of Latinos men enter higher education through a community college. Thus, the purpose of the study was to examine the successful pre-transfer mechanisms of Latino males at the educational juncture of their pipeline between two-year community colleges and four-year institutions.

The study sought to examine the following primary and secondary research questions employing a phenomenological tradition:

1. What are the pretransfer experiences of Latino men who enter two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions?
2. What external and internal factors shaped their pre-transfer process?
3. How does the campus racial climate at their two-year institution affect their educational experiences?

With the exploration of the research questions, a better understanding can be ascertained.
on how the Latino males in the study successfully navigated their community college experience and overcame their transfer achievement gap (Wood, Nevarez, & Hilton, 2011); thus, being able to provide the institution with a practical framework on how to better serve their future students.

**Theoretical Framework**

For the purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was applied as a conceptual perspective, to examine the successful pretransfer experiences and mechanisms of Latino males. Originally, Critical Race Theory was used to “challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to law by examining how legal doctrine is used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (Solórzano, 1997, p. 6). Since then, the framework has been adapted to analyze how educational institutions perpetuate racism and separatism amongst their student body (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). CRT was particularly useful in the study as a way of understanding how race and gender intersect to shape how Latino males experience the transfer process. Additionally, CRT provided a useful lens for the examination of the institution’s racial climate and their influence on the experiences of the research participants.

**Overview of Methodology**

The qualitative study was organized as a phenomenological case study. The case study tradition, allowed for the in depth exploration of “explore in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). For the purpose of the study, research was conducted on the experiences of the participants within the institution, which permitted for a full and rich description of their encounters
to be furnished. Data collection was primarily accumulated through in-depth semi-structured interviews in a three-month period. In order to obtain the data for the study, the interview questions were purposefully structured to have a critical race perspective to establish an understanding of their experiences at this Hispanic-Serving community college.

**Limitations**

The limitations of the study were rooted in the research tradition being applied. A qualitative phenomenological case study focuses on the essences of an individual or group of individuals that have experienced a common phenomenon (Schram, 2006). Through the experiential knowledge of the participants, researchers can better understand and analyze the individual’s perceptions “of the world, not as the world is thought to be but as it is lived” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 71). The objective of the study was to provide a comprehensive description of the experiences of the ten Latino men in a two-year institution; therefore, findings from the study may only be specific to this site and to these individuals thus not generalizable (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). There was a possibility that the results may have reflected the experiences of other successful Latino males within the institution or at other community colleges.

Another limitation with phenomenological studies is the idea of bracketing our judgments or epoché, which is described by Moustakas (1994) as “a new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe” (p. 33). With the implementation of epoché, researchers do not influence the lived experiences of the participants. However, the complete distancing of the researcher’s judgments is not possible. The researcher selected the phenomenon to
be analyzed because of the intrigue by the experiences of the participants. According to Moustakas (1994) “[t]he puzzlement is autobiographical, making memory and history essential dimensions of discovery, in the present and extensions into the future” (p. 59). My past is connected to their present and their successes can be a possible roadmap for the future of other Latino male students who begin their higher education in the community college system.

The researcher imposed the delimitations of the phenomenological case study. The study explored the successful pretransfer mechanisms of Latino male students at Serra College. The first delimitation of the study was that it was focused on Latino males, which excluded the other ethnic groups on campus. Furthermore, women were not permitted to participate in the study. This was not to imply that the transfer experiences of other ethnic groups or women are not worth researching, however, the interest was on the educational experiences of Latino males due to the lack of prior knowledge that provides insight to their successful challenge of the dominant ideology that the “educational system offers objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity” (Yosso, 2006, p. 7). Also, not all Latinos who matriculated at Serra College were eligible to participate. A researcher-imposed criterion narrowed the sample. Participants were required to self-identify as a member of certain ethnic group, male, and be eligible to transfer to a four-year university. While there were hundreds of eligible students, only ten were selected to participate. The study did not compare the experiences of the students in the study against the other groups on campus.

Organization of Dissertation

The ensuing chapters of the dissertation study will provide a synthesis of
empirical literature pertaining to Critical Race Theory, the educational pipeline of Latino males, campus racial climate, student support services, the transfer pathway and the transfer experience. In the examination of the literature, it was discovered that there are not many studies that focus primarily on Latino males and public two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions. The literature review conducted for the study provided a strong foundation on the issues that prevent Latino males from succeeding in higher education, which allowed the focus to be on the specific mechanisms (institutional or external) that assisted the participants in the study to move forward educationally.

The design and procedures of this study are provided in Chapter 3. The chapter provides the reader with the purpose behind the study and the questions that it plans to answer. The chapter also offers the research tradition utilized in the study and how the relationship relates to the overall purpose and questions that guided the study. The chapter also introduces Serra College (pseudonym) as the setting for the study, how it was selected, and the sample involved. Additionally, there is a full description of the instruments and procedures that were created and employed in the collection and analysis of the data. Lastly, the chapter provided full disclosure of the author’s biases while conducting the study.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation consists of the major findings of the study. The findings are a direct result of the analysis conducted of the literature and the interview transcripts. Moreover, descriptive narrative from the interviews was included to buttress the findings and provide a voice to the Latino male students who participated in the study and their experiences.

Chapter 5 presents general conclusions, implications and recommendations for
future research. The author will revisit the research questions that were posited at the beginning of the study to include data from the findings to provide support the guiding questions. The author also offers recommendations for two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions so they can assist in narrowing the educational pipeline for Latino male students and allows them to become active participants in today’s global economy.
Chapter II: Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review was to identify scholarly research that will describe, synthesize, and critique the research on the transfer process. Moreover, the review of the literature examined mechanisms and key influences related to the transfer experience of Latino male students. Different methodologies have been used in conducting research on Latino students and the transfer gap between the community college system and four-year universities (Brint, 2003; Fry, 2002; Fry 2004; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004; Moore & Shulock, 2010; O’Connor, 2009). Nevertheless, scholarship primarily focused on the educational experiences of Latino males is uncommon (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Strayhorn, 2010; Vasquez Urias, 2012). The accessible information that pertains to the educational experiences of Latino males is as a result of the research conducted on the Latino community, which in this study will be used to describe Latino male and female college students in general (Campa, 2010; Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010; Zell, 2010). Moreover, the prior knowledge on Latinos derives from research that has focused on student support groups on campus (Alexander, Garcia, Gonzalez, & O’Brien, 2007; Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, & Pohlert, 2004; Keim, McDermott, & Gerard, 2010; Saenz, 2004), as well as research using multicultural educational comparisons (Hagedorn & Lester, 2006; Nora & Rendon, 1990; O’Connor, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008; Strayhorn, 2010).

Valid attempts have been made to answer the issue that are relevant to the disparity in the educational pipeline for Latinos as a group; however, the focus of the study was on the gap that continues to be an issue for Latino men as they attempt to transfer into four-year universities.
The remaining sections of the chapter impart a review of the literature on Latino males and higher education. Based on the limitations of literature on the Latino male educational transfer process, the utilization of the more developed scholarship, which provides retrospective accounts of the Latino community’s college experiences and adjustment to their new environment in four-year institutions. Furthermore, the analysis of the literature explored and critiqued studies that focus on the deficit oriented conceptualizations of the Latino community in education and examine literature on how the educational pipeline for Latino male students continues to be affected by a discriminatory educational system and community college academic experiences, such as their disproportionate enrollment in developmental courses. To buttress the argument, literature on campus racial climate and student support services was presented to provide information on how the experiences of these students were affected by these factors, and how they contributed to the cultivation of “an environment that encourages students to pursue” the transfer process (Nuñez & Bowers, 2011, p.1291). The majority of the literature dealt with higher education as a whole or specifically with four-year universities. Therefore, I had extrapolate from the literature and comment on their relevancy in understanding the community college environment. Finally, there is a synthesis of Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework, and how it directed the research study.

As previously mentioned, the low number of Latino males in four-year universities is interrelated to their enrollment in the community college system at high rates, which creates critical mass at these educational sites. Community colleges admit Latino students that are academically overqualified, have been rejected by their university
of choice, retracted their acceptance to a four-year university and those that engage in reverse transfer (Conway, 2009; Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997; Wassmer et al., 2004). The California Community College Chancellor’s Office (2013) reported that 871,121 of the student population for the 2011-2012 academic year were Hispanic and 392,086 were Hispanic males. Moore and Shulock (2010) report that approximately 14% of the Latino community enrolled in a community college will transfer within six years of their original enrollment.

The transfer pathway within the community college system was originally created to provide individual students with the opportunity to focus on their general education coursework and then transition to a four-year institution to complete their baccalaureate degree (Townsend & Wilson, 2006; Wood, Nevarez & Hilton, 2011). In California, educational transfer meant, “the movement of students from the CCC to the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) after earning two years of credit toward a bachelor’s degree” (Moore & Shulock, 2010, p. 6). Despite of the simplistic view of a community college student’s vertical transfer path, the process is different for individuals, yet each path begins with the goal of completion in mind (Hurtado et al, 1997).

**Educational Pipeline**

Students in California navigate their education through a pipeline. According to Perez-Huber et al. (2006), “…the pipeline metaphor is often used to describe how students move through the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels of education” (p. 2). As seamless as the educational transition may appear to be for students, Latino males are not as successful in making the move from one educational level to the next.
At every juncture (primary to secondary; secondary to post-secondary) fewer and fewer students are graduating. If we focus on the secondary to post-secondary juncture, students are not making the transition due to the lack of preparation in their high school. The Latino student community is more likely to attend secondary schools where they do not receive adequate college preparatory courses or college counseling (Moore & Shulock, 2010; O’Connor, 2009; Perez-Huber et al., 2006; Rivas et al., 2007; Wassmer et al., 2004). The structural deficiencies at the high school level affect Latino students’ educational outcomes. Latino male students consequently enroll in a community college in an attempt to minimize their educational gap (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). However, empirical research demonstrated that students who begin their educational career at a community college have less of a chance of obtaining their college degree due to various external and internal factors (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; O’Connor, 2009; Yosso, 2005).

Similar to Perez-Huber et al. (2006), Covarrubias (2011) explained the current educational realities for Chicanos and predicted a pattern of educational outcomes. His updated findings were constructed on data from the 2010 Census, which demonstrated that the American educational system continues to fail Latino males as reflected in the significant gaps at every educational transitional point. As noted, “Chicanos are pushed out of high school at higher rates; earn fewer high school diplomas; and earn fewer associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, professional and doctoral degrees” (Covarrubias, 2011, p. 93). Covarrubias’ (2011) research reinforced the issue at the heart of this study, namely a mounting concern with regards to Latino male students and their diminished numbers in the four-year educational landscape.
Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) provided insight on the issue of the vanishing Latino male in higher education. By using multiple variables such as sociocultural capital (familismo), peer dynamics, and the labor force, Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) attempted to provide explanations as to why the Latino male is disappearing from the educational environment. The authors noted that empirical studies are minimal as they relate to the widening gap of Latino males in higher education compared to Latinas, and White males and females. Their research found that Latino students are “segregated along racial, socio-economic, and even immigrant characteristics. The schools they attend are under resourced, understaffed, poverty stricken, and neglected” (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 62). Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) argued that the educational progress of Latino males is hindered by institutional factors along with the external gender role expectations of their family structure such as being hardworking, strong, brave, and family contributors. Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) remarked that Latino males often were expected to self-sacrifice for the needs of the family and accomplish family responsibilities; thus, Latino males make the decision to enter the workforce instead of pursuing their education. Due to their lack of education, they hold entry-level positions where there is minimal possibility of upward mobility. As alluded to above, when Latino students do make the transition into higher education, they are more likely to do so at the community college level.

**External factors**

In the examination of the transfer pathway and the exploration of external factors that influence the educational pathway of minoritized student groups, Nora and Rendón (1990) identified the transfer function of the community college system as the most
negatively scrutinized as it pertains to students of color. As noted by the authors, “[i]n California, community colleges experiencing the largest transfer losses tended to be those with very high proportions of blacks or Chicano freshman” (Nora & Rendón, 1990, p. 236). In their study, Nora and Rendón (1990) constructed a survey from variables previously used in the South Texas Student Survey and from a questionnaire used by the Center for Study of Community Colleges. The findings from the 569 surveys (Latino and White only participants) demonstrated that the students attended a community college to transfer to a four year institution, it was less expensive to attend than a university, they wanted to stay close to home, and they wanted to work while in school. Yet, Nora and Rendon (1990) found that the need for employment to assist in the financial support of the household weighed heavily for both White and Latino participants. The external obstacles of the students had a significant negative effect on their education.

Correspondingly, Ornelas and Solórzano (2004) found that the education of Latino students at a community college is also negatively affected by external factors. The authors examined the transfer pathway for Latina/o students at a community college and how it affected their educational outcomes as they pursued a higher education. Their qualitative study also assessed the college resources, which pertain to student academic motivation. Ornelas and Solórzano (2004) utilized in-depth interviews and focus groups with students, counselors, faculty and administrators. Their research found that the most significant barrier to the transfer process for the Latino community students was the sensation of being “overwhelmed with balancing multiple roles and responsibilities outside of college while attending to their academic roles as students” (p. 243). A theme shared between the counselor, faculty, and administrative groups was the perception that
students became discouraged from continuing with their education when informed of the many prerequisites they needed to take in addition to the transfer courses.

According to Bailey (2009), Escobedo (2007) and Levin and Calcagno (2008) the majority of students who enter the community college system arrive with academic deficiencies in at least one subject area which delays their enrollment in college level and transferrable coursework, and more than half of the entering students will enroll in at least one remedial course (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). These academic deficiencies are highlighted when students take the high stakes assessments administered by the institutions. Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2011) stated that students take the exams because it is an entrance requirement but are not aware of their purpose, are unprepared, confused regarding the process, and many do not follow up to discuss placement and course options. For Latino students, developmental education is an obstacle that many cannot avoid. Bailey et al. (2010) found that students with a greater necessity for developmental education were more likely to enroll in educational institutions that were “large, certificate-oriented, and serve high proportions of minority students, particularly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students” (p. 264). Additionally, these students have a higher propensity to be academically deficient in more than one subject area (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

Similarly, O’Connor (2009), utilized a logistic regression model which employed data from the National Education Longitudinal Study 88-2000 data set to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status (an external factor) and the over representation of Latino students at two year colleges. O’Connor (2009) found that Hispanic students had the lowest SES of the three groups she studied (White, Hispanic,
and Blacks). Moreover, Latinos were also less likely to come from English speaking households and had a higher disadvantage in academic preparation (Bahr, 2009; O’Connor, 2009). The study also found that high socioeconomic Hispanic students were at a disadvantage when they entered four-year institutions. O’Connor (2009) attributed her conclusions to the lack of information the students and parents receive from the schools on higher education and transfer process.

Related to O’Connor’s (2009) findings, Bensimon and Dowd (2009) conducted a retrospective qualitative study on the transfer pathways of three Latina and two Latino students. Their primary focus was to understand the transfer choice gap, which is the phenomenon of students who are academically eligible for transfer to selective universities but elect to transfer to a less selective institution or not transfer at all. The scholars claimed that access to highly selective institutions is directly correlated to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic characteristics. They argued, that allotted enrollment slots at the universities are reserved for middle to high-class transfer students, which exclude many Latino males. The authors concluded that the students’ lack of knowledge about transfer opportunities and uncertain educational goals were amplified by the institutions lack of resources and support. The deficiency in institutional support perpetuates the feelings of Latino males that they do not have assistance to navigate the community college system and be successful.

**Fragmented Institutional Climate**

The state’s academically underprepared students have migrated to community colleges in search of guidance on how to continue their progression through the educational pipeline. The students are determined to use the community college system
as “their first step to obtaining a baccalaureate degree” (Crisp & Nora, p. 180, 2010). Nonetheless, when they arrive, institutional and personal obstacles and an uninviting campus climate greet them. There are studies that focused on the campus racial climate in higher education; however, the articles primarily focus on four-year institutions (Edman & Brazil, 2008; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Lau, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). The scholarship claimed universities fail to create a satisfactory learning environment that is appropriate to the scholastic needs of students of color.

Solórzano et al., (2000) examined the racial microagressions, subtle insults directed at people of color, and the campus racial climate experiences of African Americans students at three highly selective four-year universities through a qualitative study. By using Critical Race Theory, the authors studied how microaggressions affected the campus racial climate of the institutions. They posit that racism is about institutional power that minorities have never possessed. The article is among the few that provided a clear definition of campus racial climate as well as presented the four elements necessary to have a positive climate: 1) inclusion of people of color at all levels; 2) a curriculum that reflects the experiences of people of color; 3) programs in place that support recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority students; 4) a college mission that reinforces the institution’s commitment to diversity. One of their findings showed that students of color created counter spaces at the three locations. These spaces provided the students a safe space where they could study and create support groups. The creation of these spaces by students demonstrated that educational institutions continue to utilize
academic colonialism to maintain the status quo of unequal relations through race neutral policies and practices.

Pewewardy and Frey (2002) found that a colorblind campus climate does not support pluralism. An institution cannot just brush its diverse student population and their needs under the rug. Institutions have increasingly become more diverse, yet administrators and staff believe that the best way to maintain racial harmony within the institution is with the discouragement of the importance of campus racial issues. However, the silence of institutional players does not correlate to the acceptance or understanding of differences by the institution or other students on campus. Pewewardy and Frey (2002) noted that the “marginalized experience can negatively affect their academic and social experiences” (p. 79). The systems of institutional oppression do not require overt acts by the perpetrators, they can also be covert actions based on the systemic policies and practices of the institution (Lindsey, Robbins, & Terrell, 2009).

The literature on campus racial climate has primarily focused on four-year universities. Researchers like those mentioned above as well as Laanan (2001) focused on how the receiving institution welcomes Latino males and other students of color as they transitioned into four-year universities. While researchers’ concerns are valid due to the lack of minority students that enter, persist, and obtain a baccalaureate degree from selective universities, attention needs to be paid to the campus racial climate of two-year institutions. Hurtado’s (1994) work suggested that the experiences of the Latino community are unique and so is the climate for students. Latino students viewed and experienced the culture of a campus differently than a White, African American, or Asian American students. The low number of Latinos at the university level is a direct result of
the high numbers who matriculate in community colleges and do not persist to become eligible to transition to a four-year institution. The institutional culture of two-year colleges is a contributing factor to the transfer gap that exists (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Consequently the notion of a negative campus racial climate at a four-year university can be extended into the two-year community colleges, specifically to examine the presence or absence of any one of the above mentioned elements at these institutions.

In their research, Martinez and Fernandez (2004) discussed the implications of the lack of institutional support towards Latino students. They contend that Latinos had not acquired the socialization, encouragement and mentorship by their community college to take full advantage of the educational system. The authors noted that community colleges needed to become multiculturalist. Martinez and Fernandez (2004) explain that the community college system in California needed to understand that the students they serve are “often low income, working class, academically underprepared, first generation students” (pp. 59-60) and students of color. Thus, these institutions must adapt to the needs of the students and incorporate the cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) they bring with them. Furthermore, community colleges ought to establish completion and transfer standards and develop a culture that facilitates these standards, which is similar to Moore and Shulock’s (2010) report where the authors call for predetermined academic milestones to be the target for community college students based on their educational goal.

**Institutional Support**

**Student Retention Support Services**

With community colleges focused on recruitment, remedial and vocational
education instead of retention, providing access to the transfer pathway is not as important (Fike & Fike, 2008; Fry, 2002; Lau, 2003). Thus, Latinos must find support services or create relationships or locations that can provide academic and institutional support that give them a sense of belonging. As previously stated, institutional support, is vital to the success of Latino college students especially to those who seek to transfer. Close interaction with a counselor, from the inception of their postsecondary educational career will provide Latino students with encouragement, introduce them to other student services on campus, assist with course selection, advisement (educational and personal), and more importantly lay the foundation for retention (Crocket, 1985; Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, Pohlert, 2004; Flaga, 2006; Lau, 2002; Nora & Rendon, 1990, Wilmer, 2008).

The work of Lau (2002) examined retention issues in higher education, which focus on the institutional factors that affect retention and approaches that institutions can examine to better serve their student population. Lau (2002) stated, “student retention has become a challenging problem for the academic community; therefore, an effective program for student retention must be implemented in order to increase the retention of qualified students” (p. 126). She found that students who drop out of college do so by the first year. She listed reasons for student dropout, which included student driven factors, campus climate, student academic capabilities, lack of role models, and educational transition. Lau (2002) also identified several factors that can have a positive effect on the retention of students in higher education and provide them with the cultural capital needed to succeed. She defined cultural capital as academic and career advising, financial aid opportunities, a learning center, and freshman programs. In a community
college setting, gaining access to valuable cultural capital as described by Lau (2002), may not always be an easy feat for the educationally disenfranchised Latino male student.

Villalpando (2004) examined student support services offered by community colleges to Latino students to understand how race and gender affected the service Latino community students receive. He claimed that in order for Latina and Latino students to succeed, the academic support staff of the college needs to care and be social justice advocates for the students. By doing so, the staff can undo the racism on campus. Villalpando (2004) stated that junior colleges view Latinos through an educational deficit oriented conceptualization model. Villalpando (2004) argued that community colleges have attempted to meet their academic and social needs by way of special college outreach and transition programs, academic services, and access to Latino graduates as mentors. He noted that these services, which have been provided, are not as successful as they should be. Villalpando (2004) recommended that college campuses and their support staff needed to discontinue the practice of concentrating on the deficiencies of Latina and Latino students and redirect their efforts to buttress the skills that they do possess, which Yosso (2004) identifies as community cultural wealth. The article was the first to raise the issue of educational inequalities to explain the effect it has on the entry of Latinos into higher education. It reinforced the need to examine educational inequalities; both past and present, in order to better understand the educational experiences of Latinos.

Grant-Vallone et al. (2004) examined the affect that two institutionalized retention programs the Extended Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Academic Support Program for Intellectual Rewards and Enhancement (ASPIRE) had on their participants
at the receiving four-year campus. The qualitative study surveyed 118 junior and senior participants. In essence the authors utilized Tinto’s Theory of Departure to gauge the campus racial climate and how student support programs assisted in the integration of students on campus. Grant-Vallone and colleagues (2004) found that social support for underrepresented students is important as well as counseling services. The programs they examined have academic counseling incorporated as part of the services offered to their students. According to the authors, a program like EOP will increase the retention rate for students as they “…strive to achieve equity and access for students who are at risk” (p. 258). Moreover, the more a student actively participated in academic counseling through the programs the more likely they were to adjust to the campus environment. Additionally, four-year campuses have the opportunity to create forced relationships (clubs, dorms, fraternities, etc.) that help with the acclimation of students to the campus. Commuter institutions such as two-year institutions have to develop these relationships in order to engage their students.

Keim, McDermott, and Gerard (2010) explored the importance of support groups for the Latino student community in a rural two-year institution in southwest Arizona. Keim and associates (2010) examined the intensive six week Bridge Program that was funded by Title V. The participants in the program needed to be Education majors and be near the completion of their transferrable coursework. The goals of the Bridge Program were to increase the retention of Hispanic students in pursuit of completing a degree in Education with the assistance of the mentoring program, increase the participants’ self-esteem and self-efficacy, and to develop and augment the students’ core academic skills. The authors found that participants appreciated the connections they made with the staff
of the program. Participants were surprised with how the relationships they created with individuals with similar backgrounds to theirs created positive changes in their educational outlook in a short period of time. Keim et al. (2010) followed these students after their successful transition to a four-year institution and reported that the students experienced initial success in the new surroundings.

**Institutional Culture**

The institutional culture that successful transfer students experienced when they arrived at four-year universities is what Jain, Herrera, Bernal and Solórzano (2011) identified as the transfer receptive culture, which is defined as the “institutional commitment by a four-year college or university to provide the support needed for students to transfer successfully” (p.252). Conversely, in the community college environment, Latino students should experience a transfer sending culture that demonstrates the institution’s commitment to the transfer process. In turn, the transfer culture is likely to impact the education of these students. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) have identified the climate of higher education institutions as “the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (p. iii). An element that was not included in the definition was the role of social support groups within the institution. Campus social groups assist the students in adjusting to their new educational environment.

Hurtado (1994) stated that involvement in institutional activities are always viewed through a mainstream perspective; thus, not “considering whether the social distance between racial and ethnic groups may inhibit participation in these activities” (p. 327). As such, with the diversification of the student body population, the campus
climate has to be viewed through a racial lens. This perspective allows researchers and administrators to gain a viewpoint on the effects that the campus climate has on the academic and social relationships of minority students and their persistence (Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) in community colleges.

Similarly in previous work, Hurtado (1992) found that racial conflict on college campuses is part of larger institutional issues. Hurtado (1992) provided context for her argument in two ways: social and institutional. She stated that racial conflicts on campus are becoming the norm. Institutionally, students have begun to voluntarily racially segregate themselves due to notions of mistrust, which is similar to the conclusions in Solórzano et al., (2000) where minority students created safe spaces on campus. Hurtado (1992) also states that selective four-year institutions have lower rates of racial conflict since they have less diversity. Her findings demonstrated that not one single element of the twenty-one variables analyzed can cause a negative campus racial climate. Instead Hurtado (1992) claimed that external influences, structural characteristics of institutions, group relations, and institutionalized ideologies are the reasons for the issues with an institution’s climate. The disengagement of Latino males at four-year institutions can leave them without a sense of place. They search for an environment that fuels the mind, heart, and body. The exploration of safe spaces at four-year institutions by students is similar to the search by students at community colleges.

Perrakis (2008) examined the causes that contributed to the success of African American and White male students in the Los Angeles Community College District. Her quantitative study is a secondary analysis of the responses provided by 4,333 students in a survey originally administered by the Los Angeles Transfer and Retention of Urban
Community College Students Project (TRUCCS) at the University of Southern California. Perrakis (2008) affirmed the community college system is the entry point for postsecondary education for students of color. Furthermore, she claimed African American students initiated opposition to the dominant culture of the institution when they began to feel alienated. The hostility led to oppositional behaviors (which she does not define) and ultimately proceeded to the students not completing their degree.

The findings of Perrakis’ (2008) study revealed that African American men required a safe place on campus to feel welcomed, provide them with a sense of belonging, and needed to feel attached in order to be successful. Ultimately, Perrakis (2008) described a siloed space on campus, which is part of the institutional climate. The claim is contrary to those made by Jain et al., (2011), who argued that in order for institutional cultures to be successful, student safe spaces could not be siloed environments. The entire campus must be committed to become a safe space for students. While Perrakis (2008) did not focus on Latino males, her study did provide awareness to issues other students of color can encounter and may need in order to be successful in community college.

With community colleges changing their mission to be inclusive of vocational, remedial, and adult education, “the percentage of enrolled students transferring to a 4-year institution to pursue a bachelor’s degree declined” (Wassmer et al., 2004; p. 652). Thus, Latinos must find support services or create relationships or locations that can provide academic and institutional support. More importantly, the community college system must find a procedure to retain Latino male students in order for them to proceed to their next educational stage. According to Wilmer (2008), underprepared students
require a variety of services in order to succeed academically. She defined the underprepared student as being diverse in the following areas: age, socioeconomic status, academic preparation and emotional state. While her article is a best practices piece, she did provide information on the services that students require in order to succeed. In order for students to be successful, colleges must provide academic counseling or advisement during the first year (Wilmer, 2008). Further recommendations are for students to enroll in an orientation course to acclimate themselves to their new academic environment.

The transfer function of the community college is close to nonexistent for Latino males. Their educational pipeline consists of various obstructions that minimize or completely halt their academic progress. Latino males need to overcome substandard elementary and secondary educational systems that did not provide them with the necessary capital to navigate higher education. In addition, this subgroup of students has to overcome external societal factors that contribute to the postponement of their pathway. When Latino males do transition between secondary and postsecondary institutions, the majority find their way to the community college system. With the abundance of Latino males entering two-year colleges, one would expect that the institutions would have a culturally inclusive environment that would interact effectively with this diverse student body. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Latino males encounter a campus atmosphere that is culturally destructive, blind, and incapable of viewing students of color as educational equals (Lindsey et al., 2009); thus, the study applied a conceptual framework which stresses race as an important factor in the education of students of color.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the phenomenological study is Critical Race Theory (CRT), which allows for the specific examination, through a racial perspective, of the pre-transfer experiences of Latino males and the mechanisms in place on campus to support their process. Moreover, CRT will drive the methodology and analysis of the study. The conceptual framework of the study was originally used in law, sociology, and ethnic studies (Jain et al., 2011; Solórzano et al., 2000; Villalpando, 2004) to describe how racism continued to affect the social and institutional relationship between People of Color and Whites (Yosso, 2005). In essence, CRT extracts the institution of racism from the shadows of American society and brings it to the forefront for all to see that educational racism continues to exist.

Despite of the efforts of race neutral laws and policies in education, educational inequalities continue to have a negative effect on the education of Latino males (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Villalpando, 2004). CRT is comprised of five elements that offer “basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy” (Solórzano, 1997) in the field of education. The five tenets are 1) centrality and intersectionality; 2) the challenge to dominant ideology; 3) the commitment to social justice; 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge and 5) the transdisciplinary perspective. The scope of the study explored the five tenets of critical race theory, but in particular tenet four, the centrality of experiential knowledge, along with a phenomenological perspective allowed for the investigation of the lived experiences of Latino students.
The first element, *centrality and intersectionality of race*, identifies the institution of racism as being engrained and at the forefront of American society. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001) racist praxis is “the usual way society does business” (p.7). As previously stated, the system of higher education in California is a three-tiered system that is segregated by meritocracy and social economic status. There is an elite set of institutions that only accept the top 12 percent of the state’s graduating class. The second tier only accepts the top 33 percent and the bottom rung of the system would be accessible to the rest of the graduates, GED recipients, and individuals over the age of 18 without a diploma or GED, or the students interested in courses for personal growth. As noted by Brint (2003) “community colleges were initially promoted by leaders of elite universities to redirect students who might otherwise demand access to four year colleges and universities, thereby diminishing the status of these institutions” (pp. 16-17). Latino males are more likely to enroll in the community college system because of the system’s open admissions policy, low tuition, ease of access, and students do not have to satisfy the high entrance standards of the University of California and California State University systems (Fike & Fike, 2008). Furthermore, it has been suggested that Latino males who enter higher education through a community college are less likely to complete their education or transfer. With community colleges continually conducting business in a traditional manner, they do not address the educational difficulties of the nontraditional student such as familial expectations and roles, lack of finances, poor institutional fit, or other personal circumstances (Fry, 2002; Fry, 2004; Lau, 2002).

The second element, *the challenge to dominant ideology*, allows for the analysis of policies and campus racial climate of the institution in correlation to the experiences of
the Latino male. The institutional mission and policies the college adheres to are perceived as race neutral. However, with the concealment of racial issues within the educational setting, the institution provides a disservice to the diverse student population. The two-year HSI does not consider the academic and social needs of the Latino male students. With oversight of race, the administration is “exercis[ing] a significant degree of oppression by sustaining a campus culture and climate that marginalizes, devalues, and silences these students” (Solórzano et al., 2005). Therefore, it is vital to examine the successful mechanisms that Latino male students utilized to overcome these oppressive institutional practices.

The third element, commitment to social justice and praxis, is very important for institutions to comprehend. Latino males enter community college with the aspirations of upward mobility whether it is to transfer to a university or obtain vocational training. However, for many Latino males in the system, they leave college without achieving their educational goal. The college’s multi-faceted mission and monocultural ideology does not allow them to adequately respond to the needs of Latino students. As a result, two-year institutions do not afford Latinos with the necessary education to begin the process of upward mobility (Perez-Huber et al., 2006), which would work toward the elimination of the Latino community’s current socioeconomic status and their empowerment as well (Yosso, 2005).

The fourth element, centrality of experiential knowledge, takes into consideration the communal knowledge the Latino male carries with him to the institution. Historically, the experiences of Whites are viewed as the standard measurement while the experiences of minorities are dismissed (hooks, 2003). However, Yosso (2004) stated
that “CRT draws on the lived experiences of People of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, testimonios, (emphasis original), chronicles, and narratives” (p. 74). The perspectives of the Latino males and those who assisted them in the process of their successful educational transition provided insight on how to improve the experiences for those students actively participating in the pipeline by “cast[ing] doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144).

The fifth element, the interdisciplinary perspective, allows for racism to be analyzed through different fields such as law, ethnic and women’s studies, and sociology. With multiple perspectives concentrated on the relevance racism has in the higher education of Latino males, it lends itself to the inclusion of social factors such as language, immigration status, ethnicity, culture, phenotype, accent, surname, and sexual orientation (Villalpando, 2004; Yosso, 2005). While the preceding elements are not exclusive to Latino males, they can provide a different lens as to why there is a disparity between the number of Latinos that enter California’s Community Colleges and the number of students from the subgroup that successfully complete their transfer process.

Conclusion

There are three different public postsecondary educational institutions in California: the community college system, the University of California system and the California State University system. The higher education institutions serve different purposes for the students of the state, “[students] in one set of schools are educated to be governors; [students] in the other set of schools are trained to be governed” (Kozol, 1991, p. 176). The California Community College system is the entry point for many of the
academically underprepared minority students of the state, which as noted by Crisp and Nora (2010) the higher the “number of areas needing remediation increased for students, [the] dropout rates also consistently increased” (p. 180). Also, community colleges have an open enrollment policy that allows students to matriculate prior to the beginning of a new semester, withdraw completely from the college at any point, and enroll part time; thus, making them predisposed to failure. Along with these distractions, Latino male students face the challenge of dealing with concealed discrimination at an institutional level. In order for them to succeed, they must find or create a positive campus racial climate.

There are not many empirical studies that examine the successful pre-transfer mechanisms of Latino male students between a Hispanic Serving two-year institution and a four-year university. As a result, the literature review for the study focused on creating a foundation centered on the negative factors Latino males encountered when they entered higher education. The analysis of the research commenced with the examination of how the participants in the study overcame obstacles in their attempt to continue with their educational aspirations. Concurrently, I was able to explore whether the particular Hispanic Serving Institution currently had a supportive campus racial climate, which was conducive to the acculturation of its students, which allowed them to find their educational identity in order to succeed.
Chapter III: Methodology

Research Purpose

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to examine the transfer experiences of first generation low-income Latino male students at a two year Hispanic Serving California Community College. Specifically, the study involved the exploration and description of the perceptions and lived experiences (Creswell, 1996) of ten Latino male students at Serra College (SC), a pseudonym. By concentrating on the pre-transfer encounters of Latino men at Serra College, a comprehensive description of their experiences are presented. Furthermore, the study provides the Serra College administration with a better understanding of what it is like to be a Latino male in their institution (Schram, 2006) and face the challenges of the pre-transfer process and their mechanism for overcoming such challenges. With the inclusion of these emic perspectives, the analysis of the data collected enabled for recommendations to be made to the administration, faculty, and student support staff on how to serve the largest student ethnic group on campus. Lastly, the study provided the necessary voice of the participants, which would have been difficult to capture in quantitative studies (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Research Questions

In a phenomenological case study, the primary research question “grows out of the intense interest in a particular problem or topic” (Moustakas, p. 104, 1994), which for the purpose of the study is the low transfer rate of Latino male students enrolled in community college. The study strived to answer the following primary research question: How do Latino male students at Serra College, a designated Hispanic Serving
Institution, perceive and describe their successful pre-transfer process experiences?

Consequently, the following sub-research questions will provide facilitated the collection of data for the study: How do external and internal factors have an effect on their perceptions? How does the campus racial climate affect their educational experiences?

**Research Tradition**

The study was conducted as a qualitative phenomenological case study. Phenomenology was created by Edmund Husserl to provide a method to assist psychological researchers in “investigating the human experience and behavior” (Wertz, p. 167, 2005). Since then, phenomenology has been utilized as a framework to guide studies in sociology, health studies, nursing, and education (Schram, 2006). Phenomenological studies require the researcher to return to the experience of the participant, who has lived the phenomenon, in order to obtain detailed descriptions of the essences for them (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Schram, 2006). Ultimately, a study in this tradition explores the experience of the individual through their perspective to understand what is important to them and how the participants view their world. In steering the study under this framework, I immersed myself in the *lebenswelt*, life-world (Wertz, 2005), of this particular subgroup at Serra College. In order to do so, it was obligatory to have extensive and prolonged engagement with the participants of the study through intensive in-depth interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2012) to provide a rich description of their world.

The case study aspect requires more than one sample. As noted by Merriam (2009) the case must be identified and a comprehensive description of the sample or
bounded system, which is comprised of a program, group, an institution or a community, was included. Through the organization and administration of the interview process, it was necessary to recruit a predetermined number of students since the entire student body could not be interviewed for the purpose of the study. For the study, the bounded system researched was a set of participants within a two-year educational institution. Thus, the research concentrated on the isolated experiences of Latino male students at a Hispanic Serving California Community College who were eligible to transfer to a four-year institution.

Phenomenologies are part of the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research. As stated by Rossman and Rallis (2012), “Interpretive research typically tries to understand the social world as it is (the status quo) from the perspective of the individual experience” (p. 43). Therefore, Critical Race Theory was utilized to convey the experiences of the students in the study. With phenomenological studies’ attempt to understand the status quo experiences of the participants; CRT will provide insight to their counter experiences of the educational world. The actualities of the Latino men will shed light on how they deal with the dynamic of the intersection between the dominant institutional culture and their reality. With the integration of a critical perspective that places race and marginalization at the forefront of the discussion, as a guiding framework for the study, it allowed for the data collection instruments and analysis to include issues specific to the Latino experience at Serra College. With the execution of the fieldwork and analysis through this position, I explored the important factors that have an effect on the educational progress of these students.
Site Selection

For the purpose of the phenomenological case study on the pre-transfer experiences of Latino male students, a criterion strategy was developed for the selection of the site. By executing this strategy, boundaries were established for the site by “connecting it directly to [my] research questions and that it will include examples of what [I] want to study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). The criteria implemented for the selection of the research setting are: 1) must be a two-year institution; 2) be designated as Hispanic Serving; and 3) the institution must strive to assist their students with their transfer goals through their institutional mission, academic and student support services. Furthermore, the mission of the college claims that it provides the educational foundation for its students to transfer to a public or private four-year institution through academic and student support programs. Overall, the criterion strategy sanctioned for the creation of boundaries to specifically select the site because “it is not in any way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 2002, p. 236).

Research Setting and Context

The site for the study is one of the 112 community colleges in California. Serra College is located in the suburban city of Serra, and is nestled in the hillside that borders the city. It is the oldest community college in its district. The institution has been an integral entry point to higher education for the population of Serra and neighboring cities for over eighty years. In its infancy, the college was part of the Serra High School District. The college was incorporated into the local high school and comprised the last four years of secondary education in the district. In the mid-twentieth century, Serra High School District reorganized secondary education and detached the college from the
high school. Serra College became a stand-alone institution that offered the first two years of a college education. Not only does the college serve the local graduating population, but it also provides educational opportunities to returning students, out of area students, and veterans. Serra College is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution due to the student population being composed of more than 25% of Hispanic students (Laden, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

The college has been classified as a very large public rural two-year institution (Carnegie, n.d.). During the 2011-2012 academic year, more than 20,000 students matriculated at Serra College. Demographically, the student population is ethnically heterogeneous. Hispanic students constitute the largest percentage at 53.6, and Whites are the next highest representation at 33.8%. Asian and students of two or more ethnicities follow at 4.9% and 3.4% respectively. African American (2.8%), American Indian (.5%), Pacific Islander (.3%), and unreported (.7%) which are students who did not self-identify on their admissions application round out the population of the college. More than half (69.1%) of the student population of Serra College is of traditional age (18-24). There are a higher number of female students than male students and over 60% of its students only attend part-time. Serra College offers its student population the option of an Associate of Arts and Associate of Sciences degrees in thirty fields of study and over sixty certificates of completion and proficiency awards in career technical studies. At the end of the year, the college had conferred 1,082 degrees, 574 certificates, and 858 students had transferred to other two-year public or private or four year educational institutions.
Researcher Access and Roles

The decision to select Serra College as the research site was based on discovering the ideal two-year institution for the study which consists of the following four factors: 1) entry is possible; 2) there is a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, structures of interest, or all of these; 3) likelihood of building strong relations working with participants; 4) ethical and political consideration are not overwhelming, at least initially (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Accessibility to the setting is not a foreseeable roadblock. Previous employment experiences have required Intersegmental collaboration with Serra College as well as with one of the sister institutions within the district. Also, volunteer opportunities in community organizations and steering committees have provided me with multiple opportunities to collaborate on various projects with student support programs and gatekeepers of the institution. Many of the effective relationships and rapport created with individuals on campus provided the required accessibility to the college, programs, students, and documents. Due to the previously established relationships, no political or ethical impediments were experienced.

Research Sample and Data Resources

Data Sources

With the purpose of the study being to examine the transfer experiences of Latino male students at Serra College, human data sources will include transfer eligible students that may be part of academic or student support programs. Other data sources incorporated were institutional data such as enrollment and transfer figures as well as institutional documents. The campus had eligible students to be possible participants for the study. Selected student participants were interviewed. Participant observations were
also performed simultaneously while the interviews materialized. As stated by Patton (1990), being a skilled observer “is essential even if you concentrate primarily on interviewing because every face to face interview also involves and requires observation” (p. 32). As the primary researcher on the study, it was vital to be aware of the nonverbal communication of the interview participants as pauses, sighs, facial expressions, and/or posture can add significance to their responses. Data sources included the examination of student, campus, and program documents such as academic plans, institutional data, and archival documents to set a foundation for the study and verify claims of the participants.

**Student Sampling Strategy**

Given the qualitative approach employed, the study had an in depth focus on a small number of participants to examine their perspective of their environment. The smaller sample size required that participants provide detailed information regarding the inquiries of the study. According to Patton (1990) “[i]information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169). Taking this into consideration, a combination strategy of deviant and criterion case sampling was utilized for the study.

**Deviant case**

The deviant, extreme (Bloomberg & Volpe, 20012; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990) or the unique approach as identified by Merriam (2009) focuses on research participants that have direct knowledge of the phenomenon and can provide rich information; however, they are unique in some manner. As demonstrated by the extant literature, Latino male students enter the California Community College system yet they do not make the transition into a four-year institution at similar rates compared to Whites,
Asian-Pacific Islanders, and Black students (Moore and Shulock, 2010). The research participants in the study have had successful experiences, contrary to those of their counterparts, which can provide knowledge on how to improve the transfer process for other Latinos. However, in order to discover these unusual cases, a criterion was generated to guide in the selection of appropriate participants.

**Criterion**

A criterion sampling strategy was used to select students as participants for the study. In using this strategy, a canon of attributes was created that were essential for the recruitment of the participants for the study (Merriam, 2009). The general criterion for the students was that they be matriculated students at Serra College. Participants could be part-time or full-time students at SC. The students also need to have self-identified as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, or Central American. The reason for the inclusion of multiple ethnic options was that students may select any of these designations since the terms Latino and Hispanic are general terms. They were created to encapsulate members “of an ethnic group that traces its roots to twenty Spanish-speaking nations from Latin American and Spain” (Passel & Taylor, 2009, p.1). Academically, they must have at least a 2.0 grade point average (GPA), which is the minimum GPA required to be eligible for transfer to a four-year university. With the inclusion of this requirement, the participants, at minimum, will be eligible to transfer into the California State University system. Student participants also needed to have followed the Intersegmental General Transfer Education Curriculum. By integrating this requirement, participants had to have completed or be near the completion of 60
transferrable units and at least successfully passed one course in math or English (Moore and Shulock, 2010).

There was a possibility that a subgroup would emerge from the sample after the students returned their demographic questionnaire. The new group would consist of students who participated in a student support program provided by the institution such as the Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS), or the Math Engineering Science Achievement Community College Program (MCCP). The subgroup developed as three respondents were active members of EOPS. The Extended Opportunity Program and Services is a state funded student support program that provides academic support, financial assistance, and encouragement. Their target student population is those students that are financially disadvantaged and academically unprepared. The purpose of the program is to have their students meet their educational goals. When the subgroup was established, I was able to compare the pre-transfer experiences of the EOPS students against those of the students that did not participate in student support groups.

**Student Sample Recruitment**

The participant sample of ten students needed to satisfy the previous referenced criteria. Prior to being selected, open search was conducted with the hopes that students would volunteer to be part of the research. In qualitative studies, there are no boundaries that dictate the number of participants. The sample size for a phenomenological inquiry can range from a single individual up to twenty-five (Creswell, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1989). The amount of participants depends on the questions being asked, what the researcher wants to know and what can be accomplished with the resources (time and financial) that the researcher has available (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1994).
After being sanctioned by Serra’s Institutional Review Board to perform research on their students, I communicated with Serra’s Student Activities Office to request permission to post informational flyers with a brief description of the study and my contact information around campus. Part of the request included the approval of small electronic ad that could be posted on the welcome screen of the college’s student portal. However, the latter solicitation was denied as only institutional information could be displayed on the student portal. Lastly, I submitted an application to the Student Activities Office to have permission to hold an informational twice a week during the late morning hours in the Campus Center, which is where the majority of the students congregate. All interested parties were required to complete a short questionnaire to verify their qualifications for the study. The efforts should attract to a sufficient amount of students. If the initial recruitment efforts had not produced enough participants, I was prepared to make use of institutional gatekeepers and informants to recommend possible candidates for the study. Once I obtained the first participants and conducted their interviews, I hoped that a snowball method would develop and they would refer other possible participants.

**Ethical Issues**

The processes that have been outlined required approval of the California State University, Northridge, Human Subjects Committee- Institutional Research Board and the Institutional Review Board of Serra College. Both entities wanted to ensure the participants and research were not being misrepresented and the data collected during the process was not misused or falsified. As such, I will needed to be aware of the possible ethical traps that may arise as a result of my study.
As the primary investigator, I had to guarantee the privacy of my research site and participants. Pseudonyms were assigned to the institution and to the human subjects in order to protect their identity and avoid any repercussions due to their participation in the research study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, the concealment of all identifiable characteristics was practiced for both the participants and Serra College. Interviews were arranged in a nonthreatening neutral site where the participants felt at ease. Member checks, the opportunity for the men in the study to review their transcripts to ensure their voice was captured accurately, were conducted twice during the research process. The initial check was executed after the participant interviews were transcribed verbatim. The last member check was performed when quotes were identified to bolster the findings of the study. The men had the chance to appraise how their quotes were going to be utilized in the context of the study. Finally, all the participants in the study also had the authority to resign from the study at any point.

**Instruments and Procedures**

For this phenomenological research study concerning the pre-transfer experiences of Latino male students at a Hispanic-Serving, two-year institution, two principle instruments were executed to aggregate information from the participants, create codes, themes, and for the interpretation of that data to produce recommendations for the study. All interested parties were presented with an electronic demographic questionnaire. Grounded on the answers provided by prospective participants, the decision was attained on whom to invite to be part of the study. The final instrument consisted of the student interview protocol.
The two instruments were developed based on key factors found to be important in the understanding of the transfer process in existing research. Questions for the protocol were generated with a Critical Race Theory lens and guided by a literature review on the low transfer rates of Latino male students. An original copy of the instruments can be found in appendix section at the end of this dissertation.

**Research Solicitation**

The original solicitation for student participation was to be administered as a three-pronged approach to maximize the exposure of the study to the Latino men at Serra College. However, due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, an email invitation to all Latino men who met the criteria for involvement could not be sent because their personal information could not be divulged. Therefore the initial recruitment effort for the study was downsized to the placement of informational flyers around campus and tabling. Both efforts were coordinated through Serra’s Student Activities Office.

The 8.5 x 11 flyer was approved for a two-week period. The flyer had a brief description of the study and my contact information for interested individuals (See Appendix A). The leaflets were located in strategic areas on campus such as the Campus Center, the library, student support offices, Admissions and Records and designated informational kiosks. These are all high traffic areas where the majority of students pass during the day. The purpose was to attract participants who were not on campus due to outside commitments or their lack of interaction with campus activities. Advertisements for the study were posted during the month of October and in late November. Flyers were printed in bright orange in October and bright Pink in November in an attempt to
acquire the attention of potential participants. The posting of flyers yielded my first and last participant in the study.

The in-person recruitment effort transpired on two separate occasions. The first effort was held a week after the first advertisements was posted on campus. Set up was allowed in front of the Student Center and took place during the morning hours (8:00am-10:00am). The second attempt to recruit students in person was the week prior to finals. The idea was that students would be on campus attending courses to obtain last minute notes or study guides for the imminent exams. The time and effort devoted to tabling at Serra College was to recruit students for the study, but it also provided access to the students and their interaction with the campus. The efforts did spark interest in the study; however, the potential participants did not meet the researcher-imposed criteria of grade point average or unit completion.

The initial attempts at the solicitation of participants for the study were through the flyer and holding information tables. This was an integral component to the study as it informed the prospective participants of any agencies that sponsored the study, the issue being investigated, the procedures they would be involved in and the time commitment that would be required of them (Yin, 2009). Since flyers and tabling efforts did not yield enough participants for the study, a snowball sampling approach was used. My first participant recommended the next student and the process continued until my ninth participant where the effort came to end.

In spite of Serra College having attained critical mass with Latino community students, the recruitment of participants was difficult. A high number of interested men did not meet the research criteria, while others qualified to participate but did not follow
through with returning of the student questionnaire or finding an available time slot to schedule their interview due to outside commitments. While more participants could have provided further insight to the pretransfer mechanisms of Latino men, the ten participants did share their navigational experiences, which was valuable to the study.

**Questionnaire**

As participants initiated contact with regards to the study, they were provided with their copy of the Consent to Act as a Human Research Participant (Appendix D). Once the consent form was signed and returned, the Latino Male Student Pretransfer Study Questionnaire (Appendix B) was issued to them via email to complete. Interested participants were required to return the form as an attachment within two days of receipt. The reason for the short turnaround was to gauge their interest in participating in the study. The questionnaire served a dual purpose. The first utilization was as an assessment mechanism to verify if the Latino males satisfied the criteria for the study. Those who met the criteria were invited to participate. The interested parties who did not meet the criteria were sent an email with an explanation that clarified the reason they were not selected to participate and their questionnaires were disposed of immediately. The secondary purpose of this form was to collect preliminary demographic data.

The questionnaire was designed as a form document in Microsoft Word, which permitted potential research participants to type and click answers directly on to the form. More importantly, the concern of not being able to understand their penmanship would be eliminated. The student questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section, Contact and Commitment Information, asked for their name, address, phone number, email address, preferred method of contact, their willingness to commit three hours to
this study and an hourly grid that demarcated their availability for possible interviews. All answers to this section required the men to type in their answers. The selection of radio buttons and typed responses answered the questions in the second section, Demographics. Participants were asked to answer queries with regards to their age, marital/relationship status, household income, employment status, racial/ethnic background, and enrollment status, major, number of units completed, grade point average, and when they intended to transfer. The third section, Confidentiality, provided a small description of with regards to confidentiality. The form had three blanks where the participants’ typed three possible pseudonyms they would like to use if they were selected to participate.

The questionnaire issued to the participants was used as a selection method for the sample. The questions asked of the individuals were connected to the criteria developed for participation in the study. All the students in the study were required to be Latino males enrolled at Serra College with a minimum grade point average of 2.0 and have completed or be within fifteen units of completing sixty transferrable units. By utilizing the questionnaire as a selection tool, candidates transitioned into active participants in the research study and were able to provide a rich and thick account that was used to evaluate the research questions. The collection of participant demographic information prior to the interview process, allowed for the questions to be eliminated from the discussion with the exception of any follow up questions to one of their responses. Furthermore, the information collected through the questionnaire was vital to the analysis of the data.

Selection of participants for the study was continuous. The recruitment process commenced in late fall 2013 in an attempt to capture as many participants as possible.
With the initial effort not being as successful as anticipated, I hoped for a snowball effect would result from the recommendations of the participants. Santana was the first participant who was recruited and he recommended two other Latino males. From there, participants began to recommend other possible students. The endorsements of the participants yielded six other individuals and the last was recruited through the second posting of flyers. The selection of the students lasted until late December 2013.

**Student Interview Protocol**

The student interview protocol, Latino Male Student Pre-Transfer Study Student Interview, was the guiding instrument for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews that were performed on the pre-transfer experiences of my participants (See Appendix C). The interviews started with a brief welcome and refresher on the purpose of the interview, confidentiality, informed consent, and my contact information as the lead investigator. The second section consisted of the questions for the interview. Topics covered by the questions included the students’ ideas of what transfer is, their educational past (K12), academic experiences at SC, their experiences and perceptions of the campus racial climate, services provided by the college to assist students in their pre-transfer process to a four year university, external factors and their effect on the participants’ education, and future educational goals. The instrument also integrated a section for closing questions and comments where participants could add more information and a debriefing section.

The interviews were semi-structured as defined by Glesne (2011) and Merriam (2009). The questions were open ended so interviewees can provide their unique perspective of their experiences at Serra College and general opinions on the college.
Furthermore, the method of interviewing allowed for the inclusion of questions, which may arise based on the answers provided to the original queries. The questions in the protocol were constructed with the intention of answering my research purpose through a Critical Race Theory viewpoint. The questions assisted in the comprehension of the experiences of the students and the obstacles they encountered that affected their education.

These 60-minute semi-structured interviews were scheduled within a week of the date the men returned their questionnaire. Interviews were scheduled through email or phone based on the availability they reported on the questionnaire. Locations of the interviews were also decided at this point. The participant had the opportunity to select to have their interview off campus or on campus depending on their comfort level. Once the interview was confirmed, a completed scanned version of their Informed Consent Form was emailed for them to review and have for their records. Participants were notified to bring their copy of the form to our predetermined location in case they had questions regarding the consent form. When the formalities were concluded, the interviewee was presented with a short refresher on the purpose of the interview, confidentiality, and informed consent. Finally, the students were furnished with my contact information.

The phenomenological interviews were informal and utilized open-ended questions. This allowed for questions to be developed prior to the encounter and to gain as much insight as possible into the lived experiences of the participant. Furthermore, by utilizing open-ended inquiries, the opportunity became available to write and ask exploratory follow up questions for clarification (Moustakas, 1994). As the interview
was conducted, observations and notes were aggregated on their behavior, mannerisms, and the tone in their voice. This task was proved to be beneficial when the data was analyzed and interpreted. The follow up questions were asked after they completed their original response to the question, as I did not want to interject and interrupt their thought process (Seidman, 2006). At the conclusion of each interview, the participants were informed of their opportunity to review a completed transcript of their interview. At the review, the participants checked for the true representation of their statements.

**Data Collection**

For the purpose of the study, the examination of the successful mechanisms the students used to reach the transfer point in their education. Furthermore, their opinions were applied to gauge how the campus environment had an effect on their educational progress. In order to obtain the data for the study, the participants presented their demographic information, which also verified that they met the criteria established for the study, through a short questionnaire. Patton (1990) stated that in qualitative studies, data is collected through “in depth open ended interviews, direct observations, and written documents” (p. 10). The bulk of the data was collected through in depth semi-structured individual interviews of ten male students.

**Entering the Field**

The fieldwork conducted for the study was crucial. Entering into their environment required direct contact in two phases throughout the study (Patton, 1990). The entrance into the field did not take place until after the successful proposal of the dissertation study to the committee in spring 2013. Furthermore, entrance to the site and access to the participants was delayed until the California State University Northridge
Institutional Review Board approved the study in summer 2013 followed by the Serra College Institutional Review Board in October 2013. The first opportunity to access Serra College was as a recruiter for individuals who may be interested in becoming part of the study. This required that I engage potential participants with a succinct explanation of the study and its purpose. The second phase transpired as the primary researcher for the study. In my duties, I was required to conduct their interviews. As such, I was obligated to enter and experience the world from their perspective.

Exiting the Field

The culmination of data collection for the study was in mid-January 2014. Leaving their world proved to be difficult because of the relationships that were created with the majority of the participants. Since the last requirement for the investigation was completed, contact with them has continued through email and text message. I have inquired about their semester grades and college application process. As recent as April 2014, I have received messages from them informing me of their intent to register at four-year institutions. As stated by Rossman and Rallis (2012), leaving the field can be as difficult as ending a relationship.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the phenomenological qualitative case study allowed for a better comprehension of the information I have collected during the research process through the consolidation, reduction, and interpretation of the verbal and nonverbal communication of the participants during their interviews. This course of action permitted for the presentation of an understanding of the bounded system that was examined (Merriam, 2009) through a critical lens. Through their perspective, the
intersectionality of the participants will allow for the consideration of how their ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and language contributed to their transfer pathway. From the interviews, I concentrated on direct quotations about their experiences, opinions, and knowledge. Their language also provided a meaningful voice to their experiences (Schram, 2006). With the examination of the literature and the participant transcripts, the similarities and differences were identified across the different sets of data to create the necessary codes to conduct a content and thematic analysis.

**Content Analysis**

According to Merriam (2009), the analysis of the content is the examination of data gathered in interviews, field notes, and documents. The analysis of the content led to thematic analysis, which was done through the creation of codes, which can be a single word or phrases that make a correlation between interviews and literature. The creation of the themes ultimately assisted in the interpretation of the findings and how they related to the research questions.

The initial step in data analysis commenced prior to entering the field. The examination of the literature for the study on the low number of Latino male students transferring to four-year institutions, critical race theory, and campus racial climate allowed for the identification of preliminary codes and themes. The purpose of the initial identification was to recognize key concepts from which similar codes and themes were developed within the interviews transcripts.

The ten student interviews were transcribed immediately following the interactions with the participants. The transcription process was conducted on a personal password-protected laptop using Microsoft Word. The initial coding process was started
through the implementation of the built in comments function. After each interview, time was allotted for the opportunity to reflect on the experience. Memos were written briefly to expand on the remarks that were jotted during the process based on the responses provided, participant mannerisms, pauses, and their body language. The memos were also analyzed and coded for possible themes.

Data analysis was based on the preliminary codes that resulted from the review of previous studies. The process began as the digital audio files were transcribed. The method enabled me to focus and continue to shape the study as I moved forward. Glesne (2011) states that if I “consistently reflect on [my] data, work to organize them, and try to discover what they have to tell [me], [my] study will be more relevant” (p. 188). Digital files were completely transcribed to be inclusive of the participants’ natural language. As the only transcriber, I was cognizant of the fact that as I progressed through each recording, there were certain nuances that were inaudible due to environmental white noise, the participant lowering their voice, or poor sound quality. This required that I be selective in the translation by omitting the sections or adding [inaudible] to the transcripts.

**Thematic Analysis**

After the conclusion of the initial analysis and preliminary coding, the files of the interviews were imported into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). CAQDAS is a tool that assisted with the coding and categorizing of the interviews. The computer software does not conduct the analysis of the data. I am still the one in control of the data and interpretation (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2009). As noted by Yin (2009), CAQDAS will “locate in the textual data all the words and phrases matching
[my initial set of codes], count the incidence or occurrence of the words or codes” (p. 128). For the purpose of the secondary and ongoing analysis, the CAQDAS utilized for the study was Dedoose, a web based application developed by SocioCultural Research Consultants at the University of California Los Angeles. The software allowed for the execution of constant case comparison. Grounded theorists use the technique to compare multiple cases; however, in the study it was used to compare the interviews through visualizations of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method data. According to Glesne (2011), the researcher “takes on the mindset of looking for how each of the [the] cases vary in terms of such things as events, participants, settings, or word use” (p. 187). By synthesizing the codes, I was able to discover elements that span the multiple interviews in order to create themes.

**Interpretation**

After multiple analyses of the data, I had the responsibility of interpreting the data based on the final codes and themes. Merriam (2009) noted that the interpretive process of the data would allow the researcher to examine and ask what it all means. Glesne (2011) provided four guidance questions to assist with the interpretation of the codes. They are 1) What did you notice?; 2) Why do you notice what you notice?; 3) How can you interpret what you notice? and 4) How can you know your interpretation is the right one? The first three questions related to how the data presented by the participants was deciphered by the researcher. However, the last question required verification that my interpretation was correct. How can I guarantee that I correctly captured the voice of the student? In order to do so, I had to conduct respondent validations (Merriam, 2009). The process required feedback from the participants in the study with regards to the themes
and interpretation of their personal interviews. The procedure ensured that I captured their marginalized experiences correctly.

**Timeline**

The timeline for the analysis and coding of the data was contingent on the final participant interview. With the collection of data not being completed until late January 2014, the coding and analysis did not commence until February 2013. Two week were allotted for the coding and preliminary analysis of the data. The final analysis and the creation of themes ended in March 2013.

**Role of Researcher**

As the primary researcher on the qualitative study, reflection on my biases, values and interests were important to the outcome of the research. My personal assumptions had the “capacity to filter, skew, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in written statement” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). Therefore, it would be a dereliction of my duty as the primary researcher not to disclose the biases that I brought into this study and those that could arise during the process. Neither group could be isolated as they were key components behind my interest to undertake this study. My student subjectivity is comprised of the experiences and values from my past. My professional bias derives from my role as a student support professional at a two-year community college. My researcher bias originates from my role as a doctoral student conducting a study on the pre-transfer experiences of first generation, low-income Latino male students who have been successful in their endeavor to transfer from a two-year California community college to a four-year institution. How then do my values and experiences as a former community
college student with aspirations of transferring to a four-year institution coincide with those of my participants?

**Historical**

Being a first generation and low-income student, I came across struggles other generational students may not encounter. I did not have the opportunity to interact extensively with my parents. My parents left home early to work in the agricultural farms in Oxnard and the surrounding areas. My parents worked long hours in order to provide for our family, and I was left to fend for myself in school. With no one to advocate on my behalf, I was left in educational limbo. I attended schools where I had to navigate my own educational path because the support was not available. I was that student whose parents could not advocate on his behalf due to the language barrier between them and the school’s administration. I was that student that did not see his parents until the early evening hours. I was the invisible student that was herded along until graduation. As a former Latino male student in the community college system, I carry with me the experience of struggles and triumph during my community college education.

I knew and understood what it meant to be a marginalized student because I spoke a different language and did not subscribe to White American societal customs. I recognized how it felt to not be taken seriously as a student because of my surname. I knew how it felt to be alienated because I lacked the culture necessary to succeed in higher education.
Professional

At the time of the study, I was in my seventh year as program advisor for a student services program. One of my many responsibilities was to inform high school students about their educational opportunities via classroom presentations; thus, I brought the experience and knowledge of comprehending the educational opportunities and student support services offered by Serra College. I knew the college had systems in place for Latino male students to succeed, but did they?

Educational Capitaless

The cultural capitaless-I did not understand how students still did not receive the necessary details to make well-informed decisions to continue their education or enter the workforce. The same information not provided to me twenty years ago was still not being provided to the students. The absence of this valuable information was not only in secondary education but also in higher education. During my time at my local community college, I was not provided with the particulars on how to transfer to a university. I did not have the cultural knowledge that was necessary to understand how to manipulate the system for my benefit. Where did my anger come from? Was it targeted at the educational institutions, which are not incorporating the students into the cultural capital realm or at the students who are not motivated to search out the wealth that is available? I needed to compartmentalize my past experiences with the lack of capital as to not close my mind to any of the positive encounters that the participants experienced during their time at Serra College.
As the researcher and advocate of this group, my first priority was to guarantee that the study was trustworthy. The reason for this was that validity (trustworthiness) does not carry the same connotations as it does in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, there are multiple ways for a qualitative study to achieve validity. According to Creswell (2003), triangulation, member checking, rich thick description, reflexivity, peer debriefing, and utilizing an external auditor can demonstrate a study is trustworthy. I did not want for their voices and experiences to be perceived as skewed because I did not tighten up my research and analysis protocols. Since trustworthiness was one of the goals I had to avoid ethical obligations that could jeopardize the study. In order to avoid these traps, I created an audit trail, conducted member checks, and provided a rich and thick description of the participants’ experiences (Glesne, 2011).

As the primary researcher, I interviewed the students. This phase demanded that I entered the field without preconceived notions of how the interviewees would answer the questions or persuade them to answer in a certain manner. The bracketing (Creswell 1990; Patton, 1990; Wertz, 2005) or epoché (Hays & Wood, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Schram, 2006) of my notions required that I set them aside so I can describe the phenomenon of the research participants. As stated by Denzin (1978), researchers “enter the field with preconceptions that prevent them from allowing those studied to ‘tell it as they see it’” (p. 10). I had to be cognizant that my judgments as well as my nonverbal communication during the interviews as they could influence the responses of the participants.
For the ten interviews that were performed, the questions asked could not lead the participant to provide a specific answer; thus, open-ended questions were created, which allowed them to tell their story. Additionally, the interviews were held at a neutral site. I did not want them to view me as a student support professional or feel that they had to respond in a specific manner because the interview was being performed at Serra College. Participants were informed that a full transcription would be provided to them for their review to verify that I captured their message. Other components to the audit trail consisted of field notes and observation comments that allowed for a continuous reflection process on the events that transpired. The ultimate goal was to provide the reader with a detailed description of their experiences.

With the introduction of my biases to the reader as soon as possible, the trustworthiness of the study did not come into question. As noted by Peshkin (1998), “one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and non-research aspects of our lives” (p. 17). I could not leave it at the door. I had to attempt to maintain my emotions repressed so that I did not search for information that was not presented during any of the process.
Chapter IV

Findings

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the qualitative phenomenological case study initiated to comprehend the successful pretransfer mechanisms utilized by Latino male students at their educational juncture in their pathway between Serra College, a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution, and a four-year university. Through open-ended interviews, participants provided insight to the principle research questions that guided the study:

1. What are the pretransfer experiences of Latino men who enter two-year Hispanic Institutions?

2. What external and internal factors shaped their pretransfer process?

3. How does the campus racial climate at their two-year institution affect their educational experiences?

The results of the study are preceded by an overview of Serra College then followed by the demographic profiles of the ten participants, and finally the presentation of the themes developed from the analysis of the ten participants.

Serra College Overview

Serra College was identified as the two-year institution for the study based on the criteria set for the selection of the research site: (a) a two-year institution, (b) designated HSI, and (c) a stated commitment to student success through academic and student support services. The community college is one of three institutions in the district and was granted HSI status and provided funding to support Hispanic students in 2010 by the United States Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Serra has also demonstrated its commitment to student success through its mission statement.
Participant Overview

Candidates for the study were selected based on the following criteria: (a) currently matriculated at Serra College regardless of enrollment status, (b) self-identified as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, or Central American, (c) a minimum grade point average of 2.0, (d) currently following IGETC, and (e) near the completion of 60 transferable units. A total of 17 students demonstrated interest in the study through the outlined recruitment efforts; however, four students did not meet the criteria and three others did not follow through with the necessary paperwork required for participation in the study. Two of the ten participants were recruited from on campus solicitation and the remainder through recommendations from participants.

The ten participants were assigned fictitious names, which they provided in their student questionnaire. The pseudonyms assigned to the students are Alex, Anthony, Chuy, David, Erik, Junior, Lou, Pablo, Rafa, and Santana. None of the pseudonyms correspond to any actual names of the students. Participants for the study self-identified as Chicano (10%), Mexican (20%), Mexican-American (50%), and Hispanic (20%). The students were all employed at the time of their interview (90% part-time and 10% full-time) and their earnings contributed to their family household income which ranged from $0-$30,999 and $31,000-$56,000 (See Table 4.1).
Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Hours Per Week</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0-30,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31,000-56,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuy</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31,000-56,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>31,000-56,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0-30,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0-30,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Chicano</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0-30,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31,000-56,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafa</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0-30,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santana</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0-30,999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were first generation college students that came from working class families. The students in the study willingly contributed to the economic welfare of their families while still focusing on their educational goals.

Candidates who were interviewed all began their higher education at Serra College the semester following their high school graduation (See Table 4.2). Eight participants graduated from high school within the city limits and the other two received their high school diplomas from neighboring cities. At the time of their interview nine of the ten participants were in the fall semester of their second year and one was in his third year.
Table 4.2

*High School Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>High School GPA</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>1st Semester at SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Buena High School</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Buena High School</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuy</td>
<td>Foothill Technology</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Carpinteria</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>Foothill Technology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Buena High School</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Hueneme High School</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Summer 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>Buena</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafa</td>
<td>Foothill Technology</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santana</td>
<td>Foothill Technology</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Table 4.3 the range in units completed by the students at the time of the interview process ranged from 39 to 62 with a mean of 46.25, yet by the end of the fall 2013 semester the participants’ were projected to have completed between 51 and 73 units with an average of 58.55. Eight of the ten students were enrolled full-time. The two part-time participants were near the 64 unit transfer eligibility requirement and as one stated “[t]his semester I slowed down to where I’m already at 54 units and I don’t want to take too many classes where I would have to drop one or end up with a ‘W’ and have it negatively affect my GPA.”
Table 4.3

*Serra College Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Enrollment Status</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Current Units</th>
<th>Units Completed</th>
<th>Projected Fall 2013</th>
<th>SC GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuy</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafa</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santana</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Profiles**

In fall 2013, I was notified by Serra College’s Institutional Review Board of my approval to collect data from their Latino male student population through personal interviews. By the end of Serra’s fall semester; I had collected data from ten participants. At this point in the recruitment process, no additional participants emerged and I decided to conclude my search and begin the analysis of the data collected. The following section will provide an individual summary on each participant so the reader can gain a better understanding of the students’ educational background in high school and where they intend to be a year from now. Lastly, the reader will notice the discrepancies between the
men’s high school grade point average and their necessity for developmental education as a result of their low scores on Serra’s entrance exams.

Alex

I met Alex in the morning at a Coffee Bean about five miles from campus. He graduated from a high school a mile away from Serra College in 2012 with a 2.5 grade point average and began his college career the ensuing fall semester. He took the necessary assessments but does not remember the actual results. However, he was required to enroll in developmental coursework, and when asked about these courses he noted, “I don’t remember off the top of my head but there’s a couple that are general that you need. Some are not transferrable but you have to take them.” In the case of Alex, he had to enroll in Intermediate Algebra. When we met for the interview he had completed 40 units, was enrolled in 12, and had a 2.1 GPA. Alex had decided to major in Criminal Justice and plans to transfer to Cal Lutheran University or the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB). Due to his B/C GPA in high school, Alex enrolled at Serra College with the intent to transfer. According to Alex, the transfer process meant that he would “move on to a bigger school to get the major you want to get your degree in.”

Anthony

Anthony was the last participant to be interviewed for the study. I met him at a Starbucks located about two miles from Serra College in the early afternoon. Anthony graduated from high school with a 3.86 GPA. His first semester at Serra was fall 2012 and began in developmental education in English despite having a near perfect high school grade point average. The English level that he assessed into was not transferrable nor degree applicable. At the time of his interview he was classified as a part-time
student; however, had successfully completed 62 units with a 3.64 GPA. Anthony’s declared major was General Liberal Arts and Sciences and planned to transfer to UCSB, California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), or the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC). At the time of his interview, Anthony stated he had gained a feel for college and had completed his general education. With this portion of his transfer process near completion, Anthony could now “focus on [his] career classes” once he decides what major he would like to go into.

Chuy

I met Chuy outside of a Starbucks on a warm fall day. He graduated from a high school located across the street from Serra College in 2012 with a 3.4 grade point average. His first semester at Serra College was in fall 2012. Based on his assessment results from the previous spring, Chuy began in English V02, Fundamentals of English Composition, the second developmental level, and Statistics for math. At the time of the interview, he had enrolled and successfully completed both levels of developmental English and the two necessary transferrable English classes. Furthermore, Chuy had completed 42 units, enrolled in 15 and had a 3.4 GPA at Serra. Chuy’s declared major was Sociology and planned to apply to three California State Universities: Northridge (CSUN), CSUCI, and San Francisco State University. Chuy explained that his transfer process would allow him to “expand [his] knowledge and expand [his] education as [he] pursues [his] goals at a four-year university.”

David

David is one of the participants who was recruited from the first posting of flyers strategically placed at Serra College. I met David at a Coffee Bean in Carpinteria, which
is approximately 23 miles away from campus. David graduated from Carpinteria High School in 2012 with a 3.4 GPA and decided to attend Serra College in fall 2012 instead of enrolling at his local community college. As a result of his assessment scores, David began in math V11A, Elementary Algebra and in English V03, Basic English Composition. The results placed him three levels below transferrable math and two levels below in English. He has completed his math requirements for transfer and is currently enrolled in English V01B which is the second class required to be transfer eligible. At the time of his interview, David had completed 41 units, was enrolled in 14 and had a 3.3 GPA. His intentions are to complete the applications for the universities this month so he can continue his education at UCSB, University of California Irvine (UCI), or Long Beach State.

**Erik**

I met Erik on a hot autumn afternoon in an eclectic part of town outside a small coffee shop with a few tables and couches inside. Outside of the establishment were three bistro tables that lined the sidewalk. I sat at the furthest table from the entrance waiting for his arrival. Erik received his diploma in 2012 from the campus located across the street from Serra with a 3.0 GPA. He enrolled at Serra the semester following his high school graduation. According to Erik, he registered at Serra so he could “continue with a higher study but at a place where you get a feel for college classes prior to entering a four-year and end up falling behind and wasting money.” Erik was the only participant that was not required to enroll in developmental coursework. He placed into college level courses for math and English. He had completed 45 units and was enrolled in 12. Erik currently had a cumulative 2.9 GPA and planned to transfer to CSUCI, UCSB or at
California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly SLO) where he could resume his education and receive his Bachelor’s degree in Agriculture.

**Junior**

I met Junior at a Starbucks early on the day of his interview. He graduated from a local high school in 2012 with a 3.4 grade point average. Junior had planned to attend a four-year university after graduation but was disqualified from the selection process because his high school transcripts did not arrive prior to the institution’s deadline. When we met for his interview, Junior had completed 48 units, was enrolled in 12 and had a 2.9 GPA at Serra College. Based on his assessment results, he was required to enroll in developmental education. After completing his general education and accumulating enough transfer credits, Junior plans to transition to San Diego State University (SDSU), UCLA, Arizona State, or the University of Arizona.

**Lou**

Lou was the other participant who was recruited for the study via the informational flyers on campus. I met Lou in Ventura at a Coffee Bean about half an hour after it opened for business. Lou received his high diploma in 2011 from a high school in a neighboring city. Lou enrolled at Serra College in summer 2011 as a Criminal Justice major and currently has a 2.6 grade point average. He placed into college level English; however, he assessed into Math V03, Intermediate Algebra, which is one level below transferrable math. In his third year Lou is near the completion of the first step of his educational goal. He intends to transfer to a four-year institution such as the UC schools, CSUs or any out of state to get his Bachelor’s degree. His objective is to apply and transfer to Fresno State, San Jose State, CSU East Bay, or Long Beach State.
**Pablo**

I arranged to meet with Pablo during his only free time in a two-week period: early Sunday morning inside Coffee Bean. Pablo graduated in 2012 from Buena High School with a 2.6 grade point average. He is the only participant in the study who was employed full-time, enrolled full-time at Serra College, and held an internship at the time of his interview. Pablo completed his developmental education in math and English and is now prepared to “move out of town and transfer to a four-year university.” The Nursing internship requires 240 hours to complete but it has reinvigorated his passion for Nursing. The program has exposed Pablo to different career paths within the field. As a result, he holds a 3.2 GPA and would like to transition to San Francisco State, UCLA or Chico State to pursue his Bachelor’s degree in Nursing.

**Rafa**

Rafa’s interview took place outside of Barnes and Noble on a brisk autumn morning. We were the only people in the entire shopping center. Rafa is currently enrolled as a full-time student in 12 units. He has a 2.3 GPA at Serra and will have completed 51 units at the end of fall 2013. He graduated from Foothill Technology High School with an identical grade point average in 2012. Rafa began his education at the college two levels behind in math, Elementary Algebra, and one level below transferrable English (Fundamentals of English). At the time of our encounter, he had transitioned from developmental to general education in both subject areas. Rafa is in the process of making a decision on his major and where he will continue his education when he completes his general education at Serra.
Santana

I met Santana at a small Starbucks in the recently renovated old part of town. It was towards the end of the day yet surprisingly warm for this time of the year. Santana commenced his education the Monday immediately after his high school graduation in Serra’s summer session in 2012. Santana took advantage of the summer to enroll in the two obligatory developmental courses he was placed into. He had completed 48 units and currently enrolled in 13. His grade point average was 3.4 and he intended to apply to California State University Northridge (CSUN), Long Beach State, and California State University Los Angeles. Santana made the correlation of his transition to a four-year institution to that of a door being opened. He explained that in order to receive his degree in Criminology, he had to take the opportunity to go further educationally.

Significant Themes

The emergence of the themes for the study was based on the preliminary analysis where data was searched for “conditions among the participants as a method of pointing to regularities in the setting” (Anfra, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 32). After the performance of multiple data reviews, the next phase in the analysis was to identify developing themes. The process included the synthesis of the preliminary codes into significant themes, which provide pertinent information to the challenges and processes the students confronted as they navigated their educational pathway at Serra. From the review, the following themes emerged from the data: (a) Personal and Familial motivation, (b) External demands, (c) Institutional access and experiences, and (d) Transfer Away.
Personal and Familial Motivation

In an ideal world, a straight line demarcates the educational pathway for a student with two endpoints showing the beginning and the end. Point A on the educational map begins with preschool and culminates with Point B when the student determines that he or she has completed their educational journey. Unfortunately, for the ten Latino males that participated, their pathway was not straight. The students were required to navigate around or through obstacles that were purposely created by society to limit or completely halt their education based on their ethnicity and or socioeconomic status. Regardless of the obstructions they encountered in their path in primary and secondary education and while at Serra, the students successfully navigated their educational pathway through personal determination and the assistance of their family.

Personal Motivation

Consistent in every transcript, the students discussed their negative encounters with the campus or with external obligations, which created moments in their journey that Rosenbaum et al. (2006) identify as cooling out. Their moments of self-doubt transpired at different points in the students’ tenure at Serra. For two students, their moment of despair occurred prior to their enrollment at the college and for the others the encounters transpired during their freshman year. Anthony had strong family support, a high grade point average in high school, and the potential to succeed academically; yet, he continually struggled to envision a successful future for himself. He noted:

Yeah, there have been sometimes that I’ve felt like giving up just because I wasn’t so, I didn’t believe that I could do it. That I could be able to achieve it. Just times I felt like no matter what I tried or what I do I’m not going to be that
guy in the big house with a wonderful family and nice cars. I put myself down cause I was in a place where I wasn’t feeling very confident in myself or my schoolwork or just the people I was with.

However, the low moments the group underwent were neutralized by a sense of pride and reassurance of their future lives. They expressed that personal motivation was one of the primary mechanisms they exercised for success at Serra. The participants noted they continued their educations past high school because they were concerned with their future. The majority of the students envisioned themselves with a family and home.

Contrary to Anthony’s mixed feelings of his academic capabilities, David assessed into the lowest levels of developmental education that prolonged his tenure at Serra, and had a different perspective of his potential. David expressed:

Put what’s important ahead of you. Don’t think of now. Think of tomorrow. Think of what can happen the next day. Think of what you can achieve. Think of what you will achieve. What you want to achieve for yourself, your family and your future.

Also of importance to them was the financial stability of their parents, which was another factor why the students currently were dividing their time between a job and school. The men recognized that part or full time employment in a minimum wage position was not going to assist them in being able to provide a better future for their parents. To the participants, an education was the only approach by which they could achieve a career. Pablo noted, “My family and of course money. Money has always been an issue in my life and my family’s. We’ve never been up there. We’ve always struggled so I would like to see that go away at some point.” At the time of his interview, Pablo, was enrolled
full-time at Serra College, had two part-time jobs which approximately totaled 60 hours, and was about to complete a nursing internship at a local hospital which required 20-24 hours of his time per week. He was doing everything within his power to make sure that his family’s current financial struggles would disappear and remain that way in the future. The socioeconomic struggles the students’ families encountered in the past and continue to face today, persuaded the participants to persist. Not only do they wish to better their lives financially but the lives of their parents as well. Concurrently, there were external influences that provided motivation for the students.

Half of the participants conveyed in their interviews that their environmental surroundings also contributed to their desire to continue their education. For two participants it was the individuals they associated with in high school and for the other three it was the neighborhoods where they lived. The group realized they did not want to become like their high school counterparts who dropped out of high school to start working or begin their own families. Moreover, the students did not want to follow in the path of their fellow students who began their college education at Serra and dropped out along the way. The men in the study were not satisfied with their educational accomplishments. For instance, Lou, a third year student at Serra and preparing to transfer to a four-year university, disclosed that one of his motivations to complete his general education and transition was to not become part of “the statistic that a lot of people go to community college and don’t get out. And I don’t want that. I want to be part of the, you can say, those 1%ers that leave and go on and achieve.” Cognizant of the high probability of educational failure, the students continued to strive to succeed and transfer although their social environment was not supportive of pursuing an education.
The socioeconomic status of their families relegated the majority of the students to reside in working class neighborhoods. The residents of these neighborhoods are more concerned with survival and tend to experience subpar educational experiences. Many drop out of school at an early age because they are disengaged with their education or the secondary schools do not provide the necessary assistance for them to succeed. As a result, there are minimal expectations of the students. Santana’s motivation also derived from the neighborhood where he has resided all of his life. He noted:

The neighborhood you live in is a big issue. I mean you can be Latino in Beverly Hills and it doesn’t mean you’re going to transfer, but let’s say the neighborhood I live in. It doesn’t honestly advocate going to college. I live in the projects. Basically, I just see poor. I see people that didn’t attend college. You go out there, you come outside your door and you see uneducated people. Does that really motivate you to go further than them or does it motivate you to say ‘Oh those are the standards or maybe I’ll stay here too.’ I don’t want to be like that. I want more.

Self-deprecation and the sense of not belonging for first generation students who lack the necessary capital to succeed in an institution of higher education can be difficult to overcome. Yet, the participants in the study utilized self-motivation and discovered a pillar on which to lean for the emotional push they needed at certain points in their tenure at Serra College.

**Familial Motivation**

Similar to the conclusions in Ceja (2006), the parents of the participants in the study did not understand the capital required to assist their sons through the higher
education process. None of the parents had attended college. The educational background of the parents consisted of a low level education in another country, high school dropouts, or completed high school but did not attempt college. However, there was consensus amongst the participants on the significance their parents placed on them to continue with their education, often citing their lack of education or lack of opportunity to do so. Their parents used themselves as an example of how the lack of an education relegated them to service jobs or entry-level positions that required long hours and low pay. Santana, who came from a single parent home, noted in his interview:

What made me most want to go to college is that I saw her everyday work hard for us cause she was just a single mother and it was us five kids. And then to raise five kids on herself, like being abandoned, she had to work really really hard. And she had no education. She didn’t know no English and she still managed to bring all of us up. And me not having a father figure made me want to be more successful. Just because of that. My mom always told me “Don’t be like me. I get paid minimum wage. Look at my heels. They’re almost half gone because [I’ve] been working for almost 20 years. Why? Because I didn’t have any education. Do you want to be like me? Get your education and you have to work less hard and you get paid more.” That really got stuck in my head.

Santana and the other students received constant reminders of the sacrifices their parents made for them to have the opportunity to continue their education. Rafa, whose parents immigrated to the country, persisted with his education after high school because he wanted to be a positive role model for his younger sister and the encouragement he obtained from his parents. He remarked:
They didn’t get the education they wanted and they wanted the best for me.

Dropping out of high school and now college has never been an option or not going to school. So I just keep going cause they tell me everything they do for us to go to school and continue with our education.

In spite of their parents, as David explained, not “knowing the college and what it is to get in and stuff” the participants appreciated that their parents understood when they had to go early or stay late to conduct college business. More importantly, their parents identified when their sons experienced a difficult time. The advice of their parents always came at the right moment. Lou, whose parents both dropped out of high school and separated when he was a young child, stated:

There was a time my freshman year when I felt like what am I doing here? What’s the point of all of this? That’s when my mom asked what’s wrong and we would talk about it. Afterwards, I would talk to my dad for a second opinion we’d just you know, come to the conclusion that anything worth having doesn’t come easy.

With the lack of parental awareness with regards to the college process, participants who had access to older siblings or extended family that were currently attending or experienced higher education in the past, utilized them for support and guidance to succeed in higher education. The reassurance the participants obtained from their families was a vital mechanism to the success of their experience at Serra especially with the obstacles they encountered.

The above narratives shared by students highlight the various dimensions related to personal and familial motivation and how the students used these as sources to
persevere in what was often an unknown educational environment. As first generation students, they attended secondary schools that provided organizational habitus but not directly to them. The high schools provided services to students in boutique external outreach programs such as Upward Bound and Talent Search, or institutionalized programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). College going information is not a commodity the students possessed prior to their enrollment at Serra College; thus, their resourcefulness allowed them to create an individual support mechanism that would allow them to succeed. The students were all grateful that they had parents and family that supported them. Alex claimed “it shows somebody cares for you. It’s a feeling that you get inside your heart that just, you want to do, please yourself and them more because they’re helping you out and supporting you.”

**External Demands**

For the Latino men in the study, the desire and dedication to commit to their education is evident in the data; however, as a whole, the group had external commitments, which required their time and effort as well. The primary demand on their time was the necessity to work.

**Employment**

As previously demonstrated in Table 4.1, the participants came from homes with an annual income level of less than $31,000. The obligation to work in addition to being enrolled full-time at Serra was for them to contribute to the survival of their family. The students verbalized that their families have struggled financially ever since they can remember. Anthony, who parcelled 35 hours a week for his job at a flooring distribution company specified, “I never try to hide the fact that if I don’t work I’m gonna get nothing
out of it.” The students worked anywhere from 20 hours to more than 40 and one student had two part-time positions. One of the participants, Alex, was the outlier in the group. He was a cashier for his family’s small business and was responsible for opening and closing on a daily basis. Alex felt obligated to work long hours to support the family business stay afloat. Alex noted that he is there when he is not in class and he feels “like a zombie.” The amount of time the students devoted to their jobs for survival does place a strain on their education.

The students expressed how the demands of their employment status affected their education. They made the implication of the negative impact; however, were quick to minimize the hardship they experienced as a result of the addition of work to their schoolwork. The data demonstrated that the employers were not sympathetic to the educational demands and requirements of the students. Santana, who worked at a local fast food establishment, articulated during his interview:

> Work is an obligation. A commitment. You need to work. You can’t be calling in when there’s an exam. Especially the job I have. They’re not going to tell you ‘Oh yeah take the day off cause you have an exam tomorrow.’ You can’t take the day off if you got a lot of homework.

The participants felt they could not request time off or shift changes because of school.

Furthermore, the group explained how their time constraints added stress to their educational lives. Being at work for extended hours conflicted with their academic preparation. Chuy, who was employed a local eatery, shared during his interview a time when he had to work prior to a final exam. He explained, “One time I had a final in the morning at 8:00am, but I had to work the night before until 11:00pm so I didn’t really
have time to study, but I passed it. But I also wanted to study over everything again the
night before and I didn’t have the chance.” Even though the students were successful
with their classwork, they believed they could have done better academically if their
academic time was not constricted with employment obligations. Concurrently, work
interfered with their academic options. The students who were accustomed to have their
schedules created by the high schools were now forced to create their own class schedule.
With the students’ desire to assist their family with monetary contributions and the
variety of academic offerings provided by the campus, the participants worked full-time
or accepted shifts between classes. For instance, Alex consistently contributed to his
family’s business that his escape from his employment obligation was his attendance in
class. He mentioned, “[I] just need to get out! Even if its school, which I’m sure for
other people do not want it to be school. But for me, you know, I get out of work and I
get an education out of it.” As a result, Alex based his course selection on when he did
not want to be at his family’s business.

The other students did not have the opportunity to select their schedules. They
were required to create their college agendas around their work hours. Pablo found the
time for his classes in between his two part-time jobs with the same pizza parlor where
we worked a total of 50 hours per week. Contrary to Pablo, Lou had to create his class
schedule around his full-time day job in a photography studio. Lou’s decision to work
full-time resulted in him enrolling in evening classes. The drawback to their necessity to
work delayed their educational progress. Pablo, Lou, and the remainder of the group
articulated that certain coursework is not offered in the late afternoon or evening hours.
Pablo made the statement, “It was the first time that I needed more time with school.”
Once the students realized that their work demands were interfering with their ability to take classes, they reduced their work schedule or transitioned to another employment site in order to have the opportunity to enroll in the morning class sections.

Lastly, the students also had to take into consideration the time necessary to commute from their perspective home and employment destinations when they created their semester schedule. Due to the size of Serra’s student population, there are not many on-campus employment opportunities for students that would allow for them to remain on campus. All of the participants lived at least 15 minutes away from Serra, which also required a time allotment to find a place to park. For the students who did not have a vehicle to provide them with accessible transportation to campus, they relied on public transportation or a ride from a friend or family member. However, the latter modes posed an issue to the participants, as they can be unreliable. David commented:

I have to plan accordingly. I try to give myself about an hour to get to campus and find parking, but sometimes traffic will make me late. I work at the Boys and Girls Club and we open two hours before the students get out of school so I need to make sure that I don’t schedule classes that will make me late to work.

The students had to be cognizant of their travel time when they planned their coursework. The group did not compromise their commitment to their education. They enrolled full-time at Serra and added the responsibility of job to their schedule.

**Institutional Access and Experiences**

**Developmental Education**

Current research (Bahr, 2010; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010, Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Nora & Crisp, 2010) demonstrates that students who are required to enroll
in developmental education are more likely to become discouraged with the ambiguity of how the coursework relates to their educational pathway or with the amount of time it will delay them to reach the point of being transfer eligible. David, who assessed into the lowest levels of developmental education, was on the cusp of leaving Serra College even before he stepped foot inside a classroom. The reason for his temptation not to attend was his assessment results. David stated:

I definitely did feel discouraged with my results just because, you know, people always talked about transferring in two years. That’s what we all have in mind and that’s what I thought until I saw my results. I couldn’t fail any classes cause that would put me behind even more.

Nonetheless, the young men in the study endured through their developmental education. Nine of the students arrived at Serra College at different levels of remediation due to the results of the assessment tests that were administered in English and math. Consequently, they were slotted into Serra’s developmental education pathway in spite of them graduating from high school with grade point averages above a 2.0. As Erik noted on the administration of the exams:

They really didn’t prepare us for what we were about to take. Some people didn’t even know what the assessment was on so they just went in there and they didn’t even study for it. When it was kind of important to study for that and then get placed in the correct spot.

The participants accepted their results and began their education based on the five-minute lecture they received afterwards where a Serra staff member provided them with their scores in a large group environment. Lou stated, “It was in the cafeteria at my high
school. They basically said, ‘You’re going to get your results and depending on that is where the college is going to say where they think you should start taking classes.’ The students did not comprehend the significance of their results. Anthony explains:

When I took V03 at Serra College my first semester there, I felt like it was a joke. It was, for me, it was too easy, too simple, and too slow paced. So I was a little discouraged at it. I could do this in my sleep. So in a sense I feel like I might have been in the wrong course at first but I didn’t make anything of it. I still took the course and still did really good in the class.

The Latino men in the study viewed the assessment tests and developmental coursework as prerequisites that all first time freshmen were required to take in order to enroll at Serra. The group described their results as average or above average even though nine of them were required to enroll in developmental coursework one to three levels below transferrable college level content in English, math or both. Alex noted, “I don’t remember off the top of my head [assessment results] but there’s a couple that are general that you need. Some are not transferrable but you need to take them.” Developmental education or general courses as described by the participants were an obstacle they had to overcome. For a few students, developmental education created stress and a sense of despair, yet they continued on their educational course. The men in the study never enrolled below full-time status during the regular academic year. They also took advantage of Serra’s summer sessions in order to minimize their time at Serra. All the participants are now at a point in their education where they will prepare to transfer to a four-year institution. Ultimately, the Latino men in the study utilized their personal educational naiveté to their benefit.
Racial Climate

In the latest data made public to the community, Serra College reported that 55.21% of the student body had self-identified as Hispanic (Serra Community College District, 2014). Serra College has reached critical mass, which according to research findings, should provide underrepresented students a comfort level or familiarity on the college campus (Hagedorn et al., 2007) and increase respect on campus (Kidder, 2013). However, the same ethnic representation had not reached the lecture halls or the student support offices where students traditionally interact with the campus. In fall 2011, Serra had 633 employees. There were 141 full-time faculty, 312 part-time faculty, 158 classified staff and 22 managers and supervisors. Examining the data as it pertained to campus staff, the ethnic majority of both faculty branches have been White. In fall 2011, 91 (65%) of the full-time faculty and 227 (73%) of the part-time faculty were White. Similar figures were reported for the managers (64%) and classified staff (48%) (Serra Community College District, 2014).

The ethnic awareness was evident based on the participant responses when asked how their ethnicity had shaped their experiences at Serra. Nevertheless, the students did experience racial microagressions on campus; however, the students took the comments and actions in stride. The actions of others did not have a negative impact on their education at Serra. Alex indicated, “Uh, I don’t know. It just feels, like I don’t know, to me it feels like everybody else. At my college there probably is more Hispanics than anything. It’s just normal. It feels like high school all over again.” Conversely, despite Alex having the sense of racial normality on campus, he did experience a moment where
he felt awkward and out of place. In his first semester he enrolled in Political Science course where he was the only nonwhite individual in attendance. Alex explained:

There was nothing but, you know, there was only White people in the classroom and that included the professor and I was the only Hispanic there. I was always the first one out of class because I felt awkward but also I was the first one there to prove the point that I was not going to quit.

Examples like Alex’s were common in the transcripts. Additionally, Pablo stated:

Being Latino you kind of have to try harder. People have made comments that people from my background aren’t that educated. That people like me do not come out on top academic-wise. So I have to try my best and work my hardest and try to go somewhere, you know. Try to make a change basically.

Besides the feeling that they needed to exert extra effort to prove they belonged at Serra, the students were questioned about their affiliation with certain groups or looked at differently because of their ethnicity. Lou confirmed, “There’s nothing negative to it. There’s a good population of Hispanics at Serra so it’s not like we’re frowned upon. But sometimes not like all of the time, but sometimes you get that little look.” Asked to expand on his answer, Lou provided the following explanation, “I used to go straight from work to school so I would dress a little down and I would get those looks like ‘What are you doing? You look dirty.’ It didn’t affect me in any way. I just noticed that they noticed me.”

In conjunction with attaining critical mass, Serra is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution with government financial allocations to implement and provide additional academic services specifically targeting this sector of the student population.
In the process of our conversations, the participants stated that they were not aware of Serra’s classification as an HSI. After a brief definition of the term, Lou remarked, “That’s wrong. I probably might not have used the services but think of others that could, you know, benefitted from them.” Despite of Serra’s categorization as an HSI and the number of Latino students on campus, the participants did not experience the familial environment predicted by the aforementioned studies.

**Where is the Culture**

Serra College does not have an identity that the students can associate with. According to Shen and Tian (2012) the identity of a college campus consists of the “common values, spirits and behavior norms of people on campus who are pursuing and developing their study and research” (p. 61) which for transfer pathway students is established by three main departments on campus: Enrollment Services, Academic Counseling and the Transfer Center. The first indicator that Serra College did not have a uniform set of values was made evident as I compiled the participant data. Students were provided with the opportunity to meet on campus to conduct their interviews before or after class or during an extended break. However, the students preferred to congregate off campus. The participants made it obvious that they were only on campus to attend class. Pablo commented, “At Serra College you go there to learn and leave. So there’s not a lot of socializing between different people or interaction with staff unless you know them already or if someone extends a hand you know. It’s not very social.” The principle reasons students left was that they did not feel a connection to the campus, and outside commitments which required their full attention. Furthermore, participants believed they were stranded on campus alone with no educational support on how to
create their personal path to success. The students that participated in EOPS also felt alone outside of the confines of the office. Santana experienced this sensation in the classroom. He revealed in his interview:

  It made me feel like not part of the college. Like mostly they [instructors] didn’t care. Like it’s just like, it just seems like they go there and they really don’t answer any questions. They just go there, write on the board or pad and they’re gone. You just take notes. It would be like you were by yourself and the teacher not being there. I mean it didn’t really feel like home.

Uninformed of the stages to successfully transition from their secondary educational institution to Serra, the students did not understand how the culture had changed from one environment to the next. They felt overwhelmed and nervous. Chuy mentioned:

  Um, I’ll be honest. I was a little nervous going to my classes because I didn’t know what I was going to expect or where to go. I didn’t know if the people were going to be friendly or if they were going to welcome me. How the professors were going to be, if they were going to be mean or they were going to be nice. I was, I was pretty nervous.

The phenomenon of being isolated on campus was compounded by the fact the campus did not provide the students with an introduction to their new surroundings and the support features available to them as they transitioned into the campus. Lou indicated:

  Like if they were to have one of those like in high school where, the big meetings, like what is it? I mean they even have it at the university. Like at Fresno, they call it Dog Days. And you go and they show you around and they do a bunch of stuff. You know, that would help. Incoming seniors from high school, they could have
a date like two weeks or a month before school, you register at SC and come see what’s going on and what there is to do. There’s nothing wrong with that.

The program described by Lou could have introduced the students to the accessible institutional support mechanisms. The non-inclusive culture of the campus has created a chasm between Serra and the students. Lou remarked:

You could say scary or intimidating because nobody is there, not necessarily there to hold your hand, but nobody really cares if you’re there or not. Not even the teachers, they would say ‘There’s consequences for being tardy or if you don’t show up to class in certain amount of time you can’t get in.’ They don’t really care if we show up or not.

The participants could not identify with Serra College as an institution and did not understand the inner workings of the campus. From the students’ perspective, all they were at Serra was their 900 number, which is their student identification number to conduct business on campus. While these sentiments may have been experienced by all students at Serra College, for the Latino men in the study, the lack of a campus culture they could identify with and the institution’s dominant ideology added to the participants’ academic anxiety of being the first to attempt higher education and the sensation of not having institutional navigational support.

Access to Student Services

In conjunction with the lack of campus culture and its exclusiveness, the students were unaware of the services available to them. They were also wary of approaching the office for fear of not knowing anyone or not asking the appropriate questions. The purpose of Academic Counseling and the Transfer Center is to remove obstacles from a
student’s transfer pathway. However, the offices and departments on Serra’s campus became an obstacle for the participants by them not promoting and recruiting students to participate in their programs and limiting access to their resources. As Junior mentioned, “either you know about it or you don’t.” With the exception of the three active participants in EOPS, the remaining students hesitated in seeking assistance when it came to their academics or transfer pathway because they were afraid to be in the wrong office and did not know what to expect. As noted by Alex, “its intimidating going up to a table or an office to ask for help because everyone looks at you weird.”

The first experience with Academic Counseling for the group was a brief assembly to review the students’ assessment results. The participants were allotted a five-minute appointment with a staff member. Students were informed of their placement, given the corresponding courses to enroll for math and English, and handed a copy of the Intersegmental General Transfer Curriculum (IGETC). With no prior knowledge on how to create a class schedule or how to decipher the online or hand version of the semester offerings, the students selected their math and English courses and few others from the list handed to them. At the time of their interview, eight of the ten participants had met with a counselor, and one had an appointment scheduled a few days after we met because as Anthony noted “[I wanted to] get a general idea of where I’m at on my credits and transfer units.” Erik on the other hand, had not met with a Serra College counselor because, according to him, he “never really needed to.” He followed “the little paper they gave us for the IGETC thing. So I’ve been using that to get all those classes done with now and then transfer after.” By abiding by the IGETC they were provided, the students selected their courses without full comprehension if their
matriculation in courses was correct or what other coursework was required for their major or by the four-year institution. Anthony and Erik could have benefitted from an early interaction with a counselor prior to the middle of their third semester.

The other participants had visited with a counselor prior to our interview but at varying stages of their second or third semester at Serra; however, their perception of the sessions was that they were ineffective. The students expressed their discontent with Academic Counseling. They explained how an appointment had to be made at least two weeks in advance in order to be able to visit with a counselor. Lou mentioned:

You wait forever and they just get you in and out in 15 minutes. It’s like shoot and go. One time I had to wait like 3 hours just to see the counselor, but that was because I didn’t make an appointment and it was just drop-by counseling.

Regardless of whether the students made an appointment or dropped by for a brief question, they had to wait to have their questions answered. Additionally, the students expressed how the counseling staff was disengaged and hurried when they did get the opportunity to meet. David commented, “I don’t know. I feel sometimes they don’t really care. They are just kind of doing their job just to get by. They are not interested in what I need.” Despondent over their interactions with academic counseling, participants stated they would not return. Pablo had negative experiences on three different occasions when he inquired about his desired Nursing degree. He remarked:

On my second visit I asked about transferring to UCLA for Nursing and she told me that UCLA did not offer a Bachelor’s in Nursing. I knew they did already but she just seemed like the way she took the conversation it seemed like it was a burden that I was there which was really bad. I also asked her about the entrance
exams for Nursing and all she said was to Google it. The last time I asked how my internship would help out with my college applications. She said that it wouldn’t. They only want what they want. It was like she didn’t really care what I was there for. And at that point I’m not going back which is really sad.

With two of the three primary student support service offices on campus not being able to successfully assist the students, the Transfer Center was the last opportunity for the students to receive academic guidance.

Serra College had recently implemented a one-stop shop approach for their student support services to better assist their students. The Transfer Center on the Serra College campus is located on the first floor of the Students Services Building which coincidentally also houses Admissions and Records and Academic Counseling. The mission of the Transfer Center is “to provide resources and counseling services that empower students to achieve their desired transfer institution and career goals” (Serra College Transfer Center, 2014, p. 1). With the participants all stating their desire to transfer to a four-year institution, nine of the ten men were not aware of the center’s existence on campus. The students explained how the campus does not overtly promote the transfer opportunities or services provided by the campus or center. Chuy revealed during his interview:

I think I would want there to be a program basically just by itself, but a good program like for example like EOPS, but just a separate program that you can go in and there’ll be separate counselors helping you look more into like universities. So they can see what your likes and dislikes and especially for yourself too where
you’ll be more comfortable which school you’ll be going to. I would say a little more help on the transferring.

Participants also had preconceived notions of what they believed the Transfer Center actually was. Some believed the Transfer Center was part of Academic Counseling or EOPS. Santana verbalized:

Actually, I’m not even aware. That’s why I didn’t even know. That’s how much they don’t advertise their programs because I didn’t even know if they have a transfer program or not. I mean, that just shows that they’re not really involved with like telling you ‘Oh this is how you transfer. This is how to do this.’ Um, because I didn’t even know that and this is my second year. It basically shows that they don’t advocate that much.

In the opinion of the students, they believed they would have greatly benefitted from a program that provided the services outlined in the mission of the center, then again the lone participant that was aware of the center had no interaction with center, staff or website. Lou mentioned:

They have little workshops. They print out a monthly calendar of when they are going to have workshops and you can go and attend the workshop. Basically they explain everything about the CSU, what is it called, the CSU mentor website, how to apply, dates and deadlines and everything. I haven’t gone to one but I can do things for myself you can say. I would walk by and see what they were looking at and then look it up on my own.

The three main student support service departments at Serra College fell short in creating a culture that incorporated the first generation Latino male participants in the
study. Three participants were fortunate to have met the eligibility requirements for the siloed EOPS program to assist them with their educational pathway. However, outside of the office, the EOPS participants encountered similar experiences on campus as the others. The remaining students were able to create a personal educational culture based on the minimal information provided to them during the assessment process.

Supportive Experiences

The campus’ supportive message was received by a few of the participants who utilized them to their benefit while the others stayed at arm’s length and hesitant to consume the services that are being provided. However, the students were not aware of the same services. A handful of participants were able to identify a student support program and various forms of financial assistance mechanisms that assisted the students with their experience at Serra.

Three participants, Chuy, David, and Santana, became active members in EOPS. All three men expressed their gratitude for the academic and financial support they received from the staff and more importantly, the students felt supported emotionally. The first method of assistance the students received was their individualized student academic plan. The three participants were able to meet with the program’s counseling staff as soon as they met the eligibility requirements set by the program. Santana exclaimed:

EOPS really helped me. The first day I went to EOPS, they laid out my plan, my two-year plan. First semester, second semester, third semester, and fourth semester. They told me what classes I was going to take. They told me to expect
graduation in May 2014. I mean the first day! If I didn’t have EOPS, I wouldn’t have that plan.

The students felt fortunate for the experience through EOPS because they have friends and acquaintances that do not have an academic plan and are taking random courses with no specific direction. David mentioned, “I have a few friends who don’t have a plan and might not get out before me.” From a financial standpoint EOPS assisted the students with book vouchers. The stipends provided the participants with the opportunity to purchase textbooks and supplies from the college bookstore prior to the beginning of the semester so they would not fall behind while they anticipated the arrival of their financial check or payday to make the purchases. Lastly, the program provided the three men with a space that provided support on campus through integrated touch points in the program’s processes. The men met with the counseling staff to assess their progress and received praise for their educational performance and accomplishments. David disclosed: I probably see them three times a semester. They always ask about my transfer plans and compare my courses to those required by the universities.” The students built a strong bond with the EOPS staff. Essentially, the three men experienced the emotional support they received from their families with the exception that the support from the EOPS staff included the educational knowledge to successfully navigate their educational path at Serra and at a four-year institution. However, these three individuals were not the only students to discover services on campus.

A few students in the study explained their experiences with two financial assistance programs on campus. The first program they mentioned in their interviews was the Serra Promise, which is a grant that pays for the enrollment fees for qualifying
first year students. The students must have graduated from a Ventura County high school or received their GED the previous academic school year. For the low-income students in the study, the grant was an attraction to Serra. The participants made it clear that they are attending Serra due to their financial situation and the Serra Promise alleviated the stress of funding their education. Chuy noted:

I’m at a community college right now mainly because of money cause I didn’t want to go in and get my general [education] out of the way at the university cause I knew it was going to cost a lot more. Like SC will give you the first year free. That’s what influenced me a lot to go to community college first and get the general education out of the way and then proceed to my Bachelors.

The other monetary support for the students came via financial aid. The federal aid facilitated the students’ ability to pay for textbooks and school supplies that otherwise they would not be able to afford. For instance, Junior stated, “financial aid helped me out a lot. It helped me pay for some books and I was able to buy a laptop which helped me out tremendously as far as school work goes.” Without the financial support the students found, their education may have been more difficult to navigate due to the lack of their family’s financial contribution.

**Transfer Away**

In the data, the participants continually expressed their desire and motivation to transfer from Serra College to a four-year academic institution. The group explicitly stated their motivation behind their educational transition was to provide a better future for their families and to leave their current surroundings. The students wanted to have the college experience because they felt since they had not attended a four-year
institution; their experience at Serra was not the true experience. Lou mentioned that he did not participate in any student organizations because “I just see it at the community college level its not as, you can say, as cool you know to join something. But once I get to the university, I wouldn’t mind being a Gamma man.” He then mentioned that he did would participate at the university level “because it’s bigger and it’s actually at the university.” While participants shared Lou’s sentiments about actively participating on campus, others, like Santana defined the concept best when he described it as:

You actually get to live in front of the campus in apartments or in dorms. You get that experience cause you’re living there. I’m going to be independent. Nobody is going to tell me what do. I’m going to be responsible for my own actions and myself.

The college experience the students are in search of has a few obstacles of its own.

In the process of transferring away to a four-year institution, Latino men shared the need to negotiate a number of issues. The first of these issues that the participants discussed derives from their prime supporter: their family. While family members have been their strongest source of encouragement during their educational period at Serra College, they have begun to question why their son needs to leave home to continue their education. Parents envision better futures for their son, yet they do not want them to transfer too far from home. Rafa remarked, “my parents don’t understand why I’m interested in going to schools so far away when Channel Islands and Santa Barbara are so close to home.” One reason for the parents’ desire to have their sons stay close to home is that may lack the knowledge to comprehend that not all colleges and universities are similar. They all have different entrance requirements and are not open admission
institutions like Serra. Also, they may not be cognizant of the fact that their local institutions may not offer the major their son is pursuing.

Another factor is that the participants’ parents do not want them to leave home. Santana stated:

She tells me ‘No no cause the party life in college. It’s going to mess you up. When you live there, you’re going to live with friends. You’re going to be distracted. Here you have home. You can come home and do your homework over here and you can still hang out with your friends over here.

While his mother wants Santana to obtain his degree, she does not want him to leave. The participants’ parents contributed to the educational negotiations they were enduring. Their parents were trying to adjust to the idea of not having their sons living at home.

Lastly, the participants are very close to their family and do not want leave the supportive environment or lose their family ties. Chuy noted that he is hesitant to transfer because of his youngest brother. Chuy is willing to stay close to home and forego a great transfer opportunity out of the area so he can help his mother with his younger brother who has Down Syndrome. He said “I want to stay to help with his school work, taking him to his appointments, his regular checkups. That does affect me a lot to be honest. I don’t want to leave him. I want to see him grow up.” Similarly, Lou stated, “I know we have a close relationship and I know it’s going to affect him [11 year old brother] as well.” The students also expressed their personal desire to stay close to home. They are cognizant that their decision to leave will have a financial impact on their family members as well. The participants’ parents rely on the contribution the students make to their family income and other familial responsibilities. Pablo mentioned that his parents
remind him that he needs to continue with his education so he can “do something better and help them out.” Besides the financial assistance the students provide, they are also needed to contribute the household responsibilities. As Lou communicated, “If I had gone to a four-year university, I wouldn’t be pressured by my dad. Right now I have to go make a payment for him and I have to go do this and that. And my mom calls me and she is like can you do this for me. If I was just gone somewhere I wouldn’t have none of these pressures.” The groups of individuals the participants have relied on the most to assist them while at Serra are the same individuals that may hinder their transition to a campus outside of their comfort geographical area.

The second issue the students dealt with in their transfer pathway was the trepidation of relinquishing the personal support system they had generated. As a collective, they listed possible transfer destinations within California and out of state as well, but the majority of the universities were close to home where they could commute or come home every weekend. As they acknowledged, their departure will have an impact on their family but it will also have on them as well. Primarily, they will no longer have the accessibility to their familial support structure in the same manner. The conversations the participants had with their family members and the looks of support and encouragement during the late night study sessions will no longer be there. These actions will now be conducted over the phone, social media, video chat but the emotions would be lost in the communication. These events may not transpire at all if the students leave home. In conjunction with the emotional void, the participants have never lived away from home. Santana remarked:
I don’t want to leave home that soon. Cause if I leave home, I’m going to have to be paying for everything at the university level. And also, if you stay home you’re going to be saving a lot more money. I mean you do waste more gas but still your moms be feeding you over here.

While the participants provided various reasons for their desire to leave home, they also offered multiple reasons to attend a local institution and commute: finances, responsibility, and family. Santana stated it best, “Family. You have an obligation to family. You need to, when they need something, you got be there for them.” Family is at the core of the lives of the students. Together they have navigated life’s obstacles and formed a tighter bond. It is difficult for the men in the study to put themselves first by transferring to a four-year university out of the area.

**Conclusion**

The men in the study provided insight to the experiences that allowed them to navigate through and around issues that were encountered during their time at Serra. The students described the importance of their personal motivation and familial support in their educational success at Serra in spite of the lack of academic cultural knowledge within their support group. Conversely, the participants revealed issues that hampered their educational progress. They had to contend and overcome employment obligations, developmental education, a sometimes adverse climate, an unaccepting culture, and destructive encounters with institutional entities designed to assist and develop the academic enrichment of the student population. Lastly, the ten Latino men divulged information on the last hurdle they had to overcome prior to transferring to a university. As they neared the end of their tenure at Serra, the participants and their prime supporters
began to ponder the implications of what it meant to transfer to an out of area institution. Prior to this stage in their process, the men were not seriously considering the local universities. They wanted to leave home and experience the college life. Findings suggest that students were now contemplating how they could continue to fulfill their family obligations while concurrently give their complete attention and dedication to their new life in a four-year institution.
Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter 5 presents the discussions and conclusions related to the findings in the study. The focus of the study was to examine the educational experiences of ten Latino men at Serra College, a two-year HSI, through a critical race theory perspective. The participants entered the institution unenlightened to the procedures necessary to be successful in their new environment, yet were a semester from their transition to a four-year institution. Concurrently, the study aggregated information that can prove valuable to other underrepresented students as they enter Serra College or another community college. The results of the study can similarly be useful to the institution’s leadership and staff to recognize the barriers that affect their minority student population as they attempt to narrow the transfer achievement gap in the educational pipeline. Through the lived manifestations of the ten Latino male participants there is the opportunity to learn of barriers they overcame to succeed.

The pursuit of an education beyond that of high school in California is a complicated journey to navigate. This is especially true for Latino men who primarily enter postsecondary education through the California Community College system (Hall & Rowan, 2001; Nunez & Bowers, 2011), which is responsible for providing vocational, educational, and enrichment opportunities to California’s residents (Wassmer et al., 2004). The two-year public institutions have become the access point for a large number of the Latino student population for a variety of reasons. The inferior and segregated education the ten participants experienced in high school did not adequately prepare them to meet the mandatory entrance requirements of California’s selective universities.
Additionally, the community college system was attractive to these ten students due to low tuition, minimal academic entrance requirements, flexible enrollment options, the proximity to family, and convenience of location (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Ceja, 2006; Karen, 2002). Previous research has shown that students from minoritized communities come across educational obstacles such as a low level in cultural capital, developmental coursework, familial obligations, and the necessity to contribute financially to the household income (Alexander et al., 2007; Keim et al., 2010; Pérez & Ceja, 2010), which results in delays in their education or the decision to leave the educational system. Results from this study confirm that the ten Latino male students experienced similar issues in their attempt to facilitate a successful four-year transfer. However, contrary to the aforementioned literature, the Latino males found the motivation in their lived experiences to discover their own path to educational success.

Discussion

The results of the study developed significant themes that were guided by the critical perspective of the research questions. A discussion of each theme is summarized in the sections to follow.

Personal and Familial Motivation

The theme relates to the primary research question, which dealt with the general pretransfer experiences of the men, and a partial association with a secondary inquiry related to the significant role non-institutional factors had on their education.
Personal Motivation

Due to the hindrance in exposure to cultural and educational habitus, the students looked inward to motivate themselves to continue with their education. The participants encountered institutional and external issues that could have defeated them throughout their community college experience. Instead they continued on their educational path because they believed it would be the “magic key to gain entry into high wage jobs” (Hirudayaraj, 2011, p. 2). The men wanted to complete their education to obtain a career not a job. As Anthony noted, “I know myself. I’ve always been motivated because I’m not going to end up like some guy who works everyday ‘til his bones ache at some crappy job. I want to have a career where I’m going to enjoy going everyday and make good money.” Their desire was to have a family, house, nice cars, and be able to provide a better life for their parents. The participants wanted to leave their current socioeconomic status behind. An education was the catalyst for the achievement of their goal and the cultural change for their families. Nonetheless, there was unanimity amongst the first generation participants in their recognition that they were not alone in their educational aspirations. They were cognizant of the fact that they would not be at this educational juncture without the familial capital (Yosso, 2005) and support provided by their nuclear family.

Familial Motivation

Some contend that the designation of first generation for students in higher education has a negative connotation as it relates to a student’s academic standing and their chances to persist (Chen, 2005). In conjunction with their lower academic preparation, first generation students are twice as likely to leave college before their
second year when compared to students whose parents attended college (Choy, 2001). The participants did not have the opportunity to take advantage of the generational cultural capital that is easily transmitted by parents with a formal experience in higher education. According to Bourdieu (1983), the capital bestowed by parents consists of language, values, and experiences of higher education. With their limited access to this form of capital, the students entered Serra College unaware of the commitment and responsibility required for being successful in their new educational environment; thus the students “did not enter [community college] on equal terms” (Thomas & Quinn, 2007, p. 56). Contrary to the research, the ten students did not allow for their educational stigmatization as first generation students and diminished family capital to affect their experiences at Serra College. As a matter of fact, their families played a large role in their desire to persist.

Despite not being able to receive navigational or monetary assistance from their parents, the students conferred that their parents were one of the principal reasons for their success at Serra College. The students’ parents provided them with the inspiration and emotional support through hard work, persistence to survive, motivation, and willingness to be their confidant when the education process was overwhelming. Chuy explained that his father constantly reminded him of the importance of an education despite his father only attending up to the third grade. He shared his father’s advice, “Don’t ever give up on school. Always keep going to school. Don’t slack off. Always do good cause I want you to have a better life than me and your mom.” Although the students did not command the institutional knowledge, the men did possess the inculcated
knowledge of perseverance and hard work instilled by their parents that assisted in their success at Serra.

Overall, the argument reaffirmed that the lack of awareness and access to cultural capital whether from their parents or high schools can negatively affect the education of first generation college students if they perceive the institutional and non-institutional obstacles to be insurmountable. However, the ten participants did not succumb to the pressures of not having the wherewithal to navigate Serra College. They utilized the experiential knowledge of perseverance and hard work they possessed to negotiate and challenge the dominant philosophy perpetuated by Serra College that can slow down, postpone, or completely halt the education of the Latino participants.

**External Demands**

**Employment**

The theme of external demands, in particular employment, developed from a secondary research question. Previous research found that students from minoritized communities have the added disadvantage of the necessity to parcel out time to address outside commitments such as employment and familial obligations (Alexander et al., 2007; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004; O’Connor, 2009). For the men in the study, employment was the primary issue that obligated them to partition their time with education.

The low socioeconomic standing of their families required the students to have stable employment in order for their families to survive. All of the participants were employed part-time, close to full-time, or held two positions, which combined, was the equivalent of full-time work. The difficulties that arose as a result of their job were the
inflexibility of their employers and the mental strain caused by the limited access to classes. Rafa stated that it was difficult for him to manage both work and school. He mentioned the struggle he encountered in “figuring out what’s more important.” The participants continually contemplated between their commitments to their education or their place of employment which unfortunately were directly associated to the well being of their family structure. The socioeconomic status of their family took precedence over their educational needs every semester they created their class schedule. The participants preferred to undertake longer hours at work to contribute to their family income with the understanding that their education would be negatively affected. As a result of the extended work hours, the students had to make their education at Serra work for them. This meant maximizing their class time on a certain day of the week, having to delay their progress due to the sequencing of courses at Serra, or time conflict with their work schedule. To complicate matters, the ten participants had to take into account the commute to and from Serra from home or their employment location when they constructed their schedules. This additional circumstance further limited the amount of courses available to the participants.

The necessity to work in order to contribute monetarily to their families and their desire to obtain an education was a constant battle for the men; however, the participants accepted the challenge. They could have undoubtedly dropped out of Serra at any point during their time there and become part of the statistic of students who leave school due to employment obligations, but they did not. The students felt the need to assist their families as much as they could with minimum wage jobs and delay their personal upward mobility. The students utilized their family histories and lived experiences to assist them
with decisions that were made with regards to their education. Even with the external obstacles the ten nontraditional students confronted, they were still able to succeed at an institution that did not always facilitate, promote, or support their progress and success.

Institutional Access and Experiences

This particular theme developed as a result of all three guiding questions. It encompasses their pretransfer experiences, internal factors, and campus climate.

Developmental Education

The ten participants in the study entered Serra College with the intention to complete their two years of general education and then transfer to a four-year institution since they had graduated high school with grade point averages above a 2.0. Based on their academic history, the students expected to do equally as well at Serra. However, that was not the reality for nine members of the group who placed into developmental education. Research demonstrates that first generation students who require developmental coursework when they enter higher education are at a clear disadvantage. The impediment causes the students to leave school all together or it prolongs their two-year timeframe (Bahr, 2010; Nora & Crisp, 2010). According to Ornelas & Solórzano (2004) students in developmental education left school once they realized the amount of prerequisite work that was required of them prior to their participation in transferrable courses. The findings of this study were contrary to the results of the above referenced studies that found students leave school after they realize the amount of coursework required for them to transfer due to their placement in developmental education. The participants in the study were indeed discouraged by their results and contemplated leaving Serra but did not disengage from their educational path.
The lack of cultural knowledge of the participants was damaging to them in this instance. They viewed the assessment tests issued by Serra College as a mere requirement for enrollment, which they are. Nevertheless, the men were unable to make the connection between their assessment results and developmental education. The participants did not realize that their results on the exams would determine their placement in math and English courses. Moreover, when the students took the assessments during their senior year, they did not understand that placement in lower levels of developmental education would require the students to prolong their enrollment at Serra. The students viewed developmental education classes as an obligation any student took before they attempted the next level. This mentality was based on their experience with the latticed curriculum of high school where they had to successfully complete Pre-Algebra before they could move onto Algebra. Subsequently, the participants unknowingly delayed their academic progress at Serra with their low placement and the latticed approach they took in English and math. The lack of access to Serra’s culture also prohibited the students from participation in Serra’s lone English and math accelerated courses which combined two level of basic skills coursework into one semester so students could progress into transferrable level math or English in their second semester at the institution. Regardless of their placement in the quagmire that developmental education has become for students, the nine Latino men utilized summer sessions or added classes to their semester schedules to minimize their time at Serra and complete their developmental course sequence.
Racial Climate

The theme cultivated from an inquiry into the intersectionality of the participants’ race, Serra’s dominant ideology, and the affect it had on the education of the ten men. In the opinion of the students, being male on campus did not have a negative impact on their education. Furthermore, being Latino members in the campus community was identified as generally normal to the participants. The status quo the students experienced was the result of the critical mass of Latinos on campus, which was similar to the racial composition of their high schools. The students did not feel unwelcomed based on their gender or ethnicity. In spite of the racial commonality, some of the men were casualties of microaggressions on campus. For the participants that were exposed to these manifestations, they expressed how the events did not have a negative impact on their education. The students attributed the underhanded comments, glances they received, and the feelings they perceived in certain situations on campus to the way the dominant culture operates.

Critical Race Theory proposes the concept of challenging the dominant ideology in higher education. With the exception of Historically Black Colleges and Universities whose “principle mission was and is the education of black Americans” (United Negro College Fund, 2014, p.1), selective colleges and universities in the United States adhere to race neutral policies and procedures that govern the institution. The color-blind institutions (Nieto, 2010) further represent the dominant educational culture in terms of faculty, staff, instructional materials, and course offerings. Hurtado et al. (1999) extend the definition to include the perceptions, attitudes, and expectations of the institutions and their members. Serra College, a current HSI, prescribes to the dominant ideology despite
having attained a critical mass of Latino students. In addition to Serra’s race neutral policies, the institution does not have enough incorporation of faculty and staff that are representative of the student population. For instance, Serra College’s Office of Research and Evaluation (2012) reported that in fall 2011, Latino students comprised 49.5% of the student population at Serra College compared to White students at 36.6% (Serra Community College District, 2012). Yet White faculty dominated the professorial ranks (64.5% full-time and 72.8% part-time) contrasted to Hispanic faculty (17% full-time and 10.6% part-time). The manner in which Serra’s faculty is racially represented is contradictory to Solórzano and colleague’s (2000) blueprint for a positive campus racial culture.

The participants expressed they had not experienced blatant acts of racism on campus. They also noted their comfort level was relatively normal based on Serra’s critical mass (Hagedorn et al., 2007; Kidder, 2013). Unable to make the connection between the dominant overtone of the faculty, staff, materials, and course offerings and their isolated experiences at Serra, the students did not realize the campus was minimizing the importance of their academic and campus social needs. Lee (1998) noted that higher education institutions, similar to Serra College, needed to acknowledge and embrace the behaviors of their diverse student population as they contribute to the general climate of the institution. In the opinion of the students, being male on campus did not have a negative impact on their education; however, the mere fact that they were Latino men did have an effect on their education even if it went unrecognized. Latino masculinity, also identified as machismo by some, has negative and racist undertones of Latino men being “hyper-sexualized, aggressive, drunkard who are prone to abusing
women” (Liang, Salcedo, & Miller, 2011, p. 202). Recent studies (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002; Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracy, 2008) demonstrated that there is a positive counterpart to machismo. Caballarismo (Liang et al., 2011) identifies Latino males as being caretakers and providers for their family; they value honor, dignity, and respect for others. The education of the men of color in this study was affected by this function of Latino masculinity. Sosa Riddell (1974) noted that for some Latino males “there is the image of a father who worked long hours, suffered to keep his family alive, united, and who struggled to maintain his dignity” (p. 156). The men added this fatherly responsibility to their educational tasks in ways that may be different from other men.

Where is the Culture?

Even though the Latino males did not experience a racially fragmented campus climate, they did acknowledge seclusion and an absent campus culture where students did not feel connected to Serra. The students were in agreement that Serra College did not provide them with an inclusive environment. The consensus was that the college was a location where they congregated to receive their education. For the participants, there was no other purpose for them to remain on campus to partake in retention services, extracurricular programs, or clubs on campus. Taken together with their external demands, the students’ commitment was restricted to “formal academic engagements and not involving other socio-cultural aspects of college life” (Redmond, 2006, p. 127). The participants never identified with campus.

The culture of an academic institution is created and maintained by the interaction of two groups: the campus as a whole and the students. Unfortunately for the
participants, the communication between the two was virtually nonexistent. The students expressed that Serra College and its agents expected them to know how to conduct business on campus and how to act accordingly. Moreover, the respondents recognized that Serra did not promote institutional services that were available to assist them in expediting their education. There was a disassociation between the needs of the students and their perception of being alone that was perpetuated by the unwelcoming nature of the student support programs on campus. The lack of communication, in any format, between the two perpetuated the students’ perception of being alone.

**Access to Student Services**

Student support services are in place at Serra College to provide assistance to students with the removal of obstacles that may arise while enrolled at the institution. For seven of the ten first generation students, interaction with advisors or support service offices was limited and they hesitated to seek support despite the importance of their interaction with an advisor or counselor. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) suggest that institutions can enrich the academic experience of academically deficient students through exposure to academic skills and advising.

For the students with the educational goal of transfer, it is of the upmost importance for them to be active participants with the Transfer Center or Academic Counseling. With the exception of three students who accessed EOPS upon matriculation, the seven remaining respondents did not have a formal interaction with an academic counselor until the fall of their second year or were about to meet with a counselor when interviews were conducted. Research demonstrates that students who do not connect with an academic counselor within the first semester of college will become
disengaged with academics within the first year (Croquet, 1985; Choy, 2001; Grant-Vallone et al., 2004). The students informally created their own educational plan based on the short interaction they had with a matriculation staff member the spring prior to their enrollment at Serra. The participants deciphered the complicated process of creating their educational plan. Despite of their achievement, Serra has to discover a solution to better support first generation students who have minimal exposure to institutional navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). Serra College expects students to know how to manipulate the college environment and advocate on their own behalf.

In the participants’ first encounter with an educational crossroad, the college left them to fend for themselves. Serra has to become active participants in the relationship between the institution and students. Otherwise, Serra will continue to have a high proportion of incoming first generation Latino students who feel disconnected with the campus and unsupported in their educational agenda, which will ultimately lead to their frustration and leave. The seven students were at a higher risk of dropping out based on minimal interaction with staff; thus, they were forced to create and develop their own educational plans, often relying on the knowledge that they brought with them. Even with the students being at a higher risk of dropping out based on their lack of organizational habitus, academic deficiencies, and minimal contact with a counselor, the seven students navigated the system to become transfer eligible (Summers, 2003).

**Supportive Experiences**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants believed the campus did not adequately promote their student support services. Students were either aware of the services provided by the campus or they were not. Three students became aware of
EOPS and became active participants in the program. The collegiate experience of the three was different compared to the students who did not participate in student services opportunities. These three participants were able to create a well-informed education plan with the assistance of a counselor on their first visit with EOPS. Additionally, the students found a place where they belonged and the staff was vested in their personal and educational success. The rapport they built with the staff eased their time at Serra; however, the students were explicit that they only felt comfortable within the confines of the office. It was a different experience outside of the office.

The shortcomings of Serra’s relationship with the participants have been addressed. The dissemination of supportive information appeared to not equally be available to all students. In review of the students’ demographic data and the requirements for EOPS, the remaining participants were eligible to participate in the program but were not aware of its existence. Relatedly, all participants met the requirements for the Serra Promise, yet Chuy was the only participant who applied for the program. Establishing a connection between the institution and the students can be a highly complex process that requires fostering a welcoming and accessible environment. Based on their experiences, Serra’s programs could have actively promoted and recruited participants instead of waiting for the students to find out about their programs. However, the responsibility does not lie solely with the institution. Students must also take the initiative to search for assistance and access the necessary resources, which can assist them in navigating the institution with greater success and efficiency.

Transfer Away

The final theme provides an understanding of the general pretransfer experiences
of the Latino students. The notion of the possible transition from Serra to a four-year institution first appeared in the minds of participants during their senior year in high school or soon thereafter. Nevertheless, their acceptance letter to a university or their submittal of their intent to register does not classify them as a transfer student. The students will not become official transfer students until they successfully matriculate at the four-year institution. Consequently, the participants have to deal with the issue of having ample time to rescind their intent or not present themselves for the first day of school. When data was accumulated for the study, nine months prior to their transition, the students alluded to parallel sentiments of doubt and self-created obstacles that were present prior to their enrollment at Serra.

There was a consensus amongst the group that they were ready to leave home and continue their education. The group was prepared to experience their lives away from home and partake in the real college life, which included identifying with the campus and becoming active members in academic and social organizations. However, their parents, who encouraged the men to continue their education, now questioned their pursuit of an education at universities outside of their geographical area. Their parents expressed their concern over the possibility of students faltering in an unknown environment. While participants dismissed the idea of not transferring due to the suggestions of their parents, they did offer reasons for possibly enrolling at institutions closer in proximity. The underlying factor in their responses was the fear of the unknown.

As students’ contemplated their eventual transition from Serra College to a four-year institution, whether near or far, seemed to rekindle the same insecurities they underwent during their transition between secondary and post-secondary education. Very
much like their experiences at Serra, they would likely need to find their way in a new environment and search for institutional support mechanisms or create their own path once again. Additionally, the participants have to negotiate between transferring to a local four-year university and transferring away to a four-year institution that would require for them to physically leave their homes. The process of transferring to a local institution and commuting would be the path with less ambiguity for the students. They would be required to learn the language and norms of their new institution, but the other aspects of their educational and personal life would remain the same. The students would continue to commute, allow sufficient time for travel when creating their class and work schedules, and leave immediately after class to attend to their family obligations. More importantly, the students would be saving money by continuing to live at home, which was one of the reasons they attended Serra. Lastly, they would be able to continue to be active members in their family. With their decision to commute, the students would remain in a comfort zone they created while attending Serra, where they can find strength and motivation in familial support. For some of these students, physically transferring away to a university may mean the navigation of a new educational environment without the benefit and immediate access of the familial support they have relied on up to this point in their educational journeys.

The students will be the first to attend college and transfer in their family. More than likely, they will also be the first to leave home and the securities it brings. By transferring away and residing near or on campus the students would be in a situation where they are left to manage completely on their own. First of all, the connection to their support system would be distant. They would not have direct access to their
support system. The participants would need to establish a rapport with individuals on campus before sufficient trust could be established to utilize the individual or group as a support tool. The independence they desire is also in conflict with the interdependence of their family.

The role of participants in their families is not the typical role a son would have. Based on the amount of responsibility placed on them, the students have assumed a pseudo-parental role within their family. They feel obligated to contribute financially to the well being of their family. The students are mindful of the fact that without their financial reinforcement their family would experience tougher hardships. Furthermore, they have been active participants in the everyday business of their family. They have run errands and paid bills which are typically duties associated to the parent role in a family. In addition, some of the participants have assumed the primary and most important role in a family, which is that of the parent. They are responsible for the upbringing of their younger siblings due to their parents working extended hours. Transferring away may mean not being able to protect and advocate for their siblings in ways they have in the past. It seems that now, at this late juncture in the transition pathway, the students and parents have recognized and are coming to grips with the true meaning of transferring away. The students are at a moral impasse. The ten Latino men have to negotiate the pursuit of their individual educational needs, and the well being of their family. Their parents also face a similar dilemma. Do they pressure their sons to attend a local four-year institution and commute in order to keep their current family dynamic in tact or continue to support their sons’ dreams of transferring away to experience college life and be active participants in their educational environment? In
addition to transferring into a new institutional environment, the ten Latino men were also balancing family responsibilities as a factor in their transfer decision.

In summation, the Latino males selected for the study demonstrated their commitment to their education. The challenges identified and their perseverance can contribute to other Latino male students and other first generation college students pursuing a similar educational path and who may encounter comparable barriers along their way.

The Latino male participants finally adapted to the ways and language of one world and are now in preparation to relive similar experiences at a four-year institution. At some point during the process, educational battle fatigue has to set in. Not only do they have to concern themselves with their academics but also with adapting to their new educational environment. Lou mentioned that higher education requires more responsibility of an individual. He said, “I never took it as they didn’t want us there. I took it as a learning curve. You know they are not there to babysit. They don’t want to deal with that. People that want to learn will learn and people that don’t they will leave or get kicked out.” The ten young Latino men that participated in the study decided to learn against all the odds in their personal and educational lives and now they continue to fight to learn.

At the completion of the data collection, the participants had completed their second or third year at Serra College. They had either completed their transferrable coursework or are near completion. They are now awaiting the next chapter of their lives. Three men, Chuy, David, and Santana, will enroll in four-year institutions beginning fall 2014. Chuy and Santana will be attending California State University
Northridge and live on campus. David will attend the University of California, Santa Barbara and commute. Lou decided to postpone his education and enlist in the military. He ended Serra with two associate degrees and intends to return to higher education with his GI Bill. Alex dropped below full-time status since our last communication because he will become a father this summer and is focused on being an able provider for his new family. Pablo remains enrolled at Serra. He decided to stay and continue to take the courses required by UCLA and UC Irvine for their Nursing degree. Anthony, Erik, Junior, and Rafa were not accepted to their university of choice. They are applying for spring acceptance. While the last six men were not able to continue their education, they have not lost hope and will continue to apply to four-year institutions.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the data collected, the following recommendations are suggested for two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions. The first recommendation for Serra College focuses on the high number of incoming freshmen required to participate in developmental education. In a small sample of ten Latino students that graduated high school with GPAs above a 2.0, 90% required basic skill courses prior to their enrollment in transferrable coursework. The high percentage rate of students in developmental education entering Serra means that the college must begin to collaborate with the local high schools in an attempt to align the math and English content being offered in the students’ senior year. High school students would have the opportunity to be exposed to the curriculum in Math V01 and Engl V02 that are the highest levels of developmental education. With the student ownership of the skills developed in these courses, their need for remediation would be lowered when they assess in the spring of their senior year.
The second recommendation Serra College addresses the issues faced by Latino students when they matriculate. The participants had minimal exposure to the capital valued in higher education contexts; thus, they were not full participants at Serra. As a result, Serra needs to create a culture that is inclusive of all students and demystifies the preconceived notions the students may have. The college must create this culture early in the students’ secondary educational career so that it becomes part of their endemic experiential knowledge prior to their enrollment at Serra College. The recommendation derives from the data collected from the participants who desired to transfer to a four-year institution. The proposition concentrates on the need for Serra to create and implement a backward map approach to provide potential students with information regarding the processes for Serra College.

The trend in education was focused on career technical education, which was the primary concern for the community colleges (Boggs, 2011; Brint, 2003; Dowd, 2007); however, with the recent educational agenda change to student success and completion, colleges can no longer neglect the students that are not enrolled in vocational certificate or terminal degree pathways. With the recent implementation of SB 1456, which requires for community colleges to provide up-front support services to students in California and the creation of the Associate of Arts degree in Transfer, the transfer pathway will once again become a viable option for more students. As I analyzed the data, I recognized that Serra College advertised transfer as an option for students but had not educated the participants on how to properly achieve it. I identify three departments on campus that can create the campus’ transfer culture for Latino students: Enrollment
Services, Academic Counseling through general counseling or a specific student support program, and the Transfer Center.

Serra College’s Enrollment Services department must lead the initial effort and have a larger presence on the high school campuses through their outreach departments. The departments cannot simply show up at high schools in the spring of the students’ senior year and expect to formulate an instant connection. The relationship must be cultivated beginning in the students’ freshman year in high school through informational events such as parent/student nights, tabling during lunch and via classroom presentations. This way during their senior year when students receive the recruitment presentation, the students have an established connection with the staff and the college. Moreover, Latino students will be able to complete their steps to enrollment properly because they have been guided through the progression on multiple occasions. More importantly, the students will be aware of the significance that the assessments have on their education. With the experiential knowledge acquired and the possible execution of the recommended curriculum alignment in the students’ senior year, prospective students will be better prepared prior to the administration of the math and English evaluations. In turn, this will hopefully eliminate their placement in developmental coursework.

Once the initial assessment process is completed, students will be required to participate in Pirate Day, a new event that would be created by Enrollment Services to officially welcome the students to Serra. A portion of the day would include an Orientation to the campus and the student support services Serra has in place to assist students in the navigation of their education. From there, Enrollment Services will hand the students off to the proper student support program for specific counseling or to
general counseling where their academic plan will be created based on the student’s academic interests and assessment results. The final destination for the students will be an introduction and required membership in the Transfer Center. The center will inform students of the transfer process by semester and important transfer deadlines. One of the requirements for Transfer Center participants would be a mandatory Pirate Transfer Day. Hosted by the Transfer Center, the event would be held in early fall so students and parents could learn about the transfer process they will experience as a family in the months to come. The event would be separated into two parts. The first would consist of presentations by the Transfer Center staff on the final steps to transfer, laying the foundation for a successful transfer process and how parents can stay connected to their student once the transfer process is completed, and panels of previous transfer students and parents. Lastly, the event would conclude with a college fair or presentations from representatives of local four-year institutions. With Serra providing the information to students and parents, the hope would be that well informed discussions and decisions will be made. However, the three departments would not lose their contact with the students. It is recommended that the departments continue to promote services and deadlines through the student portal, on campus events, and social media.

The efforts outlined would create touch points between campus support services and students in an attempt to demonstrate the institution’s programs continued assistance during the course of the transfer process. The proposed procedure would replace the current online process in place at Serra College. As demonstrated by the study conducted by achieving the Dream (2014) on Zane State College and the Community College of Baltimore County, technology can produce efficiencies in the classroom and student
support services. However, for high-risk student populations who may require developmental education, like the ten participants, technology cannot supplant the personal interaction necessary to create a bond between the institution, its services, and the students.

The institution’s practices have not necessarily been student centered and have not adequately recognized the unique needs of their diverse student populations, which can lead institutions to engaging in business as usual (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Creating a more inclusive culture would increase the sense of belonging experienced by students at Serra. The adjustment to the geospatial and traditional approach of Serra’s current culture would hopefully lead to changes to the behavioral patterns and procedures, espoused and embedded values (Peterson & Spencer, 1990).

The third recommendation would focus on the creation of a student success agenda. In its current state, Serra College provides access to its students because it is an open door two-year institution. I liken the access provided by Serra to the broad opening of a funnel. However, the access that is afforded to the student population does not equate to their success. Serra currently faces a disparity in success by ethnic background and gender. The student support programs currently in place attempt to alleviate the inequality of their participants but do not have the capacity to provide services to all of Serra’s students. In alignment with the previous proposal, the Student Access Success and Equity (SASE) agenda, would be an institutional approach to meet and support all students’ goals, whether they may be ESL and developmental education course completion, degree and certificate completion, or transfer. The purpose of this plan is to deter the administration and program staff from placing “the objectives of their silo ahe
of the objectives of those in other parts of the [college]” (Myran, Baker III, Zimone, & Zeiss, 2003, p. 27). The prescribed SASE agenda would require the formation of a new committee to become an integral part of Serra’s strategic planning process. The newly formed committee would need representation from administrators and staff that are part of the isolated and already in place Basic Skills Committee, Student Success Team, and the Title IX Committee or individuals interested in access, ESL, developmental education, degree completion, and transfer. Furthermore, Serra would need to plan for the allocation of resources and community partnerships to ensure the success of the incoming students.

The final recommendation for Serra College is to recognize whether they are a Hispanic Serving Institution or a Hispanic Enrolling Institution as defined in Malcolm (2010), which again challenges their dominant philosophy. Malcolm (2010) notes that institutions merely enroll Hispanic students but do not actually provide supplemental services designed to serve Hispanic students as they make the transition in their education. The students were not aware of the campus’ HSI designation. Also the participants did not know of any student support services specifically designed to assist them.

Even without their knowledge, Serra has demonstrated their initial commitment to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution with the creation of the Velocidad, a Title V project “designed to scale-up transfer services, improve student academic success outcomes at barrier points, increase institutional effectiveness, and proactively work toward closing the differential in course success and transfer outcomes for Hispanic students” (Serra College Velocidad, 2014). The project identifies courses that are
potential barriers to Hispanic students on campus. The identification of the bottlenecks that students come across is important to comprehend where in the academic pipeline students are getting stuck. After the initial examination of the data reported on the Velocidad webpage, there did not appear to be an action plan in place by the college to further the assistance of the Hispanic student population on campus. The preliminary efforts the institution has in place are the initial step, but it is essential for the administration to take the next step. If Velocidad proves to be effective, Serra has to monetarily institutionalize the program after the Title V funds end. Incorporated into the propositioned culture, Serra could create an institutional change to the behavioral patterns and procedures of the college (Peterson & Spencer, 1990), and to the overall institutional experience of Latinos and other student populations on campus. Serra must hold itself accountable to the educational success of Latino students by increasing the overall completion of certificates and transfer of students to four-year institutions.

**Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of the study was to examine the lived pretransfer experiences and successful pretransfer mechanisms of Latino males at a two-year HSI. The study was limited to one institution in southern California. It would be beneficial to conduct similar studies in other areas of California or other regions of the United States. The information aggregated in future studies could then be compared against the findings from this study to view similarities and differences.

I also suggest a similar study to be conducted on the same student population at an institution that has not reached critical mass or designated as an HSI. It would be valuable to see if the Latino males on campus face similar obstacles or if their barriers are
different based on the different racial composition of the campus. Would the students experience blatant discriminatory events or contextualize microaggressions in a different manner?

A third recommendation for future research would be to replicate the study with the primary focus being on a different subgroup. The focus of this study was on Latino males who happened to be of Mexican heritage; however, would the results be similar if the emphasis was on African Americans, Cubanos, Filipinos, Veterans, or returning students who’s intentions were to complete their transfer pathway. Studies on different campus entities could provide information on how the various groups coalesce on campus and how the institution can create a culture that is inclusive of all their constituents.

An additional possibility for further research would be an investigation of transfer intent students who are not successful in developmental education. What were the obstacles the students encountered that prevented them from transitioning to college transferrable courses? The information gathered from the exploration of the phenomena could provide colleges with information on how to eliminate the bottleneck for their unsuccessful students in developmental coursework.

A fifth suggestion for research would be to examine the two or three year success of Latino male transfer students at four-year institutions. This would allow researchers to understand the impact of their two-year experience on their current success at the four-year institution. These findings can provide a greater understanding of the interplay between the transfer receptive culture of the four-year institution and the sending culture of the two-year institution on overall degree completion. Two-year entities could gain knowledge on the mechanisms students utilized to succeed. Four-year universities can
identify factors that assisted students in their assimilation to campus and any persisting obstacles to success.

My final recommendation based on the results of the study is for further research to be conducted on the sending culture of two-year institutions. The participants made it evident that their institution did not provide an inclusive culture that connected or allowed them to easily access valuable information necessary to be successful. Such a study can examine ways in which community colleges can foster healthy levels of student involvement and access to key resources. Finally, such a study can explore the relationship between involvement and successful transfer.
References


doi: 10.1080/10668920500248845


doi: 10668920490256831.


doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.167


ATTENTION!!!!!

Research Study

A Critical Analysis of the Successful Pretransfer Mechanisms of Latino Males at a Two-Year Hispanic Serving Institution

Seeking interview participants from Ventura Community College for a study on Latino males that are planning to transfer to a university or college in Fall 2014.

If you are:

1. Enrolled at Ventura Community College with enrollment status not being a factor
2. Self-identified as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, or Central American.
3. Have at least a 2.0 grade point average (GPA)
4. Have followed the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum
5. Be near the completion of 60 transferrable units and at least one course in math or English.
6. I would like to speak with you about your experiences as a Latino male student here at the college.

Confidential semi-structured interviews will last between 60-90 minutes.

To learn more about the study, please email or call:

Jesus Vega, Doctoral Candidate
California State University Northridge
805.701.9128
jesus.vega805@gmail.com
Appendix B: Student Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for interest in participating in the Latino male Transfer Study. This questionnaire will provide the researcher with information that will allow him to select participants for the study. If you are selected to participate, your participation will be voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point. Your identity and information will be kept secure.

Directions: Please complete the form by entering your answers directly on the form. When completed, save the form and return to the researcher as an attachment on an email.

Date:

Contact and Commitment Information

First Name: Last Name:
Address: City:
Zip Code: Cell Phone:
Email Address: Contact Method: Select One

Availability: Please mark (X) the days and times you are available for participation in the study.

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Demographics

Age: Race/Ethnicity: Select One
Relationship Status: Select One Employment Status: Select One
Hours per Week: Household Income: Select One
**Education**

High School Attended: [Redacted]  
Graduation Year: [Redacted]

High School GPA: [Redacted]

1st Semester at SCC: [Redacted]  
Enrollment Status: [Select One]

Units Enrolled this semester: [Redacted]  
Total Units Completed: [Redacted]

SCC GPA: [Redacted]  
Major: [Redacted]

Transfer Plan 1: [Redacted]  
Transfer Plan 2: [Redacted]

Transfer Plan 3: [Redacted]  
Transfer Plan 4: [Redacted]

**Confidentiality**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. It will only be disclosed with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect you. No identifying information will be used, and your institution and/or program will not be identified by name in any published report.

Please list three possible pseudonyms:

Pseudonym 1: [Redacted]  
Pseudonym 2: [Redacted]

Pseudonym 3: [Redacted]

Please remember to save your entries and return to Jesus Vega as an attachment to jesus.vega805@gmail.com.
Appendix C: Student Interview Protocol

California State University, Northridge
Latino Male Student Transfer Study
Student Interview Protocol

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. Before we begin the interview session, I would like to collect your Consent to Participate in Research and answer any questions that you may have.

Purposes of the Interview

As we discussed, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study that explores Latino male student transfer experiences. During this interview, we will talk about your experiences and attitudes pertaining to the college and the services it provides.

Confidentiality

Any information you share with me today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. Personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name and school, will not be used to identify you in any report or document. Today’s interview session will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be destroyed. Only the researchers identified in the Consent to Participate will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally, your name or personal identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports. Only the pseudonym you selected will be used in the reporting of findings.

Informed Consent

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research. It communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview session. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your
participation in this study. However, findings from this study may provide insights into the transfer experiences of Latino males and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; however, you will be given a $10 gift card at the conclusion of our follow up meeting as a gesture of gratitude. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for not answering or not answering any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without any consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and Contact Information of Principal Investigator

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, the details of this study, or any other concerns, please contact Jesus Vega at 805.701.9128 or via email at jesus.vega805@gmail.com.

Timing

Today’s interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. Are there any questions before we get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions

1. Given my interest in your experiences as an eligible transfer student, describe your idea of what it means to transfer?
   a) Who helped you form these ideas?

2. Can you describe the type of student you were in high school?
   a) Were you enrolled in College Prep, Honors, or AP courses?

3. What were your educational goals and expectations when you started college?
   a) How do you think your goals and expectations were affected by your high school experience?

4. Can you describe what role, if any, did race or ethnicity play in your college experiences?
   a. What is it like being a Latino student on your campus?

5. Can you describe what role, if any, did gender and/or sexuality play in your college experiences?
a. What is it like being a male of color on your campus?

6. What influence did your family and/or friends have on your decision to attend college?
   a) How does this make you feel?

7. What other factors encouraged you to attend college?
8. When you first began at the college, did you have to take assessment tests?
   a) What were your results and were they explained to you?

9. What was your first experience on campus like?
   a) Did you feel that you were part of the campus?
   b) Has this changed?
10. Do you know of any student support services or programs that the college has in place for its students?
    a) Have you used their services before?
    b) Have these services had an effect on your education?

11. How does the college promote its services and programs to its students?
    a) Does it promote transfer opportunities?

12. Have you met with an academic counselor?
    a) Can you describe your experience?

13. Have you seen this form before (hand them an IGETC)?
    a) Can you tell me what it is for and how you used it?

14. Do you belong to any groups that have had an effect on your educational goals?

15. In the beginning of the interview you mentioned that you were a part-time/full-time student.
    Have you always been part-time/full-time?
    a) Why do you elect to come to school on a part-time/full-time basis?

16. Are there any outside commitments that affect your education?

17. What universities have you applied to or will you be applying to?

18. How has your attitude about transferring changed since your first day at SCC?
    a) What played a part in changing your attitude?

19. Now that you have experience with the transfer process, what advice could you provide to another Latino student about the resources available to them?
    a) What are some of the potential barriers you would warn them about?
20. If you could change anything about the college and your experience what would it be?

**Closing Questions**

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help us examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there is anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

**III. Post-interview Session: Debriefing and Closing**

Thank you for participating in today’s interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you may have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?
Appendix D: Student Consent Form

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Spoken Truth: A Critical Analysis of the Successful Transfer Mechanisms of Latino Males at Two-Year Hispanic Serving Institution

You are being asked to participate in the research study, Spoken Truth: A Critical Analysis of the Successful Transfer Mechanisms of Latino Males at a Two-Year Hispanic Serving Institution, a study conducted by Jesus Vega as part of the requirements for the Ed.D degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University Northridge. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM
Researcher:
Jesus Vega
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
(805) 701-9128
jesus.vega805@gmail.com

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Miguel Ceja, Associate Professor
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
(818) 677-7391
miguel.ceja@csun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY
The purpose of this study is to examine the transfer experiences of Latino male students. Furthermore, the study will explore the transfer mechanisms in place at Ventura Community College that aided the success of these students.

SUBJECTS
Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you are:

- Matriculated at Ventura Community College with enrollment status not being a factor
- Self-identified as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, or Central American.
- Have at least a 2.0 grade point average (GPA)
- Have followed the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum
- Be near the completion of 60 transferrable units and at least one course in math or English.
Exclusion Requirements
You are not eligible to participate in this study if you do not meet the criteria listed above.

Time Commitment
The questionnaire will take you 15-20 minutes of your time. The interview should take about 90 minutes. Lastly, the review of your transcript should take about an hour. This study will involve approximately 3 hours of your time.

PROCEDURES
The following procedures will occur: (1) you will complete and return a demographic questionnaire (2) a private individual 60-90 minute interview and (3) a 60 minute appointment where you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of your interview prior to them being used in the study.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
Given the purpose of this study on issues that may be personal in nature, some interview questions could be more sensitive, including questions related to your experiences and/or perceptions of staff, faculty, family and the campus environment. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to provide answers to any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain a participant in the study. If, after, participation in the study, you feel that you need to seek support services, please contact Ventura Community College’s Student Health Services located on the first floor of the Creative Resource Center Building in Suite 108. You can also reach them at (805) 654-6346 for personal counseling appointments. This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS
Subject Benefits
You may not directly benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this study examines the transfer experiences of Latino male students. As a participant in the private interview, you may develop a greater awareness of the successful mechanisms that you utilized to succeed at Ventura Community College, which may facilitate success at your transfer institution. In addition, findings from this study may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness among two year institutions regarding the services necessary to create a nurturing campus transfer climate for Latino male students.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT
Compensation for Participation
You will receive a gift card for your participation in this study. You will have the opportunity to select a $10 gift card to any of the following locations: Starbucks, Chili’s, Outback, Red Robin, or Amazon. You will be given the option at the conclusion of your interview. The gift card will then be disbursed after the follow up meeting to review your transcripts.
Costs
There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering or not answering, any question in any way. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.** The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk. You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. Once your participation in the interview has concluded, you will have a period of 30 days (from the date of the interview) to review digital audio files and/or transcripts (whichever are available) from your interview. You may withdraw consent and participation in this study at any time. If you withdraw consent after participation in the interview has concluded, digital files and/or transcription files (whichever are available) from your interview will be destroyed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

**Subject Identifiable Data**
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. It will only be disclosed with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity. No identifying information will be used, and your institution will not be identified by name in any published report.

**Data Storage**
All identifiable information will be stored in a password-protected computer and locked in file cabinet in my office. Research data will be stored in a password-protected laptop that is stored in a locked drawer in my office.

**Data Access**
The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

**Data Retention**
Disposition of all the data will take place three years after the study has concluded

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS**
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.
If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT**
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. **Participation in this study is voluntary.** You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study. *I agree to participate in the study.*

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