

DISSERTATION

LATINAS AND LATINOS DESCRIBE THEIR PRE-COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCES:
WHAT HELPED AND HINDERED THEIR POSTSECONDARY JOURNEY

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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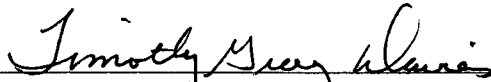
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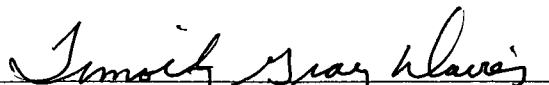
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

LATINAS AND LATINOS DESCRIBE THEIR PRE-COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCES: WHAT HELPED AND HINDERED THEIR POSTSECONDARY JOURNEY

The purpose of this case study was to better understand how Latina and Latino students experience their pre-collegiate program and learn whether or not they feel their experience has impacted or will impact their decision to continue their postsecondary pursuit. This case study focused on a single, specific pre-collegiate program. I used the phenomenology approach to explore how pre-collegiate program's social and cultural contributions impact a student's willingness, interest, and ability to pursue postsecondary education. Interviews of students participating in a pre-collegiate program and their families were the primary source of data. Using a Critical Race Theory and Latina/Latino Critical Theory lenses, I examined the social and cultural experiences pre-collegiate Latina/o students encountered in their journey to postsecondary institutions.

This research documents that Latina/o students are systematically and consistently excluded from access to the dominant high school culture. This study also documents the systematic and pervasive racism aimed at Latinas/os from those assured membership in the dominant culture who either do not notice or willingly accept. This study concludes making recommendations for multicultural and school-centered institutions that empower Latina/o students while continuing to increase college access through pre-collegiate programs.

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I'm excited but I'm also scared. I'm really unsure of college. I know instead of taking classes with 20 people I'm going to be taking classes with 500 people. I know it will be hard but I would love to have the experience. I want to be the first one in my family to graduate with a bachelor's degree (Andrea).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The inequality in income between the rich and poor in the U.S. is at a historic high. This gap is greater than any other populous industrial country and mounting at an accelerated rate (Hout & Lucas, 1996). Poverty rates of children are also strong indicators of the overall inequalities experienced in the United States. Twenty-two percent of the children in the U.S. live in poverty, taking the lead over all other industrial countries (Hout & Lucas). Australia and Canada, our closest competitors, have 14% of their children living in poverty while France and the Netherlands report the lowest at 6% (Hout & Lucas). Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands have no working poor. However, in the U.S. a parent of two children can work full-time and still fall below the poverty line (Hout & Lucas).

What does the face of poverty in the U.S. look like? In 2002, 13.3% of the U.S. populations were Latinas/os; however, they represented 24.3% of the population living in poverty. In contrast, 7.8% of non-Latina/o Whites live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Latina/o households have ten cents for every dollar in wealth owned by non-Latina/o White households (Kochhar, 2006). As a result, an increasing number of Latina/o children are born and live in poverty. While Latina/o children represent 17.7% of the population, 30.4% of Latina/o children live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau).

For Latina/o children growing up in poverty there are long term educational consequences. They are less likely to study or complete high school (Kahlenberg, 2006; Mayer, 2001; Ward, 2006). For those Latina/o students who do complete high school,

their graduation frequently ends their educational pursuits. Latina/o students are noticeably underrepresented in postsecondary institutions. They represent almost 10% of total enrollment in postsecondary institutions; however, they comprise 14.5% of the traditional college-aged population (Martinez, 2003).

Considerable leaks for Latinas/os exist throughout the educational pipeline. Solorzano and Ornelas (2002) use the 2000 census data to hypothetically tell us the story of 100 students in the educational pipeline. The story begins with 100 Latina/o students in elementary school. Of those 100 students 56 drop out somewhere between K-12 leaving 44 Latina/o students to graduate from high school. Of the 44 students who graduate from high school, 24 will pursue some form of postsecondary education. Thirteen will enroll in community colleges and 11 will enroll in a 4-year institution. Of the 13 who have enrolled in a community college, only one will transfer to a 4-year institution. Furthermore, of the 11 Latina/o students who enrolled directly in a 4-year institution only 7 will persist into their junior year of college. Whether these Latina/o students started at a community college or a 4-year institution, only 6 students will receive a baccalaureate degree. Finally, 2 students will receive a graduate degree and less than one will receive a doctorate degree. The educational pathway is very different for non-Latina/o Whites. In contrast, out of 100 non-Latina/o White students who enter high school, 93 earn a high school diploma, 65 enter postsecondary education, and 34 complete a postsecondary degree (Romo, 2004). Because postsecondary education translates into increased personal income, this achievement gap costs the U.S. billions of dollars in increased social spending, reduced consumer spending, and lost taxes (The Puente Project, 2003).

The link between education and economics is very strong (Saxton, 2000). A high school diploma no longer serves as the significant diploma for successful employment in the United States. Moreover, increased educational attainment increases the probability that a person will remain employed (Saxton, 2000). A person with a baccalaureate degree earns three times what a person with less than a high school diploma earns (Loza, 2003; The Puente Project, 2003). Therefore, bridging the educational gap also bridges the economic gap.

President Lyndon Johnson fought the war on poverty by investing in education. In 1965 Congress passed the Higher Education Act creating postsecondary funding on the basis of low-income status. This set in motion what is today known as a series of six programs collectively titled TRIO. The first TRIO program, Upward Bound, was created specifically for low-income students where neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. Today the Upward Bound program reports that students who participate are four times more likely to earn a baccalaureate degree (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2006). Despite these statistics TRIO serves 16% of low-income and first generation Latina/o students (Martinez, 2003). Forty-one years after its inception, Congress continues to debate the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Although the postsecondary participation rates of low-income minority students have increased in the past 41 years, there is a greater inequality in access to postsecondary institutions and the gap between the rich and poor has widened (Gladieux, 1996). Minority student success is no longer a minority issue.

Today there are numerous pre-collegiate programs spending millions of dollars collectively known as early intervention, early outreach, or college access programs

whose mission is to promote access and success for low-income underrepresented populations at postsecondary institutions (Cooper, 2002; Gándara & Moreno, 2002). However, Latinas/os remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of educational attainment. There are many complexities that frame a pre-collegiate experience for Latina/o students. Consequently, what approaches work best under what circumstances and with what kinds of students is not very clear (Moreno, 2002).

In the literature on pre-collegiate programs there are three recurring themes: parental involvement in the form of cultural and social capital, the role of parents and families in pre-collegiate programs, and the role of mentors in pre-collegiate programs. These three components of pre-collegiate programs are designed to work in concert to raise the skills and aspirations of the students, increase the information available to both students and parents about college opportunities, and to change the consciousness of the school and the community about the students' potential (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). Of the thousands of pre-collegiate programs in the U.S. today each program has its own mix of program practices, program intensity, and target population (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Parental involvement as a form of cultural and social capital is becoming more central in many pre-collegiate programs. For some pre-collegiate programs parental involvement is embedded in the curriculum and mentor portions of the programs; for other pre-collegiate programs it is a distinct segment. Cultural capital refers to what middle- and upper-class families pass on to their children, which supplements economic capital as a way of maintaining class status and privilege (Romo, 2004). Gándara and Moreno (2002) describe social capital as a familiarity with, and access to, supportive

social associations that advance opportunity. For Latina/o students and their families, cultural and social capital is the knowledge of what college is, the application process, the graduation rates of institutions, and the function of different degrees. Cultural and social capital can be created within Latina/o families and their communities; it can also be produced from outside social relationships (Tapia, 2004). Economic circumstances are also linked to social capital and can be transformed to cultural capital (Tapia). Data confirm that there are not many high-income families with experience in high levels of educational success in low-income communities (Tapia). In other words, families who live in persistent poverty are less likely to have supportive social connections that can be converted to academic persistence and success. Researchers know that family structures and activities are the primary contributors to cultural and social capital (Gándara & Moreno, Romo, Tapia). However, 30% of pre-collegiate programs do not have a parental involvement component (Perna & Titus, 2005). Tierney (2002) confirms that there is frequently an inconsistency between what researchers say should be done versus what is actually done.

Research by Olivos (2004) and Torrez (2004) confirms that parental and family involvement in pre-collegiate programs is a decisive element aimed at increasing the number of students aspiring to earn baccalaureate degrees. It is essential that parents understand and support the academic standards that ensure their child's eligibility for postsecondary institutions (Olivos; Torrez). In the past this has been problematic. The level of school participation required by Latina/o families is not always clear. While Latina/o parents trust the schools will do what is right for their children, the faculty and counselors frequently confuse the lack of participation with apathy (Bohon, Macpherson

& Atilas, 2005; Olivos; Torrez). As a result, Latina/o students are placed in curriculum tracks that make it less likely that they will be prepared for postsecondary institutions while the Latina/o families believe their children are being academically prepared for entrance into postsecondary institutions (Bohon et al.; Olivos; Torrez). Counselors and teachers frequently play the dual role of mentors and gatekeepers. While parents seek advice from the faculty and counselors, the faculty and counselors are unsure what information the parents need (Tierney, 2002). This becomes more complex when there are economic and linguistic barriers (Grant & Wong, 2004; Olivos; Tapia, 2004; Torrez). Below the surface there are many dichotomies that impede critical partnerships between Latina/o families and educational communities.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) also brings understanding to why inconsistencies exist between what research reports and what is actually done. CRT brings race and racism to center stage. Bringing racism to the center means racism is acknowledged to exist (Bergerson, 2003). Behind CRT is the reality that racism continues because of policies and structures that perpetuate the marginalization of underrepresented populations (Bergerson). Within the framework of CRT is the Latino/Latina Critical Theory (LatCrit). LatCrit challenges the message that Latina/o students are “culturally deficient” and not agents of knowledge (Bernal, 2002). Other researchers have also defined CRT and LatCrit in their own research. For instance, Loza (2003) reported non-Latina/o Whites believe anyone who works hard enough can achieve success. This standard for meritocracy is established by middle and upper class who work within the dominant culture (Loza, 2003). Because Latina/o students are systematically excluded from educational opportunities, it becomes apparent that although merit is championed, it

functions under the burden of racism and continues to marginalize underrepresented populations (Bergerson). Through a CRT and LatCrit lens, Latina/o students are seen as holders and creators of knowledge who have valuable histories, experiences, cultures, and languages (Bernal, 2002). These are examples of how the CRT and LatCrit provide a lens to evaluate research.

Mentors commonly represent the primary source of academic information for many Latina/o students. Thus their goal is fundamental to improving student academic success and preparation for postsecondary institutions. Mentors may be Latina/o or non-Latina/o Whites from the communities, or students from postsecondary institutions (Barrion-McKeagney, Woody & D'Souza, 2001; Diversi & Mecham, 2005). A mentor might work with small groups of students biweekly or large groups of students once a month. The focus of the mentor is as varied as his or her cultural and social background. Mentors are frequently charged with a range of activities from team facilitators and advocates to partnerships with faculty, counselors, families, and communities. Specifically they may help students complete school assignments, prepare for national exams, focus on bicultural awareness, explore career options, or a combination of many other activities. The multiple roles of mentors strengthen the offerings of pre-collegiate programs through the partnerships and leadership opportunities they provide. However, research indicates that very few programs have been rigorously evaluated (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). When a program has been rigorously evaluated, the program differences have made it difficult to apply the findings to other programs. As a result negotiating the intricacies of how a mentor includes social skills, cultural capital,

and all the varied activities is becoming more critical in research (Moreno, 2002; Salinas & Reyes, 2004).

The most prominent pre-collegiate program in the U.S. is the Puente Project. This pre-collegiate program had its beginnings in 1981 as a community college program to address the low transfer rates of Latinas/os from 2-year to 4-year institutions. This was the first program that was cultural specific targeting Latina/o students. In 1993 the Puente Project was expanded to include high schools. Similar to the postsecondary curriculum, the high school curriculum emphasizes three major components: instruction in writing and literature, college preparatory counseling, and mentoring (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). Since its inception the Puente Project has served more than 10,000 students in over 54 community colleges and 35 high schools (The Puente Project, 2003). The scale and focal point of the Puente Project has made it a seminal program.

Pre-collegiate programs across the United States have escalated in recent years (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Research on the effectiveness of college transition programs has been limited and few programs have been rigorously evaluated (Gándara & Bial, 2001; U.S. Department of Education). For the many programs that claim to be successful, the evidence is frequently anecdotal or not based on conclusive research practices (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Tierney (2002) concurs, stating the need for additional research. This study contributes to the body of knowledge to better understand the contributions of pre-collegiate programs when it comes to developing Latina/o aspirations for postsecondary pursuits.

Purpose Statement

Historically pre-collegiate programs have focused on the academic preparedness of Latina/o students. Recent pre-collegiate program research has re-examined and refocused programs reporting that students leave an institution because of social, cultural, and/or political reasons rather than for academic reasons (Moreno, 2002). My purpose in this case study is to better understand how Latina and Latino students experience their pre-collegiate program and to learn whether or not they feel their experience has impacted or will impact their decision to continue their postsecondary education pursuit.

Research Question

The main research question asks, “How do the pre-collegiate program’s social and cultural contributions impact a student’s willingness, interest, and ability to pursue postsecondary education?”

The following sub questions will also guide the inquiry.

1. What are the parental, family, and community involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?
2. What is the staff involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?
3. What are the cultural capital attributes in a pre-collegiate program that determine a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?

Significance of the Study

The rapid growth of the Latina/o population in the U.S. has prompted our communities and educational institutions to expand whom they serve. This study will be important to our communities where we live, to the academic communities, and to the Latina/o communities in several ways. Communities can benefit from this study by understanding the range of partnerships with the academic and Latina/o communities that is necessary to include all the groups they serve. Academic communities may benefit from my research by creating programs that remove the barriers to postsecondary education. This study will give the Latina/o community a voice in co-authoring a pre-collegiate program that positively impacts their children's decision to continue their postsecondary pursuits.

Value to the Community

As the 21st century begins, the United States' demographics are changing rapidly. Latinas/os are now the largest (High School Journal, 2004/2005) and fastest growing racial or ethnic minority group in the United States (Baez, 2004). It is predicted that the Latino population will increase from 35.6 million to 102.6 million in the next 50 years, an increase of 188% (High School Journal). These demographics underscore how important it is to serve this underserved group. The 2004 census data reported that of the Latinas/os 25 years old and older only 57% possessed a high school diploma (High School Journal, 2005). My study focuses on Latina/o students, the ethnic group whose education lags the most behind the national average.

One goal of educational institutions is to ensure that students acquire the skills they will need to be competitive in the workforce. Maruyama, Burke and Mariani (2005)

reported the majority of past jobs were low-skilled and required formal education at or below the high school level. However, the current knowledge economy has shifted the required job skills. New job skills now require educational knowledge and skills obtained beyond the high school level (Maruyama et al.). The need for employees with a postsecondary education is growing at a faster rate than ever before. To meet these workforce requirements, postsecondary institutions need to effectively educate underrepresented minorities. But for postsecondary institutions to do their part, they must partner with K-12 institutions to widen the pipeline of available students. The data from this study will inform communities, secondary, and postsecondary institutions about how to create partnerships that meet the workforce needs of the community and individuals. In this high stakes, high pressure era, educational reform must be accurate and deliberate.

Historically postsecondary education was viewed as a ‘public good’ or a benefit to society by producing leaders and an educated public (Maruyama et al., 2005). More recently the public views postsecondary education as benefiting individuals. The ‘private good,’ or benefit to the individual is apparent when one is made aware of the earnings gap between high school educated and college educated workers. The Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY (2000) reported that the average difference in lifetime earnings of a male college graduate compared to a high school graduate is \$1,160,000 (Maruyama et al.). The amount of education individuals have not only affects their earnings, but the quality of their employment as well.

The question of postsecondary education as a public good is linked to the concept of human capital and benefits society as a whole (Saxton, 2000). It is in the public interest to prepare individuals for the labor market and to prepare individuals for life as

citizens in a democratic society. The benefits of an educated society enrich both the individual and society. Communities can benefit from this study by understanding the kinds of partnerships with the academic community that are required in order to reach all the groups they serve.

Value to the Academic Community

Postsecondary institutions have created microcosms of the society we aspire to become. In 2000, Fry, a senior research associate from the Pew Hispanic Center, published a paper titled *Latinos in Higher Education: Many Enroll, Too Few Graduate* (Fry, 2002). As a result many postsecondary institutions have implemented programs to increase campus diversity and to reduce educational inequities among underrepresented populations. However, according to the 2002 Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, just over 10% of Latinas/os have a bachelor's degree, less than the national average of 25% (Brown, Santiago, & Lopez, 2002). Graduate student representation is even more distressing, for less than 3% of Latinas/os obtain Ph.D.'s (Baez, 2003). These statistics become even more severe when one considers the high drop-out rate of high school Latinas/os, diminishing the available Latina/o student population at the beginning of the educational pipeline. In 2000 the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans reported an increase in the Latina/o drop-out rate. The drop-out rate of 24-28% for Latinas/os is three times the 8% drop-out rate for non-Latina/o Whites (Jodry, Robles-Pina, & Nichter, 2004/2005). Postsecondary policies and resources have been ineffective in increasing their [respective institutions'] numbers of Latina/o students. As a result high schools, and more recently middle schools, have partnered with postsecondary institutions creating pre-collegiate programs. Pre-collegiate

programs support the idea that preparing for postsecondary happens somewhere at the K-12 level (Benitez & DeAro, 2004; Maruyama et al., 2005). Historically these programs have focused on academic preparedness; however, recent studies indicate that the Latina/o students who do enroll in postsecondary institutions leave for reasons other than academic (Moreno, 2002). This confirms the pursuit for postsecondary institutions to find effective and efficient ways to reduce educational inequities among underrepresented populations.

Administrators of pre-collegiate programs are continually challenged with increasing the college-going rate of Latina/o students. To do this requires that pre-collegiate programs address the barriers that students experience in postsecondary institutions. For this reason this study focuses on pre-collegiate programs, and specifically on their social and cultural aspects rather than the academic component. The admission policies of the past have not silenced the inequities or graduated a high percentage of Latinas/os from postsecondary institutions. It is now apparent that most of the preparation for college has been completed long before the senior year of high school and the available pool of available applicants already has been diminished. An expectation for enrollment in postsecondary institutions needs to be set much earlier. Past admission policies of postsecondary institutions have unsuccessfully admitted underprepared Latina/o students to increase the numbers of underrepresented students. Maruyama et al. (2005) stated that pre-collegiate programs are part of the solution for preparing a large number of historically underrepresented students for success at postsecondary institutions. Maruyama et al. informs both K-12 and postsecondary institutions that “colleges have information that students and their families need in order

to prepare for college success, but without partnerships with preK-12 schools, colleges do not have good access to preK-12 populations” (p. 432). This study will allow K-12 and postsecondary institutions to better understand how the experience of pre-collegiate programs contributed to students’ decisions to continue their pursuit of postsecondary education. The results of this study can be used to better inform policy and programs specific to pre-collegiate programs at both the high school and postsecondary academic levels.

Value to the Latina/o Community

Borderland population voices frequently are silenced. But these muted voices deserve a fair hearing. In these stories are tales of struggle in which marginalized populations attempt to make meaning of the barriers they face in schools. “A few compelling stories, framed in an authoritative context, may do more to move policy makers than voluminous statistical reports, particularly if cultural members feel they are persuasive accounts” (Auerback, 2002, p. 1388).

Research informs K-12 and postsecondary institutions and the Latina/o community of the disconnect that exists between them (Fry, 2002; Torrez, 2004; Olivos, 2004). Torrez reported that 75% of Latina/o parents had a strong desire for their children to graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary institutions. This study is confirmed by Hagedorn and Cepeda (2004) who reported that Latina/o students have the same high academic aspirations as their White counterparts. Yet statistics report a high school drop-out rate of 24-28% (Jodry et al., 2004/2005) and a postsecondary graduation rate of just over 10% (Brown et al., 2002). What makes the 10% of these Latina/o students successful? Any research without including the voices of Latinas/os would risk

perpetuating the disconnect. The purpose of this study is to better understand how Latina/o students experience their pre-collegiate program and to learn whether or not they feel their experience has impacted or will impact their decision to continue their postsecondary pursuit. This research study might provide support to the Latina/o community in further understanding the evolving educational partnership between the Latina/o communities and the educational institutions in supporting the K-12 educational and the postsecondary process.

The Latina/o Label

Hispanic or Latino? The debate continues on the relative merits of an umbrella term to describe entire Hispanic or Latino populations who are geographically and culturally diverse. Unquestionably, any one label is restrictive and biased when applied broadly to many Hispanic or Latina/o populations.

The origin and need for the term "Hispanic" began in 1964 with the Civil Rights Act that addressed discrimination based on race and color. By law, Latinas/os were legally White. Although legally and socially discriminated against, they remained outside the discussion. In 1976, Latino civil rights groups lobbied and got Public Law 94-311 passed by Congress creating an umbrella for "Americans of Spanish origin or descent" that mandated the progress and welfare for this group be monitored. In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget issued a directive titled "Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting." For governmental purposes this directive defined "Hispanic" as a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. In the 1980 the Bureau of the Census adopted the term "Hispanic." Although originating in the Latino

community the label “Hispanic” was promoted by the U.S. government (Gimenez, 1988; Gomez, 1992).

From the word Latin comes the Spanish word “Latino,” which refers to the people, the languages, the culture, and all things related to the southern Europeans whose culture is rooted in the Latin language and the Roman culture. For this reason “Latino” is frequently seen as Eurocentric. Still, others embrace “Latino” because it is so broad and inclusive of languages and cultures (Gimenez, 1988; Gomez, 1992).

The debate between “Hispanic” or “Latino” is ongoing. Either label generalizes the many nuances of individuals and their cultural identities. Although the label “Hispanic” originated by Spanish-speakers I chose not to use the label “Hispanic” because of its uses in the government. Instead I chose to use the label “Latina/o” because I felt it best embraced the Latino people, languages, and culture. It is the Latina/o social and cultural contributions that are the focus of my study. I also was attracted to the Latino label because included a specific female label “Latina.” In spite of the ethnic labels, the Latina/o populations remain a heterogeneous population with many rich cultural and varied national identities.

Researcher’s Perspective

I believe my window on the world is constructed by my personal philosophy, beliefs, and values. These elements are brought with me from my past, continually redefined by new knowledge, and clarified and strengthened through both successful and failed life experiences. I began life quite naïvely as the middle child of three in a rural Minnesota family. My early years were quiet and pleasant, even after we moved to Seattle, Washington, where I attended a private parochial grade school and graduated

from a private parochial all-female high school. After graduating in the late 1960s, I began my college education in Oakland/ Berkeley, California, attending California College of Arts and Crafts. Because I was not raised with the idea of having to support myself financially, I pursued a degree in something I loved: art. However, I gained much more than an education in art. By this point, the Vietnam War was well underway, and war protests were as common as civil rights protests. It was a very exciting time when it really seemed possible to stand up for what I believed in and make a positive impact on the world. I soon realized, however, that it seemed more possible than it actually was.

In 1968 I moved from liberal California to not so liberal Florida. George Wallace had just completed his first of what would ultimately be four terms as Alabama's governor, and I quickly realized racial attitudes I believed to be in the past were actually very present. It was Florida where I first witnessed a "whites only" sign above the water fountain and on the bathroom door. This was the single and most decisive moment of my life where I deeply felt the social acrimony that existed where I lived. I witnessed Wallace's opposition to integration at the University of Alabama. At the time I was a student at Florida State University and living in the Florida panhandle, less than 300 miles from the University of Alabama. The politics of Wallace swelled through the South. Wallace's opposition to integration ignited the racist fires and at the same time served as rally point for the growing Civil Rights Movement. Geographically I felt vulnerable and excited. But, unlike in California, I felt paralyzed by the immensity of the situation. What could I do? I was powerless. These feelings were only slightly alleviated when I moved to the University of Kansas the following year. It was here that I earned a BFA in the midst of anti-war protests, Students for Democrats Society (SDS), the Black

Panther Party, speeches by Abbie Hoffman, and civil rights protests culminating in a series of bombs exploding on campus. For me education consisted of both academic and social growth.

Upon graduation I moved to New Mexico where my two children were born. My life was quiet again, but it was clear that my window to the world had changed. Past experiences influenced me so that I began to recognize that the racial stresses of the 1960s were never far away even from our small community. In New Mexico, both the American Indian and the Latino populations were trying to maintain their own culture while following the White culture to make a living. In this borderland discourse, many people must live their lives somewhere in between while faced with subtle but present prejudices. I knew that life wasn't fair or even equitable for many Latinas/os and American Indians. I had some power which comes from maturity and certainly this problem was much more local and therefore less overwhelming, but as a stay-at-home mother, I couldn't really do much to equal the playing field. However, with my lived college experiences I observed the inequities.

It was in New Mexico as a non-traditional student that I earned my MBA. I always have valued education. After all, I am the third generation of females in my family to receive a college degree. Both my children have college degrees; my daughter is the fourth generation female to receive a college degree. Having spent the past 20 years in academics at both 4-year institutions and community colleges teaching technology has only solidified my belief that education is power. I have always treasured the journey of learning and hope it is contagious to my students in the classroom. Because my educational opportunities have shaped the heart of who I am, I feel a certain

responsibility to my students. I know I have lived a privileged life, and I know not everyone has been so lucky. Perhaps this sense of responsibility sparked the formal beginnings of my dissertation topic, which began with a single journal entry in the first semester of this PhD program. I wrote a simple quote by an instructor, Dr. Timothy Davies, who ultimately became my dissertation advisor: "Are we reaching out to every group in the community in which we serve?" I knew that we weren't. I knew that there were populations that were not being totally included in the educational process that has been so valuable to me.

Finally, I was in a position of power. Education was my position of power, and what I needed was a partnership. I found Daniel (pseudonym). When I first met Daniel he was employed at the front desk of my campus building in the evenings. It was his second job. Daniel was the one who first openly talked about the ethnic division at our campus in a Diversity Workshop, beginning the dialog between us. Together we discussed the ethnic division at our campus as well as possible ways to overcome the obstacles that exist for the Latino community. In the process, Daniel and I have forged a partnership as well as a friendship, championing the inclusion of Spanish speaking students in technology. For the past five years as a division director in technology I have programmed non-credit computer classes which Daniel teaches in Spanish. Today Daniel's computer classes are full and continue to be scheduled each semester.

In December 2002, Daniel quit his day job as a caretaker of resort home and was hired as the pre-collegiate program coordinator to a newly created position and program. The focus of the pre-collegiate program is to academically and socially support middle and high school students who will be the first generation in their families to attend

postsecondary institutions. Daniel's new position has caused our partnership to become more formal. Finally, for the first time, I have the power, the position, and the connections to truly make a difference. My postsecondary education lived experiences support the belief that affirmative action and race-based considerations for admissions have not been successful. Preliminary research for my dissertation confirmed what I already knew: enrollment quotas have not netted incremental gains for minority students. Providing minority students positions at universities is not enough when pre-collegiate students don't see college as a possibility or an opportunity. It therefore makes sense that student success at the postsecondary level should begin by mentoring students at the pre-collegiate level. After all, that was the level at which my children were prepared. My daughter once told me that she did not know she had a choice on whether to attend college or not. She thought it was just another step in the required educational process—grade school, middle school, high school, followed by college. My lived experiences also suggest that the ethnic division between the minority and majority populations is established in our communities and has perpetuated the notion for the Latino community that postsecondary education is not their opportunity. Believing that postsecondary education is an achievable reality for Latinas/os requires breaking through the language, cultural, and economic barriers. By giving students the mindset early on that college is not only a valuable but accessible opportunity, these students will begin in the same place where my children began—with choices.

Although my initial view point was from a privileged position, I have come to realize through my lived experiences that my dissertation topic is more far-reaching than inclusion and emancipatory social justice. On June 23, 2003, the Supreme Court cases

involving the University of Michigan, *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), gave new momentum to the responsibility of promoting diversity in the higher education environment. Here the Supreme Court case acknowledged the continuing importance of affirmative action and diversity efforts by postsecondary institutions not only as a means of increasing access to postsecondary education for a greater number of students, but also as a means of fostering the academic and social growth for all students, making it essential to the educational development of all students. Based on this credible rationale, I believe this Supreme Court case has advanced the debate on if and why minority populations should be included in postsecondary educational opportunities. The how question, of course, remains to be determined, and it is this how question which I seek to address in my dissertation research.

While my initial research interest was based on my lived experiences, my specific research question has been narrowed by the existing scholarly research on pre-collegiate programs. The current research on these programs is hopeful but inconclusive. Since the inception of pre-collegiate programs, a great deal of evolution has happened to their structure and content. It is my hope that my dissertation will provide insights and understanding to increase the educational opportunities for Latina/o students by investigating pre-collegiate programs.

Unashamedly I have fallen in love with my research question and the participants. Daniel has become my gatekeeper. The participants will become my co-authors by permitting me into their borderlands and allowing me to give a voice to their storied lives.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There's a girl in my pre-collegiate group who says there is an attractive Latino boy who has only Anglo friends. He wants to stop being Hispanic or showing he's Hispanic. I told her that's not true. I told her when I grew up we used to believe the same thing. You don't want to stop speaking Spanish because you want to stop being Hispanic but because you are ashamed of your culture (Monique).

Learning how pre-collegiate programs work requires seeing them as organizations, whom they serve, and how they serve. While all pre-collegiate programs share certain characteristics, there are differences as well which are important in illuminating why a comprehensive understanding of pre-collegiate programs remains elusive and why their content is so complex. This literature review summarizes the pre-collegiate research, recognizing what is already known, and identifying the research gaps. Identifying the research gaps best supports and explains the choices made for this study.

Role of Education in Our Communities

History shows that “economic inequality depends on the choices we make—how we regulate corporations and unions, how we distribute the tax burden, how we finance or do not finance education, and how we set wages” (Hout & Lucas, 1996, p. B1). There is an equally strong agreement among economists that formal education is a central influence of individual earnings as well as the economic growth (Saxton, 2000). As a result, postsecondary education is becoming increasingly important to both our economy and competitive position in the world. It is equally important to the individuals who dream to share in the American dream.

The gap between a college graduate's and a high school graduate's average earnings steadily has increased, making a college education the gateway to the middle class (Gladieux, 1996). As the United States moves rapidly into a technological society,

the greatest employment needs will be for well-trained, well-educated individuals. It is predicted that three out of every five new jobs will require a “fairly high skill level” in technology (Saxton, 2000, p. 5). The low skilled jobs for undereducated individuals will disappear. Hout and Lucas (1996) reported that the rising inequality of incomes in the United States is the result of an economy that rewards intelligence more than in the past. It is said that schools create intelligence; they do not merely certify it (Hout & Lucas, 1996). Education levels in the U.S. are rising for the general population. In 2000, 52% of the U.S. population 25 years and older had completed at least some college education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). This is in contrast to the 24% of Latinas/os who have enrolled in postsecondary institutions (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002). The educational level of the Latina/o population continues to lag behind the 52% of the general U.S. population. As a result Latinas/os increasingly work in low skilled jobs and live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

Education also benefits society in ways that are not measured by economic factors. These non-market factors enable individuals to be better mothers, fathers, children, voters, and citizens (Saxton, 2000). People with higher levels of education enjoy healthier and more productive lives (Saxton). Education has also been linked to a decreased probability of engaging in criminal activities as well as a reduced dependence on welfare and public assistance (The Puente Project, 2003). In this sense education is a public good, in that society benefits from an educated population as well as the individual.

Historically, every society has its rich and poor; inequity is a matter of degree. In 1996 the United States reported the largest gap between the rich and poor in the past 75

years, larger than any other industrial nation (Hout & Locas, 1996). These inequities happen at both societal and economic levels. Latinas/os are more likely to be unemployed than their non-Latina/o White counterparts. In 2002, 8.1% of Latinas/os 16 and older in the labor force were unemployed, compared with 5.1% for non-Latina/o Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Latinas/os were also more likely to work in low paid service areas: 22.1% Latinas/os as compared to 11.6% for non-Latina/o Whites. Of the Latinas/os in the labor market 20.8% worked as operators and laborers while 10.9% non-Latina/o Whites held the same jobs. Conversely, only 14.2% Latinas/os were in managerial or professional occupations, compared with 35.1% non-Latina/o Whites (U.S. Census Bureau). Only 5% of Latinas/os were represented in high skilled occupations such as architecture and engineering, legal, computer and mathematical science, health care, and life, physical and social sciences (The Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Nonetheless, the next generation of minority workers will overwhelmingly be Latinas/os, and they will represent a growing segment of the workforce (Gladieux, 1996).

Educational opportunities and occupational choices are also reflected in earnings. Full time Latinas/os workers earn less than their non-Latina/o White counterparts. In 2002, 26.3% Latinas/os and 53.8% non-Latina/o Whites earned \$35,000 or more; the proportion of workers earning \$50,000 or more was 12.4% for Latinas/os and 31.8% for non-Latina/o Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Latinas/os also fare worse than other populations in economic recessions. In the end Latina/o households have less than ten cents for every dollar in wealth owned by non-Latina/o White households (Kochhar, 2006).

Low wages translate into poverty. Although the Latina/o population makes up 13.3% of the population nationwide, 24.3% live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). In contrast 7.8% non-Latina/o Whites live in poverty. Across the nation a growing number of Latina/o children are born and live in poverty. Latina/o children represented 17.7% of the total population in the United States but constituted 30.4% of all children living in poverty and the numbers are rising (U.S. Census Bureau). Mayer (2001) and Ward (2006) reported that children who experience persistent poverty are less inclined to study or stay in school. Because earnings are linked to educational levels, the gateway to the middle class is increasingly dependent on a baccalaureate degree (Gladieux, 1996). This confirms Romo's (2004) research citing that the lower class continues to increase as their access to the privileges held by the middle and upper class diminishes.

Educational Attainment

More than one in eight people in the U.S. are of Latina/o origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). According to current estimates, by 2030, 40% of all Americans will be members of a minority group (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). As the fastest-growing ethnic group in the nation the Latina/o population has become a critical focus and the intellectual capacities of this ethnic group remain central to the economic and civic health of this country.

Until recently, the educational paths of Latinas/os were not considered an important research topic (Bernal, 2001). Latinas/os currently represent over 13% of the U.S. population, but only about 10% of Latina/o high school graduates attend college (Brown et al., 2003). These statistics are graver when one considers that many Latina/o high school students do not actually finish high school. In 2000 the high school drop-out

rate for Latinas/os was 28% (Tapia, 2004). To put this statistic in perspective, this is two times higher than African Americans and more than three times the rate for non-Latina/o Whites (Tapia). Additionally, when examining educational backgrounds of parents of SAT test takers, only 1% of non-Latina/o White parents and 5% of African American parents do not have high school diplomas, compared with 27% of Latina/o parents (Gándara, 2004). The challenge is to insure higher levels of academic achievement to the rapidly growing population of students who are destined to become the majority in the US.

While Latinas/os have made steady progress in obtaining academic degrees, they continue to lag behind non-Latina/o Whites and African Americans. In 1970, 40% of native born Latinas/os had completed high school. By 2000 the rate had improved to 60% with the native born Latinas/os faring better than their immigrant counterparts (The Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Despite recent increases made by Latinas/os in academic performance, glaring distinctions of race and class continue when comparing these students to their non-Latina/o White and African American peers. Sixty-two percent of Latina/o students graduated from high school in 2003, compared to 94% of non-Latina/o Whites, and 88% of African Americans (Ward, 2006). Between 1971 and 2003 the gap in high school graduation rates narrowed between African Americans and non-Latina/o Whites, from 23% to 6%, a decrease of 17 percentage points. During this same time period the gap in high school completion rates increased between Latinas/os and non-Latina/o Whites, from 48% to 62%, an increase of 14% points (Ward). The outcome is that more than two in five Latinas/os over 25 years do not have a high school diploma

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Consequently Latinas/os continue to be the least educated major population group in the U.S (Fry, 2002).

A high school diploma no longer serves as the basic credential for successful employment in the current U.S. economy. Low-skilled jobs are being replaced with well-trained and well-educated workers (Saxton, 2000). In 2002 the percentage of Latinas/os with a baccalaureate degree was 11.1% compared to 29.4% for non-Latina/o Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). These statistics do not tell the whole story of what happens to many Latina/o students. One-third of Latinas/os entering college drop out before their second year, and over half fail to complete a degree at the institution where they began (Hoffman, 2003). First generation postsecondary Latina/o students are twice as likely as those with college educated parents to leave a 4-year postsecondary institution before the second year (Hoffman, 2003). The barriers influencing retention also show up in baccalaureate completion rates.

By the late 1990s 1.3 million Latinas/os went to college compared to 11 million non-Latina/o Whites and 2 million African Americans (The Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). However, to put this statistic in perspective, in 1995 only 4.7% of all baccalaureate degrees were awarded to Latina/o students compared with 79% to non-Latina/o Whites and 7.5% to African Americans. By 1998 approximately 10% of Latinas/os age 25 to 29 years old held a baccalaureate degree, compared with 32% of non-Latina/o Whites (Brown et al., 2003; The Puente Project, 2003). These statistics reflect the continued disproportionate pursuit of postsecondary education between different population groups, with Latinas/os ranking the lowest.

Being marginalized in the educational process becomes magnified over a life time of earnings (Loza, 2003; The Puente Project, 2003). The median annual household income of a person with a baccalaureate degree is 75% greater than a person with a high school diploma and three times that of a person with less than a high school diploma (Gándara & Bial, 2001; Loza; The Puente Project). This means for a person with a bachelor's degree who earns \$52,500, a high school graduate earns \$30,000, and a person with less than a high school diploma would earn \$17,500. The only path more expensive than going to college is not going to college (Berry, 2003). Although the financial advantage of a baccalaureate degree can be clearly dictated, the benefits of education go beyond economics. People with higher levels of education are less likely to burden the social service and criminal justice systems, they enjoy better health and longer lives, and they contribute substantially more to the public coffers through their taxes (Gándara & Bial, 2001).

For many people the community college is the entry point to postsecondary education. Approximately 56% of the 1.2 million Latinas/os in American attend community colleges. This is in contrast to 36.2% of non-Latina/o Whites and 41.6% of African Americans who choose to attend community colleges (Gutierrez, Casteneda & Katsinas, 2002). As a result, community colleges have become the dominant educational vehicle for Latinas/os in pursuit of their educational dreams.

Community colleges have a number of characteristics that are appealing for the Latina/o community. Attachments to family and community, as well as economic factors, encourage Latinas/os to stay in their communities while pursuing postsecondary education. These factors also logically appeal to low-income students. The open door

practice of community colleges welcomes students with low levels of academic preparation. Finally, community colleges promise that a student can transfer to a 4-year institution through transfer agreements. However, the dream of completing a baccalaureate degree is frequently not realized for most community college students. More than half of all students who begin in community colleges never complete a postsecondary degree, compared to the 18% who begin at 4-year institutions (The Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Improving the community college and the 4-year institution graduation rates is prerequisite to improving the economic status of Latinas/os.

It is widely recognized that academic preparedness is critically important to success in postsecondary education, and this academic attentiveness begins in the K-12 grades. In 1990 one in ten high school students was Latina/o. By 2025 that number is projected to rise to one in four (The Puente Project, 2003). Of the total growth in the school-aged population projected to take place over the next 10 years, two-thirds will be Latina/o (The Puente Project). Latinas/os are also four times more likely to drop out of high school as non-Latina/o Whites (The Puente Project). Latina/o students, who lack cultural and social capital of the dominant culture, need help in navigating the leap between K-12 and postsecondary education. The link between high school and postsecondary education frequently takes place in pre-college programs. The scope of what happens in the K-12 years and in pre-collegiate programs is not clearly understood. However, advocating for Latina/o participation pre-collegiate programs is critical for both K-12 and postsecondary institutions (Brown et al., 2003; Cooper, 2002; Moreno, 2002; Tierney, 2002).

History of TRIO Programs

The public postsecondary education system began in the U.S. with the Morrill Land Act of 1862 (Council for Opportunity in Education, n.d.; Groutt, 2003). One hundred years later the educational system emerged, serving primarily upper-income families. In 1963 Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as president following John Kennedy's assassination, and along with Johnson came his vision to build a great society. The Great Society program became Johnson's agenda focusing on poverty and discrimination. In support of Johnson's agenda Congress passed the Higher Education Act in 1965 (Council for Opportunity in Education; Groutt). This was the first time funding was provided on the basis of low-income status (Groutt). A series of programs called TRIO were established to help low-income Americans more fully participate in America's economic and social life by navigating the class, social, and cultural barriers to higher education. Prior to this the federal government had been only minimally involved in postsecondary education (Groutt). The primary goal of the Higher Education Act of 1965 was to provide information, counseling, financial support, and services to equalize postsecondary opportunities for disadvantaged students (Wallace, Ropers-Huilman & Abel, 2004). Educational elitism had been successfully challenged (Gladieux & Hauptman, 1995).

TRIO began in 1964 with the Economic Opportunity Act creating the pre-college Upward Bound program. In 1965, the Talent Search was created as part of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). The passage of the HEA was the result of Congress acknowledging that more than financial support was necessary to open the postsecondary doors for qualified students. In 1968 the Student Support Services, originally known as the Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, was authorized by HEA. This was later

amended to the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2001. In 1968 the Upward Bound program was transferred out of the Office of Economic Opportunity and into the Office of Higher Education Programs. By the late 1960s the term “TRIO” emerged to describe these three federally supported educational opportunity programs. By the end of the first decade TRIO had expanded its eligibility to non-financial barriers to include students where neither parent had attended a postsecondary institution (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2006). Politically this enabled TRIO to build a broader coalition to include both low-income and first generation people who previously had not had the opportunities for postsecondary education.

The second decade of TRIO expanded services to a wider range of students. In 1972 the HEA added the fourth program, authorizing Educational Opportunity Centers. The Training Program for TRIO was authorized in 1976. This fifth program was initially known as Training Program for Special Programs Staff and Leadership Personnel. By the end of the 1980s most of the TRIO programs had been established.

At the beginning of the third decade five of the six programs were in place. In 1986 the sixth program, the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program, was added. Additionally, in 1990 the Upward Bound Math/Science program was created within the Upward Bound program. In 1998 the federal government established GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness through Undergraduate Preparation) extending the role of promoting educational attainment among disadvantaged groups. Although the TRIO programs have increased to five, the term TRIO has been retained because of its legislative and national name recognition (Wallace et al., 2004). Together these programs offer a wide range of services that promoted emotional, environmental,

and academic acculturation of first-generation, low-income students into postsecondary institutions (Wallace et al.). The overriding assignment of TRIO programs is to help students overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to postsecondary education (Gladieux, 1996).

Each TRIO program is aimed at a specific population and need. The Upward Bound/ Educational Talent Search program provides fundamental support to college-able high school students to prepare for postsecondary education. Eligibility to Upward Bound programs require students come from a low-income family where neither parent held a bachelor's degree. This is the first time that federal monies would be distributed based on low-income status (Groutt, 2003). All Upward Bound programs provide instruction in literature, composition, foreign language, mathematics, and science on college campuses after school, or on Saturdays, and during the summer (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2006; Wallace et al., 2004). This 4- to 6-week summer program is designed to transition students from high school to postsecondary education (Ward, 2006). Other Upward Bound activities include instruction in reading, writing, and study skills; academic, financial and personal counseling; exposure to academic programs and cultural events; tutorial services; mentoring programs; information on postsecondary educational opportunities; assistance in completing entrance and financial applications; support in preparing for college entrance exams; and work study positions that exposed students to careers requiring postsecondary degrees (Council for Opportunity in Education). The Department of Education has reported that Upward Bound is one of the largest college transition programs and has been "closely studied using rigorous evaluation methods" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). However, Caldwell and Siwatu (2003) state that

the effectiveness of this program has been measured only by college grades in the specific areas of English and math, and college grade point average. This is in contrast to Ward who stated that no evaluative studies have been published on the effectiveness of Upward Bound/ Educational Talent Search programs. The discrepancies of how rigorous or uncertain the evaluation methods are for Upward Bound serve to suspect the true benefits of these types of pre-collegiate programs.

There was also a Veterans Upward Bound program available to adult students who were low-income, first generation, military veterans preparing to enter postsecondary education. Participants in this program were assisted in enrollment, financial aid, and career counseling (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2006; Wallace et al., 2004). This program was enacted in 1972, embedded in the Upward Bound/ Educational Talent Search programs, and lasted only one year.

Student Support Services (SSS) also works under the umbrella of TRIO. The goal of the SSS is to increase retention and completion rates at postsecondary institutions (Wallace et al., 2004). SSS participants, who include disabled college students, are eligible to receive tutoring and counseling. Unique to the SSS program is direct financial assistance given to students entering college, as a supplement to Federal Pell Grant awards (Ward, 2006).

Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) was the fourth TRIO program, added in 1972. These services are similar to Upward Bound, except the focus is on displaced or underemployed workers over the age of 17, interested in postsecondary education, and who live in specified geographical areas with a high concentration of poverty. The goal

of these centers is to help individuals in career counseling, financial aid options, and tutoring.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement program have promoted low-income and minority undergraduates to consider careers in postsecondary teaching or to prepare students for doctorate degrees. The key components of this program are financial support, mentoring, internship and research (Blake, 1998).

GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) joined the TRIO programs in 1998. The primary goal of this program was to increase enrollments of low-income and minority undergraduates in postsecondary institutions by influencing the policies that support “excellence for all students, high standards, and rigorous coursework” (Ward, 2006, p. 59). GEAR-UP does this by focusing on three activities. The first activity identifies the social and academic needs of students by exposing students to college prep courses. The program also identifies curriculum challenges and tutoring that facilitate a student’s pursuit of postsecondary education. Finally, GEAR-UP programs support long-term, early intervention activities such as campus visits, after school homework sessions, and information about college admissions and financial aid (Caldwell & Siwatu, 2003). The end goal of GEAR-UP is to increase academic achievement outcomes for low-income minority students and to ensure their access to postsecondary institutions.

Today more than 2,700 TRIO programs serve almost 866,000 low-income Americans where neither parent has graduated from college (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2006). Included in these numbers are 22,000 students with disabilities and more than 25,000 U.S. veterans. Nineteen percent of TRIO students are identified as

Latinas/os (Council for Opportunity in Education). Upward Bound programs are four times more likely to earn an undergraduate degree than students not participating, however these statistics are self-reported (Council for Opportunity in Education). Adelman (1997) puts these statistics in perspective. The author reports that 57% of TRIO students entered postsecondary institutions following high school compared to 50% of the non-TRIO students. However, the baccalaureate completion rates were 17% for TRIO students, compared to 44% for all students reported (Adelman, 1997).

While collectively, TRIO programs have demonstrated some successes, several challenges remain. First, TRIO programs target students who have demonstrated the ability to succeed academically. This excludes many students who might benefit from academic support and enrichment opportunities but do not meet the TRIO eligibility requirements (Ward, 2006). Secondly, TRIO programs are offered beginning at the secondary grade level. Researchers report this is too late it and should happen in earlier grades (Brown et al., 2003; Cooper, 2002; Moreno, 2002; Tierney, 2002). Recently GEAR-UP has been added to work at the middle school level but works only with larger groups of students. Although GEAR-UP does address some of the concerns that many underrepresented students are not eligible and the programs are offered too late to intervene with at-risk students, Ward reported that GEAR-UP is still too late and too little for many at-risk students who need academic support. Next, TRIO programs are limited in their ability to address the overabundance of issues that affect student achievement (Ward). Finally, TRIO programs are instigated and remain on the periphery of educational reform. Although TRIO programs do operate within school districts and local

communities, they remain isolated from school, community, and family partnerships that could potentially strengthen the program's success (Ward, 2006).

There is no doubt that the TRIO federal aid has helped many students afford a college degree. However, the antipoverty origins of the TRIO programs beginning in 1964 have evolved from a grant-based to a loan-based system, with loans now providing most of the available aid (Gladieux, 1996). This trend in borrowing, combined with the declining purchasing power of federal grants, has created an opportunity gap between students from low-income and upper-income families (Wolanin, 2003). As a result students who are most at-risk increasingly must borrow to gain access to postsecondary institutions. For students who do achieve a baccalaureate degree, the economic gains offset the college debt. However, low-income students, unfamiliar with debt and the economic gains of education, are most likely to be deterred by the process of accumulating educational debt. High-risk students, who do borrow to finance their education but do not complete their degrees, are left worse off; these students are left with no degree, no skills, and in debt (Gladieux, 1996; Ward, 2006; Wolanin, 2003).

Gladieux (1996) reported that although many underrepresented groups have made gains, TRIO efforts have largely failed to equalize college opportunities. The modest gains that were made in the 1970s have been erased in the 1980s and 1990s (Gladieux). Martinez (2003) reported that TRIO serves 16% of low-income and first generation Latinas/os. However, Wallace et al. (2004) reported that TRIO serves 5% of the eligible Latina/o population. As a result, currently there is a greater inequality in access to postsecondary institutions than any time in the past 25 years (Gladieux).

A summary of TRIO programs describes the evolution and its focus. A growing awareness of poverty sparked the TRIO beginnings in 1964 by providing financial support to low-income students. By the 1990s TRIO had evolved into six different programs with the common goal of helping students overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to postsecondary education (Gladieux, 1996). However, the philosophical underpinnings have also evolved from being grant-based to loan-based (Gladieux, 1996; Ward, 2006; Wolanin, 2003). Although TRIO programs continue to increase in number, expand the number of students served, and evolve in content, narrowing the gap of educational inequities for low-income Latina/o students remains an unmet goal (Gladieux; Martinez, 2003; Wallace et al., 2004)

History of Pre-collegiate Programs

Currently there are many pre-collegiate programs collectively known as early intervention, early outreach, or college access programs whose mission is to strengthen diversity at postsecondary institutions. These pre-college programs are designed to promote postsecondary education attainment of underrepresented students by developing the skills needed to enroll in and graduate from postsecondary institutions. Not all pre-college programs have been initiated at the federal level. State governments, not-for-profit organizations, and secondary and postsecondary institutions all sponsor college preparation programs. The High School Puente Project, AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), EAOP (Early Academic Outreach Program), MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement), Young Scholars Program, Upward Bound, I Have a Dream, and GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) were all responses to increasing the successes of

underrepresented populations in postsecondary education (Cooper, 2002). However, Latinas/os remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of educational attainment despite numerous efforts by education and government leaders to facilitate student success along educational pathways. Gándara and Moreno (2002) reported that although thousands of dollars are spent on pre-collegiate programs “very little careful evaluation is one of them. As a result we actually know a lot less than we should about what kinds of strategies work best under what conditions and with what types of students” (p. 464).

There are many complexities that frame the overall experiences of Latinas/os in high schools. Loza (2003) reported that most of pre-collegiate programs fall into two categories: student-centered and school-centered. Most pre-collegiate programs are student-centered. These programs identify a group of students from specific underrepresented populations and then develop strategies and interventions to get them ready for postsecondary education. The strategies include tutoring, college visitations, counseling, and a parent component (Loza). The goal of a student-centered approach is to close any perceived academic gaps in the student’s educational experience. Most programs like TRIO are student-centered. By identifying a few students based on specific criteria (a minimum GPA, motivated to pursue a postsecondary education, low-income, first generation college student, no behavior problems, etc.) the majority of Latina/o students remain excluded and on the fringes of the educational system (Loza).

In opposition, school-centered programs attempt to restructure and reform the school as a whole. When school failure is widespread for a specific group of students, the more appropriate response would be to initiate school-centered response. This focuses the change on school structures, systems, and processes (Loza, 2003). A school-centered

program includes all Latina/o students. The eligibility requirements common in student-centered programs demonstrate that many underachieving, at-risk Latina/o students are not being served. Loza documented that admission requirements for pre-collegiate programs not only serve to exclude some students but contribute to their being pushed out of the system altogether.

Characteristics of Pre-collegiate Programs

Pre-collegiate programs have been in existence for many years and the literature is abundant regarding the specific characteristics of pre-collegiate programs. The central characteristics of pre-college programs are reported from both a research and practice perspective. Tierney (2002) lists the following as components considered fundamental to success: cultural capital; structural barriers; cultural integrity; and the level of involvement by families in the educational process, determined by what they believe to be appropriate. Gándara and Moreno (2002) have a different view of what should be considered the main components of pre-collegiate programs: instruction in writing and literature, college preparatory counseling, and mentoring. Cooper (2002) also identifies characteristics present in High School Puente Project: family involvement, culturally enriched teaching, counseling, mentoring, and support of college-bound peers. Discrepancies exist among the authors as they define the pre-collegiate characteristics. The wealth of pre-collegiate characteristics underscores the possibilities of what a pre-collegiate program might look like. The goal of each characteristic is to address the academic, social, and cultural barriers and to move Latina/o students closer to access and success in postsecondary institutions (Gladieux, 1996; Moreno, 2002). These are the emerging characteristics for pre-collegiate programs.

The characteristics of pre-collegiate programs are broadly divided into three main categories: parental involvement as a form of cultural and social capital, the role of parents and families in pre-collegiate programs, and the role of mentors in pre-collegiate programs. Using the critical race theory lens enables researchers to expand their understanding of pre-collegiate programs. Critical race theory (CRT) surveys the application of CRT from the perspective of different researchers and provides a lens to discuss educational policies and structures. Embedded in the CRT is the Latino/Latina critical theory (LatCrit). Used together, the CRT and LatCrit provide a new framework to see a more complete picture of educational institutions. Educational policies and structures, when viewed with the CRT and LatCrit lens, offer insights to the challenges Latina/o students experience in their educational pursuits. The first category, parental involvement as a form of cultural and social capital, begins by defining why cultural and social capital is an essential ingredient in pre-collegiate programs. Second, the role of parents and families in pre-collegiate programs reviews how parents understand academic standards and how they navigate school systems. The process of cultivating diverse educational climates happens from both inside and outside of educational institutions. The third category investigates the roles of mentors in pre-collegiate programs by exploring the mentoring partnerships and leadership programs. I will investigate these categories and CRT in more detail.

Parental Involvement as a Form of Cultural Capital and Social Capital

Pradl (2002) defined the term of cultural capital, social capital, or instrumental knowledge as having the skills, knowledge, and understanding that allows a person to function in an alternative interpretive community. The concepts of cultural capital and

social capital are defined and placed in context. Cultivating diverse educational climates is becoming a central consideration in educational institutions.

Cultural capital. Many researchers describe and advocate cultural capital as an important component of pre-collegiate programs. Grant and Wong (2004) describe cultural capital or cultural fund as a person's entire cultural relationships across all of the key social spheres. Gándara and Moreno (2002) define cultural capital as knowledge of a system—in this case the educational system—how it works and how to access opportunities. Cultural capital is also defined by Tierney (2002) as “the knowledge that social elites value yet schools do not teach; it is a set of linguistic and cultural competencies that children inherit from their families” (p. 592). Perna and Titus (2005) report that cultural capital is measured by four variables: parents' education, parents' expectations for child's educational attainment, primary language spoken in the home, and participation in cultural classes. As a result, families are the primary originators and propagators of cultural capital. Without cultural capital students and their families are unaware of the investments needed to succeed in postsecondary institutions or how to gain access to the knowledge appropriately.

Social capital. The data defining social capital comes from various researchers. Social capital is the collective value of all social works or social trust and the preferences that occur from these networks to do things for each other (Segura, 2001). Fukuyama defines social capital as the existence of a set of informal values or shared norms among group members that permit collaboration and cooperation among individuals in the group (Huntington & Harrison, 2001). Social capital is also described as a familiarity with, and access to, supportive social networks that foster opportunity (Gándara & Moreno, 2002).

The overriding social capital theme is a bridging and bonding behavior between people (Segura, 2001). The primary function of social capital is to enable a student to gain access to human and cultural capital, as well as educational resources and support (Perna & Titus, 2005). This happens when a student uses their social capital as a bridge to gain cultural capital. Pong, Hao, and Gardner (2005) report that social capital can be produced through different kinds of social relations that include obligation, expectation, trustworthiness, information exchange, and norms. Perna and Titus explore the relationship between family involvement as social capital and college enrollment, confirming the belief that parental involvement is a central component in successful pre-collegiate programs. Social capital is also measured by family involvement in the educational process and by parent-student discussions about education related issues. Translated, this means the parents actively seek to gain information about college and academic requirements for college admissions, and initiate contact with the school about academic requirements as well as behavior issues (Perna & Titus). Parental involvement, combined with the level of social, capital, and economic capital available, contributes to the probability that a student will enroll in postsecondary institutions (Perna & Titus).

Social capital is gained from families. Latina/o households have been described as highly “*familistic*” (Tapia, 2004). This family orientation acknowledges the ties between related households and households beyond the nuclear family. The important characteristic of *familistic* households is that the households are interconnected by economic and social exchanges. These economic and social exchanges take the form of labor exchanges, such as baby-sitting or house maintenance and celebratory exchanges, such as baptisms and holiday activities. Tapia reported that the structure and activities of

familistic households promote the understanding of social capital. Here Tapia uses Coleman's (1988) definition of social capital: "social capital within the family refers to the nature and type of interactions between adults and children" (p. 418). Social capital can also be created from outside the family, from social relationships with other adults in the community. These family structures and activities influence academic performance (Tapia).

Economic factors are also linked to social capital and can be converted to cultural capital. In turn, cultural capital can be linked to the academic performance of students. Tapia (2004) illustrated the complexity of the links through the lives of two Latina/o families. One Latina/o family lived in Tucson where the Latina/o population was 24%. The proximity to the Mexican border as well as the close proximity of extended family provided a cultural and linguistic presence. Because of the high Latina/o population in the area, schools had bilingual programs and a higher representation of Latinas/os in the educational system. The schools had abandoned tracking students into academic or vocational tracks; all students were exposed to the basic curriculum. Although Latinas/os in Tucson were generally employed in occupations characterized by low wages and job instability, both parents were always employed. The high school males were employed outside the home and economically contributed to the family. Tapia (2004) stated family stability and economic stability are contributing factors of school performance for Latina/o students in low-income communities. For this particular family the close proximity to their extended families created stability, while the combined income from all family members contributed to economic stability.

The story of the second Latina/o family was in sharp contrast to the first family's story. The second family lived in a Puerto Rican community near North Philadelphia. No bilingual programs existed in the schools. The neighborhood had graffiti and abandoned buildings. High poverty rates were linked to the elevated number of households headed by females; 41% of the Puerto Rican households were headed by females (Tapia, 2004). The depressed economics of Philadelphia resulted in limited economic opportunities, and Latinas/os were the hardest hit. The mother periodically worked in stores or factories; she sometimes worked cleaning houses. Frequently her primary income was from welfare. The father of the children was not married to the mother but sometimes lived in the home. The parents also had periods of separation. When the father was employed, he contributed to the economics of the family. During these times the mother volunteered at the school, spoke to the teacher and was generally aware of the curriculum. During times of unemployment the father frequently sold drugs to support his family and on several occasions was incarcerated. The family had few relatives who could assist them economically when the father was incarcerated. For the mother, securing a long-term job was difficult due to discrimination and the limited jobs available. Ultimately the father, experiencing periods of hopelessness, was sent to a rehabilitation center. At that time the mother and three children returned to Puerto Rico (Tapia).

In this Latina/o household, family relationships and residential mobility were strongly influenced by the lack of economic opportunities. In turn this condition influenced what happened at school. When the family experienced economic stability, the parents were involved in school. The children passed their classes and received school awards. At times of instability the children's grades declined. The Puerto Rican family

experienced higher levels of economic insecurity, family fragmentation, residential mobility, and a less *familistic* support (Tapia, 2004). Family stability was directly linked to economic stability for this household.

This study by Tapia (2004) looks at cultural capital with an economic origin for two Latina/o families. The composition of households and economic activities influenced the connections between home and school. The author summarizes his study by stating “family stability, which is greatly influenced by economic stability, is the most important factor affecting the school performance of Latino students in low-income communities” (Tapia, 2004, p. 434).

This is not to say that poverty does not influence educational completion rates. Research has established that “children who experience poverty, particularly persistent poverty, during their preschool and early school years have lower rates of school completion than children and adolescents who experience poverty only in later years” (Ward, 2006, p. 52). Mayer (2001) confirmed that poor or deprived children are less inclined to study or stay in school. For children growing up in poverty this suggestion has long-term educational implications. However, research also has established that the educational achievement of parents is a more important predictor for access to postsecondary education and completion of a baccalaureate degree, more important than family income, educational expectations, academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influence (Ward). This generational effect underscores the importance of children from low-income families to enroll in postsecondary institutions and complete postsecondary degrees.

Cultivating diverse educational climates. As Latina/o students progress through the K-12 and postsecondary educational systems they move between two cultures. The prevailing educational practices in the U.S. endorse the assimilation of Latinos into the dominant culture. As a result, in order for Latinas/os to function in educational institutions as well as society they must typically learn the dominant culture while at the same time living in the margins. These margins that Latinas/os often live in are called borderlands. Elenes (1997) defines borderlands as the “discourse of people who live between different worlds” (¶2). This borderland can be geographical, emotional, and psychological and serves as a metaphor for the condition of living between spaces, cultures, and languages (Bernal, 2001). For many Latinas/os this means that they live somewhere “belonging” and “not belonging” (Elenes). This discourse illuminates the social conditions of people with hybrid identities and accurately describes the Latinas/os who live in the U.S. with their native cultures.

Dominant educational practices in the U.S. promote the assimilation of Latinas/os into the dominant culture. However, Elenes (1997) maintains that a hybrid identity is problematic. Elenes states the assimilation of Latinas/os into the dominant culture is detrimental to their educational advancement. However, in order to function in the educational system Latina/o students must assimilate into the dominant culture. In a review of the literature, Harbour, Middleton, Lewis, and Anderson (2003) confirm the opposition felt by Latinas/os to assimilate into the dominant culture. The authors report the pressures felt by the Latina/o to “assimilate into the dominant culture, appearing as absorption, was hostile to multiculturalism and diversity” (Harbour et al., 2003, p. 832). Shaw, Valadez, and Rhoades (1999) state these students must “either maintain separate

identities, behavior patterns, and peer associations or they are forced to leave one culture behind and uneasily accept the dominant culture” (p. 174). This frequently results in a profound sense of isolation or loss for the student (Shaw et al.). Gay (2004) wants educational institutions to know that multicultural education is the solution to these problems that appear currently unsolvable. Shaw et al. informs educational policy makers whose students “possess border knowledge—knowledge that resides outside the canon, outside of the cultural mainstream—must be incorporated into a learning community that recognizes distinct [cultural] groups...” (p. 174). In this way crossing these borderlands can become an integral part in the experience of multiculturalism education.

It is imperative for schools to respond to the multicultural reality of the society that they serve (Sogunro, 2001). Cultural diversity is promoted when multicultural organizations implement multicultural curriculum in educational institutions. Because of the link between cultural diversity and multiculturalism, it is important to understand the terms multiculturalism and canon (Rhoades & Valadez, 1966). Canon is the traditional knowledge that is produced by White European males and is superior to the knowledge of other populations (Rhoades & Valadez). Tierney (2002) refers to this as “cultural imperialism” (p. 598). Canon knowledge involves “value judgments about the quality or aesthetics of specific works, ideas, ways of knowing, and forms of knowledge” (Rhoades & Valadez, p. 7). Therefore, the canon is believed as the appropriate knowledge to be acquired by all educated people in a society. For this reason the canon as a form of knowledge suppresses border knowledge or knowledge outside the cultural mainstream. As a result the canon would deem border knowledge, as a form of cultural capital, unworthy of exchange in mainstream educational settings (Rhoades & Valadez). The goal

of multiculturalism is to create educational institutions that authenticate cultural identities and border knowledge, and at the same time, “build educational opportunities for culturally diverse students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in mainstream society” (Rhoades & Valadez, p. 107). It is because culture exists in every social context and for each student, that it plays a role in the way students function and make sense of the world.

The traditional American mainstream culture resists different ways of being in the world. Additionally educational institutions have traditionally and systematically barred from academic study any ethnicity foreign to the dominant culture (Pradl, 2002). As a result, members of non-dominant cultures have little opportunity to develop the kind of confidence that makes it possible to venture into mainstream society. For this reason the High School Puente Project teaches cultural and social capital inside the classroom. However, Salinas and Reyes (2004) state a need to develop an awareness and alternative to mainstream educational structures and practices that clash with the lives and cultures of Latina/o students. Sogunro (2001) concurs with the previous researchers, recognizing the essence of multicultural education while struggling on how best to teach multiculturalism to reflect cultural diversity.

The transformation to multicultural institutions requires a shift from cultural deficit thinking to cultural sensitive thinking. Ornelas and Solorzano (2004) confirm what is termed cultural deficit thinking—the perception that Latina/o families do not value or place enough emphasis on education. The authors report that cultural deficit thinking allows schools to shift the accountability of educational attainment from to school to the individual and their family. In turn this kind of thinking becomes the foundations for

policy recommendations, legislation, and school practices (Ornelas & Solorzano; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

Cultural deficit thinking also places value on the assimilation of Latina/o students into the educational system (Rolon, 2002/2003; St-Hilaire, 2002). This is evidenced by the academic endorsement of monolingualism and the decline of bilingual education. The deficit model accuses the Spanish language and Latina/o culture as interfering or being less than English. A culturally sensitive model views the Spanish language and Latina/o culture as a positive foundation that is a resource in the teaching and learning process (Grant & Wong, 2004). Paul (2003) and Villenas and Deyhle (1999) confirm these findings.

Bilingual and bicultural Latina/o students are often portrayed as hard working and having high aspirations for a good life (Vilene & Deyhle, 1999). However, St-Hilaire (2002) states that Latina/o students become acculturated, they are more likely to choose lower levels of education. In contrast St-Hilaire states Latino students who maintain fluency in Spanish while acquiring or maintaining fluency in English aspire to and expect greater educational opportunities for themselves. This confirms Loza (2003) who states the success of pre-collegiate programs hinges on the program's ability to affirm the Latina/o culture and identity rather than ignoring or rejecting it. Loza (2003) goes one step further and states that the absence of a cultural component in an early intervention program would render a program irrelevant to the students and their families. Rolon (2002/2003) suggests a culturally sensitive approach that views Latina/o students as having bilingual and bicultural skills, and if developed would enhance the student's

capacity to positively respond to their communities and their place in the expanding global economy.

The Role of Parents and Families in Pre-collegiate Programs

A 1999 survey revealed that 70% of pre-collegiate programs report a parental involvement component. However, parents were required to participate in only one-third of these programs (Perna & Titus, 2005). Perna and Titus confirm research by Diversi and Necham (2005), Jose-Kampfner and Aparico (1998), Olivos (2004), and Torrez (2004) that links parental involvement as a critical ingredient to increasing the number of students aspiring to enroll in postsecondary institutions. Parental understanding of academic standards facilitates how postsecondary preparation is supported for Latina/o students. Parental navigation of school systems examines the research surrounding the disconnect that Latina/o parents experience regarding the available information they receive when academically preparing their children for postsecondary institutions.

Parental understanding of academic standards. The data examining the effect of the parental level of enthusiasm supporting college enrollment of their children appears at first glance contradictory. Torrez (2004) reports that 75% of the Latina/o parents surveyed reported a strong desire to see their children graduate from high school and continue to postsecondary institutions. Despite these high expectations only 10% of surveyed parents reported having a student who was actively enrolling in a four-year institution and none of these parents reported that they expected their children to be enrolled in postsecondary institutions upon high school graduation (Torrez). Fry (2002) reports that more than 10%, or nearly 1.2 million, Latina/o high school graduates enter postsecondary institutions. This is the starting point for further investigation. Jose-

Kampfner and Aparicio (1998), Olivos (2004), and Torrez suggest the problem could stem from two separate elements. First, there is a lack of parental understanding of how high schools classify students for college preparation. Second, there may be little understanding of the need for Latina/o parents to become actively engaged in advocacy roles for their children's curricular paths at schools. I will explore each of these elements.

Understanding the parental perspectives of academic standards is important. Based on a survey by Torrez (2004) Latina/o parents indicate they do understand the importance of education. This supports Olivos (2004) who reaffirms the importance of the home environment as a proactive means of promoting social, cognitive, and academic development. Despite high educational expectations, parents are frequently unaware of the academic input needed in order to be an advocate for their child at the middle and high school levels. Similarly Diversi and Necham (2005) and Torrez report Latina/o parents trust secondary school systems to guide their children through a curriculum that would ensure their children's eligibility for admissions into postsecondary institutions. Because of this, many parents are under the impression that their children are being prepared for college when, in fact, their children are placed in a high school curriculum that does not meet the prerequisites required for entrance to many postsecondary institutions. Such interactions between parents and schools result in building a negative social capital for families who feel alienated and marginalized because of the perceived betrayal (Bryan, 2005). This negative social capital is confirmed by Romo (2004), who reports that while some parents pass on middle-class cultural capital, others pass it on with the symbolic violence of exclusion, marginalization, and classism. While many parents are in contact with the school's faculty and counselors, Bohon et al. (2005) and

Torrez state Latina/o parents are generally not getting sufficient information regarding adequate academic preparedness for postsecondary education. Given the lack of authentic participation in the educational system by Latina/o parents, these parents instead rely on the decisions made by the school's faculty and counselors. So while it is easy to confuse lack of participation with apathy, Bohon et al. and Torrez discredit this first glance perception. Deeply rooted in the lack of participation by Latina/o parents is the continued and problematic states of "belonging" and "not belonging" (Elenes, 1997).

Parental advocacy roles are critical in the academic success of children. Although parents are highly motivated to see their children succeed academically, they do not know what interventions are necessary. Bohon et al. (2005) and Torrez (2004) establish that many Latina/o parents do not understand the importance of being an advocate in guiding their children through a high school curriculum necessary to ensure their child's eligibility for postsecondary institutions. Many students are placed in curriculum tracks which would make it less likely they would go to college, and there is little communication between the school staff and the parents that these curriculum choices have been made for their children. Torrez agrees, concluding that bad counseling and low parental advocacy are two factors contributing to the low college-going rates for Latinas/os.

Parental involvement often results in higher academic achievement for their children. Torrez (2004) establishes that parents with high participation at their child's high school are more successful at navigating a curriculum that puts their children into postsecondary institutions. Olivos (2004) confirms Torrez by suggesting efforts to critically engage ideologies, policies, and practices that link collaborative relationships

between high schools and parents. Olivos and Torrez conclude by recommending additional research on effective policies that would provide the necessary academic information to Latina/o parents.

Tierney (2002) examines how research has interpreted the family's role in preparing a student for college. Tierney shows that a significant discrepancy existed between what researchers say should be done, and what is actually done. For instance, research supported the hypothesis that parental and family involvement increases the chances that low-income students gain entrance to college, yet the practice of family participation in pre-collegiate programs is unclear and inconsistent (Bryan, 2005; Tierney). In analyzing Tierney's (2002) research there are two specific areas where additional research would be helpful in clarifying ideas and defining topics. The author recognizes problematic research defining the success of students in pre-college programs ranging from "dependent on parental involvement" to the "presence of strong parental influence was a major determinant for students preparing themselves for college attendance" (p. 591). Tierney also recognizes equally robust literature that points out the importance of concentrating on academic skills. Despite the fact that pre-college programs have been developing for many years, there remains a need for additional research (Tierney).

Bryan (2005) states parents and family members frequently emerge empowered by the process of participation in high schools partnerships. These partnerships provide parents with a way to gain skills, knowledge, and confidence that help their children in the educational process. As a result Latina/o families, their schools, and communities are able to build partnerships and networks of trust or social capital. This closes the gap

between home and school cultures (Bryan, 2005). While researchers (Diversi & Necham; Perna & Titus; Jose-Kampfner & Aparico, 1998; Olivos, 2004; Torrez, 2004) have confirmed the broad importance of family involvement in pre-collegiate programs, Tierney (2002) states little is known about the specific activities. Tierney has challenged researchers to move beyond the broad statement of family involvement in pre-college programs, and investigate specific family involvement activities. Additionally, Tierney recommends practitioners develop an evaluative framework to prioritize family involvement activities to ensure that program activities achieve their goals.

In keeping with the Bryan's (2005) recommendations to empower parents, Mitchell, James, Essig, and Shipp (2003) recommend hiring parent liaisons from the Latina/o community. The tasks of parent liaisons are to increase parent involvement and advocacy at the school, provide information about project activities and school events, and promote postsecondary awareness and readiness. Additionally these parent liaisons become the parent's resource at both the school and district levels resulting in stronger partnerships.

Parental navigation of school systems. It is sometimes alleged that Latina/o parents don't care about their children's education nor are they interested in participating in the educational process (Olivos, 2004; Torrez, 2004). This absence of parents in the educational process is also viewed as indifference or incompetence; Olivos argues a contrary view. Olivos argues the absence of Latina/o parents in the schools is a demonstration of resistance and a defense mechanism against oppression and humiliation. Deeply rooted in this struggle are the conflicting interests and assumptions on the part of the school system that preclude the success of Latina/o students and the authentic

participation of their parents. In reality, parents lack opportunities to develop a more sophisticated political and critical consciousness that will allow them to increase their awareness of the social, economic, and historic framework under which the educational injustice occurs (Olivos). What Torrez refers to as a “disconnect” (§ 21) regarding accessibility to information, Olivos refers to as a “knowledge void” (§ 42).

Diversi & Necham (2005) confirm the research of Olivos (2004) and Torrez (2004), stating that Latina/o parents expect the school to be the sole authority and responsible for the education of students. Meanwhile the parents are unaware that the school expects a significant level of parental involvement. Because neither party is aware of the other’s conceptualization of the school’s role, and with these conceptualizations being so opposed, Latina/o students are forced to navigate the educational system without informed adult guidance.

The Latinas/os strong commitment to family, work, and education is complex. While Latina/o parents advocate postsecondary educational goals for their children, the high occurrences of part-time employment have adverse consequences on all levels of degree completion. Fry (2004) documented a high number of Latina/o youths who work in addition to being enrolled in postsecondary institutions. This trend is predominantly true in immigrant households where acceptable household incomes are a combination of the earnings of several workers earning poverty-level wages. Often foreign born Latina/o youth have come to the U.S. for work rather than education. The employment patterns of immigrant youths who came to the U.S. as adolescents are notably different than U.S. born Latina/o youths. Statistics verify that U.S. born Latinas/os 16-19 years old are four times more likely to be in school and not working than their immigrant peers (Fry, 2002).

This is an important fact when one considers that the U.S. Department of Education considers part-time enrollment to be a “risk factor” for dropping out of postsecondary education prior to the completion of a baccalaureate degree (Fry). Fry’s research indicates the complexity of the family involvement that determines a high school student’s ability to enroll in postsecondary education.

School policies also make it difficult for Latina/o student and family participation, and act as structural barriers (Tierney, 2002). Tierney states structural barriers come from three fronts. One barrier is the economic requirements of the family. Attending parent-teacher conferences and other meetings are secondary to work schedules. The second barrier is that no one is certain about what advice to provide to the Latina/o families. While parents look to teachers for educational advice, teachers are unsure of what educational focus to provide. The third barrier is the language barrier. When Spanish is the primary language spoken in the home and the school is English intensive, Latina/o parents are reluctant to become involved. For schools that have no bilingual speakers on staff it becomes impossible for Spanish speaking family members to participate (Grant & Wong, 2004; Tierney). However, it is Grant and Wong (2004) who states parental involvement needs to go beyond providing translators. Recognizing the high correlation between parental involvement and academic success, Grant and Wong states it is imperative that parents who speak different languages and come from different racial, ethnic, and educational backgrounds become full participants and partners in the educational process of their children.

Villenas and Deyhle’s (1999) ethnographic research becomes very powerful in telling individual stories. One compelling story follows a Latino child and the family’s

unsuccessful attempt to navigate from elementary through high school. The researcher re-tells the stories of the hopes, dreams, skills, knowledge, and spirit of the child and his family. Progressively over the five years the walls of racism and the borders of literacy devastate the child's chances at school success. The researcher then steps out of her established role as a researcher and becomes the child's mentor, advocate, and friend. The researcher's new vantage point permits her to "explore the contrasts and contradictions of borders and boundaries to reveal a below-the-surface human vitality that is often ignored in traditional educational research" (Villenas & Deyhle, p. 415). This portrayal illustrates the xenophobia or intolerance that is evident in the range of monolingualism and monoculturalism policies that exist in our schools and society. Paul (2003) goes one step further, cautioning that policies and body counts that declare a student population as diverse without authentically transforming the institution into a multi-cultural environment rarely result in any resolution towards providing an equitable education for Latina/o students beyond a superficial level.

Critical Race Theory

The roots of Critical Race Theory (CRT) are in critical legal studies and were developed in response to the legal system's perpetuation of racism (Bergerson, 2003). CRT brings race and racism to the center. Bringing racism to the center means not having to explain that racism exists. Behind the CRT is the fact that racism persists because policies and structures perpetuate the dominance of White privilege (Bergerson). As a result CRT provides a framework to study marginalized populations and to discuss educational discriminations that might otherwise go unnoticed (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002).

The CRT literature provides a lens to evaluate educational policies and structures. Within the CRT is a supplemental theory, the Latino/Latina Critical Theory (LatCrit). The CRT lens is used by researchers to evaluate the barriers that are widespread in educational institutions and how the CRT lens examines parental involvement in schools.

Each researcher defines CRT in relationship to his or her own particular research. For Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) CRT consists of “basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies that seek to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain, subordinate, and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (¶8). These authors use the CRT framework to evaluate access and enrollment in advanced placement courses. Consequently, social class becomes a powerful filter that defines who succeeds and who does not (Romo, 2004). Hytten and Adkins (2001) and Jose-Kampfner and Aparico (1998) examine how CRT, and the pedagogy of Whiteness, disrupts the educational practices and blames the victim for his or her cultural defects. Proweller (1999) asked that CRT researchers become instrumental in expanding the understanding of the radicalizing of White identity. These authors point to CRT as a framework to better understand why the goal of equity has remained so elusive.

Latino/Latina Critical Theory. Within the framework of CRT is the LatCrit. Although Latina/o students are holders and creators of knowledge, their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are marginalized, devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted from formal educational settings (Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2002). LatCrit is an emerging field of legal scholarship that gives authority to Latinas/os as holders and creators of knowledge (Villalpando, 2003). LatCrit is supplementary to CRT, and like

CRT acknowledges that “race and racism are imbedded in the structures, discourses, and policies” that influence the practices and policies of educational institutions (Villalpando, p. 623). Together CRT and LatCrit in educational research define a framework that challenges the dominant discourses on race, gender, and class. This happens when the researcher asks the question “how complete of a picture can we get about Latina/Latino education if we rely only on the dominant (school) discourse” (Fernandez, 2002, p. 46)?

The message that Latina/o students are not holders and creators of knowledge continues to influence educational institutions at all levels. Educational institutions continue to relay this message through their policies and practices. At the elementary and secondary educational levels Latina/o attend predominantly overcrowded and underfinanced schools. At the secondary level Latina/o students are frequently recipients of low teacher expectations and consequently tracked into low level and out of advanced placement courses (Auerbach, 2002; Bernal, 2002; Brandon, 2003; Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). At postsecondary institutions Latina/o students get the same message that they are not holders and creators of knowledge when they are not recruited at the same rate as non-Latina/o Whites for 4-year postsecondary institutions (Dumas-Hines, Cochran, & Williams, 2001) and when they are counseled into vocations rather than careers (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004). CRT and LatCrit challenge researchers to rethink the traditional notion of what counts as knowledge.

Through LatCrit researchers are challenged to consider the lives of all Latina/o students more seriously, questioning how the policies, tracking, curriculum, and other educational and social structures change the lives and educational chances of these students. It is Fernandez (2002) who urges researchers to ask important questions:

What of those young people who didn't "succeed"? The ones who didn't go to college or who didn't even graduate, or the ones who did graduate but are barely literate? Where are they and what have their lives been like since they left high school? What are their prospects for the future (p. 60)?

Fernandez acknowledges these questions are repeatedly left unanswered in educational research.

Barriers in educational institutions. Research offers insights into how barriers limit or end educational pursuits throughout the educational process. Bergerson (2003) uses CRT as a framework for educational researchers to view racism in education by centering on issues of race and challenging dominant views in both research and practice. Bergerson identifies structural areas that are problematic when viewed with a CRT lens: neutrality, merit, and colorblindness arguments. "Neutrality is a problem because whites consider whiteness the norm; neutrality is perceived as equivalent to whiteness" (Bergerson, p. 53). Because Whiteness is considered the norm in educational institutions, non-Latina/o Whites are frequently not aware of their own Whiteness and their perpetuation of racial dominance (Brandon, 2003; Rolon, 2002/2003). This illusion seduces non-Latina/o Whites to consider themselves colorblind.

Colorblindness is another problematic concept for critical race theorists. Bergerson (2003) reports non-Latina/o Whites frequently cannot practice true colorblindness. For instance, a classroom teacher may say she treats all students equal regardless of their race while referring to students of color as slow learners or educationally disadvantaged. Villenas and Deyhle (1999) reported colorblindness in the dismantling of bilingual education programs. The author uses the lens of CRT to

understand how dismantling bilingual educational programs strengthens non-Latina/o White cultural and linguistic supremacy and maintains the subordination of Latinas/os. Here the critical race theorist contends colorblindness allows racism to persist in subtle ways (Beregerson; Brandon, 2003). Although Roma (2004) argues that minimizing a Latina/o student's language and culture actually has a subtractive effect on their school experience, Americanization continues to be the goal for many pre-collegiate programs aimed at helping Latina/o students (Grant & Wong, 2004).

Merit is another CRT problematic idea, announcing that anyone who works hard enough can achieve success. The reality is the middle and upper class population establishes the rules for who gets what by establishing the social and cultural capital needed to succeed. Because the dominant culture has the power to set the standards for meritocracy, the dominant culture is depicted as normal (Loza, 2003). Affirmative action is just one casualty of the high value placed on merit. Because merit has been highly valued in the educational system it is not easy to convince a non-Latina/o White privileged person that people of color are "systematically excluded from opportunities to succeed, by individual racism as well as racist structures and institutions" (Bergerson, 2003, p. 53). When Latinas/os are continually and systematically barred from educational opportunities, it becomes clear that although merit is championed, it operates under the burden of racism and continues to marginalize underrepresented population.

Citizenship status is a barrier for many Latina/o students currently enrolled in the U.S educational systems. Bohnon, et al. (2005) reports what Latina/o students referred to as "the Big Lie" phenomenon. Specifically, "the Big Lie" refers to teachers encouraging continued education from kindergarten thorough high school for undocumented Latina/o

students who know that good grades will not be what determine their educational limits. For the many undocumented Latina/o students “the Big Lie” also exists in federally funded pre-collegiate programs that deny them access based on their citizenship status.

Enrollment in remedial courses is also a barrier faced unknowingly by Latina/o students. Vilene and Deyhle (1999) probe what happens when Latina/o families encountered U.S. schools through a CRT lens. The authors document the “incessant ways in which schools fail to capitalize on the culture, knowledge, and language of these families and the ways in which Latino/a youth are systematically being tracked into low-level classes and by receiving remedial type instruction” (Vilene & Deyhle, p. 441). This perceived discrimination on the part of the school staff results in Latina/o parents feeling resentful and helpless to complain or intervene. This becomes more insidious when the school staff understands that low-income Latina/o parents commonly trust the schools to know what is right for their children. For Latinas/os this results in perpetuating the belief that schools are outside the scope of their influence (Vilene & Deyhle). Additionally, Lott (2003) reports that Latina/o parents fear retaliation from teachers against their children if they became too vocal or hypersensitive. Auerbach (2002) confirmed this disparity between family and school culture. With the counselors as gatekeepers, Latina/o parents with low educational backgrounds experience the power differential with counselors as a sense of inferiority, shame, embarrassment, and helplessness. These findings frequently are reported in other studies as well (Adelman, 1997; Brandon, 2003; Fry, 2002; Perez & Pinzon, 1997).

For Latina/o students tracked into low-level or remedial classes the future becomes very prophetic. Villenas and Deyhle (1999) suggested the high drop-out rate of

35% by Latina/o high school students is misleading. For the Latina/o student who does graduate from high school it becomes misleading to consider that their high school diploma leaves them prepared for either the job market or postsecondary education (Berry, 2003; Villenas & Deyhle). As a result, students who have been tracked into low-level classes during high school graduate with low-level academic and job skills. This makes their high school diploma worthless in terms of their competitiveness in the job market or application to postsecondary institutions. Bohon et al. (2002) confirm the consequences of low level tracking when they report there is little difference in available jobs for those with and without high school diplomas. The end result of low level tracking is Latina/o students are not prepared for success in postsecondary institutions or the job market.

While not being placed in remedial classes is one barrier, not being enrolled in advanced placement (AP) courses becomes yet another barrier. Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) report that in the 2001-2002 academic year, Latina/o students represented 66% of the Los Angeles Unified School District but comprised 49% of AP enrollment. Statistics also revealed that while Latinas/os comprised 38% of California's high schools only 16% of the Latina/o students were enrolled in the top 50 high schools (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). The authors describe the structure and practice that produces unequal representation in access and enrollment in AP courses as "schools within schools" (Auerbach, 2002; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). The negative consequences of Latina/o unequal representation in advanced placement courses have far-reaching and subtle implications. The unequal representation of Latina/o students in AP classes is consistent with the end results of low levels of educational attainment. Loza

(2003) and Solorzano and Ornelas (2002) confirm the underrepresentation of Latinas/os in AP classes determining the student's ineligibility for merit-based schools.

Parents also experience barriers in the educational system. Villenas and Deyhle (1999) confirm that racism is evidenced in the pervasive ways in which schools fail students. The authors contend that CRT provides a tool to understand how the subordination and marginalization of minorities are created and maintained in the U.S. (Villenas & Deyhle). Villenas and Deyhle states the following:

The voices of Latino parents reveal how despite the school rhetoric of parent involvement, parents are really 'keep out' of schools by the negative ways in which they are treated, by insensitive bureaucratic requirements, and by the ways in which the school-centered parent involvement programs disregard Latino knowledge and cultural bases. (p. 413).

These findings are also echoed by Auerbach's (2002) narrative voices of parents who face institutional barriers of discriminatory tracking and have fewer resources for overcoming them. This CRT lens provides a framework for studying policies and structures that perpetuate racism in partnerships between educational institutions, Latina/o families, and their communities.

Role of Mentors in Pre-collegiate Programs

The role of mentors in pre-collegiate programs is viewed from a partnership and a leadership perspective. Mentoring partnerships involve many participants—the mentors and students, their parents, and the communities. Mentoring partnerships are also documented between secondary and postsecondary students. Finally, mentoring is examined within a leadership program. All these programs incorporate cultural integrity

in the foundation of the program. Culturally adapted programs incorporate the values and traditions of the target population while maintaining the basic outlook of the majority population. This underscores the value of culturally specific programs that are developed specifically for those populations (Tierney, 2002).

Mentoring partnerships. Barron-McKeagney et al. (2001) sought to determine whether bicultural competence could be fostered by programs that provide long term mentoring to students and their families. This particular program focused on a mentoring partnership between postsecondary institutions and communities serving bicultural children. The primary goals of the mentoring program are twofold. The first goal was to increase the effective participation of the children in a variety of positive community activities, including school life. The second goal was to increase the participation of parents in community services with the intention to improve their parenting abilities (Barron-McKeagney et. al, 2001). This research yielded two major findings. First, mentored children and their mothers had a greater involvement in educational programs but not in social and recreational activities. Second, mentored children showed a positive increase in social skills. This research underscores the research by Moreno (2002) that emphasizes the importance of mentoring that focused on social skills and cultural capital. Salinas and Reyes (2004) examine the role of pre-collegiate programs focusing on equity, access, and respect for the Latina/o community's cultural and linguistic diversity. The results of these studies highlight the complexity of how the lives of Latina/o students are reflected in their school experiences. Negotiating the complexity of how social skills and cultural capital can be incorporated into the mentoring process is becoming more critical in recent research.

Leadership programs. Diversi and Mecham (2005) report on an after school program located in a small northern Utah town. This program began as a result of the sudden and rapid influx of Latina/o immigrants into the area. Most immigrant youths came from families where the adults worked long hard hours, lacked English proficiency, and did not understand the American shared educational system between parent and school (Bloomberg, et al., 2003; Diversi & Mecham, 2005). The purpose of the program was to create an empowering relationship with the Latina/o youths in the school who were struggling with academic and behavior issues. More pragmatically the program hoped to create a relationship between the students and mentors that facilitated the students to see school as a workable and meaningful option for their future (Diversi & Mecham).

The after school program began with 50 eighth- and ninth-grade Latina/o students and 20 non-Latina/o White mentors. Three of the mentors were male and the remaining 18 mentors were females. The mentors were college students recruited from the local state university and had an interest in community service. The mentors were trained in immigration, adolescent development, acculturation, and ethnicity. The high school students were invited to participate two times a week for one and a half hours in an after school program. During this time mentors and students worked on homework, tests, school projects, and acculturation issues with a focus on increasing students' biculturalism awareness. Additionally, informal activities outside school exposed students to unfamiliar parts of the mainstream community which included visits to parks and festivals, and camping (Diversi & Mecham, 2005).

The program experiences were reported by students, mentors, and coordinators. From the students' perspective the after-school program revolved around three basic themes. The first, the students felt they were more successful at completing their homework assignments. Second, the students enjoyed the time with the mentors and their peers. Third, the students were positively influenced by the mentors. The students felt respected by the mentors and the after school program provided a safe haven (Diversi & Mecham, 2005).

From the mentors' perspective they were able to establish trusting relationships across age, social class, and cultural differences. The mentors also experienced tension. The tensions centered on the notion of empowerment versus enabling the students. Mentors considered homework paramount and this became the basis for tensions. Frequently the mentors found themselves doing too much of the homework, which represented 60 to 80% of a student's grade, when students were not academically ready to perform the homework tasks. The success of program was based on the improved academic achievement so homework and grades were important to the mentors (Diversi & Mecham, 2005).

The coordinators viewed the program as successful. They felt the ultimate purpose of keeping the students engaged in school happened. Although the coordinators recognized the tensions reported by the mentors, the coordinators considered the improved grades of the students a result of a safe and friendly environment fostered by the mentors. In retrospect the mentors and program coordinator recognized that improved student grades did little to address the larger systemic problem of moving students along the grades regardless of their level of subject specific knowledge (Diversi & Mecham,

2005). The program was most successful in addressing the educational isolation that immigrant youth often find themselves in resulting in disconnect of education (Diversi & Mecham).

Initial research indicated the value of culturally specific youth development programs that positively impact a significant number of participants. Diversi and Mecham's (2005) research is confirmed by Bloomberg et al. (2003) who report positive changes in Latina/o students who participated in a high school leadership program. The student selection process for the program was based on a self-selection. All Latina/o youth were invited to apply; however the study acknowledged that the impact of the self-selection process could exclude those at highest risk for poor developmental outcomes. This program used mentors to improve social and leadership skills through community projects; workshops exploring career options, financial aid, cultural capital, and high risk activities; and visits to postsecondary institutions. Success was measured by graduation rates. Latina/o students who participated in the leadership program had a 73% graduation rate compared to 47.2% for Latina/o students in the same state over the same time period. Additionally participating Latina/o students reported positive changes in their social behavior and postsecondary aspirations. These findings also were confirmed by researchers Bloomberg et al. (2003) who also examine mentor programs that build leadership skills based on cultural integrity.

Summary of Characteristics of Pre-collegiate Programs

Summarizing the characteristics of pre-collegiate programs begins by synthesizing the role of parents and families in pre-collegiate programs. Seventy percent of pre-collegiate programs report some version of parental involvement (Perna & Titus,

2005). Parental and family participation becomes important for two reasons. First, while Latina/o parents have high educational expectations for their children, they frequently are unsure of how to be advocates for their children in educational systems. Torrez (2004) states parents who participated in their children's schools are more likely to gain an understanding of the curriculum required for entrance into postsecondary institutions. Although research supports parental and family participation in pre-collegiate programs, specific research defining what the parental and family participation should look like remains unclear (Bryan, 2005; Tierney, 2002). Second, authentic navigation of school systems is problematic for Latina/o parents. The Latina/o *familia* have a great respect for the educational process in their native countries. As a result Latina/o parents trust schools to prepare their children for postsecondary institutions without parental interference. In reality, the policy and structural barriers in school systems prevent Latina/o parents from developing the appropriate awareness of the social, economic, and historic structure of educational systems that would let them know what the schools considered an appropriate level of involvement (Olivos, 2004; Torrez, 2004). Paul (2003) states that rather than opening up the educational processes to include Latinas/os, school policies and structures should authentically be transformed to create multicultural school environments.

Families are the primary originators of cultural and social capital. Without cultural capital students and their families are unacquainted with the educational system, how it works, and how to gain access to the appropriate knowledge. Cultural capital is linked strongly to social capital. Social capital is expressed as a familiarity with and access to supportive social networks that foster opportunity (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). Translated this means that social capital is a bridging and bonding activity between

people. Social capital can be gained within the Latina/o community as well as from outside the Latina/o community. In order for Latina/o families and students to function in educational institutions they must learn the dominant culture while living in their own culture. This necessitates living between two cultures, or living in the borderlands. Currently schools seek to assimilate Latinas/os into the dominant culture (Elenes, 1997). This display of cultural deficit thinking has the effect of being hostile to the Latina/o culture (Harbour, et al., 2003). Loza (2003) reports that not acknowledging cultural capital in pre-collegiate programs would make the program irrelevant to students and their families. However, research verifies the uncertainty of how and to what extent cultural capital should be embedded in pre-collegiate programs.

Critical race theory offered new insights into the educational successes and failures of Latina/o students within the framework of a marginalized population. The underlying presumption in CRT is that racism exists. Within the framework of CRT is LatCrit. LatCrit conveys the message that Latina/o students are not creators or holders of knowledge. Evidence of LatCrit exists when Latina/o histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are marginalized, devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted from educational settings. Bergerson (2003) uses CRT to identify the three arguments of neutrality, colorblindness, and merit that are problematic when viewed with a CRT lens. The CRT lens also is useful when looking at barriers in citizenship status, and enrollment in remedial and AP courses.

Role of mentors in pre-collegiate programs are viewed from both a partnership and a leadership perspective. Mentoring partnerships focused on facilitating cultural capital and social skills. Barron-McKeagney et al. (2001), Moreno (2002), and Salinas

and Reyes (2004) confirm the intricacies of teaching cultural capital and social skills in different programs. Pre-collegiate programs based on mentoring from a leadership perspective also experience mixed results in analyzing the successes of the program. As a result the complexity and success of the mentoring role remains one of the most elusive roles in pre-collegiate programs.

High School Puente Project

This section examines the beginnings of the Puente Project in the community college and the evolution of the Puente Project in high schools including identifying the target population and curriculum. I then review the future of the Puente Project.

Beginnings of the Puente Project in the Community College

The Puente Project began in 1981 at Chabot Community College in Hayward, California, to address the problem of the low transfer rate of Latina/o students from 2-year to 4-year postsecondary institutions in California (Laden, 1999). Beginning as a community college program, the Puente Project was developed by Galaviz and McGrath. Galaviz was an instructor and counselor at the Chabot Community College where he developed the Puente concept. From his own personal and professional background Galaviz saw Latina/o students being counseled out of programs, and without any plan or understanding of the college structure enrolled in random courses (Grubb, Laura & Valdez, 2002). McGrath was an English instructor at the same community college. She observed the slow progress of Latinas/os whose primary language was Spanish in her English classes. Together Galaviz and McGrath developed the community college Puente Project. This was the first program that was culture specific and designed with academic

and cultural goals in mind (Laden, 1999). The target audience was Latina/o students who were at-risk academically in their first year at the community college.

This community college Puente Project differentiated itself from other programs by emphasizing a culturally specific approach bridging the three components of writing, counseling, and mentoring (Laden, 1999). The first emphasis was a year of intensive freshman English that focused on writing and reading, and spotlighting Latina/o cultural experiences and identity. The second emphasis was the presence of counselors in the English classroom. These counselors had first hand knowledge of the cultural and academic challenges that students faced in the community college environment. The third aspect was the use of mentors from the Latina/o professional and academic community (Laden, 1999).

The Puente Project at the community level has been successful in increasing retention and transfer rates. The Puente Project reports a 97% retention rate in California community colleges (Laden, 1999). Forty-eight percent of all students who have completed the Puente Program transferred to a 4-year institution within 3 years. To put this statistic in perspective, less than 7% of non-Puente students transferred to 4-year institutions within the same time period (Laden, 1999). Given these successes the Puente Project is making a difference in student persistence and a commitment to completing a baccalaureate degree.

Evolution of the Puente Project in High Schools

“The best indicator of success is how well a program model can be replicated with a different population” (Laden, 1999, ¶47). In the Fall of 1993, the Puente Project was broadened to include high schools. The same designers of the community college Puente

Project model designed the High School Puente Project. Similar to the community college curriculum, the High School Puente Project emphasizes three major components: instruction in writing and literature, college preparatory counseling, and mentoring (Gándara & Moreno, 2002).

The High School Puente Project, or the pre-collegiate program, was designed to increase the number of Latina/o students who successfully matriculate from high schools into postsecondary institutions. Although the Puente Project is open to all students, it remains of special interest to Latinas/os (Hagedorn & Capeda, 2004). Unlike TRIO programs focusing on low-income US citizens, the Puente Project recognizes that their participants might have questionable immigration status (Hagedorn & Capeda, 2004). The pilot program began with seven high schools in five California school districts (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). Preliminary data reveal that with modifications, replication of the Puente Project to a high school model is effective (Laden, 1999). For example, in the 1993 Puente cohort 80% of high school participants graduated from high school as compared with 38% of non-Puente students (Laden, 1999).

Target population of the High School Puente Project. The target population for the High School Puente program is nonimmigrant English speaking Latina/o students as they enter the high school (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). This population accounts for approximately two-thirds of 9th-grade Latina/o students in California who are at-risk for not completing high school, ineligible for admissions to postsecondary institutions, and failing to complete a baccalaureate degree. Student selection is purposeful. The main criterion is students must “demonstrate a sincere desire to improve or excel in school and who ‘buy into’ a college-preparatory ideology” (Gándara & Moreno, 2002, p. 469).

Students are nominated by teachers and counselors from the middle schools, and then are selected based on four categories of effort and achievement (Gándara & Moreno, 2002).

Category 1 students are high achievers with good grades, good test scores, and evidence of good effort. Category 2 students are high potential and have high grades, high test scores, and but lower motivation than Category 1. Category 3 students are those with high effort but low grades. Finally, Category 4 students have low performance as well as low effort but are recommended by teachers or counselor as capable of a higher performance (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). The single academic criterion for admittance is that the students do not score lower than three years below grade level in reading. Parents are required to attend an orientation interview and sign an agreement to support the academic activities of their children and attend the required meetings. Students sign an agreement to complete the 4-year program (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). The parent and community involvement underscores the philosophy of Puente model that student success requires the participation of the family and the community.

Puente Project Curriculum

Although the Puente founders did not realize it at the time, the approach they developed would later be identified by researchers to be successful to removing barriers to postsecondary education. So while the major underpinnings of the High School Puente Project are still intact, the Puente Project has continued to evolve. By 2002 Cooper (2002) identified the five main characteristics that are present in High School Puente Projects: family involvement, culturally enriched teaching, counseling, mentoring, and support of college-bound peers.

Instruction in writing and literature. The curricular focus of the Puente program is to develop critical thinking and writing skills with an emphasis on Latina/o literature. The objective is to strengthen the cultural identity of the students with the intent that they feel empowered by their heritage and language. This instruction is provided for 9th- and 10th-grade students. This instruction happens during the school year as well as during a summer program. Research confirms that Latina/o students benefit by increased test scores and improved familiarity to mainstream writing skills (Gándara & Moreno, 2002).

The curriculum also includes community based folklore and assignments that involved mentors, parents, and other family members (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). This creates a classroom environment that honors the identity of Latinas/os. Research by Pradl (2002) reports that treating Latina/o identity and concerns separate, or outside the classroom, marginalizes these students. This has the effect of silencing Latinas/os and encourages them to withdraw “in ways that allow their own behaviors, not the schools’ failure, to be labeled as the cause of the problem” (Pradl, 2002, p. 525). So what appears to the schools’ staff as disinterested in the educational process is viewed by the Latinas/os as having their language and culture marginalized.

College preparatory counseling. The counseling component is considered the heart of the Puente program (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). The counselor’s role in the Puente program has continued to develop since its inception. Research by Grubb et al. (2002) outlines the multiple counselor roles. One role is emphasizing the importance of academic preparation for college, particularly entrance requirements for California colleges and universities. The second role is collaborating with parents in creating a supportive environment that encourages their children to go to college. The third role is

moving the freshman students to a mindset of taking a high school curriculum that prepares them for college (Grubb et al, 2002). Family and student involvement in the commitment to postsecondary education is essential.

Ensuring student placement in college preparatory classes and providing a wide range of information concerning postsecondary institutions is also the responsibility of the counselor. At some institutions the counselor facilitates 11th- and 12th-grade students to participate in credit classes at the local community college (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). The author reported that the “lack of instrumental knowledge—knowing what they needed to do to be eligible for 4-year colleges and universities” was the greatest obstacle to postsecondary institutions (Gándara & Moreno, 2002, p. 466).

Research by Grubb, Lara, and Valdez (2002) analyzes the diverse role of counselors in the High School Puente program. Unlike the traditional counseling role in schools, the Puente counselors arrange group meetings with students. The content of these meetings is typically what students need to know about college. Counselors also cooperate with English teachers, set up meetings with parents, and arrange field trips to colleges.

The following statistics give insights into the demographics of the counselors and the amount of counselor and student contact in the Puente Project. Conventional counselor-students ratios in the California schools have been in the range between 500:1 to 700:1 (Grubb et al., 2002). The Puente program aims at a 240:1 ratio, effectively doubling the resources in counseling. Twenty-seven of the 31 Puente counselors are Latina/o (Grubb et al., 2002).

Counselors have group sessions with their assigned Puente students to explain college requirements, to develop 4-year high school plans, to prepare them to take national college entrance exams, to provide them with information about financial aid, and to provide encouragement that keeps students on track for their high school years (Grubb et al., 2002).

The counselors also meet with parents. One goal is to teach parents about college requirements. Because *familia* is an important component, it is critical that they understand college requirements and ensure their children are taking the high school curriculum that places them ready for college. Another goal is to inform parents of the importance of letting their children go away to college (Grubb et al., 2002).

Professional and academic mentors. The primary goal of the mentor program was to expose students to opportunities they have never imagined. This mentoring component consists of Latinas/os from the community who are matched with Puente students. Mentors are encouraged to maintain relationships with students for a minimum of two years. During this time mentors meet both individually and in groups with students. Mentors are also encouraged to meet with the students' families. The role of the mentor is to serve as a guide and buddy for the students. It was hypothesized that an older guide could provide help to the Puente student in transitioning to high school and provide access to an affirming peer group (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). These activities are coordinated by a community mentor liaison provided by the Puente Program.

In 1997-1998 the mentoring component was improved by adding a peer partners program. This program pairs 9th- and 10th-grade students with 11th- or 12th-grade students. The intended outcome of peer mentoring program is to provide a structured

opportunity that allows for mentoring between students who reinforce the lessons they learned in the Puente program. This new mentoring component is the result of recent research. Recent studies have cited the importance of cultural capital and social capital (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). The authors define cultural capital as “knowledge of the system, how it works, and how to access opportunities” (p. 466). Social capital is defined as “familiarity with, and access to, supportive social networks that foster opportunity” (Gándara & Moreno, 2002, p. 466). The High School Puente Project reasons that cultural capital and social capital are held by successful mentors and to some extent by successful peers.

The mentoring component reported by Gándara and Moreno (2002) happens at many levels. First, a mentor is charged with developing a relationship with a Puente student and their families for a minimum of two years. These mentors are also charged with developing a relationship between the school and the community by making presentations to local community groups. The intended outcome of the relationships is to encourage community participation in the form of donations and other provisions for resources (Gándara & Moreno, 2002).

Future of the Puente Project

By 2003 in the *Bridge to a Better Future: A State-of-the-Program Report from the Puente Project*, it was reported that Galaviz and McGrath, the founders of the Puente Projects were exploring ways that the Puente model could be adapted and expanded to serve to the middle-school population. Twenty-three years after its beginning Puente, Spanish for “bridge,” continues to bridge one segment of education to another.

The scope and focus of the Puente Project has made it a seminal program. To date, the *Bridge to a Better Future: State-of-the-Program Report from the Puente Project* (2003) reports serving “tens of thousands of students in over 54 community colleges” (p. 2) and “over 35 high schools in California” (p. 2). The research by Gándara and Bial (2001) has equally acknowledged the rapid growth of early intervention college preparation programs in virtually all communities across the nation and confirms that minimal evaluation is done regarding how effective these programs are. Specifically Gándara & Moreno (2002) confirm there is sparse research data concerning what kinds of strategies work best under what conditions as well as with which type of students. The Puente Project staff has similarly acknowledged the need for further internal assessment and independent research (Gándara & Moreno, 2002, p. 464).

In an exploratory study titled *The Long-Term Outcomes of Puente*, Moreno (2002) confirms the need for greater research on the long-term influences of pre-college outreach programs. This research concludes with a call to increased college participation with stronger links between pre-college outreach programs and college-based support programs through the lens of access and success (p. 572). In analyzing the Puente Project, Moreno suggests three things. First, high school programs need to pay closer attention to developing stronger links to community- and/or university-based outreach programs and their high school campus support programs. Second, Puente and other similar pre-college programs need to begin introducing and providing a greater emphasis on college survival skills. To this end, college-based support programs need to consider forming stronger partnerships with pre-college programs so that when they drop off their students at the front door, someone will make sure to open the door and invite them in. And third, this

study affirms the need to better understand the limitations of pre-college programs as they work with students who have complex and challenging life situations. In the final examination of pre-collegiate program models as they presently exist, Moreno confirms that it is improbable that these programs address the social circumstances of students who find themselves marginalized economically, educationally, and socially. Yet, students report leaving an institution because of social, cultural, and/or political factors rather than for academic reasons (Moreno).

Summarizing, the pre-collegiate literature begins by recognizing the roles of education in our communities and ends with affirming the need for greater partnerships between community- and/or university-based outreach programs and high school pre-college programs. The challenge in our communities and schools is to insure genuine opportunities for higher levels of academic achievement to the rapidly growing population of Latina/o students who are destined to become the majority in the U.S.

Research reporting on pre-collegiate programs begins with TRIO programs by providing financial support to low-income students. While the many TRIO programs have provided the initial catalyst to help a specific population and need, the trend for TRIO program to be grant-based has evolved to a loan-based system, creating an opportunity gap between students from low-income and upper income families. Although TRIO program have been in existence for over 40 years, narrowing the gap for low-income Latina/o students remain an unmet goal.

The wealth of pre-collegiate characteristics underscores the promise of what pre-collegiate programs might look like in the future. However, the goal of each element is to eliminate the academic, social, and cultural barriers that impede Latina/o students'

success in postsecondary institutions. While many researchers have loosely defined the characteristics of pre-collegiate programs as (a) parental involvement as a form of cultural capital, (b) the role of parents and families in pre-collegiate programs, and (c) the role of mentors in pre-collegiate program, Critical Race Theory and the Latino/Latina Critical Theory have emerged as a lens to assess educational policies and structures. Together CRT and LatCrit offered new insights into the educational successes and failures of Latina/o students within the framework of a marginalized population.

The seminal High School Puente Project began as the Puente Project at a community college and was designed to increase the number of Latina/o students who successfully matriculated from high schools into postsecondary institutions. Comparable to the community college curriculum, the High School Puente Project emphasized (a) writing and literature, (b) college preparatory counseling, and (c) mentoring. Researchers confirm the need for greater research on the long-term influences of the pre-collegiate program. Researchers have also acknowledged the need for stronger partnerships between pre-collegiate programs and college-based support programs through the lens of access and success. It is confirmed by research that pre-collegiate programs are not addressing the social circumstances of students who find themselves marginalized economically, educationally, and socially. Research confirms that students are leaving educational institutions for social, cultural, and political reasons.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

I still have a hard time getting to a comfortable spot when I meet new people who are American. My really close friends are Latinos but now that I'm in college I got to be close friends with some of the American people there. For me that is just awesome. I'm getting to see that there's not that big of a difference. We get along so good. I gained a lot of confidence and a lot of knowledge about the American culture. That's where my confidence comes from, getting to know about the people you are around and not feeling they're aliens or something (Enrique).

Research Design and Rationale

As the fastest growing ethnic group in the nation, the success of Latinas/os is central to the United States' economic and civic health. But enrollment and graduation rates in postsecondary institutions for Latinas/os continue to lag behind the rest of the population (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002). Academic institutions acknowledge that academic preparedness is a prerequisite for a successful postsecondary experience. Equally, it is acknowledged that postsecondary preparedness happens at the K-12 grade levels (Brown et al., 2003; Cooper, 2002; Moreno, 2002; Tierney, 2002). Moreno states Latina/o students are either not applying to or are leaving postsecondary institutions for other than academic reasons.

The mission statement for the California based Puente High School pre-college program is to increase the number of educationally underrepresented students who enroll in postsecondary institutions, earn their degrees, and return to the community as leaders and mentors of future generations (The Puente Project, 2003). The Puente Project has set the standard that prepares Latinas/os at the secondary institutions for postsecondary institutions. Despite the inroads of pre-collegiate programs nation-wide, the gap between Latinas/os who held a baccalaureate degree compared to non-Latina/o Whites is the largest gap in the past 30 years (The Puente Project). It becomes increasingly critical to

identify the successful components of pre-collegiate programs that are relevant to increasing the number of Latina/o students who enroll in postsecondary institutions.

Historically pre-collegiate programs have focused on the academic preparedness of Latina/o students (Jarrell, 2004; Moreno, 2002; Reid, 2002; Stodolsky & Grossman, 2000). Recent pre-collegiate program research has re-examined and refocused programs, reporting that students leave an institution because of social, cultural, and/or political reasons rather than for academic reasons (Moreno, 2002). My purpose in this case study was to better understand how Latina and Latino students experience their pre-collegiate program and to learn whether or not they feel their experience has impacted or will impact their decision to continue their postsecondary educational pursuits.

I selected a qualitative case study approach in which I focused on a broad understanding of the social and cultural experiences of Latina/o students in a pre-collegiate program within a selected case site. A case study is effective because it arrives at a broad understanding of the groups under study (Merriam, 1998). Merriam defines the purpose of a case study in two parts. First, a case study arrives at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study. In this case, the group was Latina/o high school students in a pre-collegiate program. Second, a case study seeks to “develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process” (Merriam, p. 29). A case study is also an exploration of a bounded system “over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). A bounded system is bounded by time and place and is specific to a single program. This study focused on a single, specific pre-collegiate program. A case study includes multiple sources of information. I used interviews with students and

their families participating in a pre-collegiate program, field notes, and documents from the pre-collegiate program as my data sources.

The interviews with students and their families who have participated in a pre-collegiate program were my primary data source. The field notes included my personal observations of the interview location and my observations of the student during the interview process. The documents were used to confirm or disconfirm the student data. For example, the mentor contract document states that a mentor makes a 9 month commitment to the pre-collegiate program and meets with a group of 7-10 students after school on the school premises for a minimum of 2.5 hours. The document containing the parent and student interview questions identifies the level of support and commitment that is required from the student and family members. The Student/Parent Handbook document documents student commitment to include attending a week long, out of town summer program. These documents, and others, informed me of the intended content of the pre-collegiate program and whether students perceive these program tenets as being met.

Within the case study, I used the phenomenology approach. Phenomenology explores how people interpret everyday experiences from their perspective and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). Moustakas (1994) explains that in phenomenology there is an interweaving of participant, the conscious experience, and the phenomenon. As the researcher I gained entry into the conceptual world of my participants in an effort to understand how and what meaning they constructed around events in their lives. My gaining entry into my participants' conceptual worlds is one feature that differentiates phenomenology research from other research methods. Because

phenomenology addresses questions about experiences of a specific group of people, it is appropriate for my research. Phenomenological questions attempt to answer “what is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000, p. 269)? In keeping with the phenomenology approach, I used the interviews of students participating in a pre-collegiate program as my primary data collection source. I attempted to better understand how these Latina/o students experienced their pre-collegiate program.

I used the constant comparative method of data analysis. This required a spiral process of interviewing one participant, transcribing those data, analyzing the data by comparing new data with the emerging categories, and improving or refining the questions if necessary before returning to the interview process (Merriam, 2002). This constant comparative structure kept me zigzagging through the interviewing, transcribing, and data analysis process. This process gave me the opportunity to continually reevaluate and adjust all processes throughout my study.

The main research question asked, “How do the pre-collegiate program’s social and cultural contributions impact a student’s willingness, interest, and ability to pursue postsecondary education?”

The following sub questions also guided the inquiry.

1. What is the parental, family, and community involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?
2. What is the staff involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?

3. What are the cultural capital attributes in a pre-collegiate program that determine a Latina/o student's willingness to continue to postsecondary education?

Site and Participant Selection

The pre-collegiate program site I selected to study had initiated the program in response to a district wide growing Latina/o population. In this section I describe the admission requirements for this particular pre-collegiate program, as well as the participant selection I used for my study, the interview process, and how I collected the data.

Site Selection

The pre-collegiate program selected was established in 2003 within a rural school district that has three high schools. For the entire school district of 4969 students, the Latina/o population was 40%. The total high school population for the Spring 2006 semester was 1330 students, 31.6% of whom were Latinas/os. This school district was experiencing an increase of Latina/o students at the elementary level. The combined student population in the four elementary schools was 2090 students, 49.2% of which were Latinas/os (G. Campbell (pseudonym), School District Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, February 5, 2006). I negotiated with the director of the pre-collegiate program to conduct my study using the Latina/o students in this program.

Participant Selection for the Pre-collegiate Program

In order to qualify for admission to this particular pre-collegiate program, students were required meet a number of criteria. First, the student had to be a potential first generation college student. This meant that neither parent had a baccalaureate degree.

Second, the applicant had to aspire to a postsecondary degree, and they must be academically supported by their families. Third, the student must have had an average proficiency in English speaking and writing, and a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average for their current grade level. Maintaining a 2.5 grade point average at each grade level was required to remain in the program. High risk students were not admitted to the program. Translated, this means students who had been suspended from school for one full day were considered to have severe behavior issues for the purposes of not being admitted to the pre-collegiate program. Citizenship and immigrant status of the Latina/o students was not requested or considered in the admission process.

The process to become a participant in the pre-collegiate program began in the classroom and primarily was determined by the teachers, counselors, and the high school and middle school principals. The pre-collegiate program coordinator, Daniel (pseudonym), began by distributing a letter describing the program and the admission prerequisites to the high school and middle school teachers, counselors, and principals. The teachers, counselors, and principals were invited to nominate students whom they felt meet the initial requirements. The recruitment focus was at the 6th-grade level, where students first entered the pre-collegiate program. Students in higher grades may have been nominated and admitted if there was space available at their level in the program. These nominations were sent to the principal's office that compiled the list and provided the student profile information. The student profile documented that the nominated student met grade point average requirements and had no behavior issues. The list and profiles then were submitted to Daniel. The eligible students and their parents were invited to attend a pre-collegiate presentation. During his presentation Daniel outlined the

mission and the benefits of the program. The presentation also outlined the participants', the families', and program's responsibilities. At the end of the presentation students were offered a pre-collegiate application and invited to apply to the pre-collegiate program.

Students completing the application were self-selected. All students submitting an application to the pro-collegiate program were invited for an interview by Daniel. The interview process included both the student and the student's family. The intended outcome of the student/parent interview was for the student and family to understand the long-term benefits, requirements, and commitments to the program. Because there was a parent/family component required in the pre-collegiate program, it was important that the parents/families understand their commitment requirements. As part of the pre-collegiate admission requirements parents and students were required to sign contracts indicating their full commitment. This underscored the self-selection criterion based on the student's and family's ability and interest to fully commit to the academic and time requirements required of the program.

The pre-collegiate program began in February 2003 and experienced startup growth. Students admitted into the program were paired with a mentor. Each mentor had a group of 8-10 students. At this point there were insufficient mentors to serve the increased number of students who were admitted into the program. The students who were admitted to the program but were not assigned to a mentor group were waitlisted. These waitlisted students were assigned to mentor groups as space became available.

Participant Selection for the Study

As a sampling criterion, I purposefully invited Latina and Latino students who participated in the pre-collegiate program. Daniel's successor provided me with a list of

students by grade and mentor. The participants were divided into four tiers based on the length of pre-collegiate participation. Students with the most pre-collegiate experience were placed in tier one and students with the least pre-collegiate experience were placed in tier four. Within each tier students were prioritized based on their length of pre-collegiate participation. Because students in tier one were the oldest, they had graduated from high school and had completed one year of college. In some instances, the students in tier one also had served as mentors. Participants from tier two had also graduated from high school, but had not begun college when I first began the interviewing process. Students who had made the decision to continue their postsecondary educational pursuits were in keeping with my criterion of purposeful sampling. This criterion positioned tier one and two as optimal.

Tier one was comprised of four students who graduated from high school in the spring of 2005 or before. These students were the first pre-collegiate students to graduate. Of these four students, three (Monique, Andrea, and Alejandra) participated in my research. In my phone conversation with the fourth student, he indicated that although he had been enrolled in the pre-collegiate program, he did not participate in any activities. For this reason I did not include him in my study. Tier two was comprised of five pre-collegiate students who had graduated from high school in Spring 2006. The students in this tier indicated they intended to continue postsecondary educational pursuits. This was in keeping with my criterion of purposeful sampling. Within this tier, I contacted two of the students (Enrique and Giovanna) with the most pre-collegiate experience and invited them to participate in my study. In tier three, nine pre-collegiate students were identified as juniors and seniors in high school. Tier four consisted of students who were

sophomores in high school. Because saturation was reached with the available students in tier one and two, no students from tier three and four were contacted. Monique, Andrea, Alejandra, Enrique, and Giovanna (pseudonyms for the five pre-collegiate participants) had all participated in the pre-collegiate program, graduated from high school, and were attending college, either a community college or a baccalaureate institution when I interviewed them.

Table 1 displays the student demographics of the spring 2005 graduates of the pre-collegiate program. Table 2 displays the student demographics for the 2004—2005 academic year.

Table 1: 2005 Graduated Students by Ethnicity in the Pre-collegiate Program

Class	Latinas/os	Non-Latina/o Whites	Other	Totals
2005 Graduates	7	0	0	7
Totals:	7	0	0	7
	100%	0%	0%	7

Table 2: Students by Class and Ethnicity in 2005-2006 Pre-collegiate Program

Class	Latinas/os	Non-Latina/o Whites	Other	Totals
12th-Grade	6	0	1	7
11th-Grade	19	2	1	22
10th-Grade	21	2	0	23
9th-Grade	22	4	0	26
8th-Grade	26	3	0	29
7th-Grade	31	1	0	32
6th-Grade	41	4	1	46
Totals:	166	16	3	185
	90%	9%	2%	100%

Students were contacted and interviewed based on their placement in the tiers. I began by contacting the students in tier one by phone. I presented my dissertation study,

relevant information, and invited the students to participate. When the students indicated an interest in participating in the study we set a time for the interview to take place. I suggested the interviews take place in the school near where the student resides if he or she felt comfortable with that option. For all of the participants, the initial interviews took place either in the high school they had attended or the community college they were currently attending. Prior to the interview I confirmed with the school that we could have access to a room that was quiet and private. The day before the scheduled interview I called the student to confirm the time and date of the interview. I brought the consent form to the interview if I had not received it previously. I also informed the student that his or her real name would not be used in my research and he or she could think about a name that would identify him or her in my study.

Prior to the first interview I provided the students more detail regarding my study. All information provided to the student and their parents was in English and Spanish. If the student had not completed the consent form, this was completed prior to the interview taking place. I also provided students with my home phone number to contact me directly if they or their families had any questions or concerns. Daniel's successor was also available if the families needed assurances beyond what I could give them in order for their children to participate in my study. For the second interview that included the family, students translated for their parents or family when necessary.

Data Collection

Data collection included interviews, documents, and field notes. Interviews were my primary method of data collection. Documents from the pre-collegiate program were collected. Data also came from my field notes.

Interviews

I collected data through face-to-face in-depth interviews that were audio taped with participant permission. Each student participating in the pre-collegiate program was interviewed three times. The first interview was 60 to 90 minutes and consisted of unstructured and open-ended questions. I began the first interview by asking the participant to identify a pseudonym to reinforce their feeling of anonymity in the interview process. The first open-ended question was “tell me about your experience in the pre-collegiate program.” The second interview was 60 minutes. To gain a deeper understanding of the family’s influence the second interviews included the participant’s mother and in some instances siblings. These interviews all took place in the participant’s home and the participant translated for his or her parents. The third interview was 30-60 minutes. The purpose of this interview was member checking.

Although my study initially indicated I would conduct three interviews with each participant, there were some exceptions. Because Monique participated in the pre-collegiate program as a mentor only, I did not interview her parents because they had not been involved in the pre-collegiate program. Also I did not interview Andrea’s mother who lived in Mexico. Because Giovanna did not return my calls following the second interview, I did not interview her for a third time. This was in keeping with my research parameters. In purposeful sampling, the interview process was ended when no new information was forthcoming from additional students. I interviewed five students. In total I conducted 12 interviews with 5 participants.

All the interviews were recorded. Following each of the 12 interviews, I transcribed and completed the open coding process prior to contacting the participant for

the subsequent interview. This was in keeping with my previously defined constant comparative method of data analysis. By transcribing and coding the interview data following each interview I was able to identify emerging categories and improve or redefine questions before returning to the interview process. From the open coding I was able to structure follow-up questions in addition to the research questions for the participants' subsequent interviews. These follow-up questions were intended to clarify, question, and fill in details from previous interviews. The constant comparative structure enabled me to continually reevaluate and adjust my processes throughout my study. After I had completed all the interviews I proceeded with axial coding, followed by selective coding. The selective coding became the primary document I used to determine the structure and participants' dialogue in my dissertation.

Documents

Documents provided data specific to the pre-collegiate program. The pre-collegiate program coordinator provided the following documents: student demographics by ethnicity; student sign-up form; student information sheet; parent and student interview questions; mentor handbook; mentor application and contract; student evaluation forms completed by their mentor; mentor training curriculum; student curriculum; and board member information and data sheets. The pre-collegiate web site could also be used to collect data such as the pre-collegiate mission statement.

Documents were useful for a number of reasons. The student demographics document, which was distributed to the board members, provided the number of Latina/o students available at each grade level. I used this document to create Tables 1 and 2. Other documents provided background information. The student sign-up form was used

to document the student understanding of the program curriculum. The mentor documents were used in the constant comparative analysis to document the job description of the mentors, the role of the mentors, and the curriculum the mentors followed in their program. The information distributed to the board members included items such as the Saturday Academy program for parents, and the agenda for the summer student programs. The web site disseminated a variety of information to the students and their parents about study habits, financial planning for college, and testing related issues. All these pieces were used in the constant comparative analysis process.

Field Notes

Immediately following each interview I recorded my observations of the physical environment and my observations of the participant. These recordings were transcribed, adding my reflections. I used the data from the observations to inform my follow-up questions or to generate clarification to the interview text. For instance, my observations regarding body language indicated when a participant was really excited or reluctant about answering a specific question.

Data Analysis

Student interviews and field notes were transcribed. I used the constant comparative method of data analysis which involved comparing one student with another student to determine the similarities and differences (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method follows the standard format of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 1998, Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In open coding, the analysis began by generating open codes. Next the open codes were examined to determine how they contributed to the evolution of new concepts or

axial codes. This open coding to axial coding process was written as code notes in a memo format.

Following open coding, the data was reassembled in new ways called axial coding. In axial coding, categories were systematically developed and linked with subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Translated, axial coding puts the data together in new ways by making new connections. Axial coding was done for the data from each student. Where open coding takes the data apart, axial coding reassembles the data in new ways around axial or related groupings. These groupings became the cornerstones around which the bigger story was developed.

Selective coding was the process of merging and refining the axial codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this process of selective coding, the researcher begins working with the axial coding with the intent of writing the whole story for each participant. Through the constant comparison of axial codes the analysis process begins to develop the select codes. Selective coding reassembles the axial codes in new ways. From the interrelated set of categories emerge occurrences that support a phenomenon. This was an integrative process where I took the core themes of the individual students to tell a bigger story.

Trustworthiness

Merriam (1998) defined research results as trustworthy when there have been some procedures used to verify data. I used the following strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of my research: member checks; peer examination; and thick, rich descriptions.

Member checks. The process of taking the data and the tentative interpretations back to the participant and asking if the results are credible is called member checking (Merriam, 1998). After the initial interview I began transcribing and analyzing the data. I used the second interview, in part, for member checking. I provided the participant with my interview notes and my tentative analysis and asked the participant if my analysis was plausible. The second interview included conversation to clarify, question, and fill in any details from the previous interview. I did member checks throughout the interview process with each participant.

Peer examination. Peer examination consists of asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge (Merriam, 1998). In my study peer examination was an ongoing process. I elicited comments from two members of my dissertation committee: my methodologist/co-chair, and Latina co-chair.

Thick, rich description. The hallmark of a case study is a richly descriptive story that places the reader in the case situation (Merriam, 1998). The use of thick, rich description allows the readers to determine how closely their circumstances match the research situations. This transferability allows the readers to transfer information to other settings because of the shared characteristics (Creswell, 1998; Merriam). I supported the analysis of my data by using quotes of my participants.

Ethical Considerations. Shank (2002) invites us as researchers to consider four notions to build into our research work. The first is “do no harm” (p. 98). This idea of “do no harm” began with having informed consent to being welcomed in the field setting. I recognized that consent happens throughout the interview and member checking processes. Member checking allowed the participant an opportunity to clarify or remove

their thoughts or words from my research. During the interpretation and data analysis process I did continual member checking and peer examination. I was cognizant that the data belonged to the participant.

The second notion is “be open” and the third notion is “be honest” (Shank, 2002, p. 98). Simply stated, do not lie to your participants or to yourself. If participants asked what I had written about them, I showed them. Member checks are another way a participant knows what was written about them. I provided the participant with analysis from their interview and I asked them to confirm that the analysis said what they intended to say. I also asked for any clarification that I need to complete the analysis of the data. The stories belonged to the students.

The last notion is “be careful” (Shank, 2002, p. 98). This required that I documented and created an audit trail for my work. This meant that all analysis and conclusions could be traced to my data. I maintained an audit trail in my coding and data analysis. Additionally using rich, thick descriptions will connect my conclusions with the data. During the process the confidentiality of the participants and pre-collegiate program was never compromised. My participants chose their own pseudonyms. I assigned pseudonyms to the school and to all people mentioned by participants. Although I have an empathetic stance towards my participants, I remained neutral in the data analysis process.

Bloom (1998) reminds researchers and participants that there is an inherent power in being the researcher. It should also be noted that myself and the students also shared unequal power in the areas of social and cultural experiences. I asked the high school Latina/o students to share and clarify their social and cultural experiences to me as an

outsider in their culture. By doing so, I allowed the participants to alter the power dynamic by allowing them to recreate their social experience as they saw fit rather than through my own social and cultural window. It was my hope that the interview format would shape “collaboration between researcher and participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2002, p. 20).

Lujan, Gallegos, and Harbour (2003) report that cultural barriers are frequently invisible to non-Latina/o Whites. The authors also report that cultural barriers are an everyday part of life for Latinas/os and best described through the voices of Latinas/os (Lujan et al.). I agree with the authors that the barriers experienced by Latinas/os are best viewed and understood by allowing these populations to present their viewpoint or perception in a framework that respects and preserves their experience and culture (Lujan et al.). It is my hope that in the interviews the Latina/o students will invite me to cross the cultural barriers to understand their viewpoint. This border crossing will facilitate an understanding of the “otherness in its own terms” (Rhoades & Valadez, 1996, p. 206). I feel a deep commitment to give a voice to the participants in particular and to the participants’ group in general.

Parents need information on how they can help at home, what their children are doing with their mentors, and what the pre-collegiate program is doing to help them. They should also tell parents that their children can go to college because many parents they don't have the money to send their kids to college. They don't think college possible; they hold their kids back from going or thinking that it is possible (Giovanna).

CHAPTER 4: DATA AND RESULTS

Chapter 4 describes a pre-collegiate program. At the time of my research the program was in the infant stage; the first students who participated in the pre-collegiate program had just graduated. Next, I introduce the five Latina/o participants and their families. The data falls into six themes: listening to the family, creating cultural capital, living between cultures, finding a voice, living with prejudice, and navigating the path to college. Each theme is introduced, then illustrated and supported by the participants' voices. I conclude by summarizing the data within each research question.

The Pre-Collegiate Program

This section provides an overview of the pre-collegiate program in my study. I describe the student application process and the recruitment and training procedures of the mentors. The pre-collegiate program focus points are the mentoring sessions, the Saturday academic program, and the summer program.

The pre-collegiate program's primary goal was to provide support to underserved middle and high school students who will be the first in their families to attend college. The program helps students develop and maintain the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to successfully complete high school and pursue college enrollment. All students affirmed they wanted to graduate from high school and attend college. The program provided the support to make that happen. The pre-collegiate program focused

on three main activities: the bi-monthly mentoring sessions with the students, the Saturday academic program for both the students and their parents, and the pre-collegiate summer program experience. I discuss each of these more fully in the subsequent paragraphs.

The pre-collegiate application required the students and their family to participate. Students, in the 6th- through 12th-grade who will be the first in their family to attend college, were eligible to apply for admission to the pre-collegiate program. The application process primarily was done by word of mouth or by Daniel who specifically recruited students. Students were required to have at least a 2.5 grade point average and no behavior problems (no principal referrals). Teachers were invited to nominate students to the program, but because the program was new, not all teachers were aware of the program. All applicants and parents were interviewed by Daniel to verify they met the criteria and had the support from their family. Of the 125 pre-collegiate participants 89% were Latinas/os, 3% were immigrants from Europe, and 8% were Anglo.

Mentors served as the primary contact for the students during the school year, acting as role models and group leaders. For this reason, the mentors had the foremost responsibility. While each mentor individually determined how he or she used the time with the students, mentor training was required and continually available. At the beginning of the academic year mentors were required to attend a six hour training session. Daniel distributed a resource binder and made available a website; he was also available as an ongoing resource. Additionally mentors attended a four hour meeting at the end of the year. Other than the six hours of training, the resource binder, and the web

site, there was no additional direction on the content of the mentoring sessions with the pre-collegiate students.

College students and community members who had college experience were invited to become mentors in the pre-collegiate program. The mentors ranged from successful business entrepreneurs, attorneys, teachers in the local school district, to college students at Panorama Community College. These people became mentors to the high school students. Because the pre-collegiate program was just beginning, it was difficult to get mentors. For this reason, high school pre-collegiate students become mentors to middle school students. For the high school students who were mentors, college experience consisted of concurrent enrollment at the local community college. Of the 19 mentors, 7 were high school students, 5 were college students, and 7 were professionals from the community. Mentors made a nine month (September through May) commitment to meet with a group of pre-collegiate students every two weeks for two and a half hours. Each group of pre-collegiate students consisted of 8 to 10 students at the same grade level. When the mentors remained in the program, the mentors and students typically remained together during all four years of high school. In some instances, this created a lasting bond and friendship.

The Saturday academic program was designed to inform parents about the content of the pre-collegiate program and to help them understand the college process. Parents received practical advice on how best to support their children academically, as well as what the pre-collegiate program had to offer their children. The program director acknowledged that most of the parents of students would be Spanish speakers.

Central University sponsored the summer pre-collegiate program. It was intended to give pre-collegiate students a one week practical experience at a university campus. Initially, the summer program was available to upcoming 6th- through 11th-grade students. As the pre-collegiate program grew, the summer program was later changed to be available to 9th- through 11th-grade students. For many students this was their first college experience.

The college experience was a combination of academic and social activities. In preparation for the summer program students were given a writing and math pre-test and assigned to classes based on pre-test scores. Students attended classes from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. These six classes, taught by university faculty, consisted of writing, engineering, mathematics, study skills, academic enhancement, and college planning. Additionally, students experienced the university environment by living in dorms, eating at the cafeteria, using the recreation center and library, and visiting the planetarium and museum. Parents and friends were welcome to visit the students in a college environment during non-academic hours. They also were welcome to eat with the students in the cafeteria. Each year the summer program rotates through a different Central University campus with a different focus. For example, in this year the emphasis was engineering careers. Previously, the focus had been on the medical science careers. During the evenings, students attended study labs to complete homework or attended the recreation center. The week-long college experience was a focal point that concluded the pre-collegiate program at the end of each academic year.

The summer program at Central University was structured to recruit educationally and economically underserved students who would become successful in continuing their

education beyond high school at any postsecondary institution. Central University acknowledged that the local community college likely would be the transitional educational institution between high school and a baccalaureate institution. One summer program goal was to prepare the student to assume a leadership role at his or her high school and in the community. The pre-collegiate program was a partnership between the community, the local school district, the local community college, and the state university.

The Participants

There were five participants in this study. In describing the participants I want you to see them and hear their voices. By using the participants' quotes, I want you to see the participants' lives through their eyes.

Although the life experiences of Alejandra, Monique, Giovanna, Enrique, and Andrea were unique, they were similar in many ways. Four were females (Alejandra, Monique, Giovanna, and Andrea) and one was male (Enrique). Alejandra and Monique were enrolled at a baccalaureate institution. Andrea had graduated from the local community college and was planning to transfer to a 4-year institution next semester. Giovanna and Enrique were enrolled in the second year at the local community college, committed to their major with plans to transfer to baccalaureate institutions. All the participants were the first in their families to enroll in and attend college.

Alejandra

Alejandra was a lean 5'6" Latina woman dressed in jeans and a tee shirt. She had brown eyes and full lips. Her long dark curly hair was pulled back in a ponytail. She had all the confidence and maturity of a young woman who had just completed her freshman

year of college away from home. Alejandra was the first person in her family to go to college. Her English skills were good; her accent was minimal, becoming negligible over time.

Alejandra came to the United States from Mexico with her mother, older brother, and younger sister when she was in the 4th-grade. Although Alejandra lived in the dorm at Delta State during the school year, driving home each weekend to work and be with her family, she was now home for the summer. Alejandra lived in a single-wide trailer with her family. The home had an open floor plan. The living room had a tan/brown plaid over-stuffed couch. The sections of the couch moved across the room and curved around the corner. Above the couch were family pictures. Some of the photographs were formal wedding photos while some of the photos were more informal. In front of the couch was a wooden coffee table with a glass top which had only the TV remote on it. Opposite the room from the couch was a large entertainment center which took up the entire wall. It housed a TV, some DVDs lined up, framed photographs, and a few books. There were artificial plants on top of the entertainment center, on top of the kitchen cupboards, and on the window sill behind the kitchen table. The kitchen table was an oval wooden table with wood chairs and tucked against a window next to the kitchen. On the wall next to the refrigerator was a large framed picture of the Last Supper. On the refrigerator door were taped eight holy cards. One holy card was a picture of the crucifixion, one depicted an angel, one was a picture of the Lady of Guadalupe, and the five others were holy cards of Mary. Down the hallway, past the washer and dryer, were the bedrooms.

Alejandra's mother had a lean stature similar to Alejandra's. She was employed in the housekeeping department at a hospital about 30 miles from her home. During the

interview Alejandra's mother preferred to speak in Spanish. At times she would speak English. My questions were not translated into Spanish for her, and Alejandra translated only her mother's responses to me. Alejandra and her mother appeared to be very close and candid with each other, frequently smiling and laughing during our conversation. Alejandra's mother spoke very openly and passionately. In spite of the language difference, she was very willing to tell her story to both me and her daughter. In turn Alejandra talked very passionately about her mother's strengths as a parent and a woman.

I admire her so much for all her strengths. Being a woman in the Latino culture you automatically think a woman was less than a man. She was able to prove that she can be more, both a father and a mother. She took those two roles by herself and raised a family on her own in a country where she doesn't speak the language. I really admired her for that. There are not many people who have the nerve to come to America, a country by themselves, with three kids and start all over (Alejandra).

It was Alejandra's mother's strengths and determination, her ability to leave her native country and start over with her three children in America, which ultimately gave Alejandra permission to also "move away from the traditional Latina culture" (Alejandra).

Alejandra's older brother was 22 years old. I first met him outside his home. He was in the driveway detailing his black truck. The Dodge truck was loaded with custom chrome features, and he was clearly very proud of it. He told me it took him three years to pay for it. Following high school graduation, he decided to go out into the workforce. The pre-collegiate program was not active when he was in high school.

Alejandra's younger sister had completed her freshman year in high school. She had been in the pre-collegiate program since 6th-grade, with Alejandra as her mentor for the first two years. She had definite plans to continue on to post-secondary education.

It was Daniel who walked up to Alejandra her junior year in high school and recruited her to the pre-collegiate program.

I went home and talked to my mom about Daniel. I told her that he wanted to help me with college (Alejandra).

Prior to Daniel recruiting Alejandra, she recalled she had not given college much thought. At the time she did not know “the full details and what it was like to go to college” (Alejandra). Daniel became Alejandra’s one-on-one mentor. Although Daniel did not spend a great deal of time with her, he gave her the initial push she needed.

Alejandra also began mentoring. As she was a junior in high school, she mentored 7th-graders and then mentored the same pre-collegiate group as 8th-grade students when she was a senior. Her motivation for mentoring this age of students was her younger sister, who was in this particular group. As a high school student herself, Alejandra had no college experience to impart to her students as a mentor. Instead she shared with her students what she was learning from Daniel.

During Alejandra’s last two years in high school Daniel counseled her about dual enrollment and transferring credits. He encouraged her to take classes both at the local community college and Central University, which offered classes at her local high school. By the time Alejandra graduated from high school she transferred 15 credits to Delta State as a beginning freshman.

He gave me a broad idea and then he helped me with the first steps. I then went on my own. He got me about thinking about colleges and scholarships and taking college classes while I was still in high school. It was all just thinking ahead (Alejandra).

The high school counselor also was involved in working with Alejandra during her junior and senior years in high school. She counseled Alejandra to take four years of

the core classes—math, history, science, and English. Because Alejandra was a native Spanish speaker, and the high school she attended only offered Spanish as a foreign language, she did not have the opportunity to take any foreign language during high school.

As a Latina, Alejandra understood that good grades were linked to scholarships that would eventually enable her to attend college. Because her family received no support from her father who lives in Mexico, there was no money allocated for Alejandra's educational expenses. Alejandra speaks about her family's finances.

Because she doesn't earn a lot of money, she can't pay my education. I always tell her it doesn't matter that she couldn't support me financially. She has already supported me in everything I needed (Alejandra).

It was Alejandra's high school counselor who was instrumental in Alejandra obtaining the scholarship that eventually enabled her to go 100 miles away from home for college. A counselor from Delta State came to Alejandra's high school to recruit applications for the Ambassador Scholarships. The Ambassador Scholarship pays for full tuition and fees for four years. Delta State awarded seven Ambassador Scholarships to the incoming freshman class. In return the scholarships recipients gave campus tours, and helped at the admissions office and peer-counseling. It was the high school counselor who identified and encouraged Alejandra in the scholarship application process. Alejandra also was awarded additional scholarship monies that cover the cost of three years of her room, meals, and books.

Alejandra also received other scholarship opportunities at other baccalaureate institutions but the cost of a college education influenced her ultimate decision to attend Delta State.

You are not notified of the scholarships until summer. I had also applied to Richmond University, a private school, where I was accepted and was awarded a \$30,000 scholarship. I knew that if I didn't get enough total scholarship money I wasn't going to be able to pay my way through four years of school there. Because Delta State was so much cheaper than Richmond University I knew if I got even a small scholarship I could make Delta work. When I found out I had been awarded the Ambassador's Scholarship I was thinking this is probably my best option. I didn't want to end up dropping out of Richmond because I couldn't pay for it. I knew my only chance of going to college was getting money to pay for my education. I also didn't want to ask my mother for money because I know how hard it is for her (Alejandra).

In September, following Alejandra's graduation from high school, she left her family and home to attend Delta State. A week prior to beginning college, the Ambassadors conducted a retreat for all Ambassador Scholarship recipients. In return, the students received a network of twenty friends who were freshman through seniors. The nuances and the transitions to college life were explained to the freshman Ambassador students. All students were counseled about class schedules and able to pre-register for classes.

The retreat made the transition so much better. I was so worried! I'm thinking it's going to be new school where classes would be much bigger. I was away from home and on my own. It was really really scary. It really helped to participate in a retreat with all the ambassadors a week before school started so we could get to know each other. I got to know the ambassadors and that felt like I had a family and friends before I started school. That was an advantage (Alejandra).

Alejandra lives in the dorms during the week, scheduling her classes from Monday through Thursdays. Each Thursday night she drives the 100 miles home for the weekend to work. On weekends she clean houses with her mom.

I cleaned houses with my mother even before I went to college, through high school. She used to tell me see if you don't go to school this is what you are going to be working at all your life. That did help. Sometimes we had so much work and I would come home tired. I'd think I don't want to work like this; I'd better hit the books (Alejandra).

When Alejandra completes her 4-year degree she will return home to live and work. “I like this area and this is where my family is” (Alejandra).

Monique

Monique was a tall Latina with an athletic body. She wore casual pants and a cotton blouse when I first met her. She had shoulder length brown wavy hair that was worn down. Monique was 21 years old and had been in the United States for 12 years. Although she had lived in the United States since she was nine years old, her English and pronunciation skills were poor. Regardless of her English skills, her unashamed forthrightness made her immediately delightful. During our conversations she smiled and laughed easily. Because Monique was living on her own and a successful student navigating her way towards a baccalaureate degree, I got the sense that she was very smart despite her struggles with the English language.

Monique remembered her life in Mexico. Growing up on a small ranch outside a small village in Mexico, Monique remembered her family was poor. Her mother milked the family cows and made cheese from the cows’ milk. Her dad knew how to build houses so whenever someone wanted to build a house he had a job; otherwise he worked on the farm. Regardless of the family’s economic struggles in Mexico, school was always important. I asked Monique to tell me about the educational system in Mexico. In the Mexican school system, grades one through six were free, but the family buys the books. After 6th-grade the family pays for both school and books. As far back as Monique remembered her mother helped raise money for the schools in Mexico.

We barely had money for school, to pay for my elder sister’s education, but my parents still wanted her to go to school. My mom believes that education is number one. When my parents were young their parents made them stay home from school to milk the cows or feed the animals. The man had to help with the

cattle and the woman had to help around the house. They were more uneducated back then, especially coming from a small village. On my dad's side my grandma and grandpa went through the 1st- or 2nd-grade. They can hardly read and can't write (Monique).

Monique's mother and father came to the United States specifically so the three children could get a better education. Her family also was attracted by the employment opportunities they did not have in Mexico. Monique's father was a stonemason. At one point Monique's dad had his own construction company in the United States. His business was successful enough that they were able purchase a house. Because he had a 6th-grade education he was unable to perform the necessary paperwork that his business required. Although Monique's older sister briefly worked with her father in his business, he eventually closed his construction company. Monique says that all of a sudden the money her family previously had enjoyed was gone when her father closed his company. Her father was now 51 years old. Monique noticed her father's bones were tired and his body was stiff from the years of breaking stone as a stonemason.

Although Monique's mother had a 6th-grade education, she had been an influential voice promoting the benefits of education. Monique's mother worked as a housekeeper for an affluent family. She frequently came home and shared with Monique how disrespectful the woman was to her. Monique's response was "I'm not going to take that" (Monique)! Like Alejandra, Monique understood that education was the way out of a house keeping job.

My mother always told me "you have to go to school. Look at me. You don't want to be doing the same thing." My mother is a housekeeper and my dad works in construction as a stone mason. I know they are really worn out by their jobs. I see people that work in offices who are the same age as my parents and they look younger. My parents look worn out. They have physically hard jobs. What made me go to college was my mother telling me I had to go to school so I could get a better job. She would tell me "We came to the United States so you could bet a

better education, so you would have the opportunity that I didn't have." I believe if my mom had the opportunity she'd be a nurse (Monique).

The pre-collegiate program was not available for Monique or her older sister when they were in high school. Although Monique's older sister went to Delta State for a year and a half, she did not complete her degree. She quit school and got a job after getting pregnant.

When I first interviewed Monique her younger brother was 16 years old and a junior in high school. Of the three children in Monique's family, her younger brother was the only child left at home. Monique's mother remained involved in her son's education. She attended all the school's meetings if they were in Spanish. Although Monique's mother spoke English, she felt more confident in understanding everything when Spanish was spoken at these meetings.

Monique's brother did not have a job until his father closed his construction business. Previously, Monique father's business earned enough money so her younger brother did not work. Now that her father no longer owned his own business, the family's income was more limited. Although Monique noted that her brother didn't spend money for unnecessary things, he knew if he wanted things he had to earn his own money.

Monique's brother was currently in the pre-collegiate program and planned on attending college to earn a business degree. Although Monique's mother frequently reiterated the importance of college, and his two older sisters had gone to college, Monique's younger brother had not always believed that he could go to college. He believed he needed a 4.0 grade point average to get a scholarship, and without a scholarship college was too expensive.

Monique was the middle of three children. Her family came to the United States when she was in the 4th-grade. She remembers her early school experiences in the United States “like it was yesterday.” Because Monique went through 4th-grade in Mexico, she was able to both read and write in Spanish. Isolated from English speaking students, she became an avid reader.

When I came from Mexico I had only two months left in the 4th-grade. At my new school I was taken to the library. They showed me books written in Spanish. I started reading and loving it. I love reading. I believe if I hadn’t started reading in Spanish I wouldn’t be a good reader now. I read a lot because we didn’t have books at my school in Mexico. In Mexico there were three grades in the same classroom (Monique).

By the time Monique started high school there were more Latinas/os in the school system. At 14 years old and in high school, she began working a job throughout the school year. Monique recognized that her English skills improved when working gave her the practice she needed. In high school Monique joined the soccer team but never had the confidence to join any other clubs.

It was Monique’s high school ESL teacher who gave her the extra push she needed to make college a reality. He knew Monique’s mother and knew she wanted Monique to go to college. As a result, he made available scholarship applications, reviewed her applications, and proofed her essay for college applications. Although Monique received a scholarship from a local bank for Panorama Community College, she reported she was going to let that money go away because she wasn’t confident enough to attend college.

Monique’s introduction to the pre-collegiate program began quite innocently after she already had graduated from high school. The Panorama Community College coordinator for the bank scholarship she received suggested to the scholarship recipients

that they should volunteer to mentor for the newly formed pre-collegiate program as a pay-back for the scholarships. As a result, Monique became a mentor for 6th-graders when she was a freshman at Panorama Community College. The following year as a sophomore at Panorama Community College she mentored the same group as 7th-graders. Monique's college experience became the foundation and her focus as a mentor.

It wasn't required but everyone did volunteer to mentor. I was thinking, OK, I'll experiment. I didn't have a clue what I was going to say to the students. I told my kids about my experiences. I tell them not to talk about myself but to tell them that I've had the same experience (Monique).

Monique mentored the same pre-collegiate students for two years until she graduated from Panorama Community College and transferred to Delta State. During the summer following her graduation from Panorama Community College, she attended the pre-collegiate summer program at Central University with her students as a peer counselor. Although she no longer mentored she kept in contact with her students. As her Latina pre-collegiate students turned 15 years old, she was invited to their Quinceañeras, a traditional Latina celebration for girls coming of age in the Latina/o community.

The last time I interviewed Monique she was living in a duplex near Delta State, the college she was attending. Her father had purchased the duplex unit for her to live in as an investment while she attended college. She had an Anglo roommate who also attended college. The house was furnished sparsely. The living room had a small couch, a coffee table, and a large carved Mexican wooden hutch painted in bright colors. Monique was working towards her baccalaureate degree in sociology. Because she did not know how to go about finding out about scholarships at Delta State, she was not on a scholarship; her parents were paying her tuition. She had talked to a school counselor

who informed her she had to decide on a minor along with her major in sociology. She then asked my opinion on whether business or Spanish would be the best option.

As I said good bye to Monique she was excited about the possibilities her career in sociology might have for her, and hoped to pursue a master's degree in sociology. She asked me if there was also a Ph.D. in sociology.

Giovanna

It was evident from the beginning that Giovanna was an extrovert although it was much later she revealed "I love to talk!" She had earned the right to be very secure with her English skills. She was medium height with a lean build and shoulder length wavy hair. At 18 years old she was working full-time and attending a Panorama Community College as a full-time student. At our first meeting it was evident that she was confident and self-assured.

Giovanna's family came to the United States five years ago when she was 13 years old and in the 8th-grade. Giovanna's father, mother, younger sister, and younger brother live in a two story condo that they own.

My father is very organized with money. When we bought the house we didn't want to be only making house payments and not have any money left. We wanted to have enough money to pay everything and then have a little extra to save and to go on a vacation (Giovanna).

On the main floor the dining room, kitchen, and living room were all open to each other; upstairs were the bedrooms. The long wooden table was surrounded with eight high back wooden chairs with faux leather cushioned seats. On the center of the table was a table runner with a row of three candles. The dining room had decorative framed mirror on the wall. The living room was small with an over-stuffed loveseat sized sofa with a matching chair. An entertainment center housed the TV. A closed curtain covered the windowed

wall. I sat at the dining room table and talked to Giovanna, her mother, and her younger sister. Giovanna's mother spoke in Spanish. Sometimes Giovanna translated and sometimes Giovanna's sister translated. In the background Mexican music was playing.

By Mexican standards both Giovanna's parents were educated. In Mexico Giovanna's father taught at a private school but noted the pay was inadequate to support his wife and three children. He also had been elected to the city council in Mexico. Eventually he became tired of the time politics took away from his family, and he was unwilling to continue with the re-election process, citing "politics are very dirty."

Initially Giovanna's father came to the United States without his family to work for a roofing company with his brother.

He stayed here in the United States while we were down in Mexico, but we missed each other so much. My mother said we needed to grow up with our dad. My dad decided to bring us to the United States with him. We didn't really want to come, but we wanted to be together (Giovanna).

Giovanna's father continued to work at the same company as a roofer. Because Giovanna father's job as a roofer deals with Latino workers, he doesn't speak fluent English.

His work doesn't require that he speak English. Once in awhile he needs to talk to the supervisor of a job but he doesn't use English much. He understands everything. He just needs more vocabulary (Giovanna).

The support Giovanna's father gave to his children went beyond providing economic stability and confirmed his love of knowledge as a teacher.

My dad likes us to read all the time. Sometimes we all read the same book, then after dinner we get together and talk about the book. There's a lot of communication in our family. I see my parents working so hard right now for us to go to college. They've given up a lot for us (Giovanna).

Giovanna's mother was one of eight children in her family and the only one to complete high school. Like Giovanna's father, in Mexico her mother also was working in education, teaching people who were pursuing their GED. Now, in the United States, she was cleaning houses. Although Giovanna's mother was "tired of the work" and had considered going back to school in the United States, the escalated wages in the United States in comparison to the wages in Mexico factored into the equation (Giovanna).

It's hard for her to go back to school and try to be a teacher here in the United States. She's doesn't think she will be earning what she is earning now as a house keeper (Giovanna).

The support Giovanna's parents gave their children was absolute and unconditional.

Whatever you choose to do, I'm always here for you. I'm always going to support you no matter what. We're always going to be together (Giovanna).

The importance of the family unit also was apparent.

Giovanna was the eldest child with a younger sister and younger brother.

Giovanna's sister was a freshman in high school and had been in the pre-collegiate program since the 6th-grade. She joined the pre-collegiate program because she wanted to go to college and recognized the help the pre-collegiate program would provide.

My sister wants to go to medical or law school somewhere but not here in the United States. My sister doesn't want to live in the United States, but she doesn't want to live in Mexico either (Giovanna).

Giovanna's younger brother was now 10 years old, coming to this country when he was four years old. It was important for Giovanna's parents that the children continued to value the Mexican culture.

He speaks better English than Spanish and never speaks Spanish at home. Because my parents don't want us to lose our language, they are teaching my younger brother to read and write in Spanish. They believe knowing the language is important to keeping our Mexican culture. That's the main thing. They've also

taught us about being well behaved and being a good member of a society (Giovanna).

Giovanna's brother was also in the pre-collegiate program. His mother knew for sure that her son wanted to go to college and study science. The whole family would participate in making this happen.

I don't know how to explain how my family is, but we're so attached to each other. I'll be graduated from college when he begins college. I will be able to support him financially if there is a need for it. In Mexico your family is what matters the most (Giovanna).

The family bond and Giovanna's attachment to her younger brother became apparent when she was willing to support him financially in college. Like Giovanna's siblings, she also knew from an early age in Mexico that she wanted a college degree.

When I was young I wanted to be a teacher. I had this wall in the laundry room I would use for a blackboard and I pretended to have students. I use to play I was going to college to become a teacher (Giovanna).

Giovanna and her siblings recognized many role models in the family that encouraged them to have college as an educational goal, saying "my family is especially influenced to think higher education is a good thing" (Giovanna).

In my dad's family I'm the only one going to college. Some of my cousins got married too young and got pregnant; some didn't even finish high school. One of my cousins went to the Army. She's in Iraq right now. On my mother's side everyone went to college. I have a cousin who has his master's degree in chemistry. He's a chemical engineer. He works for a world-wide company and travels around the world. I want to be successful like him. I see all my cousins in my mother's family being educated and successful in their careers. I have another uncle who is finishing his nursing degree at the University in Texas. It's very sad that on one side of my family every body is going to college and on the other side nobody is (Giovanna).

Giovanna came to the United States without any English skills in the middle of the 8th-grade and quickly adjusted. For a year and a half, from the 8th-grade through her

freshman year in high school, Giovanna attended ESL classes. The first summer in the United States her mother ensured Giovanna's English skills.

My mom met this woman when she was taking ESL classes at Panorama Community College the first summer we were here. She decided to help me learn English. Sometimes she would come to my house and sometimes we would go to her house. She helped me for the whole summer. Thanks to her I can speak English (Giovanna).

Following that summer and during Giovanna's freshman year of high school she took ESL instead of English.

The ESL teacher really worked with me. I'm good at reading. I can read everything. The things I didn't understand I ask or look up in the dictionary. There weren't any barriers for me to learn the language (Giovanna).

The following year, during her sophomore year, Giovanna did not enroll in the ESL classes stating "I was ready to move on" (Giovanna). In addition to learning English in high school Giovanna took two years of French. She was very proud that she now knew three languages.

As a high school junior Giovanna joined the pre-collegiate program because she wanted to go to college.

I think girls are more motivated to go to college because women way back then didn't have the opportunity. Now we have the opportunity and we want to take advantage of it. We like to succeed; it's not just a guy thing (Giovanna).

Her one year mentoring experience was uneventful. Because Giovanna was mentored "once or twice" before her mentor quit, Giovanna does not remember any activities or her mentor's name. However, the network that was created with the pre-collegiate participants was a network that informed each other what classes to take in high school. The high school counselor did not assist pre-collegiate students in the scheduling process. During the summer following her junior year she was invited to

attend the pre-collegiate summer program. It was there that she produced the essay required for scholarship applications. Her high school English teacher and sister also proofed her college essay.

As a senior she became a mentor for 6th-graders. She began mentoring 10 Latina/o students and ended the school year with six students. Giovanna reported the students who dropped out did not see themselves as going to college; the students who remained knew they wanted to go to college and had the support from their parents.

During her senior year Giovanna prepared to attend a local community college. Although she no longer was involved in a mentoring group, Daniel assisted her with the Panorama Community College applications. She filled out the scholarship forms without assistance, noting “I don’t recommend it to anyone” (Giovanna). Ultimately Giovanna received a local bank scholarship for Panorama Community College which pays for books, tuition, and fees for two years or 60 credits.

Giovanna only went to the pre-collegiate summer program following her junior year at high school. She was invited to attend the summer program a second time the summer following her senior year as a peer mentor, but did not attend. Instead her younger sister went while Giovanna stayed home to help take care of her younger brother, who was out of school for the summer.

There was no chance to do it. My sister went but I stayed home to help care for my younger brother. My mom has to leave my little brother while she works. He’s not that little, but he can’t stay home alone for long periods of time yet. Both my sister and I don’t both leave my parents at the same time. We help take care of my brother (Giovanna).

Following graduation from high school Giovanna was working a waitress job when a friend of her mother gave Giovanna a job application for a local bank. Although

Giovanna was reluctant to apply, her mother urged her to apply. She was interviewed and offered the position as bank teller.

When I was a senior I decided that I wanted a business degree. I wasn't working as a teller for the bank yet. Now that I'm working at the bank I'm even more motivated because I'm working in business. I would like to be a bank auditor. This is the first job that I've been happy in (Giovanna).

After six months of employment at the bank Giovanna would be eligible for tuition reimbursement for classes if they benefit her position at the bank. Giovanna intended to take advantage of tuition reimbursements as she continued working towards her business degree. She worked 40 hours a week and attended school full-time.

For Giovanna, college and her job had provided her with a new clarity for her future. Although she continued to live with her family, Giovanna was economically independent and maturing.

I'm very independent from my parents. I love to live with them but besides that I'm pretty independent of what I think, what I need to get done, what I'm doing right, and what I'm doing wrong. I'm a young adult and I know what my goals are. At some point in my life I'm going to depend only on my income and being independent now it's a good experience (Giovanna).

Giovanna's family also talked about where she might go to earn her baccalaureate degree when she graduated from Panorama Community College. She considered going to Central University but affordability was paramount in her decision to transfer to a 4-year institution.

Because I'm on a full scholarship at Panorama Community College, I have no educational costs. My family and I are thinking about all the expenses for me moving out of home and renting my own place. Because it will be so expensive we're thinking I might end up going to Delta State (Giovanna).

Wherever Giovanna considered transferring she knew it would be difficult to leave her family behind.

I'm scared. I'm not ready for it and I don't want to be ready. I'm so attached to my parents. I know its going to be very hard. (Giovanna)

Giovanna's sister confirmed the closeness of the family, saying Giovanna was "really close to my mom and everyone in the family. It will be hard for everyone here to see her go" (Giovanna). In spite of the family closeness, Giovanna's parents remained supportive of the children's educational ambitions even if that meant they would leave home.

When I leave, my sister will leave right after me. My parents will be left with just my brother. But my dad is pretty cool about it. He says "go anywhere you want to go. The sky's the limit. Do what ever you need to do, get educated, travel, do as much as you can" (Giovanna).

While Giovanna's mother set priorities and cautioned "don't be married yet, it will interfere with your studies," Giovanna knew she wanted to be successful.

I would never get married to somebody that wouldn't let me do what I want, who wouldn't let me succeed. When you love someone you let that person succeed, you push them to do a lot. I've seen it happen to my cousins, and I don't want a controlling husband (Giovanna).

Giovanna was listening to the advice from her parents.

I'm in my shoes! I know what I have to do and know what it takes to do it. I know that it's up to me to accomplish it and I know I'm capable enough to do it (Giovanna).

Enrique

Enrique was a tall, almost too lean, Latino with dark wavy hair. He had braces on his teeth and wore contacts on his brown eyes. His sense of humor amplified his gracious smile and easy laugh. Because Enrique came to this country when he was seven years old, he had excellent English language skills. When I first spoke with Enrique he had just graduated from high school. The last time Enrique and I spoke he had completed his first year at a local community college. His college experience clearly had matured him.

Enrique lived in a single-wide trailer with his mother and two younger siblings. As I stood on the porch and knocked, through the window next to the door I could see a lace curtain. On the inside window sill I could see gold Christmas tree garland with red chili peppers. Inside, the living room was uncluttered. It had a big overstuffed sectional couch. There was a big TV and a computer in the living room. There were family pictures as well as decorative pictures on the wall. Down the hall towards the bedrooms was a large framed picture of Jesus with a crown of thorns. The kitchen was small and clean with washed dishes drying in the sink. There were ceramic fruit hanging on the wall. We sat at the kitchen table and talked.

Enrique's mother was tall and lean. Her long dark wavy hair was worn down. She looked very young, young enough to be a friend of Enrique's rather than his mother. In spite of working seven days a week as a housekeeper, Enrique's mother's said her challenges were her estranged husband, not having documentation, and not speaking English. The warmth and lovingness that Enrique often spoke of being part of the Latino culture, was evident in Enrique's home. With the satisfaction of a very proud mother, Enrique's mother would touch him affectionately. Once she touched him on his shoulder, and they looked at each other and smiled. Another time she brushed hair off his face. More than once during the three interview process, Enrique would swell with pride and say "she's the best" about his mother. During the interview with Enrique and his mother, they were both interested in what the conversation newly revealed about each other. Enrique frequently laughed and smiled at his mother's responses as she spoke. Clearly, they enjoyed a close relationship.

Enrique spoke about the role of his father in the house. At times, his father lived in the house, helped with paying the bills, and the environment was good for awhile. But like the many times before, that changes, and the good environment eventually turns bad.

My family life has been very difficult; I'm not sure crazy is the right word. I will tell you about my family. It's really hard. My dad is alcoholic and a drug addict. He keeps getting put in jail and then deported back to Mexico. In time, he comes back to America. We've been running away from him but eventually we need his support, his financial support, so we get back with him. It's really tough. Since I was little I've known I can't take things for granted. I have worked hard for everything I have accomplished. I have to appreciate what I have and keep going forward, to keep fighting. I've had to work really hard for a lot of things. American kids take a lot of things for granted (Enrique).

Unlike his father, Enrique prided himself as a family man. For Enrique it was important to help his mother and siblings.

The last time I talked to Enrique he told me that his parents were getting a divorce. Although he noted divorce was uncommon in his culture, he felt the divorce was a good decision for his parents. Because Enrique's father was now out of the home, Enrique felt responsible as the eldest male child to stay at home. As a result, after graduating from high school, Enrique enrolled in the local community college. "I'm staying home to help my mom out because we're by ourselves" (Enrique).

Enrique had a younger sister and brother. These siblings have lived and gone to school in the United States since kindergarten and before. Enrique's sister was in the pre-collegiate program and was interested in attending college. Because the pre-collegiate meetings were after school she quit the pre-collegiate program to work and join the dance team at her high school. She worked to pay for her cell phone. Enrique laughed as he emphasized how important having a cell phone was for her. Enrique also bragged that his

sister's dance team had won the state competition, the first state competition that her high school had won in any sport.

Enrique's brother, who was 12 years old, spoke English as if it were his first language, although he was a native Spanish speaker. His left ear was pierced and he wore a large diamond-like stud. His hair was brown and straight. It was evident that he had lived most of his life in the United States. Enrique's brother was currently participating in the pre-collegiate program. I asked Enrique's brother about the pre-collegiate program.

Being in the pre-collegiate program makes it both easier and harder. It makes me work harder because if I get bad grades I will be kicked out of the program. So I get good grades (Enrique).

Like Enrique, he also understood that a college education would give him access to better jobs. This was a motivating factor to stay in the pre-collegiate program, to get good grades and qualify for scholarships, and attend college.

Enrique was the first one in his family to go to college. Although Enrique knew at an early age in Mexico he wanted to go to college, he joined the pre-collegiate program as a sophomore in high school, having heard about it from a friend whose younger brother was in the program.

Everybody that I knew in Mexico was working the fields. I knew that was not what I wanted to do. I had a teacher in Mexico who was my role model because he had gone to college. I just had it in my mind that I had to go to college. When I came to the United States I knew there was more opportunity. Maybe I was crazy but going to college was all I ever wanted (Enrique).

Enrique joined the pre-collegiate program because he wanted to go to college and he knew that the program would prepare him.

In the pre-collegiate program Enrique, along with six other students from various grades, met with his mentor every two weeks to explore college goals. Together they

would talk about what they wanted to study in college and prepare for SAT and ACT exams. During high school Enrique took English, Biology, and College Algebra from Central University for dual enrollment credits. However, after completing his first year at Panorama Community College, he had yet to transfer those credits to Panorama Community College. Enrique reported that he always wanted to join clubs in high school but never felt confident enough to actually join a club. However, after he joined the pre-collegiate program, he felt comfortable enough to join the soccer team and the art club.

Enrique also became a mentor for 6th-grade pre-collegiate students. Although the pre-collegiate program's participants were predominately female, Enrique had more males than females in his mentoring group.

When I first started mentoring I had not gone to college, but I had been to the pre-collegiate summer program at Central University. I used that for motivation. I told them about the two week summer program at Central University. I told them it was really fun and you live like a college student, living in the dorms and going to classes. The kids already know that college is something good for them and so I just told them about the fun. In 6th-grade, they are young and I just wanted to make things fun. When they get to high school, they will see things are a little more serious and this is really going to help them on their path to college. I just tried to motivate them to stay in the program. I know when they get older it's going to be more serious. It is a little more relaxed at middle school (Enrique).

Enrique stays in contact with his mentor. Periodically Enrique returns to his mentor's pre-collegiate meetings to talk with current pre-collegiate students about his college experience.

Enrique received four scholarships from local businesses totaling \$3500. Initially, Enrique was not planning on attending Panorama Community College. But because Enrique was undocumented, he enrolled as an out-of-state student at the local community college "because that's the only thing I could do" (Enrique).

When I last talked to Enrique he was completing his first year at Panorama Community College. He was taking 16 semester credits and working 25 hours a week. He also had joined a cross-cultural club. One of the risks Enrique took as an undocumented student was driving a car without a driver's license. Enrique attended classes at a local community college that was about 20 miles from his home. However, because the community college was four miles off the bus route, it was difficult to get to classes without a car. Enrique said if he got stopped by the police he could be sent to jail and potentially deported. Enrique's mother also worried about Enrique driving without a license. Now Enrique's mother was worried if he was not home when he said he would be. She always worried that something bad might happen to him. The path to college was clearly different for the Latina/o students who were undocumented.

As I left Enrique's home his mother offered me homemade "empanadas" (a Mexican cookie). I took one and thanked her. Translating for his mother, and using his captivating smile and laugh, Enrique said take two—you will like them so much you will wish you had another. I took two. She was right.

Andrea

Andrea had long dark straight hair and brown eyes. She was medium height and lean; the last time I spoke with her she was noticeably thinner than the first time we spoke. She told me she had two surgeries in the past year—a tonsillectomy and an emergency appendectomy. She spoke fast and with a lot of energy. At 19 years old she looked younger than her years. She was independent and determined to be successful in her life.

Andrea was raised by her single mother in Mexico, although she was born in the United States, in a town near the Mexican border. Because her mother and father divorced shortly after she was born, she had no memory of her father. Andrea says “it was good for me not to grow up with my father. I think if my dad was there my mom wouldn’t let me come to America so young” (Andrea).

I am from a little town in Chihuahua, Mexico. Since I was 13 my mother sent me to another city to attend school. She wanted me to have better education than the one available in the little town where I grew up. So I’ve pretty much been by myself since I was 13 years old. My mother always took care of me; she put me in a secure apartment. She has a nice job and spends all her money so I can have a better education (Andrea).

For Andrea the “go to school, go to school” chant from her mother was familiar. Andrea’s mother was employed in Mexico as a nurse. Prior to earning her nursing degree, she had an accounting certificate. Andrea’s mother personally understood the value of an education. Andrea acknowledged how lucky she was that her mother placed a high value on education.

My mother saved \$10,000 for me. When I turned 15, at my Quinceañera party, my mother asked me “What do you want? Do you want to go to school or do you want to have a nice car? What do you want to do?” I said I wanted a car. We were about to buy a car but my mom said “it’s your responsibility; I taught you well.” After that I decided not to get a nice car (Andrea).

Following Andrea’s Quinceañera she was sent by her mother to the United States for the first time in her life. Andrea was enrolled as a senior in high school to learn the English language and to prepare for college in the United States. When Andrea came to the United States her senior year, she told her high school counselor she wanted to go to an “American university,” and the counselor referred her to Daniel.

As the director of the pre-collegiate program, Daniel became Andrea’s one-on-one mentor. He helped Andrea enroll in high school classes and talked to her about

college. Together they filled out college applications. Isolated, Andrea relied exclusively on Daniel. It was Daniel who recommended to Andrea to concentrate on school, get good grades, and apply for scholarships. Daniel understood the benefits of being an American citizen when he told her “the scholarships are going to come really easy to you” (Andrea). Currently the Department of Labor and Employment’s Workforce Center was paying Andrea’s tuition.

Andrea looked back on her high school year as a horrible experience. She felt alone and isolated in America. When she first came to the United States, Andrea’s mother gave her money for rent, utilities, and food. Andrea recalls that although her mother did not have a lot of money “she was paying for pretty much everything” (Andrea).

I didn’t speak a single word in English. I was feeling super smart but without speaking the language you can’t do anything (Andrea).

Without speaking English, employment was difficult for Andrea to find, and she spoke of the “horrible” waitress jobs she had to endure.

Daniel kept in contact with Andrea following her graduation from high school. Although Daniel invited Andrea to be a pre-collegiate mentor during her freshman year at Panorama Community College, her work and class schedule prevented her from participating. Alone in the United States, Andrea acknowledged how hard it was to do everything her first year of college: pay the rent and utilities, work full-time, and pay for school. She told me that her immune system was worn down and she got really sick. Although she had no memory of her father, it was at this point she decided to contact her father who lived in the same state and near where she was attending college.

I called my father on the phone; I called him for the first time. I was really sick with my tonsils. I was so scared and alone in the United States. I was thinking if I get really sick, what am I going to do? When I called my dad I asked if he would

help me if I got really sick because my mother was miles away from me. I told him I was going to college in the United States. He said he didn't have any money. After that my mom said "Andrea, we've never needed your dad. I'm going to help you." I'm going to prove to him that I don't need him (Andrea).

The summer following Andrea's first year at Panorama Community College, Daniel invited her to attend the summer pre-collegiate program at Central University as a mentor. For Andrea it was her first experience at a large university. Sleeping in the dorms, eating in the university cafeteria, and attending classes, she felt part of the university. As a result, Central University was where Andrea dreamt of earning a baccalaureate degree.

During Andrea's first year at Panorama Community College she also started dating an "American boy" (Andrea). Eventually Andrea told her mother about her boyfriend.

One day I was talking to my mother on the phone. I was just playing around with her; I don't know why. I told her "I have a boyfriend. I guess I'm going to get married." Well, I shouldn't have said that, never again. "WHAT!!!! WHAT!!!! No you're not going to get married until you finish your school!" I told my mom "I know mom, I was just kidding you." Saying that was a big problem. I will never say that again (Andrea).

Initially, Andrea's mother did not like her boyfriend. She was worried that Andrea was going to get married and quit school. Ultimately, when Andrea's mother realized Andrea was receiving support and care from her boyfriend, she reconsidered her opinion of Andrea's boyfriend.

At first my mother didn't like it that I had a boyfriend. But when I got sick with my appendicitis he took care of me. When I was sick and my mother came from Mexico, she saw him give me my medicine and take me to the doctors. That made her realize I had support, that I wasn't alone here. Now she thinks that I'm going to be finishing school easier with him (Andrea).

When we completed the interview and the recorder was turned off Andrea showed me her “promise” ring that her “American boyfriend” had given her (Andrea). The last time I spoke with Andrea she said she and her boyfriend had been together for almost a year. Her mother would be happy to hear that Andrea was “happy to wait five or six years before she gets married” (Andrea).

Andrea finally had a job that she liked and was excited about. Currently, Andrea worked 40 hours a week at Century Homes at Peach Valley Ranch. Initially she was hired as a community assistant, was promoted to a community representative, and most recently had been promoted to sales representative. Andrea felt proud that she not only had a good job but was the only Latina employed at Peach Valley Ranch. However, Andrea’s mother continually reminded Andrea that she was in America to receive an “American education” (Andrea).

I was so excited about my job; it is a really good job, I was always talking about my job. My mom said “wait wait wait a minute. What are you doing? You went there for school, not for a job. I don’t want to hear about anything but school” (Andrea).

Andrea’s mother continued to be a strong influence in Andrea’s life, supporting Andrea’s educational goals.

Much had changed for Andrea since the first time we spoke. Although Andrea was born in the United States, she was raised in Mexico and identified herself a Mexican. Because she did not live in the United States until her senior year in high school, and did not know the English language, she had no real connection to being an American citizen. The last time I spoke with Andrea she felt differently.

I use to not feel like an American; I didn’t speak English. Before I’d say no I’m Mexican. Now I say I’m Mexican-American (Andrea).

Of the five participants I spoke with, Andrea was the only participant born in the United States. Although Andrea now referred herself as Mexican-American, she now understood how her United States citizenship changed her status from the Latinas/os who were not born in this country.

At 19 years old, Andrea's goal of completing her associate's degree at Panorama Community College was about to happen. Last time I spoke with her she had 10 credits remaining to graduate and was confident she could do it. She would then transfer to Central University where she hoped to earn a baccalaureate degree in political science.

I'm excited but I'm also scared. I'm really unsure of college. Instead of taking classes with 20 people I'm going to be taking classes with 500 people. I know it will be hard but I would love to have the experience. I want to be the first one in my family to graduate with a bachelor's degree (Andrea).

Three years ago Andrea came to this country alone and struggled to learn English with the dream of attending an "American university" (Andrea). After our interview and outside in the parking lot Andrea proudly showed me the car her boyfriend had purchased for her following her emergency appendectomy. Andrea now had a nice car.

He did that so I wouldn't have to struggle. I was struggling before, and it was so hard. He wanted to make my life a little bit easier so I could concentrate on school. He loves me, and he loves my food that I cook, and he loves my mom, and he loves everything about me (Andrea).

Andrea frequently referred to herself as "super smart." There was no doubt in my mind that Andrea was "super smart" and will be the first in her family to earn a baccalaureate degree from an "American university" (Andrea).

You have now met the five participants in my study—Alejandra, Monique, Giovanna, Enrique, and Andrea. Although all were Latinas/os, there were countless differences. Alejandra, Enrique, and Andrea were raised in single-parent families.

Monique and Giovanna were raised by both parents. Giovanna and Enrique were the eldest with two younger siblings. Alejandra and Monique were middle children with both an older and younger siblings. Andrea was an only child. All the parents of the participants had the customary 6th-grade education in Mexico with the exception of Giovanna's parents who were teachers in Mexico. Enrique's family immigrated to the United States when he was in the 2nd-grade. Both Alejandra's and Monique's families immigrated to the United States when they were in the 4th-grade. Giovanna's family came to the United States when she was in the 8th-grade; Andrea moved to the United States when she was a senior in high school although she was a citizen of the United States by birth. All the participants were pursuing the dream of being the first in their family to graduate from college.

In the subsequent pages I focus on the similarities and on the reoccurring themes I found in my data. Each participant had extraordinary support from their mother and family. All the participants listened to and were guided by their families. The participants also spoke about the cultural capital available in the Latina/o community. Although all the participants lived in the borderlands, they spoke about living and navigating between cultures. Finding a voice was a common theme for all the participants and for the mothers and fathers. Many of the participants bravely spoke about the prejudice they had experienced. Some participants experienced more prejudice than others. All the participants communicated how they navigated the path to college. Throughout these reoccurring themes, the experiences of each participant remained unique and distinctive.

Cultural and social capital have remained strong and intertwined themes as the participants navigated their path to college. Broadly defined, cultural capital is the

knowledge that middle and upper class families pass on to their children. As a supplement to economic capital, knowledge of the cultural capital is a way of maintaining class status and privilege (Romo, 2004). Social capital is described as the familiarity with, and access to, supportive associations that advance opportunity (Gándara & Moreno, 2002). Collectively, cultural and social capital is the knowledge of what college is, the application process, the graduation rates of institutions, and the function of various degrees. Cultural and social capital can be created within families and their communities. It can also be created from social relationships with people in the dominant culture.

Listening to the Family

These participants became involved in the pre-collegiate program because they knew they wanted to go to college. All participants were inspired by their mothers and in some instances additionally influenced by the fathers. Students told their own stories about the influence their mothers, fathers, and other family members played in persuading them to dream about college.

There's no other option. You've got to go to college.

All the participants were compelled and supported by their families to go to college. The storytelling by Alejandra's mother about her personal educational experience was a particularly powerful legacy for a Latina mother to give to her two daughters. The story began with Alejandra's grandfather in Mexico and continued 25 years later in the United States. Although Alejandra's mother loved school and was an excellent student as a young girl, Alejandra's grandfather paid for only his eldest son to attend college. Alejandra's grandfather was not interested in supporting his daughter's education because "she was a girl and wasn't supposed to go to school" (Alejandra).

Reluctantly, and after repetitive begging by Alejandra's mother, the grandfather consented to pay for two years of secretarial school even though that was not what she wanted to study. She wanted to go to the university like her brother. The grandfather considered secretarial school appropriate and adequate for a Latina. After all, "she was going to get married and would have a husband to support her" (Alejandra). Ironically, it was Alejandra's mother who completed her secretarial program and her brother who dropped out the first year of his studies at the university to get married. Equally, Alejandra's mother was a single parent and the sole supporter of her three children. The legacy that Alejandra's uncle wasted his educational opportunity while Alejandra's mother was denied the opportunity was still recognized by the family 25 years later. Alejandra uses the story to motivate her, a Latina, to not only attend college, but to be in a field that was male dominated.

My mother was 100% behind me since I first started thinking about college. I remember talking to her about college. She was really excited because when she was younger she was one of those girls who loved school. I asked "you really liked school, mom?" She said when she was little her dream had always been to be a teacher. She always wanted to be a teacher and that's what she wanted to study in Mexico at the university. But her father, my grandpa, didn't want to pay for her education because she was a girl. It was just going to be a waste of his money. She was just going to get married and her husband would work so she didn't need an education. My mother had an older brother; my grandpa would only pay the education for the boy. There was no way he was paying the education for my mother because she was a girl and girls didn't need to go to school. The school system works kind of different in Mexico. After she finished middle school, she could go to another school and study two more years to become a secretary and that's what my grandfather had her do. She wanted to become a teacher which would be seven more years of school. She begged and begged to attend the university. My grandpa consented to pay for her to attend two years of secretarial school. Although my uncle was able to attend the university, my mother went to secretarial school. My mother didn't like being a secretary but that was her only option; it was either that or nothing. Because my uncle dropped out the first year to get married, he didn't finish school; my mother, however, did finish her secretarial school. That is something she always lives with. She wanted to get an education, but she couldn't because she was a girl, and

girls aren't supposed to go to school. Her brother wasted the opportunity his father had given to him. If she had been given the opportunity, she wouldn't have wasted it. But because she was a girl, it wasn't her opportunity. That's when she decided her daughters didn't have to go through the same thing she did because she was a woman (Alejandra).

Alejandra acknowledged this kind of gender bias might happen in some families, but not in her family anymore. For Alejandra the idea that a woman stayed home and remained uneducated while the man got educated was perceived as unfair and an idea that belonged to her grandfather's generation. Alejandra's mother had a new legacy for her daughters, a confidence not only that women could go to college, but they could earn degrees in fields traditionally dominated by males. Because of her mother's lost college opportunities 25 years ago, Alejandra was acutely aware of the opportunity that her mother had given to her.

I really feel bad for my mother because I know she could have done something great if she had just been given that opportunity, a chance to go to school. She was an honor student and she liked school. Just because she was a girl she wasn't able to go to college. I think about how unfair it is. My grandfather definitely had different views. His idea was that the woman stays in the house and takes care of the husband and the husband is supposed to go to school and get educated. My mother doesn't want that life for her daughters. Even if I'm in a field that is mostly for men she doesn't say anything because if that's what I love then that's what I should do. I shouldn't have to change my career because it's a field dominated by males. Now that I'm in college I know the opportunity that I have been given and it motivates me even more (Alejandra).

Alejandra observed that the men in her family were complimentary of her being in college, while the women in her family were silent. The support from her uncles was interpreted by Alejandra as being compassionate of her mother's educational experiences at the hands of her grandfather. Alejandra was keenly aware that she was living her mother's dream.

My family is so proud of me and the compliments I've heard are mostly from my uncles. My uncles are really proud of what I'm doing, that I've been able to

surpass all the barriers, and that I'm now in college. My mother had two older brothers and one younger brother. They are all close together, all about the same age as my mother. My uncles saw how my grandfather denied my mother the opportunity to go to the university. My mother's younger sisters, my aunts, were very small when my grandfather died. They didn't get the chance to get to live with my grandfather and get the idea of how he thought; they were not denied an education because they were girls. They had the choice to go to school, but they didn't want to; they got married instead. I think that's why they don't appreciate college like my mother and I do. I think my uncles see what I'm doing, not only for me but for my mother too. They know that's what she always wanted to do. She's living this with me (Alejandra).

With support from her mother and uncles, Alejandra conceded that she was a "non-traditional Latina" in her family who had pursued a college education (Alejandra).

A family frequently came from Mexico to the United States for better opportunities and a better life. This often included a better education for the children. Like Alejandra's mother, it was Monique's mother who spoke about her lack of educational opportunities in Mexico and the hope of a better education for her daughters in the United States. Although Monique's mother only went through the 6th-grade in Mexico, the incentive to go to college came from her mother. Monique acknowledged that it was her mother who let her know that college was her primary goal in life, there was no other option for her.

When we were in Mexico my mother always helped in school. Ever since I was a little girl I remember she was involved in our education. She believes in education and always wanted us to have the best. My mother told me our family came to the United States so we could get a better education since she didn't have the opportunity. She would always say school is the best thing. I think sometimes parents just need someone to put the picture of college in your head, that there's no other option. You've got to go to college (Monique).

Like Alejandra's and Monique's mothers, Andrea's mother was influential in relaying the importance of a college education to her daughter. From an early age Andrea grew up in Mexico knowing education was important. Since she was 13 years old, an age

many Mexicans quit school, Andrea was sent away to attend school in a neighboring town. While preparing Andrea for higher education, her mother also saved \$10,000 to be used for educational expenses in the United States. As a senior in high school Andrea was brought by her mother to the United States to complete her senior year of high school.

I came to America for school. The economic situation in Mexico is not very good and I was feeling confident that I was an American citizen because I was born in the United States. I never learned the language; I never lived here before. My mother brought me here, enrolled me in school, and then she returned to Mexico (Andrea).

During her senior year Andrea learned the English language, and met Daniel who helped to prepare her for college. Although Andrea's mother lived and worked in Mexico, she continued to remind her daughter that education was more important than getting married or her job. Andrea mirrored her mother's values, confirming that a college education would mean she was successful. Although Andrea wanted to earn enough money to live comfortably, she also wanted to be knowledgeable.

I will feel successful when I get well-educated; I don't want to be ignorant. I don't care if I have a lot of money here; I just want to live comfortably. I do want to have a lot of knowledge, especially in another language (Andrea).

What was notable about Andrea's educational journey was her compelling pursuit of knowledge beyond the college degree and the subsequent job that a college degree affords. For Andrea, success includes being well-educated in the United States.

It was Enrique's mother who was his greatest supporter despite the absence of cultural capital in the family. Although encouragement had been unconditional throughout Enrique's journey to college, in reality his mother's support was limited to encouragement.

When I first told my mother I wanted to go to college she hoped that one day that would happen, that I could get there. My mother was always telling me don't give

up. She says there's got to be money somewhere for you. You've done so much and tried so hard. There's no way you are not going to find a way to attend college. It was relieving to hear that and it felt good. She's great. She's always right by my side, so I'm going to keep going. She sees for me to accomplish, to do what I want to do, and succeed. I'm doing a good job. She's the best (Enrique).

Seeing the rapport that Enrique had with his mother, it was easy to understand why he says "she's the best" (Enrique). Now that Enrique was attending college, Enrique's mother acknowledged he was becoming more independent and home less often. She also knew that he wanted to transfer to a baccalaureate university when he completed his associate's degree at Panorama Community College. Although Enrique and his mother did not look forward to the prospect of him leaving home to attend college, she remained unquestionably supportive of his educational dreams.

She says my future is bright. She sees me accomplishing what I want to do. I am also becoming more independent now that I'm in college. Although she likes it when I'm home for dinner, she sees there's no other way. She doesn't like it that I will eventually leave home for a 4-year degree, but when I do leave home for college it will be for a good cause (Enrique).

Like Andrea's mother, Giovanna's father and mother were educated beyond the 6th-grade in Mexico and continued to teach their children the value of education. In Mexico Giovanna's father was a teacher; here he was a roofer. Giovanna's mother was also a teacher in Mexico; in the United States she was a housekeeper. From a young age Giovanna's parents told all their children they needed to go to college. There was no gender bias between the females and males in Giovanna's family. College was as important for the two daughters as it was for the son.

My mother's parents never saw it as bad for girls to go to college. My mother did get her education. She graduated and began her studies to teach. Her family especially influenced her to think higher education was a good way to succeed. Going to school and appreciating what education does to you makes us realize it is good (Giovanna).

Giovanna's father was a strong role model for his daughters and powerful in communicating the value of a college education. He told his children they had a lot of potential and were smart enough to go to college. As teachers, Giovanna's parents continued to take an active teaching role at home. As a family they read and discussed books. Because Giovanna's younger brother was four years old when he came to this country, he was learning how to read and write Spanish at home. Being a responsible student was also an important concept that had been taught in the home.

My mother sees me doing my homework. From a young age we've been taught to be very responsible. That's how we were educated, to be responsible, to do our homework. Because if you don't do your homework, you're the only one affected by it. That's how I see it. If I don't do it my teacher is not going to benefit from it or affected by it, just me (Giovanna).

All the participants had unconditional emotional support from their families. For some participants, the idea of college came before they knew the word "college." Enrique knew he wanted to go to college before he was seven years old in Mexico. He told his mother and from an early age she knew her son, Enrique, dreamed of going to college. For some participants, they inherited the cultural capital from parents. Both Andrea and Giovanna had parents who were educated beyond the 6th-grade in Mexico. These parents instilled in their children the benefits of going to college. Other participants were fulfilling the opportunities, denied to their mothers, to attend college. Inspired by the voice and spirit of their mothers, Monique and Alejandra were the first in their families to attend college. For all the participants, their families have played a critical and supportive role enabling the children to pursue a college opportunity. All their journeys and voices were strong and extraordinary.

We're so attached to our families

All the participants knew that going to college eventually would mean they would have to leave their home and families behind. Although the prospect of leaving home was daunting, the participants also looked forward to attending a university and becoming college graduates. Leaving home was contrary to the traditional Latino families, who wanted their children to stay in the home until they got married. This was particularly true for the female children. Notwithstanding, all the families of the participants recognized and accepted that their children would leave home to attend a baccalaureate institution.

Although Andrea was raised by her single mother, she knew she had more independence as a young Latina because her father was not part of the decision-making process. Still it was difficult to get her mother to consent to Andrea leaving Mexico and going to college in the United States. Like all the other participants in this study, Andrea's mother had supported her daughter's college aspirations even though that meant Andrea would leave home to attend college and be the first in her family to earn a baccalaureate degree.

I think it was good for me not to grow up with my father. My mother had always supported me in so many ways; she had been so supportive of my school. I think if my dad was still with my mother he wouldn't let me come to America so young and by myself to go to college. After the first year, when I graduated from high school, my mother wanted to take me back to Mexico to continue school there. Daniel talked to my mother on graduation day. He told my mother "Andrea is smart and I'm sure she's going to make it. If you let her stay here, she will do fine." Daniel explained to my mother how important education was. But my mother still said "no, no, I'm going to take Andrea back home. She needs me so much." I went to Mexico for the summer with my mother. I kept telling my mother "I really want to go, please, please, please, please." After that my mother talked to Daniel by phone; that's when she agreed to let me come to America. Because my mother didn't know anything about the American college system, she said "I'm not going to be able to pay for your education, Andrea." It's going to be

hard for me and I know I'm going to be away from my mother for a long time. But it's going to be worth it (Andrea).

Like Andrea, Alejandra also left home to attend college, leaving her family miles away. Despite the distance of 100 miles, Alejandra returned home each Thursday after classes and returned for Monday's classes. Alejandra conceded that going away to college was something new for her and other Latinas. It was Alejandra's mother who approved of and motivated her daughter to move away from the Latina tradition and prejudice that denied females access to all career choices.

The Latino culture says you're a girl, a Latina, you can't go away to college. It's not something most girls do and if they do go to college, they stay close to home. They just don't move away like me. I really did something that was out of my culture. Other Latinas from my high school who did go to college stayed home and went to Panorama Community College. They just go to school and go home. Going away to college is really new for the Latinas, especially in our culture. My mother was the one that motivated and supported me to leave home. Because my grandfather was the typical macho, my mother wants to change that bias. She tells me that I can do anything a guy can do (Alejandra).

By Alejandra's admission she did something that was outside of her culture. The motivation and support Alejandra received from her mother to depart from the traditional Latina culture was an important piece that enabled Alejandra to make the decision to leave home and attend a baccalaureate institution. With her mother's support Alejandra felt confident and proud to earn a degree in a male-dominated field.

Although Alejandra was given support and permission by her mother to leave home and go away to college, she lacked the information cultural capital could provide. She had no mentor, no access to information for the college part of the journey. During high school, Alejandra had always joined clubs with Latina friends. Now she knew she would be leaving home without her Latina friends. She remembered the scary part of being away from home and alone.

I was so worried about going to college and I knew absolutely nothing about the college experience. None of my friends were going to Delta State with me. One of my friends stayed here at Panorama Community College which was the friend that was supposed to go with me to Delta State. We made plans that we were going to go together, but she stayed home, and I left for Delta State. I'm thinking "I'm going to be so lost." It was really scary and I'm thinking "what am I going to do?" I'm going to be away from my mom. I'm thinking "I don't know." I was really nervous (Alejandra).

For Alejandra, no one in her family had previously attended college. She was the first to leave home and the first to attend college. Her decision to attend college was a departure from the traditional Latina culture. Alejandra's older brother still lived home. Following his graduation from high school he got a job and contributed to the support of his family. Although he was following the traditional role of the Latino male, he supported Alejandra's non-traditional Latina aspirations and dreams.

I'm a girl and at first when I went away for college my brother wasn't too sure about it, but he's really proud of me. He's proud of me especially since I'm doing greater things than he is. He said he is so proud of me and I should keep up with my dreams (Alejandra).

Although Alejandra's older brother accepted and supported Alejandra's non-traditional Latina role, not all Latinos were sympathetic of her educational aspirations.

Alejandra's mother remained a persistent and unwavering advocate of Alejandra's non-traditional college choices even when others were not. It was Alejandra's mother who encouraged and motivated Alejandra to move outside the traditional cultural and gender roles. After all, it was Alejandra's mother who moved outside her traditional cultural and gender roles when she moved to America as a single woman with three children. Alejandra's mother went one step further and reminded her daughter that "she doesn't care what other people think," (Alejandra). As a Latina in a male-dominated field

Alejandra knew it would be more difficult for her, but she was confident she could do things just as well as males.

Sometimes at church, around Latino people, I tell them I'm going to college. They think I'm living at home and attending Panorama Community College. When I tell them I'm going to Delta State and living in Sherwood, 100 miles from home, they are surprised that I'm on my own. My mother says she doesn't care what other people think; we're not going to live from what they say. My mother knows the importance of education and she supports my college aspirations. She doesn't care if other people want to be biased against women. Because I am in a field that is predominately a male field, I know it's going to be more difficult for me. Besides being a Latina, I'm a female in a field that is mostly for males. That doesn't discourage me or my mother; instead it motivates me. My mother says I can show men that women can do things just as well (Alejandra).

Although college had matured Alejandra and made her more independent, she remained very connected to her family, particularly her mother. Alejandra's mother acknowledged how hard it was for Latinas/os to let their daughters go but felt proud that Alejandra was going to college.

My mother says I have grown up and matured. I still ask her advice for decisions but I make most of those decisions by myself. I'm more independent now, more mature, but to her she says I'm still going to be her girl. We keep in touch every day, so we're a phone call away. We both have cell phones so I could get a hold of her 24/7 (Alejandra).

Both Alejandra and her mother appreciated the genuine and deep affection they have for each other; although Alejandra had grown up and matured, she would always be her mother's little girl.

Alejandra confirmed that she would return to her home and family with a college degree and have a better paying job that she might otherwise have gotten without a college education.

I tell my mother I'm going to work really hard and save enough money to buy her a house after all. That has been her dream always, to have her own home. I tell her she's not going to die before she has her own house. She's going to have her own

house and that's my future plans. I really want to do that for her because she's done so many things for me. So I want to repay her for everything (Alejandra).

The genuine and deep affection Alejandra had for her mother became even more apparent when Alejandra told her dreams of how she will repay her mother for encouraging her to move outside the cultural and gender bias and be the first in her family to receive a baccalaureate degree.

Many Latinas/os stay at home to support their families and to offset the costs of attending college. In all cases, the participants who left home were not concerned with losing their culture or losing the connections to their families. Unlike Alejandra, Enrique stayed home to help his mother while attending the local community college. Ultimately, he planned on transferring to a 4-year university to earn a baccalaureate degree when he graduated from Panorama Community College. Like other Latina mothers, Enrique's mother confirmed "she will miss him a lot and he will become even more independent" when he leaves home (Enrique). Although Enrique was excited about his educational journey, he admitted his reluctance to leave his family.

I have noticed a lot of Anglo kids can't wait to get out of their parents' house. They are excited about being on their own. Latino families feel the opposite. I have noticed in our culture we are raised more loving and warm towards each other than some of the Anglo kids. We are so attached to our families that leaving home is not something we look forward to. That's not one of the reasons why we want to go to college. We really don't want to leave our families behind and be on our own. We really don't want to go away from home (Enrique).

Like Alejandra, Enrique confirmed his genuine affection for his family.

Giovanna was currently in her second year at the local community college.

Because of financial considerations, she was thinking of transferring to Delta State as opposed to attending Central University. When I asked Giovanna's mother what she thought of her daughter leaving home, she was silent for a moment, unable to find words

for how she felt. After a long pause it was Giovanna's younger sister who instead answered the question, her mother nodded affirmatively as she spoke.

Giovanna is very close to my mom, and everyone in the family. I think it will be hard for everyone here to see her go (Giovanna).

In turn Giovanna also answered the question for her mother and once again her mother nodded affirmatively as her daughter spoke. Giovanna predicted she will miss her mother's cooking and tucking her in bed each night.

It will be very hard for me too. I told my mother I'm going to become anorexic, I'm not going to eat. I want my mother's food! I want my mother's food! My mother says she will have to call me a lot of times each day; she will too. When I go out with my friends she doesn't go to bed until I get home, no matter what time it is. I tell her "you're not going to sleep when I leave." She will have to call to tuck me in bed; I will tell her "I'm in bed now" (Giovanna).

The genuine affection Alejandra, Enrique, and Giovanna have for their mothers and families was apparent.

However difficult it was for both the families and the children when their children leave home for college, the pride the families felt for the children who attend college superseded the reluctance of leaving home. Upon graduation from high school, Monique, Enrique, and Giovanna all remained home and attended Panorama Community College. Although Andrea was attending the local community college, she had already left her home and her mother in Mexico. Enrique and Giovanna were in their second year at Panorama Community College and looked forward to transferring to a baccalaureate institution, necessitating that they would leave their families and home. For Monique the community college was a stepping stone to a baccalaureate institution. "Parents feel so proud of the kids when they are smart, more than anything" (Andrea). By her own admission, Alejandra did what was considered rare for a young Latina when she left

home following high school graduation to attend a baccalaureate institution. “I’m barely on my second year and my mother is so proud. She can’t imagine how proud she will feel when I finish” (Alejandra).

Latinos families came to the United States for a better life for their children. For many parents a better life frequently included a college education. Although Latina/o parents frequently did not have the cultural capital to support the path to college, they remained supportive even if it meant the children would leave home to attend college. In all instances, the participants had unconditional support from their families.

Creating Cultural Capital

All the Latina/o students and the families respected the cultural tradition of their children living in the home beyond high school. This was the respected tradition that families brought with them from Mexico. The parents were equally supportive of their children’s independence and maturation through high school and beyond. When the tradition to remain in the home beyond high school was no longer aligned with the educational opportunities, the participants and their families embraced the educational opportunities. Even when the participants left home for college, the Latina/o family unit remained strong and together. The pride parents felt when their children were smart and successful in college superseded the cultural tradition of remaining with the family.

It’s embedded in our heads that Latinos don’t really go to college.

Many Latina/o parents want what is best for their children. However, for Latina/o parents without cultural capital or the understanding of United States high schools, knowing what was the best for their children was difficult. Because the majority of Latina/o parents quit school sometime before or at the 6th-grade, their children frequently

did not have the cultural capital to complete high school. As a result these students relied on siblings and peers, or went without the information required to insure a successful high school experience. In Mexico if a family was not poor and did not need a young person to work, that person would most likely stay in school through the 6th-grade. Both Alejandra and Monique informed us of the educational level of the parents of the pre-collegiate students.

The parents of my pre-collegiate students had to quit school so they could work and help their families. The educational level for the parents was a middle school level (Alejandra).

For most of the kids in my group, their parents didn't have an education of more than 6th-grade. There are a few parents who have finished high school, but not many (Monique).

In the Mexican school system, the family paid for both school and text books after the 6th-grade. If a family was poor and not able to afford the tuition and book costs following the 6th-grade, sending the adolescent into the workforce to earn additional income to help the family made sense. So without the cultural capital of the dominant culture, educators in the United States expected Latina/o parents to make educational decisions as if they did have the appropriate cultural capital.

As a pre-collegiate mentor, Giovanna informed us that the Latinas/os who dropped out of high school probably did not have the encouragement from their parents to remain in school. Because these Latina/o parents have not experienced the benefits of education, they were not able to pass the value of an education on to their children.

Almost all of the parents don't have any background in education. For the Latinos who do drop out of high school in the United States, their parents never went to high school either. Some of their parents don't know how to read or write. So how can you tell your kids to go to school? Their parents don't know why school is important because they never learned it (Giovanna).

Although Monique's mother had a 6th-grade education, she advocated education for her children. It was Monique's mother who informed Monique that education would enable her to get a job other than housekeeping. Like Monique, students who were the first in their families to attend high school frequently did not receive any academic support from their parents. When the parents had only completed 6th-grade, helping their children with homework became improbable. So even when parents were supportive of education, they were unsure of how to help their children.

I know the experience. I had to do everything myself. I remember when I was growing up I saw other kids whose parents helped them with their homework. I had to do it myself. I even had to help translate for my parents (Monique).

For Latina/o parents who did want to help their children, not speaking English became an added barrier.

In addition to language as a barrier, not understanding the high school and college educational systems in the United States became an added barrier. Although parents were supportive of education, they did not know how to navigate their children through high school or what was appropriate for application to college. Equally important, it was not apparent who the student or the parent could rely on for information. It was notable that the high school counselors were not a source of information for Latina/o students and the families.

My mother would always try to stay really involved in what we were doing at school even if she didn't know a lot of how to go about the school process. She still helped me as much as she could and stayed involved. Some of the questions she asked I would say "I don't know mom." Then we would try to find the answers together. We would ask people; ask around to see who could help us. My mother was always stayed very involved in my high school career and everything I did (Alejandra).

Even when Latina/o parents had a high school education in Mexico, the school system in the United States was different enough that the parents were unable to help their children. Although Giovanna's parents were teachers in Mexico, it was Giovanna who had the cultural capital specific to the United States' school system in her family. It was Giovanna's younger sister who received counsel from Giovanna, not her parents or the high school counselor, for her class schedule during high school.

My sister knows what classes I should be taking. She is the one that has helped me out. I am lucky, I have my sister, but a lot of kids don't have anyone. A lot of kids in the pre-collegiate program with me don't know what classes to take. We were given our schedules to fill out, what classes we wanted to take next year, and a lot of kids were just putting down any class. They didn't know what they should be taking. I think that's what the pre-collegiate program could be asking "what do you think you want to do" so you can start taking classes towards that goal (Giovanna).

If high schools that have significant Latina/o student populations were aware of the differences between the Mexican and the United States' educational systems, it is notable that counselors and the structures within the educational systems are not inclusive in helping Latina/o students navigate the high schools in the United States. Many Latina/o students and their parents have no access to the cultural capital of the school systems in the United States. As a result, students have no formal guidance as to which classes are appropriate or required for high school graduation and entrance to college. Lack of knowledge of the American school systems becomes more complex when combined with low teacher expectations. Consequently, these students are more likely to be tracked into low level courses or vocational careers, and out of advanced placement courses (Auerbach, 2002; Bernal, 2002; Brandon, 2003; Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). The cumulative effect is that Latina/o students are not as prepared or recruited for postsecondary institutions at the same rate as non-Latina/o Whites (Dumas-Hines,

Cochran, & Williams, 2001). Latina/o students get the message that they are not holders and creators of knowledge.

Americans stereotype Latinas/os, believing that Latinas/os come to America not for a college education but instead to construction, restaurants, or housekeeping. Latina/o families believe their children cannot go to college, not because they are not smart, but because they are Latina/o. When Latina/o students are interested in college, they don't receive any help from the schools or from the parents on what steps to take.

Well, it's hard because Americans have a stereotype of us. We just live in communities where all we do is clean houses and cook in kitchens. Americans don't think we came to the United States for college. Our families don't believe that we can go to college either. We don't get any help from school or from our parents. My aunt doesn't believe my cousin can go to college. Because he's a Latino, his family only thinks he can work construction when he graduates. He's going to be making good money, and he will be helping her. Even when their kids are smart, Latino parents still believe their kids can't go to college (Andrea).

Latina/o students benefit when their parents encourage them and believe that they could go to college. Without the cultural capital to navigate the American educational system Latina/o parents don't want to encourage or raise the hopes of their children going to college. The downward spiral begins. When parents do not believe college is a possibility for their children, they don't want their children to raise their hopes for what the parent considers impossible. Even these parents want what's best for the children and are protecting the children from life's disappointments. In poor families when the extra income is appealing, school becomes even less attractive. So the downward spiral continues when the parents are not involved in the schools nor understand the American school system. Many Latina/o students are defeated both at home and in the schools.

I think it would be really hard for students to be successful in the pre-collegiate program if their parents were not supportive of college. Maybe not impossible, but it would be really hard. Your parents influence how you think or what you do.

Some parents don't want their kids in the pre-collegiate program. They wouldn't allow their kids to be thinking about college because parents are thinking college is not for their kids. They don't want to give their kids false ideas and hopes that they will get to college because that's not a possibility for them. So when parents aren't supportive of their kids I think it's hard for the kids to try to get to college. It's because of the parents that their kids drop out of school. Parents tell their children they should stop going to school and wasting their time; they should get a job and help out with the house expenses. So sometimes it's because of the parents that their kids drop out of school. I have known a couple of kids who liked school, but they had to quit. Their parents wouldn't pay for anything anymore; their kids had to quit school and start working. So support from the parents is so important. The parents are not involved in the schools. They don't care about grades or how they are doing in school. If the kids have projects or homework, they just don't get involved in the schools. When the kids don't see an interest from their parents, they just don't do it. Sometimes kids need a lot of push from their parents. If there's no interest in school from their parents, the kids just don't bother (Alejandra).

Latina/o parents who receive their education in Mexico commonly do not have an education beyond 6th-grade. These parents lack the cultural capital to motivate or support their children through high school in the United States. Equally important, the middle and high school students and their parents do not receive information from the counselors or the teachers to motivate and inspire them to complete high school. Paired with the repetitive statement "embedded in our heads that Latinos don't really go to college," many high school students don't see college in their future and frequently become drop-outs during high school (Alejandra).

There was this kid who was really smart in high school and all the Latinos brought him down for being smart. Like being smart was something bad. They all have that image of the Latino guys are suppose to be this macho player with the nice car so he can take out the ladies. That's the image of what a guy is supposed to do. But when someone just focuses on school they bring him down and tell him he's a nerd. That's not something that is really accepted in our culture. College is not something they think about. That's just our mindset (Alejandra).

Male Latinos comprise the greatest number of high school drop-outs. This also is reflected in the gender demographics of the pre-collegiate program. There are more

females participating in the pre-collegiate program, and there are more females than male Latinos who go to college.

Incrementally, the decision whether a Latina/o goes or doesn't go to college is made by many people other than the student. Without the student's knowledge, educators create systems that exclude students without the necessary cultural capital. Counselors become the co-conspirators with the school administrators when students without the cultural capital are not informed in a system that already marginalizes them. The Latina/o parent, unknowingly, provides the third strike. Based on inaccurate information learned from the Mexican school system but applied to the American school system, and without the cultural capital or access to the cultural capital of the United States' school system, Latina/o parents are unable to academically support their children. High school Latina/o students without access to the cultural capital are unable to even consider going to college.

What's the point?

Latina/o parents, without cultural capital or knowledge of the United States schools, have a hard time deciding what is best as their children progress through middle school and high school. Even when Latinas/os graduate from high school, they frequently do not believe college is a possibility. The tale that Latinas/os believe is there are no educational opportunities beyond high school; Latinas/os can't go to college. Many Latinas/os believe that college is not a possibility. For the undocumented Latina/o the reality of going to college becomes even more remote. So instead of believing that college is a possibility, and in some cases, instead of completing high school, Latino males enter the workforce.

You see it in our culture that Latinos, male Latinos, rarely even get through high school because they just get a job. There is no future beyond high school except work. There's definitely the idea that we can't go to college because we're Latinos. We are not legal and we can't go to college. I think that brings them down to where they don't even finish high school. What's the point? They're still going to end up working a job where they just use their physical strength and not use their minds. They think high school is a waste of time; that's probably why Latinos just go out in the work force and work. They know they are just going to end up working eventually anyway. They can't go to college, either way they are just going to end up working construction or something similar. So that's what they do, they don't finish high school. They start getting the material things that they want instead of wasting time going to school and just ending up in the same place (Alejandra).

Latinas/os, documented or undocumented, all believe they cannot go to college. It has been repeated so often that it is fixed in their heads. They are unaware of the origin. Alejandra articulated how the undocumented Latina/o understands the possibilities of enrolling in college. The undocumented student is frequently labeled as "illegal" both inside and outside the Latina/o culture. These "illegal" students are simply children of undocumented workers. They had immigrated to the United States along with the parents, possibly when they were very young and just beginning grade school. They have progressed through the United States' school system; they speak and read English fluently. Yet, they are repeatedly called "illegal." The term "illegal" is a demeaning and shameful term for these young adults. It has the connotation of being criminal and dishonest. As children of undocumented workers, who immigrated with their families at a young age, where being criminal and dishonest was not the intent, "illegal" becomes their designation. The repetition of continually being identified as "illegal" has the end result of "bringing them down to where they don't even finish high school. What's the point" (Alejandra)? So for the Latinas/os who are undocumented, they clearly understand that they can't go to college.

Alejandra might have been talking about her older brother who was 22 years old. When he graduated from high school the pre-collegiate program was not yet established. After completing high school he got a job working construction because the pay was higher than other jobs, and he was physically strong. His monetary contribution to the household, where his single mother was the primary wage earner, was also important. As a Latino male, he had it in his head that college was not his opportunity. Although Alejandra's brother had seen her attend college, he feels time had passed him by.

Since he is the older one in the family, and no one told him about college, he just decided to go out in the workforce. I think even if he wanted to go to college he feels his time has passed; that he's too old to back to school or college (Alejandra).

When I asked Enrique, the only male that I interviewed, why males drop out of high school, he told a story about his friend. Enrique cited two reasons why a male student might drop out of high school: lack of interest and lack of finances. Because Latino males have a strong connection to the family, they are happy to work and support the family who benefits from the additional income.

I think it's just lack of interest or maybe they just need the money right now. I have a friend, and he is alone with his mom. His mom is older now so she needs a lot of help. She can't work too hard anymore so he's also been working during high school. He always pretty much knew he wasn't going to college. College is expensive and there's just no way he can support his mom and go to college at the same time. He pretty much knew he wasn't going to college so he never really tried to show much interest in school. His mom depends on him so much; they just have each other. He did graduate from high school and doesn't have any college plans right now. College is expensive and there's just no way he can support his mom and go to college at the same time. His mother definitely needed him to work after school because they needed the money. He just has to work. I'm with my mom also and I do need to work, but I just can't give up the opportunity to go to college. I'm going to try working part-time and help out, but I don't know. Maybe he could have done the same thing, but my mom is younger and she can work more and harder. She works seven days a week now (Enrique).

What Alejandra described as “no educational possibilities beyond high school,” Enrique expressed as lack of interest in school. Enrique also spoke about the simple economics of living in persistent poverty. For Enrique’s friend, the need to support his ageing mother supersedes his interest in high school and possibility of college. Without access to the cultural capital of financing college, Enrique’s friend perceives college as beyond his possibilities. Like many Latino males, the strong connection and responsibility to the family supersedes any educational aspirations they might have otherwise had. In contrast to many families’ income, the cost of going to college appears disproportionate. For Enrique, his mother was able and willing to work seven days a week in support to his college aspirations. Additionally, his sister worked throughout the school year and his youngest brother worked construction during the summer. There were financial considerations attached to many decisions about whether a student might also pursue college.

I asked Enrique what effect knowing that one is not going to college has on how hard one works during high school. Clearly, there is a difference on how Latinas/os view high school based on what they will pursue following high school. For the Latinas/os who plan on pursuing college, they know scholarships are important. These students want to earn good grades and join clubs in high school to enhance their scholarship applications. For the Latinas/os student who plan on working full-time following high school, they don’t see any value in good grades or joining clubs.

If you know that after high school you are going to college you will want good grades. You will have to fill out scholarship applications. You will also want a good background. But if high school is it, you do want to graduate, but who cares if you get the best grades in your class or if you joined all these clubs? It doesn’t matter to anybody; you’re just going to start working after school (Enrique).

Each participant told a story about his or her personal experience. Andrea spoke about her cousin, confirming Alejandra's story that undocumented Latinas/os believe they cannot go to college. It is embedded in their heads that Latinas/os cannot go to college, particularly the undocumented student. Despite the repeated messages that scholarships were available for both documented and undocumented Latinas/os, many Latinas/os, particularly the student without "legal" papers, don't see college as available.

I have a cousin and I tried to motivate him to go to college. I tried so hard but I just give up. He just wanted to finish high school and start working in construction so he could save money and go back to Mexico. That's all he wants to do. They don't see college as available, especially if they don't have legal papers. Without legal papers it seems so hard to go to college. I tell them they can still go to college if they don't have legal papers, they will just be paying more money. If they are really smart, they can get scholarships. If you have a college degree you can get a better job instead of one where you are working outside in the cold. I tell them they can take vacations; I try to picture how good it is (Andrea).

Again, the word "legal" verses "illegal" is used to describe a young person who immigrated to the United States with his parents. Using this terminology has the potential of assigning the negative label of criminal to the Latina/o student. Repeated over and over, the undocumented Latina/o begins to believe that they are not welcome in dominant culture. The unintended consequence of the high out-of-state tuition rate has a way conveying to the poor Latina/o student that they cannot go to college.

I then asked Giovanna's mother who also had two daughters and a son, why males are less likely to complete high school and go to college. Her response confirmed what already had been said by the other participants. Many Latina/o students do not care about high school because they do not think they are going to college. These students are repeating what their parents did; they went to work and helped support their families.

They also are listening to what the culture continually is repeating to them; Latinas/os can not go to college. They are not hearing or believing that Latinas/os can go to college.

It has a lot to do with the parents. Most families are coming from Mexico to the United States and bringing with them their closed minded idea that once you're done with high school, you have to go to work and support the family. Latino families especially raise boys with the idea that their main thing to do is work. There is less support for boys to go to school. This is a cultural thing. Many of the Latino kids in school don't really care about high school because they don't think they are going to college (Giovanna).

Each family had a similar story to tell. Alejandra's brother graduated from high school. Although he had been out of high school for a few years, Alejandra still tried to motivate him to attend college. Alejandra was the person with the cultural capital in her family. She told her brother that was it was not too late for him to enroll in classes at the local community college. Even when Alejandra reminded her brother that in Mexico he was a straight "A" student, he continued to believe that at 22 years old he was too old to attend college.

He didn't go to college; that was his decision. I still tell him it's not too late, he can still get enrolled in some classes at Panorama Community College. That way he wouldn't have to go very far to go to college. I still try to motivate him. He says he doesn't have the brains that I do. I tell him that's not true; he's a really smart person. Back in Mexico he got even better grades than I did. He was the straight A student in Mexico. I asked him what happened and he would say "I don't know, just things changed." So why (Alejandra)?

I asked Alejandra if her brother, who was 22 years old, understood the value of a college education.

I believe he does know now that he has seen me go to college and my possibilities of a better job because I will have a college degree. He thinks, since he was the oldest one and nobody told him, he just decided to go out in the workforce. I think even if he wanted to go to college, he feels like his time has passed and he's too old to go back to college (Alejandra).

Undoubtedly, Alejandra had provided cultural capital within her family. But because her brother was older than she, he did not benefit from the cultural capital like Alejandra's younger sister will. Alejandra's brother graduated before the pre-collegiate program was created at his high school, and so nobody told him he could go to college. Without the cultural capital, the knowledge of how to get to college, Alejandra's brother simply did not know how to go to college. Just like her brother, nobody told Alejandra that she could go to college until Daniel walked up to her in the hall at school and said he would help her go to college. Just like her brother, Alejandra had not thought about college until Daniel encouraged her to consider college. Despite the powerful and inspiring support Alejandra's mother had provided, her support alone would not have been the critical piece that enabled Alejandra to think college was her opportunity.

Latino males know they are not going to college. It is embedded in their minds and in their culture, like Alejandra's brother nobody tells them differently that college is a possibility. For males, who live at home where the mother is the single head of the household, the income earned by the male children is important to the family. Because these adolescent males have great affection for their families, they are happy to help financially. For these Latina/o high school students, it is easy to understand the belief that college is too expensive when instead they could be earning income for the family. For other high school Latina/o students, who are children of undocumented workers, they believe if a person is "illegal," one cannot go to college. For the students who are over and over again identified as "illegal" the close identity of being criminal has the added effect of bringing them down. Either way, because these students know that they will soon be working, completing or excelling in high school holds no promise for them.

You can go to college. Sure, but how?

Latinos perceive many barriers that deter them from going to college, but are without the critical information they need to move forward. Alejandra identified money as a barrier for Latinos whose families, like hers, are supported by a single female parent working for low wages. For the undocumented student who will pay out-of-state tuition rates this is yet another barrier. For the student who is prejudiced by the talk “you can’t go to school if you don’t have papers,” they believe they cannot go to college. For the undocumented student who acknowledges that the undocumented status increased the cost of college, they are still thinking “yaw right, but how?” A teacher or mentor also knows that an undocumented student, without a social security number, has limited scholarships available and no access to government sponsored student loans. If the documented student was dependent on scholarships, this student has a double jeopardy in funding his or her college aspirations.

Most Latinos get influenced just by the talk. (Using a deep gruff voice Alejandra repeats the refrain heard in the heads of Latinas/os) “Oh, you can’t go to school, you can’t go to school if you don’t have papers.” That’s what we hear. Since we don’t really have the information or someone to help and guide us, we keep thinking we can’t go to school because we are not legal. Sure, teachers can tell you that you can go to college but (using that deep gruff voice again) “yaw, right, but how?” Sure teachers can tell you it’s a possibility but what do you know? In the back of your mind you are thinking “how am I going to do it if I’m not from here? You don’t really want people who are not citizens or do not have a social security number. They are not really accepted in schools and if they are they have to pay huge amounts of money. It’s hard enough to pay regular tuition let alone trying to pay like out-of-state prices. Teachers do say you can do anything, you can go to college but they don’t really guide you, they don’t really show you the way because (in a deep animated voice) “yaw, what would you know, you’re legal! (Alejandra laughs) You don’t have to struggle with what we have to struggle through.” That’s what we are thinking, “sure, but how?” (Alejandra).

Alejandra openly translated what Latinas/os are really thinking when Anglos are telling Latinas/os they could go to college. Latinas/os are aware of the barriers to college which

seem insurmountable. Latinas/os think that not only do they not have the information they need, but there is no one they can depend on to guide them through the process. In the end, Latinas/os feel they are not accepted in the dominant culture, and they are not accepted in the schools.

Monique's younger brother was not planning on attending college for financial reasons. He believed that scholarships are only for the students with a 4.0 grade point average. Although Monique received a local scholarship for her first two years at Panorama Community College, she did not have a scholarship at Delta State. While Monique's brother witnessed Monique's financial struggles he was not being sure how he would finance his own college costs and this ended his college aspirations. Without Monique's cultural capital and influence, her brother would have had it in his mind that he couldn't go to college.

When my brother first started high school he wasn't planning on attending college because of the money. Although his high school grades were better than mine, he didn't think his grades were good enough for a scholarship. A lot of the kids in the pre-collegiate program think they need 4.0 grade point average to get a scholarship. I think it's because their parents don't know about scholarships. It's in their minds that they can't go to college. I don't know why my brother thought the same thing (Monique).

Alejandra also spoke about a friend who wanted to go to college. Unable to figure out how to finance college eventually she gave up.

One of my friends was planning to go to college. She was going to pay for college on her own by taking out bank loans to go to school. But during her last couple of years in high school she wasn't as dedicated anymore. When people saw that she wasn't as dedicated in school anymore they would say college was a waste of money. She was going end up coming out of school with a big debt and not much of an education. That's what people would say (Alejandra).

For the students who are documented, they know in-state tuition rate was hard to pay; for the undocumented students they know they have the added financial barrier of

out-of-state tuition. Although many Latinas/os hear from the dominant culture that they can go to college, without addressing the barriers those words become hollow promises.

I had to be the first one to show my brother and sister the way to college.

When one child successfully navigates from high school to college, the whole family is watching and learning. Of the five participants in my study, Alejandra, Monique, Enrique, and Giovanna had younger siblings at home. Only Andrea was an only child. In each family the participants had a positive role in influencing the younger siblings to consider college as their opportunity. Alejandra's entire family watched Alejandra navigate from high school to college.

My mother told me, she asked my little sister who her role model was. My sister told my mother I was her role model. When my mother asked why, my sister replied because I was really smart and was going to college. My sister said all these great things about me. That motivates me to even be better and not fail. I know my little sister looking up to me and if I do well she will follow in my foot steps (Alejandra).

Although Alejandra's younger sister was in the pre-collegiate program, she received a tremendous amount of cultural capital from her older sister. Alejandra became a role model for her younger sister and in turn became additionally motivated by the role she played in her sister's life. Alejandra realized much was at stake, and if she did well, her sister would also do well. Alejandra was clearly a pioneer, leading the way for her younger sister. Alejandra's influence on her younger sister was remarkable. The following conversation Alejandra recalled between Alejandra and her sister was filled with banter and laughter. Alejandra was unmistakably proud of her younger sister.

I have asked my sister "do you want to go to college Raphaela?" She would say "yes, I'm going to college and I'm going to do even greater things than you, Alejandra." I reply "oh really!" She says "YES!" and I'm saying "OH! We'll see about that!" She says "I'm going to work really hard in high school and I'm going to get a 4.0!" I counter "OH really!" She responds "Yes!" I answer "we'll see

about that!” She’s just an awesome little girl and she’s really motivated. When a teacher at school asked her what she was going to do in her life she said “after I graduate from high school I’m going to college.” Every time she gets asked that same question she says she’s going to college. She says “I’m going to work really hard in high school and I’m going to get a 4.0!” I have never heard her say that until I went to college. I know she is looking up to me and I know I have influenced her (Alejandra).

The idea that Latinas/os can’t go to college had been replaced with the chant “I’m going to college” by Alejandra’s younger sister (Alejandra).

Alejandra gained cultural capital that benefited her whole family. Alejandra’s younger sister will not only be guided through the enrollment and scholarship process, but she also knows that females can leave home and go away to college.

My mother says she doesn’t have any worries because when my sister goes to college I’m going to be there for her. My mother also knows the process because she saw me. I would talk to her and she would help me. My younger sister has me to show her how everything is done. The hard part was with me because we didn’t know anything about anything. My mother knows that I’ll help my sister now (Alejandra).

The powerful confidence that was evident in Alejandra’s younger sister was absent in her older brother. No one told Alejandra’s brother that he could go to college during his middle or high school years, and so his opportunity to go to college had passed him by. However, Alejandra’s younger sister was confident that she was going to college; she was persistently telling her teachers and her family that she was going to college.

Enrique’s siblings also benefited a great deal from his example. With only the cultural capital provided by his pre-collegiate mentor and Daniel, Enrique successfully navigated through the college process as an undocumented immigrant. In turn he will pass that cultural capital to his younger brother and sister, who both said they were going to college.

I'm the oldest one in my family so I had to be the first one to show my brother and my sister the way to college. I hope the pre-collegiate program does to my brother and sister what it did to me (Enrique).

Enrique's mother also values the cultural capital Enrique acquired. Enrique and his younger sister will both be attending Panorama Community College together for a year before he graduates and transfers to a baccalaureate institution. He will be available to help her navigate her freshman year at college.

My mother says that my younger sister is happy because when she gets out of high school she will go to Panorama Community College. She will be there with me for a year before I graduate (Enrique).

Even though Giovanna did not have older siblings to help her through the college application process, she understood the value of cultural capital in the family. Giovanna could be talking about either Alejandra or Enrique and the cultural capital they provided to their younger siblings.

Some of my friends that I graduated with have older siblings who are already in college helping them. They look up to them. That would be a big help. I wish I had an older sister or brother that could have helped me or told me what things were or would take me to college and help me fill out all the papers. (Giovanna).

However, as the eldest sibling who was attending college, Giovanna acquired and passed the cultural capital on to her mother and younger siblings. It was Giovanna's sister who talked about the cultural capital gained from Giovanna.

My mother knows what classes I should be taking but my sister Giovanna is the one that has helped me. I think how difficult it must be when you don't have someone to help you, I have my sister Giovanna, but a lot of kids don't have anyone (Giovanna).

Giovanna's brother, who was in the 4th-grade, had already confirmed that he was going to college. Both Giovanna and her younger sister knew that they will have completed college and be available to answer questions for their brother. Giovanna also was willing

to financially support her brother during college. Because of Giovanna's affection for her family she also carries on the cultural tradition of helping to financially support other members in her family.

I'll be graduated from college and I will be able to support him financially if there is a need for it. When I graduate I will have a good job and if I can help financially with my sister then I would do that also. But I don't think she will need my help. She is too smart. I don't think she will be worried about getting money (Giovanna).

Alejandra, Enrique, Monique, and Giovanna, all with younger siblings at home, recognized the value of cultural capital they provided at home. The parents, who also lacked the knowledge of the educational system in the United States, equally acknowledged the role the participants played showing the younger siblings that a Latina/o can go to college. All the participants became role models for their extended families dispelling the predominately held idea that Latinas/os can't go to college. The next step was to address and eliminate the cultural barriers.

Living Between Cultures

Many Latinas/os have been excluded from fully participating in the dominant culture. Even those participants who have gone through the American school systems, speak fluent English, and live in our neighborhoods, live in the borderlands and feel the barrier between Latina/o culture and the dominant culture in the United States. Although from the perspective of the dominant culture Latinas/os were welcome, the rejection and prejudice Latinas/os strongly feel appears subtle or non-existent to those of us who reside in the dominant culture.

There's always that barrier; we're from different cultures.

It was true that many Latina/o families come to the United States for a better life. Yet although economic life in the United States may be an improvement, Latinos struggle with feeling isolated from the dominant American culture. Alejandra expressed what it felt like for Latinas/os who attend school in the United States. Although Latinas/os and Anglos are in the same schools in the United States, Alejandra felt like she lived and attended school in the borderlands. Alejandra talked about what happened in high school classroom for many Latinas/os.

Unless you were like born in the United States, live here all your life, and you were always with Anglos, there will be a barrier. There's always that barrier; we're from different cultures. Although Latinos and Anglos are together in classes, it is obvious in group projects how separate we are. The Latinos would talk among themselves and the Anglos would among themselves, then they would try to come together at the end of the project. It's obvious that it's hard to try to mix the two groups. We're so different in so many ways. You obviously feel more comfortable with a person who knows about you, how you were raised, your culture, and all the struggles we've been through as opposed to a person who has a whole different life in a different country, and doesn't really understand what it's like to be Latina/o (Alejandra).

Although Latinas/os attend the schools in the United States, they remain marginalized and outside the dominant American culture. They live and attend school in the borderlands. They feel unwelcome in the schools and the dominant American culture. Although Alejandra couldn't say she was "pushed aside," she doesn't want to be "completely worthless."

I didn't feel like I was pushed aside with the Anglos but of course they got along together very well, better than they got along with me. I knew we were from a different race, we had different ideas, and we had a whole different culture. You are never going to mix an Anglo and Latina together and have that same connection as a Latino and Latino or an Anglo and an Anglo have. So I knew that's impossible. I think Latinos hold back from Anglos because we have a fear that Anglos are going to think we are completely crazy and stupid. With Hispanics you can say whatever, and sure they'll laugh but we're a community.

We have each other's back. Even if you mess up, you wouldn't be judged because they're also Latinos. There's a big difference between us and what you do or what you say. It's like we're always watching out. You know that you wouldn't be a fool in front of them and have them think that you're just completely worthless. No wonder Anglos don't like us (Alejandra).

"No wonder Anglos don't like us" echoed in my head for a long time following the third and last interview with Alejandra. I don't think Alejandra would have or could have said this to me during our first interview. Despite the fact that we were neighbors and lived in the same communities, the Anglo and Latina/o lived in separate cultures. Alejandra felt "stupid" and "worthless" in the Anglo culture. Despite how Anglos feel individually, the dominant culture tolerates a level of racism and bias that is pervasive and extends into the lives of all Latinas/os. While racism and prejudice is so invasive and persistent in the dominant culture, the members of the dominant culture might even consider prejudices to be minimal or non-existent. However, this feeling is not shared with the Latina/o who feels the persistent and daily struggles of racism. The consequences are that Latinas/os have a difficult time living fully in both cultures.

Alejandra acknowledged that it was hard to mix Latinas/os and Anglos. Although Alejandra admitted she felt more comfortable with other Latinas/os with whom she identified culturally, it generally was expected by Anglos that the Latinas/os assimilate into the dominant American culture. However, assimilating into the dominant culture require Latinas/os to relinquish living in their own culture. So in order for the Latina/o to fully participate in the educational system they are required to be absorbed into the dominant culture.

Latinos stay in groups with Latinos, we don't mix with Anglos and that's the deal. My friend and I would get comments like we were trying to become Anglos. We were hanging around with them and you're not supposed to do that. You're supposed to hang out with your own race and leave the Anglos by themselves.

But I had my group of Anglo friends in the same class; those are the ones I would talk to. I've known them since middle school and I would stay in contact with them. We were just trying to keep those connections with them. The people in my class that I have known for awhile knew even if I hung around Anglos that didn't mean I didn't like Latinos or I wasn't Latina. They would still talk to me and I would still get along with them and with my friends. Some Latinas/os I didn't talk to them and they didn't talk to me. We just didn't get each other. When you saw a Hispanic hanging around just with Anglos you would say 'gringo' or 'gringa' and they were rejected from that whole the Mexican community (Alejandra).

However, Latina/o students in high school understand the unspoken "deal" that has been in place for generations. Latinas/os understand they are not welcome to participate as a Latina/o in the dominant social structure. It might be thought by these Latina/o adolescents that only if the Latina/o student was willing to become more Anglo, they would be welcomed in the dominant social culture. For the Latina/o students who are trying to bridge cultures, they are thought to betray the native Spanish culture by other Latina/o students. In an effort to be accepted in the dominant Anglo social community Latinas/os are thought by their peers to turn their backs on the Latina/o culture and to betray other Latina/o students. Excluding the Latinas/os from fully participating in the dominant culture denies the Latina/o student the social experience that in turn provides the cultural capital of the dominant culture. As a Latina mentor Monique shared her personal experiences with her pre-collegiate students.

There's a girl in my pre-collegiate group who says there is an attractive Latino boy who has only Anglo friends. He wants to stop being Hispanic or showing he's Hispanic. I told her that's not true. I told her when I grew up we used to believe the same thing. You don't want to stop speaking Spanish because you want to stop being Hispanic but because you are ashamed of your culture. It's just an immature thing. What I told her was that doesn't mean he was ashamed of being Hispanic; you have to have all kinds of friends. You don't have to see them as a different culture. We are all people, we are all the same, and we just have different beliefs. That doesn't mean you are going to forget your Spanish culture or show off and say you can't speak Spanish. The problem I have is if you are going to interact with Anglos that doesn't mean you don't want to speak Spanish and forget your culture. When I grew up I used to think the same thing. When you

go through college it's different; you're more mature. You know how high school is, you have to be popular. I see a big difference in college; I love it. I felt like everyone is more mature. I tell my kids my experiences, not just to talk about myself, but because it's a pattern I remember. It's been four years since then, and I see these girls going through the same thing (Monique).

It is easy to understand why Latina/o adolescences are ashamed of their language and culture. For Latina/o students, Spanish as a language and culture is not honored in the K-12 school system. Latina/o adolescents, who have been segregated or set apart for much of their educational experience, have little understanding of, or support by the dominant culture. In this way schools have failed to respond to the reality, denying both the Anglo and Latina/o students the experience of a multicultural education.

Finding a Voice

Latina/o parents are routinely silenced in the schools when they are unable to speak English. They do not receive the same information Anglo parents receive. When Latina/o parents are silenced, they frequently are stereotyped as not caring about their children's education. I have documented the love and pride Latina/o parents feel for their children. Although Latina/o parents might not have an English speaking voice, they have a voice. The challenge is for the school districts to hear the Latina/o voices.

I remember I had to translate for my parents.

Not knowing the English language is a barrier for many parents as well as the pre-collegiate participants. It changes how the family communicates with the child's teachers and the family's participation in the schools. The school district hired two liaisons to translate between families and teachers but that was not always successful. The liaisons provided by the schools neither acted as an advocate nor translated for the parent. The following story was told by Giovanna's younger sister.

Last year there were things going on at my high school; we didn't have a math teacher and I was falling behind in math. At night Giovanna would help me with my homework. My mother tried to contact the school's bi-lingual liaison to see what was happening and how the school was going to fix it, but the liaison never called back despite repeated calls. Giovanna and I had to go with my mother to the principal's office and translate. So even if parents do care, because of the language barrier they have no way to voice their concerns when things go wrong (Giovanna).

Children also are asked to translate for their parents during parent/teacher conferences at school; this becomes a barrier between the teachers and the parents. I asked Enrique what happens when children translate at school for their parents and teachers. I wondered if the children translate correctly. Enrique laughed as I asked the question "do students translate completely for their parents" and he finished my sentence saying "or leave some things out" (Enrique)?

I don't think I ever did that but I'm sure students do it. It would have helped if my mother could speak English and be able to communicate more with the teachers or the people at the school (Enrique).

From Monique's perspective as a mentor, having a child translate for his or her parent had consequences beyond the student translating correctly. It also prevented the parent from engaging in candid conversations with the child's teacher.

If there's a problem with the student, whose going to translate? Will the student translate the exact same thing? Some times the student is not a good translator or the parents might not want to say something in front of their child. I guess it's possible to find some one to translate for them, but most parents don't have the time after work (Monique).

Monique saw the struggles for the parents of pre-collegiate students as well as her own mother. In Mexico, Monique's mother was involved in the schools, but in the United States, without English language skills, there was no way for her mother to be involved in the schools.

When my family first came here there weren't a lot of bilingual people or even Spanish people. I was the only Latino in my class. I remember I had to translate for my parents. Now, nine years later my mother is helping at the school cafeteria. She's able to do that without communicating a lot; she knows English, but not 100% perfect (Monique).

Latina/o parents, who do not speak English, have no way to voice their concerns when things go wrong for their children in school. Although the school district hired two liaisons to translate, translation was not available for Giovanna's mother when she asked for help. At parent/teacher conferences it is routine for the children to translate for the parents when they do not speak English. This has its own problems. Students are not always dependable for accurate translations and parents might be reluctant to be candid in front of their children. For the parents who do participate, their role is marginalized. When parents are unable to speak accurately or freely about their educational concerns and their children, their role is marginalized in a system that relies heavily on a parent being an advocate for the children.

I don't know what my problem is.

When Monique first came to the United States, she spoke about being very shy and the only Latina/o in her 4th-grade. She remembered being so shy she did not want to answer the phone. The school district did not provide Monique with adequate support to learn English. Instead she was provided an English speaking volunteer who wanted to learn Spanish herself. Monique attributed learning English ultimately to working a job requiring her to speak English, and not the result of something the school district provided for her. The fact that she continued to have an accent was a continual concern of hers. In one conversation about her accent she rhetorically asked "I don't know what my

problem is” (Monique). Monique continued to be wounded and disappointed by her English skills.

I’ve been here in the United States for 12 years, and I still have an accent. I know some Latinos who have been here nine years, and they don’t have an accent at all (Monique).

During high school Monique continued to have difficulty with the English language but to satisfy her foreign language requirement she took French; Spanish was not an option at her high school for native speakers. Although she was able to read and write Spanish at a 4th-grade level, she was not given the opportunity study Spanish as a native speaker during high school. The last time I talked to Monique her advisor at Delta State informed her that in addition to her major in social work, she was required to have a minor. She was thinking of a business minor. With a major in social work, Spanish was not considered a desirable option by Monique or her counselor. Monique’s experiences confirmed the expectation that Latinas/os were required to assimilate into the dominant American culture by many educational institutions. As a native Spanish speaker able to read and write in her native language, Monique was dismissed by her college counselor.

Because of Monique’s shyness she missed valuable information that she could not ask for. I asked Monique if she had a scholarship at Delta State. She told me her father had paid for her tuition that semester. I asked her if she had applied for any scholarships. She cited she didn’t know how to go about it. Monique experienced what many Latinas/os encounter. Without the cultural capital and language skills, they do not ask for help or receive the opportunities available to other students.

Like Monique, Alejandra was a native Spanish speaker in a high school that offered only Spanish as a foreign language. As a result she had no foreign language options. During this time the district wide Latina/o high school population was 31.6%.

All we had at my high school was Spanish as a foreign language. Because I already knew Spanish, that was not an option for me. The counselor said that would not be a problem since it was the only class required and there weren't any possibilities of me taking another foreign language other than Spanish. She was the one who told me but I wasn't really sure of the classes I needed to go to Delta State. Thankfully I had taken all the classes they required. I was good but it was a lucky thing (Alejandra).

As native Spanish speakers, the language skills of Latinas/os students were summarily dismissed as unimportant. Although providing Latina/o students the ability to read and write at a high school level in their native language was not important at the school district level, every Anglo student was provided the opportunity to speak, read, and write Spanish, in addition to four years of instruction in their native English language. Native Spanish speakers were also under served when they were not provided a foreign language opportunity during high school. They became marginalized when the Spanish skills they did have were not honored or documented at the high school level.

Andrea, Monique, and Alejandra all experienced prejudice as they learned the English language. Although Andrea's English was difficult to understand at times, she was employed and promoted to sales by a real estate company. Employees at the real estate company were aware of her English language skills at the time of employment and her subsequent promotion. There's no justification for treating her unkindly and rudely during her employment with them as she learned the English language.

Monique was underserved by the school district. When Monique first came to the United States as a 4th-grader, she was the only Latina/o in her grade, although probably

not the only Latina/o in the elementary school. The school educators provided her with a volunteer who could not speak Spanish herself, but had an interest in learning Spanish. Providing a volunteer, who was neither bi-lingual nor an ESL teacher, underserved Monique as she progressed through her grade level while concurrently learning English. The school district continued to marginalize and socially isolate Monique by not providing her with adequate ESL instruction. Because Monique was very shy and her parents did not have a voice to ask for more, Monique was never supported by the school district in her journey to learn the English language. Because Monique spent a great amount of her school time in the library reading, she was also denied the cultural and social capital that was available in the classroom.

I was the only Hispanic in my grade and no one spoke Spanish. A woman who was volunteering her time took me out of the classroom and drew pictures for me. She showed me this is a horse but she didn't speak Spanish. She knew a few words in Spanish but she mostly wanted to learn Spanish. That was why she started teaching me English. She was teaching me a little bit of English. I couldn't really communicate. For some reason I remember that I was able to understand English even though I didn't know the language. The kids at school were really nice to me. They invited me to play. At first you see how everyone acts differently. The games they played were different. If you don't how to communicate how you do know how to play games? When I first came to the United States I was really shy and didn't want to talk. That's why I still have an accent. I didn't have any Anglo friends so I didn't get to practice English. I don't know what my problem is (Monique).

Monique remained isolated throughout grade school and middle school. She reported by the time she started high school there were more Latinas/os in the school district. However, she had lasting doubts about her self worth. She was still asking herself "I don't know what my problem is." Monique was not provided with any opportunities to develop the confidence that would have made it possible for her to venture out of the borderlands and into dominant culture.

In retrospect, Monique was able to talk about how she felt during high school. Although she felt less isolated during high school, she still felt “embarrassed,” “inferior,” and “afraid.” Because she felt inferior or second-rate, she did not join any clubs, other than soccer, during high school. Because soccer is played in Mexico, Latinas/os feel soccer is their sport. Beyond soccer, she remained marginalized from the social landscape of high school.

Unfortunately I never joined any clubs at school. I graduated from high school but now I look back and realize I didn’t do a lot of things because I was embarrassed and felt inferior. I just felt bad for myself. I look back and what exactly did I do in high school? I did join the soccer team. Even though people were treating me good and helping me, I was totally afraid (Monique).

“Embarrassed,” “inferior,” and “afraid” were the consequences of being marginalized and isolated from other students and her environment. Monique had a profound and continuing sense of loss for what she experienced during her grade school and high school years. Feeling “more equal” in college, Monique was becoming more socially confident.

Although Monique was able to successfully attend a baccalaureate institution, her English language skills continued to be problematic to her. When I spoke to her in her junior year, she continued to doubt herself. Although Monique was struggling with learning the English language in high school, she took French for her foreign language requirement. As a native speaker, Monique was not permitted to take Spanish in high school, and the writing and reading skills she did have in her native language were never validated or documented. Now, as a junior in college, when Monique’s counselor said she was required to have a minor in addition to her major in social work, her college counselor did not suggest Spanish as a viable option. Monique’s language skills

continued to be dismissed and the message sent to all Latinas/os is they are not holders and creators of knowledge.

Like Monique, Alejandra was not permitted to take Spanish in high school to satisfy her foreign language requirements for college. Since the high school that Alejandra attended offered only Spanish as a foreign language, she could not satisfy her foreign language requirement in high school. For Latina/o students like Alejandra who were preparing for college, her foreign language options were unsatisfactory. Although students like Giovanna, who also took French in high school, boast that she now knows three languages, her Spanish skills were not documented on her school transcript. For all Latina/o students who were native Spanish speakers their language skills were neither recognized and acknowledged, nor provided the opportunity by the educational system to excel beyond the current level.

Living with Prejudice

My participants initially were resistant to describe their life's experiences as prejudice or racism. Instead they used words like "well, sometimes" (Andrea) or "I did kind of feel bad" (Alejandra) about events that occurred during high school. The participants talked about "feeling more equal" (Monique) and "getting to a comfortable spot when I meet new people who are American" (Enrique) following high school. However, it was Alejandra, Andrea, and Daniel who used the word racist specifically. All the participants experienced marginalization because they were Latina/o.

Was he being biased or racist or what?

The participants were not been welcomed in the mainstream culture of the United States. Additionally, Latina/o participants were marginalized by other students, faculty,

and administrators in the high school. As a Latina/o living in the United States, Daniel was able to relay his personal experiences to Andrea, who had come just recently to the United States. It was Daniel who predicted that Andrea would experience racial prejudice. Daniel also acknowledged that as a Latina Andrea would have to work twice as hard.

Daniel told me it's going to be really hard to go to college. First, because Latinos don't have the money; Latino parents don't have the resources to go to college. Second, I don't speak English very well. Daniel told me I would have to work twice as hard as Americans. He told me it's going to be hard because sometimes people are very racist (Andrea).

I asked Andrea if Daniel was right about people being racists. Initially she was reluctant to reveal her experiences of racism. However, she talked about the Mexican stereotypes that Anglos use to ridicule her.

I've never been around anybody who has been racist towards me. Well, sometimes. When you say you are from Mexico, you get stereotyped. Somebody starts making fun about tacos or our spicy food, or big hats. I try to ignore them, but I've been around them (Andrea).

Andrea also relayed how she was treated at work, how co-workers made fun of her English skills. Although this was subtle, it showed intolerance and small-mindedness in Andrea's work environment.

Not knowing how to speak English was so bad because when I first came to the United States. Without English I couldn't work and when I could find jobs, the jobs I had were really horrible. I was trying to finish high school at the same time. My dream was to finish high school and learn English. The hardest part was when people would say "what is she saying?" Some people were so mean (Andrea).

Intolerance and small-mindedness is a form of bigotry. When Andrea experienced racism both at work and socially, her only recourse was to ignore them. Because Andrea had only recently come to the United States, Daniel felt he had to inform her about racism. For the other participants, they all had their personal experiences of racism.

Alejandra told the following story of being marginalized at her high school. She also told about her racist treatment by a judge at a state-wide school sponsored speech competition. Her mother was present when Alejandra relayed her story to me. Initially, Alejandra spoke about “just feeling kind of bad” about the way she and other Latinas/os were treated when they joined clubs (Alejandra). Ultimately, Alejandra acknowledged the obvious, that the judge was bigoted at the speech contest.

I did kind of feel bad because in most of the clubs at school. Except the Hispanic clubs, Hispanics did not join them. It was mostly just me and my friend who would always join the clubs, just me and her as Hispanics. Student council had more Hispanics but the other clubs didn't have Hispanics involved at all. I remember talking about it when we were at a speech competition. In all the competitions we did we never did see one other Latino. Even when we went to state competitions we didn't ever see one other Hispanic. It was just me and her. I remember a state competition we won second place although we were close to first place. We suspected that we lost first place because we were Hispanic. There were four judges. We were ranked first place by two judges, second place by the third judge, and last place by the fourth judge. We were surprised when we were ranked last by that one judge. How did that happen? Was it because we were the only Hispanics in the competition? When our coach looked at our ranking he also commented “he ranked you last?” We were all puzzled at being ranked last by one judge when all the other judges ranked us first or second place. We knew we weren't that bad because we had gotten first and second place by the other judges and now for us to go to the bottom by one judge was confusing. Because we were ranked last by one judge we went second place instead of first place. It was close. I asked my friend “was he being biased or racist or what?” (Alejandra)

After Alejandra relayed her story I looked at Alejandra's mother and asked her what she said to her daughter when she had been pushed out of something that maybe she should have had because she was a girl or Latina? Alejandra translated for her mother.

If you trip you have to learn to get up. She says she's always supported me with not letting things like that get in my way, not getting me upset and bringing me down. Because that's what some people are trying to do, bring me down so I'll just get out of their way. My mother has always taught me how to get up (Alejandra)!

Alejandra's mother was charitable towards the racist treatment of her daughter. She did not want Alejandra to lose her spirit or her confidence. Systematic racism is demoralizing and disheartening for the recipient. Like Daniel's conversation with Andrea about racism, how to react to racism must be a conversation every Latina/o parent has with his or her child. Alejandra felt the bias or racism in her life.

Not too much since the high school. There wasn't a lot of racism going on but there were some occasions like the speech contest. At the speech contest there were so many schools and so many people; my friend and I were the only Hispanics. I felt out of place and said to my friend "maybe we shouldn't be here." I was a little bit hard but for the most part it's not bad... (Alejandra).

Alejandra's voice trailed off, not finishing her sentence. Members in the dominant culture routinely and publicly strip Latinas/os of their dignity. The prejudice is so embedded in the dominant culture that it is unashamedly accepted by the majority. Alejandra's speech instructor said and did nothing. All the outstanding young adults participating in the speech contest witnessed that racism was okay and was standard behavior by members of the dominant culture. At the state level, one judge felt confident being openly racist without consequences by peers who also reside in the dominant culture. When the speech instructor, the competition participants, and the other judges don't notice or react to the overt racism by one judge, racism becomes entrenched in our high schools and in the dominant culture. The racism is accepted casually by those who reside in the dominant culture, while unaware of how devastating it is for the recipient who lived in the borderlands. Latina/o mothers routinely teach their children how to counter racism. The end result of racism is that it demoralizes Latina/o students and stops them from fully participating in the mainstream culture. Persistent racism continues to push Latina/o students further out of the American educational system.

Because of the racism that Latina/o students frequently experience, they feel rejected and not welcomed in the mainstream and dominant American culture. High schools sponsor clubs because they are valuable to the students. In all schools, but high school in particular, school sponsored clubs are an important social event and way of belonging. Participation in school sponsored clubs also is important in securing scholarships. Alejandra joined various clubs during high school. She was secretary for the Los Compañeros (a Latino student council), joined the speech team, and participated in mock trials. She was also a member of the National Honor Society and FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda), both nationally sponsored organizations. Often Alejandra joined clubs, like the debate club, along with one other Latina friend.

Latinos feel comfortable with someone in their own culture, their own race. Most of the high school clubs didn't have any Latinos. No Latino would feel comfortable going and signing up for a club where there would be all Anglos. They would feel like they would be rejected and just set aside (Alejandra).

Alejandra said what every high school counselor, faculty, administrator, and Latina/o family at her school knows. The fact that Latina and Latino students are systematically "rejected and set aside" tells the truth that they are not welcome in the mainstream social structure of the high schools, and the schools are not providing a multicultural education for all the students (Alejandra). This is the consequence of racism. When schools systematically marginalize a student's ability to join clubs, they are institutionalizing a culture that sanctions racism, and all students lose. However, the biggest losers are the Latina/o students who live in the borderlands and are not afforded the opportunity to go to college.

Alejandra also revealed the prejudice she felt at Delta State. The prejudice she felt was both for being a woman in a non-traditional field and for being a Latina. Although Alejandra was living and going to school in the mainstream American culture, she disclosed that some people might not see her as belonging.

I don't feel too bad but I'm studying in a field that is not traditionally for females. All of the bigger girls that are in the same field of study grew up in the United States. They know the culture and are used to everything. I've been living in the United States for along time but I think people might not see I belong in that field of study or I don't belong doing that. I know girls have to work twice as hard as guys and being Hispanic I think I have to work three times as hard. That's just how I feel. (Alejandra).

Alejandra started her statement with "I don't feel too bad" and repeatedly questioned if "people might not see I belong" or "I don't belong doing that" (Alejandra). She felt badly about not belonging.

Andrea revealed similar experiences of not belonging. She spoke about being made to feel stupid by her counselor for asking a question. The unintended consequence was that Andrea no longer went to her counselor for advice for her degree requirements.

I pretty much decide on my own what classes I take at Panorama Community College. I was calling Daniel every day for registration advice my first semester. Registration was so painful. I remember going to the counselor at Panorama Community College and almost crying. My English wasn't very good so I was trouble and I couldn't take many classes because of my English level was low. I remember one time asking the counselor about Astronomy and what Astronomy means. She told me I don't think you're going to be able to go to that class, it's really hard. Well I know that. She treated me like I was stupid. Probably she was doing her job but she wasn't giving me the support that I needed. She was a really bad counselor. I didn't say that, but that was in my mind

Clearly Andrea's counselor at Panorama Community College was not responsive to Andrea's needs. When Andrea left the counselor's office "almost crying" she experienced what it felt like to navigate through the American educational system without cultural capital (Andrea). She felt like she didn't belong. For a student without

cultural capital, the counselor's office was where Andrea should go to receive the information she needed. Once again, Andrea, like many Latinas/os, was made to feel pushed aside, marginalized, and not belonging to the mainstream American culture.

I felt more equal but not equal

Although many Latinas and Latinos experience racism, they are reluctant to share their "not equal" experience with someone who resided in the dominant culture (Monique). Monique talked about "feeling more equal" in college although she had a hard time putting words to her feelings of "more equal" (Monique). She resisted using an overt word like segregated or racist, but had a difficult time coming up with the right words for how she felt she had been treated. Instead she used a vocabulary that was more subtle or insidious to how she had been treated.

As soon as I moved from high school to Panorama Community College, I felt more equal. Well, I know that I wasn't segregated or anything in high school, but in college I was just like you; I was able to interact with more people. I felt more equal, but not equal. I met a lot of people and it was fun. I liked it better than high school. I felt more equal. I'm not saying I was segregated or I felt set apart because I was Hispanic (Monique).

Although Monique was reluctant to talk about overt racism during high school, she was treated "less equal" (Monique). Following high school when she enrolled in and attended Panorama Community College, she felt less segregated and free to interact with students who were not Latina/o. In college, "I was just like you" (Monique). Said another way, the environment at Panorama Community College was not segregated, and she was not set apart because she was Latina or because her English was easy or difficult to understand.

Like Monique, Enrique also spoke about "feeling more equal" in college (Monique). Even though Enrique had lived in the United States and attended public schools since he was 7 years old, he frequently felt isolated and not part of the

mainstream American culture. When I first met Enrique he had completed high school but had not attended the local community college yet. By the third time I met with Enrique, he had completed his freshman year at Panorama Community College. He clearly had gained confidence and freedom in his new environment at Panorama Community College. Enrique appeared to live comfortably in both the dominant culture and the Latino culture; he reported that he lived in the borderlands. So although he identified himself as bi-cultural, he continued to feel distanced from the dominant culture.

I still have a hard time getting to a comfortable spot when I meet new people who are American. My really close friends are Latinos, but now that I'm in college I got to be close friends with some of the American people there. For me that is just awesome. I'm getting to see that there's not that big of a difference. We get along so well. I gained a lot of confidence and a lot of knowledge about the American culture. That's where my confidence comes from, getting to know about the people you are around and not feeling they're aliens or something. I learned that they are just people too. Throughout high school I tried, I tried to like my peers that were American, but it was always different. I did it and it was okay, but there was still that little something. This is a little strange for me, but now that I'm in college, it's changed. I guess I'm at a higher level now with my relationships with the Anglo community. I got to be really good friends with some American kids at school and it's just awesome! They like to go dancing with us at Latino clubs and they like it a lot too! It's definitely something they probably wouldn't have done otherwise if we weren't there. We get to experience the best of both worlds. Yes! It's really good. I like it (Enrique).

Like all the participants, the pre-collegiate program was the only club Enrique joined during high school. And like Monique, at Panorama Community College he felt free to interact with students who were not Latina/o. The "awesome" relationships, previously unavailable to him during high school, were now a great source of confidence and knowledge about the American culture. As Enrique gained knowledge about the American culture, he was using social capital as a bridge to gain cultural capital. Enrique benefited from the multicultural environment. Enrique recognized that both he and his Anglo friends experienced the best of both worlds in the multicultural environment.

Andrea, Alejandra, Monique, and Enrique have all experienced the consequences of racism that Daniel anticipated. Andrea experienced ridicule when she identified herself from Mexico. Additionally, Andrea was treated unkindly while at work when Anglos were intolerant of her English skills. Alejandra and her mother spoke very strongly about Alejandra's racist experiences. It was Alejandra who spoke for all Latinos when she acknowledged Latinos frequently felt "out of place" in both in the schools they attend and after-school sponsored activities. Monique spoke about "feeling more equal but not equal." Enrique spoke of feeling uncomfortable with his American peers during grade school and high school, and now that he was in college he finally had an American friend. He definitely was enjoying his new relationship with Anglo students in a multicultural community. Similarly, these Latina and Latino participants experienced the social landscape of high school very different from their Anglo counterparts. So while Anglo students feel entitled to the mainstream of American experiences and benefits during high school, Latina/o students feel many of high school experiences along with the benefits are inaccessible to them. Feeling excluded, many Latina/o students leave the educational system altogether.

In some instances the prejudice the participants experienced was aimed specifically at the individual. In other cases, the prejudice is routinely felt by all Latinas/os. In some instances racism is so systemic and pervasive that those people belonging to the dominant culture don't notice or react to the prejudice. In all instances, all the participants felt the prejudice at a very personal level.

I'm scared, I'm so scared that somebody might find me and deport me.

The path to college is clearly different between the Latina/o high school student who is documented and one who is undocumented. The barrier of being “illegal” is both physical and psychological. The undocumented Latina/o lives with the stigma and all the ramifications of being “illegal” and a criminal. The last time I talked to Enrique he was completing his first year at Panorama Community College. He was working taking 16 semester credits and working 25 hours a week. He also had joined a cross cultural club. Enrique attended classes at a local community college that was about 20 miles from his home. However, because the community college was four miles off the bus route, it was difficult for him to get to classes without a car. One of the risks Enrique took as an undocumented student was driving a car without a driver’s license. Recently, Enrique was stopped by a police for a burned out light on his back license plate.

For the first 2 weeks of school I was really struggling to get rides to classes and back. My mother’s family had purchased a car for me to get to classes, but they hadn’t delivered the car yet. It was really hard to get to classes and I was really frustrated. I wouldn’t have been able to take that a whole year. Now I drive the car to classes but I don’t have a driver’s license. Recently, I got pulled over. The police was going to give me a ticket but then said he was letting me off the hook. The police said he was supposed to tow my car. The next time he said I could go to jail. I take the risk and drive without a driver’s license. You’ve got to do what you’ve got to do (Enrique).

Enrique and his mother both knew if Enrique got stopped he could be sent to jail and deported. Because of the possibilities Enrique’s mother worried when Enrique drove without a license to school. So when Enrique was not home on time, his mother worried about him. She continually worried that something bad might happen to Enrique when he was away from home and she will not be contacted. Always worrying, the family did not live in peace.

As child of undocumented parents, Enrique had inherited their undocumented status. Although Enrique was confronted daily with the barriers of his immigration status, talking about his status to Anglos was even more difficult. Enrique openly shared his feelings in a documentary. He also expressed the fear he felt each day as a result of his undocumented status.

One of the hardest things would be to talk about my legal status in front a bunch of American people, but I've actually done that. It was hard. I was pretty uncomfortable. I've never done that before but I went with it. It was suppose to be to inform one of the local community leadership groups. They said it would be a good opportunity to inform them and maybe they could do something to help out. So I said yes, and so I did it. It was really hard. It was hard to talk about it with anybody because you think about things you have struggled with and a bunch of memories come up. It just makes you want to start crying right then and there. When you tell American people your story, you don't know what they're thinking. Maybe some of them might be completely against immigration. They're not going to say anything, but you know that there are some people that have those feelings. That just makes it 10 times more uncomfortable. It's pretty hard. You feel like you're pouring out your secrets to... not the enemy but to the other side. I'm always scared. Recently I volunteered to participate in a documentary about the Dream Act produced by three women from California, Texas, and New York. The documentary will focus on specific kids who the Dream Act will affect in a positive way. They asked me if I wanted to participate. This is scary because I'm going to be on camera and people are going to see my face. It will be shown at universities and schools to inform people about the Dream Act and what it would do for some of us. I'm scared. I'm so scared that somebody might find me and deport me. But you've got to take risks if you want to see change. If I don't do it, and nobody else does it, nothing is going to happen. I'm willing to put myself out there and in the end even if it doesn't help me, I hope it helps somebody else out. Everyone says they want the Dream Act to pass, but they're waiting for other people to get up and make it happen. But nobody does anything. I do what I can and I'm proud of that (Enrique).

As a child of undocumented workers Enrique spoke about his struggles, his sadness, and his wanting to cry as he recalled his memories, and his candidness of pouring out his secrets knowing that some people sitting in front of him opposed immigration. He also spoke about his continual fear of being deported from a country in which his family lives and he had called his home in since he was 7-years old.

As a child of undocumented immigrants, Enrique was not able to get a driver's license. Without social security documentation, employment was also problematic. The cost of going to college became yet another struggle. For the undocumented Latina/o student like Enrique, out-of-state tuition rates are greater than five times the cost of in-district rates. For example, calculating the tuition differential at Panorama Community College, if the in-district student takes 15 credits a semester and paid \$1,500 in tuition, the out-of-state student who took 15 credits paid \$5,055. That is an increase of \$3,555 per semester for the undocumented student. So while the in-district student pays \$6,000 for an Associate's degree, the out-of-state student pays \$20,220 for the same degree. Additionally many scholarships are not available to undocumented students. For the undocumented student who already has limited job opportunities, the cost of going to college becomes proportionally even more expensive.

There are a lot of Latinos who are undocumented and still want to go to college but it's so difficult for them. Because they don't have a driver's license, they don't have a car. They have no way to get around. If you're in a bunch of clubs you would have to take the bus or ask for rides. It's also hard to find a job. You know you're not going to pay in-state tuition because you don't have a social security number. A college education is going to be more expensive for you. You don't qualify for a lot of scholarships. Before I got the scholarships I knew that I had to do something because I needed money. There's just no way that I could make it without financial help. There are endless ways that it's more difficult (Enrique).

Like Enrique, the undocumented student also lives in the borderlands but with added concerns. They live with the continual fear of being deported. The cost of going to college soars while the access to jobs becomes more limited. The undocumented student experiences additional barriers.

Navigating the Path to College

Latina/o students who experience both social and cultural barriers during K-12 need an extra push to successfully navigate the American school systems, which ultimately enables them to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. Although resources may be available to the general high school student population, the Latina/o student who lives in the borderlands, is unable to access these resources. Without access to the necessary information or access to cultural capital, Latinas/os have a difficult time navigating their way to college. In many instances this extra push comes from a high school counselor or participation in the pre-collegiate program.

That little push I needed.

Latina/o students are up against many barriers. All through grade school and high school Latina/o students are marginalized and excluded from the cultural mainstream of the educational system. Inclusion to, or exclusion from, the pre-collegiate program is often a decisive moment in determining if a Latina/o student goes to college. Latina/o students who will be the first in their families to attend an American college lack the essential cultural capital required to even begin the process of admittance to college. The process of going to college requires more than scholarships and completing applications, and most likely, the process of getting to college is different for the documented and undocumented student. For the Latina/o students who are recruited into the pre-collegiate program, they are told that Latinas/os can go to college. For many students these become the most important and empowering words.

Daniel recruited both participants and mentors when the pre-collegiate program was first beginning. Prior to Daniel recruiting Alejandra she had not thought much about

college. Only after Daniel approached Alejandra did she think that she would be able to attend college. For Alejandra, the moment Daniel offered to mentor her became the most decisive moment that enabled Alejandra to go to college.

When I was a freshman and sophomore I really didn't think much about college. So as a junior when I first met Daniel, I hadn't given college a lot of thought. It was Daniel who first introduced me to the pre-collegiate program and started talking a little more about college. He's probably the one who most influenced me to go to college. He's the one that gave me that little push that I needed. I went home and talked to my mom about Daniel. I told her that Daniel wanted to help me with college; that he was really interested in helping me get to college (Alejandra).

Students were also able to self-nominate themselves for the pre-collegiate program. Enrique was "100% sure" that he wanted to attend college when he signed up for the pre-collegiate program his sophomore year (Enrique). For Enrique, who already had the incentive to go to college, the pre-collegiate program provided him with the critical cultural capital necessary to prepare him for college.

A friend told me about the pre-collegiate program. He was going to join the pre-collegiate program because his little brother who was in middle school had joined it. I was 100% sure that I wanted to go to college. I knew the pre-collegiate program would help prepare me for college and since I wanted to go to college I knew that was a good step to take. (Enrique).

As a senior Enrique became a mentor for 8th-grade students while continuing to be mentored. The students enrolled in the pre-collegiate program were the students who want to go college.

The pre-collegiate program is pretty much open for kids who want to be there but there are some exceptions. You have to be responsible; you have to show up for the meetings. I think there were certain qualifications, but I think pretty much anyone who is interested can join it right now. Yes, you can tell if you are going to fit into the program, if not you will drop out yourself. They don't kick you out. In the end it's the kids that really do want to go to college that stay in the program so it works out (Enrique).

Monique mentored for two years beginning with 6th-graders and continued to mentor the same students during 7th-grade. Monique verified Enrique's self-nomination process for the pre-collegiate but challenged the grade point average requirement. Her assertions confirmed the barriers students encounter when the families live outside the cultural mainstream and are unable to help their children with school work.

The students tell me they have to fill out an application. But as soon as a student came to the program I said I didn't want them to wait, I wanted them to be here. I didn't care how many kids I had. I know Daniel has a limit of the number of students in each mentoring group, but I personally didn't care. My group actually grew. I had a girl ask if she could invite some friends. I said sure, but they didn't stay in the program. They thought it was just for fun. If I know students are just coming to the mentoring sessions and don't care about school, they want to be with their friends, that's when I tell the student "you know what, there's someone out there who really wants to be here. So when I got new students I told Daniel, but first I wanted to be sure they were going to stay in the program. I think he had to talk to their parents after I had the students fill out the application. He took care of that. I know the student needs a grade point average of at least 2.5. From my point of view I would accept them even if they had a grade point average lower than 2.5. If I see a student is trying to improve I would accept them. Daniel, the pre-collegiate director, used to say if the kids didn't have more than a 2.5 grade point average they shouldn't be accepted into the program. I have met people with lower grade point averages and they want to go to college. They just need some extra help to guide them. Some of the students I mentored their parents only went through the 6th-grade. I know the experience. I remember when I grew up I saw kids whose parents helped them with their homework. I had to do it for myself. I even had to translate for my parents (Monique).

Language becomes yet another barrier. Latina/o parents are not invited into the schools; they can't speak the language. For many students whose parents are not able to guide their children in the American school system, the children are unable to survive the American school system by themselves. Unassisted, it is easy for these students to lose interest in school.

Monique's observation suggested that students with a grade point average lower than 2.5 could benefit and be successful in college if they were enrolled in the pre-

collegiate program. Said another way, the prospects of Latina/o students who are not admitted into the pre-collegiate program become diminished by not having access to the cultural and social capital the pre-collegiate program provides. Students who require the added mentoring and support the pre-collegiate program provide are sometimes excluded and pushed out of the educational system altogether. Many underachieving Latina/o students are not being served. The following story was told by Giovanna's younger sister, who was enrolled in the pre-collegiate program. It's a story about a Latino male who was pushed out of the pre-collegiate program. This story is more potent when one considers Latino males comprise the highest high school drop-out group.

There's a boy that goes to the same school that I do. Last year he was in the pre-collegiate program. He really wanted to go to college and he worked hard in school. Those of us who had been in the pre-collegiate program previously were called and told that we didn't have to reapply or interview again. This year he was not called or interviewed and so he's not in the pre-collegiate program. I don't know why he wasn't called because I was in the program last year and so was my friend. Because my friend was a very shy guy he could not ask if he was overlooked for the program. My sister [Giovanna] talked to the pre-collegiate program director about him, but she (Daniel was no longer the pre-collegiate program director) didn't do anything. I think it will be hard for him to get to college without being in the pre-collegiate program. For him finances are the main problem. I think being in the pre-collegiate program would help his parents know that he really wants to go to college and to let his parents know he can go to college. I don't think his parents can otherwise send him to college (Giovanna).

For Giovanna's friend and many other Latinas/os not included in the pre-collegiate program, the net result is that they continue to believe their college opportunities have eluded them. Because Latina/o parents cannot tell their children anything different, they settle, expelled from the system that could have enabled them. Deliberately, or possibly by an oversight, the destiny of Giovanna's friend was irrevocably changed. Without the cultural capital provided by a pre-collegiate program going to college might be impossible for this male.

How can I help you now?

Alejandra, Enrique, Monique, and Giovanna were all mentors. Daniel also asked Andrea to mentor, but because she worked full-time during high school she was unable to mentor. Andrea attended the summer program as a peer-counselor. She also accurately identified what the pre-collegiate program has to offer Latina/o students. The pre-collegiate program provides the cultural capital that otherwise was unavailable to them.

Daniel asked me to be a mentor; I was more than happy to do it. I think for Latinos, who come from Mexico and want to be successful, they need to know the educational system in this country. They need to know exactly what kind of classes they need to take. The pre-collegiate program is where Latinos get this information (Andrea).

I also asked Alejandra what she would tell the students she mentored, what they needed to know. Alejandra reiterated what many participants have already said; Latinas/os don't believe college is a possibility. The impossibility of going to college diminishes his or her incentive to even complete high school. Just in case a Latina/o might believe college was a possibility, they are reminded by other Latinas/os that Latinas/os don't go to college.

When I was mentoring I told my students I wanted to go to college. I told them about my plans but I hadn't gone to college yet. Now they can see me, see that I made it through the first year and I am going for my second year. It's really not impossible to go to college. I am an example. Something really sad in the Latino community is instead of encouraging each other we do the opposite. We tell each other "you can't go to college, you're illegal, and you should work." People would tell me that because I was a really hard worker in school. They would tell me "oh quit, you're studying so much. You should go out and have some fun. You're still not going to be able to go to college." So instead of trying to encourage each other we do the opposite. There are always kids who don't take school seriously. They would come in as freshman and by sophomore year they would be ditching classes. They wouldn't even attempt to get good grades because they knew there was no possibility of going to college. They just don't try at all. When they would see other students attempting they would just put them down instead of trying to encourage them. It's that whole idea that Latinos don't go to college. When I went to Delta State there weren't many Latinos there;

Latinos were still a very small minority of Latinos in colleges. It's been embedded in our heads that Latinos don't go to college. Latinos come to this country to work and make a living for their families and they don't go to college. If you ask any Latino that's what they think, college isn't for Latinos. I wish there was something we could do, to inform Latinos that there is a possibility of Latinos going to college (Alejandra).

Latina/o students do not have many role models; it is hard for them to authentically believe that they could go to college. From the perspective of the Latina/o community, Alejandra was doing the impossible, going to college. For each participant who successfully attended college, they became the role model not only for their siblings, but for the community.

Giovanna identified the inspiration, motivation, and invitation of going to college as important.

The pre-collegiate program motivates you to go to college. If you can't find the help from your mentor you can find it somewhere else, or you can do it on your own like I did. It's a lot harder when you don't have someone to guide you, but in some way you know you can do it. They just tell you that you can do it. I guess they just inspire you to do it and once you get the inspiration you will do it whether or not someone is willing to help you (Giovanna).

I asked Monique what activities as a mentor she thought were the most beneficial for the students. Like Giovanna, she identified the invitation and hope of going to college as important.

I think it would be critical thinking and scholarships. It is also important to show students how to search for college information so they can look for information on their own later. Mentors need to put the picture of college in the minds of their students; they need to tell them they have to go to college. Mentors need to tell the students that college is an opportunity for them, their next goal in life. I think sometimes Latinos just need someone to put the picture of college in the kids' heads. We need to tell them there is no other option but college. Sometimes it's hard when Latino parents don't support their kids. In the United States, the Latino parents don't have any background in education. Some of these parents have dropped out of school before high school themselves. Some of the parents don't know how to read or write so how can they tell their kids to "go to school?" How can you tell your children that school is important if you have never learned it? I

had one girl who was in the pre-collegiate program since I started mentoring. I was so disappointed when she stopped going to class. I talked to her mom and her mother told me “oh, she’s just going to get married anyway.” “How can you say that about your daughter? You have to tell her that she has to go to college. Just don’t give up!” (Monique)

The Latina/o students, whose parents have not attended school in the United States, do not have the advantage of cultural capital. Alone, they don’t know where to begin or who to ask in an unfamiliar educational system. When a Latina/o lives outside the mainstream of the dominant culture, they are unable to make connections with the Anglo teachers or counselors who could help them.

They really have to take the next step and get you started, to show you how. You need to specifically be shown the way because most Latinos don’t even know how you would enroll. Latinos obviously need to be shown about everything because their parents have never gone to school in the United States and so we don’t have a clue. I was lucky because I got along with a lot of my teachers; I had help. I knew who to go to when I needed help. There are some kids who just go to school and don’t make any connections with the teachers. They don’t have anyone to go to for help (Alejandra).

Because Alejandra was able to make contact with her teachers, she was able to access the social cultural capital of the dominant culture. The Latina/o student who is unable to make connections with his or her teachers is unable to make use of the cultural capital a teacher could provide. For the Latina/o student who typically has an Anglo teacher, this connection would be difficult to develop for the Latina/o student who feels uncomfortable outside their own Latina/o culture.

I heard about Panorama Community College from other people. At first I wasn’t planning on going to Panorama Community College; I was thinking about going to other schools. But then I started to see it wasn’t going to work out so then I thought about Panorama Community College. People kept telling me that was a good choice because it was cheaper and its close by. During my last year of high school I really looked for scholarships but I needed help. I had to go knock on the counselor’s door and make an appointment. After she saw I was interested in her help she would come up to me and say “I have this and this you could apply for.

How can I help you now? Do you want me to do this and that? My counselor helped me apply for scholarships and send my transcripts (Enrique).

I asked Enrique how he initially made contact with the counselor. Initially, it was not the high school counselor that pursued Enrique. However, once she realized he was determined to graduate from high school and attend college, she was helpful.

Prior to meeting Daniel her junior year, Alejandra had “not really given college a lot of thought” (Alejandra). However, once Alejandra decided to pursue her college dreams she had the help from teachers, counselors, and Daniel.

My high school had a college prep class I took the last semester of my junior year. I had an awesome teacher for that class; she was so great. She helped us three Latina girls so much. She said she wished she could see more Latinas going to college. She would take extra time to help us because she knew it was hard for us. Because we were the first in our families to attend college we really didn't know what to expect. The teacher would help them with the college terminology. My two friends also took the college prep class again their senior year. Unfortunately, I was not able to take the class again. Each week I would call them and ask what they had done in class; I would get help from them. I got the college applications from my friends and they helped me fill them out. I tried to stay on track (Alejandra).

The high school that Enrique and Alejandra attended had college resources available. However, because Latinas/os were not welcomed to fully participate in the schools, they did not know or feel welcome to access these resources. Alejandra was able to ask teachers and counselors for help. But her ability to access the resources that helped her gain the information she needed to attend college also alienated her from her Latina/o peers. She remembered being called a “gringa.” Alejandra was able to ask teachers and counselors for help but not without a price.

The high school had a little room called the future's room full of college information and scholarship applications. I would spend all my free periods there just looking for the scholarships that I could apply for. I had a really good high school counselor; she was a big help in finding and applying for scholarships. Whenever I had a question I would go to her and she was good about helping.

Some kids don't really step foot in the counseling office and they don't know the counselor. I had a really good relationship with the counselor since freshman year. I did get a little worried but I still didn't give up on my plans. But if the student doesn't know who the counselors are, there's no help (Alejandra).

When I asked Giovanna's mother what parents need to know about school, her response was similar to what had been previously said. Latina/o parents hold their children back from thinking about college because they don't believe college was a possibility for Latinas/os,

Parents need information on how they can help at home, what their children are doing with their mentors, and what the pre-collegiate program is doing to help them. They should also tell parents that their child can get to college because many parents they don't have the money to send their kids to college. They don't think college possible; they hold their kids back from going or thinking that it is possible (Giovanna).

Latina/o parents and their children need the cultural capital and access to counselors that educated parents and their children have when they consider college as an opportunity. Monique, whose own parents were like many parents of the students in her mentoring group, understood the barriers both the students and the families encounter.

My parents went through 6th-grade so I understand, I've been through it. I've been struggling to go to college on my own. I understand the problems those kids are having because of their parents' lack of education. When you come from a good educated family you might be thinking why their parents don't do some things for their kids. Educated families don't understand how hard it is when parents don't understand the language or the school system (Monique).

Without the hope of going to college, the Latina/o participants would not have been able to navigate the cultural and social barriers alone. Although Latina/o parents want the best for their children, without the confidence that college is an obtainable goal, they discourage their children from being too optimistic. The pre-collegiate program is one place where Latina/o students and the families get access to the cultural capital of high school and college. It is also where the persistent idea that Latinas/os can't go to

college was dispelled, both in the minds of the students and the families, as well as the school's faculty and counselors.

The conclusion for chapter four synthesizes the data coupled with the research questions. My main research question asked "How do the pre-collegiate program's social and cultural contributions impact a student's willingness, interest, and ability to pursue postsecondary education?" I also included three sub questions to direct my inquiry. First, "What is the parental, family, and community involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student's willingness to continue to postsecondary education?" Second, "What is the staff involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student's willingness to continue to postsecondary education?" And third, "What are the cultural capital attributes in a pre-collegiate program that determine a Latina/o student's willingness to continue to postsecondary education?"

I will begin with the main research question. Social and cultural capital is the understanding of what college is, the application process, the graduation rates of institutions, and the function of degrees. Cultural and social capital can be created within families and their communities. It can also be created from social relationships with people in the dominant culture. My primary research question focused on the social and cultural experiences of students in the pre-collegiate program. Each participant became involved in the pre-collegiate program because he or she had the dream of going to college. Although these college dreams were shared by each participant's family, they frequently were overshadowed by the lack of social and cultural capital available to make going to college a reality. Additionally, embedded in the Latina/o social and cultural

experiences is the contrary belief that Latinas/os cannot go to college. This divergent belief has its roots in the systematic and pervasive racism that all Latinas/os experience.

Repeatedly, the dominant culture communicates the message that Latinas/os are not welcome to fully participate in the educational systems in the United States. Although the members of the dominant culture might believe the discrimination is negligible or non-existent, this belief is not shared by members of the Latina/o community. Using the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Latino/Latina Critical Theory (LatCrit) lens provides a foundation for examining social and cultural experiences from the perspective of the Latina/o.

Although Latinas/os are denied full access to the dominant culture, they are expected by Anglos to assimilate into the dominant culture. This becomes problematic. Because Latinas/os are very proud and aligned with their families and their culture, they are reluctant to be assimilated into the dominant culture. Additionally, when a Latinas/os participates in the dominant culture, they are ridiculed by their peers for betraying their own culture. Yet all the participants reported the social and cultural capital gained from their social relationships with people in the dominant culture. The policies and structures of the educational systems perpetuate the disconnect.

The pre-collegiate program gave the participants the message that they could go to college, and it answered the question Alejandra asked “but how.” The message that Latinas/os can go to college was transferred to the parents and the siblings of the participants. Additionally, the pre-collegiate mentors worked with the participants providing the application to college and scholarship knowledge. Although the pre-collegiate program was weak in providing cultural capital for the parents, the program

was the main source of social and cultural capital for the Latina/o students who wanted to go to college.

The first sub question asked “What is the parental, family, and community involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?” Unquestionably, my research confirmed that Latina/o parents want what is best for their children. Parents and the Latina/o community are intensely mindful of the barriers that prevent their children access to postsecondary institutions. It is a strongly held belief in the Latina/o community that Latinas/os cannot go to college because they are Latinas or Latinas. This belief is reinforced in the Latina/o community when Latinas/os are made to feel not welcome and excluded in the mainstream of the educational systems and the dominant culture.

Living in the borderlands and experiencing a life time of exclusion from the dominant culture, it is easy to understand why Latina/o parents might hold their children back from considering college. Even though Latina/o parents are proud when their children are smart and want the best for their children, they continue to believe college is not a possibility for them. Instead Latina/o parents discourage their children from being too hopeful and thinking college is possible. The belief and hope that college is a possibility is paramount. Without the hope, the participants and their families would not have attempted to navigate the cultural and social barriers.

Parents, without the cultural capital of what it takes to successfully send their children to college, rely on the pre-collegiate program. For many of the participants and their families, the pre-collegiate program was the primary source of information specific to the application and scholarship process. All the families I spoke with understood the

value of the pre-collegiate program and would welcome a more involved and expanded role in the pre-collegiate program.

The second sub question inquired “What is the staff involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?” The role of mentors in the pre-collegiate program was decisive for the students who had supportive mentors. In some instances high school educators also played the role of mentors. Alejandra, Enrique, and Andrea had influential mentors. For these students, their mentors provided the hope and reality of going to college.

Prior to meeting Daniel, Alejandra hadn’t given college a lot of thought. She believed that college was not a possibility for her. She reported Daniel was probably the one who most influenced her to go to college. As a mentor, Daniel gave her the hope and vocabulary to begin the college process. Although Alejandra received a lot of help from her high school counselor and peers, the initial hope that college was a possibility for her came from Daniel as the pre-collegiate director.

When Andrea told her high school counselor that she wanted to go to an “American university,” her counselor introduced her to Daniel. It was Daniel who mentored Andrea during her senior year in high school, providing her with the cultural capital to make college a reality. The last time I spoke with Andrea, she had graduated from Panorama Community College with an Associate’s degree and was applying to Central University to earn her baccalaureate degree.

Since he was 6 years old and living in Mexico, Enrique knew wanted to go to college. Enrique joined the pre-collegiate because he wanted to go to college and he

knew the program would help prepare him for college. He relied on his mentor to provide him with the cultural capital to make college a reality. The last time I spoke with Enrique he had completed his freshman year at Panorama Community College. He was committed to his newly declared major and committed to continuing to a baccalaureate institution.

Alejandra, Enrique, Monique, and Giovanna also served as mentors and role models to pre-collegiate students in middle school. Even though the mentors had limited college experience they were influential in dispelling the myth that Latinas/os can't go to college. It was Alejandra who told her students her plans to go to college noting they now see her beginning her second year at Delta State. "It's really not impossible to go to college. I am an example" (Alejandra). These mentors personified the hope and reality of going to college.

The third sub question asked "What are the cultural capital attributes in a pre-collegiate program that determine a Latina/o student's willingness to continue to postsecondary education?" Cultural capital is measured by the educational level of the parents, the parent's expectations for their child's' educational attainment, the primary language spoken in the home, and the participation in cultural classes (Perna & Titus, 2005). Combined, these elements construct the cultural capital available to the students and their families.

All the participants came to the United States during grade school or high school. Although all the participants attended and graduated from American schools, none of the parents had attended American schools. For this reason, the Latina/o parents did not have the knowledge and understanding of the American school system. As a result they could

not help their children with their homework, navigate them through a college preparatory curriculum, or be an advocate for their children in the K-12 school system. Latina/o parents were also unable to access the cultural capital required in preparing their children for postsecondary institutions.

For all the participants and their parents, English was their second language. Language played a minimal to nonexistent barrier for the participants. This was not the true for their parents. For all the parents language was a decisive barrier. As a consequence, parents were unable to academically help their children or easily communicate with the educators and staff at their children's schools.

All the participants and their families lived in the borderlands, not able to fully participate in the dominant culture. The prejudices the students experienced in the schools perpetuated and reinforced their living in the borderlands. So although the Latina/o students attended the same K-12 schools as their non-Latina/o Whites, the policies and structures of the school systems denied Latina/o students full access to the educational opportunities.

All the participants' families were supportive of their children's educational aspirations; however, they frequently were not the instigators of postsecondary education. Generally, Latina/o parents were unaware of what was required to succeed in postsecondary institutions and how to gain access to that knowledge. In some instances, parents did not believe their children could go to college. These parents discouraged or held their children back from thinking college was an available opportunity. For the families who valued education and wanted their children to go to college, there was a disconnect on how to make college happen. So while all the Latina/o families wanted

what was best for their children, not being welcomed or having access to the dominant culture limited their successes.

I think Latinos hold back from Anglos because we have a fear that Anglos are going to think we are completely crazy and stupid. With Hispanics you can say whatever and sure they'll laugh but we're a community. We have each other's back. Even if you mess up, you wouldn't be judged because they're also Latinos. There's a big difference between us and what you do or what you say. It's like we're always watching out. You know that you wouldn't be a fool in front of them and have them think that you're just completely worthless. No wonder Anglos don't like us (Alejandra).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The rich diversity of our communities is unmistakable. It is no longer tolerable or ethical to educate some of our children while marginalizing others in our communities. School environments must fully include and reflect the cultures of the communities they serve. Educational institutions must look more closely at what being genuinely diverse looks like for all students during the educational process.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of my research that upholds or supports the current research. I then discuss the findings that expand or further develop the current research. Next I identify the findings that advance or add current research. I conclude chapter 5 with the practitioner's or my voice followed by recommendations for schools and further research.

Discussion

The discussion section focuses on my research findings. Beginning with a dialog on the findings that uphold or support the current research, I explore the question "what are the prospects for the future?" Next, I discuss my research findings that expand or add to the current research, beginning with "parents want what's best for their children." Additional headings include "we would try to find the answers together," "we are all people, we just have different beliefs," and "a friend told me about the pre-collegiate

program.” Finally, I report the findings in my research that advance or add to the current research, “we don’t mix with Anglos and that’s the deal.”

Findings That Support Current Research

Researchers continue to ask questions in an effort to complete the picture of what pre-collegiate programs should look like. While much attention is focused on the many attributes of pre-collegiate programs that make Latina/o students successful in pursuing a postsecondary education, little attention is paid the Latina/o students who don’t succeed in going to college.

What are the prospects for the future? Fernandez (2002) urges researchers to ask the important questions. “What happens to the young Latina/o students who don’t succeed in going to college, and what are their prospects for the future” (Fernandez, 2002)? Fernandez, a proponent of CRT (Critical Race Theory) and LatCrit (Latino/Latina Critical Theory), acknowledges that this question has been repeatedly left unanswered in educational research.

In responding to Fernandez’s question, it will be helpful to first define the word “habitus.” Habitus is a set of acquired patterns of thought, behavior, and taste. A person’s habitus is socially acquired and shaped in the formative years by the culture where the adolescent resides. The social, cultural, and economic traits of a culture become anchored in the daily practices and experiences of the group. For this reason an individual’s habitus is the product of his or her tradition or history. Habitus is the assumed knowledge, the knowledge that “goes without saying” for a specific group. A person’s success in school and society depends on that individual’s ability to understand the dominant cultural ethos, or its habitus. It then follows that the social, cultural, and economic capital of the

dominant culture is dissimilar to the social, cultural, and economic habitus of the Latina/o community.

Based on the social, cultural, and economic traits of a culture, students make educational choices that are influenced by their habitus. Alejandra told the story about her older brother who, following graduation from high school, did not go to college but instead went into the workforce. It was Alejandra who reminded the reader that in the Latino/a culture male Latinos rarely even get through high school. Instead they just get a job. Many Latinos are raised to believe there is no future beyond high school except work. The Latina/o habitus holds the idea that Latinas/os can't go to college. Like her brother, Alejandra also did not believe college was her opportunity, but Daniel, as the pre-collegiate coordinator, approached Alejandra and offered to help her get to college. The only difference between Alejandra and her brother was that no one offered to help him go to college. Why does a smart Latino male who earned straight A's in Mexico not consider college his opportunity in the United States? It was Alejandra who asked the question "So why?" Bergerson (2003) and Loza (2003) affirm that although merit is valued by the dominant populations, it operates under the burden of racism, and continues to marginalize underrepresented populations. As a result, many Latinas/os are systematically barred from educational opportunities. Without the cultural capital, the information of how to get to college, Alejandra's brother listened to his cultural, social, and economic habitus, which told him Latinas/os can't go to college.

Giovanna's sister told a similar story about a Latino male who was in the pre-collegiate program one year, but was not invited to participate in the pre-collegiate program the following year. For this Latino male, being pushed out of the pre-collegiate

program increased his odds of not going to college (Loza, 2003). For the many Latinos not included in the pre-collegiate program, the end result is they continued to believe college is not an available opportunity for them. Said another way, the pre-collegiate program helps Latina/o males replace their cultural, social, and economic habitus with the hope that as Latinos they can go to college. Without access to the habitus of the dominant culture provided by the pre-collegiate program, Giovanna's friend, and many males like him, join the statistics of male Latinos who do not go to college.

Enrique, Monique, and Andrea had similar stories to tell. Enrique told the story about his friend who lived alone with his mother in a single-parent household. Because the cost of college was disproportionately expensive for Enrique's friend, who needed to support his aging mother, Enrique's friend always knew college was not a possibility. As a result, when he graduated from high school, he would work full time to support his mother. Monique told the story about her brother who did not believe he could afford to go to college even after observing both Monique and her elder sister go to college. Andrea told the story about her cousin working to earn enough money to move back to Mexico. All of these males believed their habitus: Latinos can't go to college. What are the prospects for the future for these Latina/o students who listen to their habitus and believe college is not an opportunity?

The response to this question is found in both the statistics and the stories. A person with a baccalaureate degree can expect to earn three times more than a person with less than a high school diploma earns (Loza, 2003; The Puente Project, 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau these students will more likely live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau). In 2002, the 13.3% of Latinas/os who lived in the United States

represented 24.3% of the populations that lived in poverty. While Latina/o children represented 17.7% of the population, 30.4% of Latina/o children lived in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Additionally, Latina/o households had ten cents for every dollar of wealth owned by non-Latina/o White households (Kochhar, 2006). For the Latina/o student who does not attend college, he or she will most likely remain at home and work following high school. Jobs that high school students qualify for will pay less than their college educated peers (U.S. Census Bureau). The quality of employment will also be lower for the high school graduates (Maruyama, G., Burke, M., & Mariani, C., 2005; Saxton, 2000). Clearly the futures of Alejandra and her brother will be very different as a result of each of their educational opportunities.

Fernandez (2002) asks “What happens to the young Latina/o students who don’t succeed in going to college and what are their prospects for the future?” Together, statistics and stories confirm what happens to the Latina/o students who are not successful in going to college. Alejandra’s brother, Giovanna’s friend, and Enrique’s friend are all Latino males who did not go to college. Statistics indicate these Latinos increasingly work in low-skilled jobs and live in persistent poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). This is confirmed by the statistics that a recipient of a baccalaureate degree earns three times the salary of what a person with less than a high school diploma earns (Loza, 2003; The Puente Project, 2003). The link between education and economics remains very strong (Saxton, 2000).

It was Alejandra who asked the more important question of “so why?” “So why” don’t these Latino students succeed in going to college? Like Alejandra’s brother, many Latinos believe there is no opportunity for school beyond high school. The Latina/o

cultural, social, and economic habitus accepts that Latinas/os cannot go to college. So while the specific reasons might vary from student to student, without the cultural capital, social capital, or economic capital, many Latinas/os believe postsecondary education is not a viable opportunity for them. Without the prospect of going to college many Latinos work in low skilled jobs and continue to live in poverty.

Findings That Expand Current Research

Research on pre-collegiate programs has been prolific since the inception of the Puente Project in 1981. The wealth of research holds the expectation and promise of expanding what pre-collegiate programs might look like in the future. The challenge continues for our communities and schools to offer greater educational opportunities to the rapidly growing population of Latina/o students in our educational systems.

Parents want what's best for their children. Research reports that Latina/o parents don't care about their children's education (Olivos, 2004). The Latina/o participants in my study were all raised in the traditional warm and loving Latina/o home. It was without question that all the Latina/o parents I interviewed wanted the best for their children, and were supportive of their educational pursuits. Enrique noticed that his non-Latina/o White peers "can't wait to get out of their parents' house. They are excited about being on their own." Although leaving home was inevitable, Enrique did not look forward to leaving his family. Giovanna confirmed the attachment many Latina/o families feel for each other. "In Mexico your family is what matters the most." The attachment that Latinas/os feel for their families, combined with the habitus legacies, did not preclude that the participants would leave home to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

The respect for education was verified by all the Latina/o parents I interviewed. For all the participants, the source of making college their goal originated in the family habitus or from their parents. All the parents realized the importance of a college education, and for many parents their children were living the dream they did not have as young adults. Latina/o parents want the best for their children. This is the simple response when the question is uncomplicated.

The response becomes more complex when I include the Latinas/os who do not pursue baccalaureate opportunities following their high school graduation. Research examining the parental support of their children's enrollment in college appears contradictory. Researchers report 75% of surveyed Latina/o parents support postsecondary education, with only 10% of Latina/o high school graduates attending college (Brown et al., 2003; Torrez, 2004). What happens to cause 65% of the Latina/o students who have support from their parents but do not attend college?

The Latina/o students and their families are acutely aware of the barriers that prevent Latina/o access to postsecondary institutions. My research revealed that Latina/o parents discourage their children from considering college, not because they don't want the best for their children, but because they don't believe college is a possibility for their children. Although the barriers may include economic, social, and cultural capital, the belief that Latinas/os can't go to college is embedded in their habitus. Single parents, who rely on the additional income from their working adolescent children, and do not understand the financing options available for college, believe the economic habitus that college is too expensive. Undocumented students, listen to the negative social habitus that "illegal" students are not welcome in the United States, and they are not welcome in the

schools. Latina/o parents, unfamiliar with the school system in the United States, feel hopeless and isolated.

Even when Latina/o parents want what is best for their children, the years of being marginalized and excluded by our school systems' institutional racism are accumulative and discouraging. The barriers seem insurmountable. Without the confidence that college was a realistic goal, many Latina/o parents caution their children from being too hopeful and optimistic in believing that college is a realistic goal. So while Latina/o parents are hopeful and want what's best for their children, parents are reluctant to be overconfident in hoping that college is a realistic and possible goal for their children.

We would try to find the answers together. Typically, cultural capital originates in the family and is passed down from one generation to the next. For this reason, students who are the first in their families to attend college hold a special place in the college recruitment process. These students earn the right to attend college in a different way than students whose parents had attended college. This study identifies that cultural capital is passed between the participants, their siblings, and their families within the same generation. In this study four of the five participants had younger siblings who indicated that they would benefit from the cultural capital of their older siblings the same way students whose parents have attend college benefit.

The powerful confidence that cultural capital creates in motivating siblings to go to college is apparent. Enrique noted that he was the oldest in his family, and it was his responsibility to show his brother and sister the way to college. Enrique and his sister would be at the same community college together. He reported "My mother says that my

younger sister is happy because when she gets out of high school she will go to Panorama Community College” with me. He knew the benefits he could provide and would help his sister understand the nuances of the college culture. It was Monique who envied her friends who had older siblings who were able to help them in school. Giovanna’s younger sister repeated what Monique observed when she said “I have my sister Giovanna, but a lot of kids don’t have anyone.” Giovanna acquired and passed her cultural capital on her younger sister who would soon be attending college. It was Alejandra’s mother who acknowledged Alejandra’s positive influence and position as a role model for her younger sister. All these participants were pioneers in creating and sharing cultural capital with their siblings and families.

With younger siblings at home, Alejandra, Monique, Giovanna, and Enrique were the creators and propagators of cultural capital for their families. As a result, families of the participants were aware of the investments required to be successful in postsecondary institutions, and how to gain access to the appropriate information. The likelihood of the participants’ siblings attending and being successful in college increased because Alejandra, Monique, Giovanna, and Enrique created cultural capital and passed that cultural capital on to their siblings.

They just tell you that you can do it. The second sub question asked “What is the staff involvement in a pre-collegiate program that determines a Latina/o student’s willingness to continue to postsecondary education?” I purposefully asked this question because the mentoring component was considered the mainstay of the pre-collegiate program. I found that the participants did not rely solely on their mentors for their college information.

Although the mentoring component was considered a critical part of the pre-collegiate program, the participants did not reap the intended benefits of their mentored relationships. Perhaps Andrea benefited the most with Daniel as her mentor during her senior year in high school. As a mentor Daniel also played a critical role in initiating both the idea and the hope of going to college for Alejandra. However, it was the high school counselor who worked with Alejandra to secure her scholarship to Delta State. Alejandra also spoke of relying on teachers and peers for the college information she needed. Although Enrique continued to maintain a relationship with his mentor following high school he did not talk about any specific help his mentor provided for him as he was transitioning from high school to college. Enrique did talk about having to take the initiative and knock on his high school counselor's door. Even though Giovanna had a mentor, she noted that she had to fill out her college application alone. It was as Giovanna aptly said, "The pre-collegiate program motivates you to go to college. If you can't find the help from your mentor you can find it somewhere else, or you can do it on your own like I did....They just tell you that you can do it." As a mentor herself, Monique was without a mentor. The push for Monique to go to college came from a high school teacher who knew Monique's mother wanted her daughter to go to college. Enrique, Monique, Alejandra, and Giovanna spoke of the benefits their younger siblings would have because they have navigated the cultural and social barriers of going to college before them. The benefits gained from the mentors were at best marginal for many of the pre-collegiate participants.

The dream to go to college originated in all the participants' homes but the reality of going to college was fueled through the pre-collegiate program. As mentors, Enrique,

Monique, and Alejandra dispelled the myth that Latinas/os can't go to college, although the specific mentor influence was not well-defined by any of the students. Ultimately, the participants relied on many sources that included Daniel, their pre-collegiate mentors, high school counselors, the "future's room," high school college prep classes, teachers, and peers as they navigated from high school to postsecondary institutions. Although the pre-collegiate mentors played a role in determining the Latina/o student's willingness to continue to postsecondary institutions, it was not a decisive role.

We are all people, we just have different beliefs. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino/Latina Critical Theory (LatCrit) address the inconsistencies between what research reports and what is actually done. The foundation of CRT establishes that racism is perpetuated because the policies and structures that are responsible for continuing the marginalization of underrepresented populations continue (Bergerson, 2003). Within the framework of CRT is the LatCrit. LatCrit challenges the message that Latina/o students are not agents or holders of knowledge. Educational institutions continue to communicate this message through their policies and practices. Using a CRT and LatCrit lens, Latina/o students become holders and creators of knowledge with valuable histories, experiences, cultures, and languages (Bernal, 2001; Fernandez, 2002; Villalpando, 2003).

Exploring what schools might look like using the CRT and LatCrit lens, in contrast to what schools look like without the CRT and LatCrit lens, becomes informative as both the inconsistencies and the challenges are explored. Beginning with the differential treatment of language, I highlight the language policies and structures of high schools, and how racism is perpetuated. Next, I explore the how K-12 school systems fail to recognize and honor the rich cultural experiences of Latinas/os. Finally, using the CRT

and LatCrit lens, I examine how student-centered and school-centered programs continue to exclude or include students. Research describes what K-12 educational policies and systems would look like if they were absent of policies and structures that continue racism.

I begin by exploring the way language is treated in the school systems. Without the CRT and LatCrit lens, high schools deny native Spanish speakers both the opportunity to validate their language skills and the opportunity to become fluent readers and writers of their native language. In some schools where Spanish is the only foreign language option, native Spanish speakers are left without any foreign language options as they prepare for college. This was what Alejandra accepted as she prepared for college. Alejandra could not prepare for college at the same level as her non-Latina/o White peers. This subtly reminded Alejandra, and many Latinas/os like her, that Latinas/os are not welcome to fully participate in their high schools or colleges. For non-Latina/o White students it would be unimaginable that a high school would not make available classes in their own language or provide a foreign language option for them as they prepare for college.

The dominant White privilege prevails. This is documented by Roma's (2004) research. While Roma (2004) argues that minimizing a Latina/o students' language and culture has a negative effect on their school experience, Americanization remains the goal for many pre-collegiate programs aimed at helping Latina/o students (Grant & Wong, 2004). Said another way, students are marginalized rather than valued for their bilingual language skills. So while with seemingly good intentions the ultimate goal of many pre-collegiate programs is to provide Latina/o students with the habitus of the

dominant culture, trivializing their language has been the ultimate consequence. The current language policies and structures of K-12 educational institutions do not honor or value the language skills of Latina/o students.

With a CRT and LatCrit lens, the language of native Spanish speakers would not be marginalized, devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted from formal educational settings (Bernal, 2001; Fernandez, 2002). Educational institutions would create policies and structures that honor the language skills of Latinas/os. As native Spanish speakers, all the participants would receive credit for the language skills they do have. Enrique, who came to this country when he was seven years old, would have the opportunity to learn to read and write his native language. Monique's history would be rewritten. She would not be left in the library, isolated from her English speaking peers. Giovanna's younger brother, who was taught to read and write Spanish at home by his parents, would have the opportunity to read and write Spanish at school. This would be a significant shift from the current school policies.

Next I will explore how educational institutions respond to the histories, experiences, and culture of Latinas/os. Research by Bergerson (2003) reminds non-Latino Whites that "Whiteness" is the educational norm. It is this colorblindness that allows racism to persist in subtle ways (Beregerson, 2003; Brandon, 2003). Without the CRT and LatCrit lens Latinas/os are expected to assimilate into the dominant American culture by educational institutions. Americanization of Latina/o students continues to be the goal for many pre-collegiate programs aimed at helping these students (Grant & Wong, 2004). Because social capital is a bridge to gaining the much needed cultural capital of the

dominant culture to be successful, belonging, even at the ridicule of peers, is one way a Latina/o student learns and benefits from the social capital of the dominant culture.

Schools have perpetuated an environment where Latinas/os believe their peers have turned their back on their culture, and betrayed their fellow Latina/o students when they bridge or “belong” to the dominant culture. Latina/o students, who live between “belonging” and “not belonging,” are taunted with “gringa” or “gringo” from their Latina/o peers. This necessitates that Latina/o students live in the borderlands, moving between “belonging” and “not belonging” as they move between the Latina/o and the dominant school cultures. When school policies and structures attempt to counter prejudice by including Latinas/os in the dominant culture, the Latina/o culture continues to be marginalized in the process. The unintended consequence to including Latinas/os in the dominant culture is the message that says Latina/o histories, language, and culture is unimportant or inconsequential. By minimizing the Latina/o habitus and not valuing Latinas/os as holders and creators of knowledge, educational institutions allow racism to persist.

With a CRT and LatCrit lens the histories, experiences, and habitus of the Latina/o student will be valued. The Latina/o student will not have to show off and say he or she can’t speak Spanish. Monique, Enrique, and Alejandra would not feel ashamed, scared, or set aside because of their language or experiences. Latinas/os will not feel marginalized in the hallways, in the classrooms, or in the counselor’s office of their schools. All students of all cultures will have richer educational experiences that are inclusive of all cultures. This is the joy Enrique experienced when he had an Anglo

friend. The CRT and LatCrit solution is a multicultural education that is inclusive and values the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of all students.

Finally, I will examine student-centered and school-centered programs. Without a CRT and LatCrit lens, student-centered programs identify a group of students and then develop the appropriate interventions to prepare them for postsecondary education. These pre-collegiate programs include mentors, college visits, and a parent component (Loza, 2003). Most pre-collegiate programs fall into this group. These programs identify a few promising Latina/o students while the majority of Latina/o students remain excluded and on the peripheral of the educational system (Loza). The at-risk students, the students in jeopardy of not completing high school and ineligible for admissions to postsecondary institutions, remain underserved or pushed out of the educational system entirely. A student-centered program necessitates that the Latina/o students move between “belonging” and “not belonging,” between the dominant and their Latina/o culture. Paul (2003) goes one step further, cautioning that policies that focus on body count to proclaim a student population as diverse rarely results in any resolution towards providing an equitable education for Latina/o students beyond a superficial level with student-centered policies and structures. The majority of Latina/o students remain excluded and in the borderlands of the educational system (Loza). It is this superficial level of diversity that schools need to move beyond.

With a CRT and LatCrit lens the appropriate response is a school-centered approach. Using a school-centered approach requires the educational institution to restructure and reform the school as a whole. This is the most appropriate response when school failure is extensive for a specific group of students. This focuses the change on

school structures, systems, and processes rather than changing the student (Loza, 2003). The fundamental change begins by valuing the Latina/o histories, experiences, cultures and languages. A school-centered response is genuinely inclusive of all student populations. To move beyond a superficial level, research suggests that educational institutions must be transformed into school-centered multicultural environments (Paul, 2003).

Educational institutions cannot claim to be diverse unless they have consciously and authentically transformed the policies and structures that perpetuate the racism and marginalization of underrepresented populations. Educators must accept the CRT and LatCrit challenge that Latinas/os are creators and holders of knowledge with valuable histories, experiences, cultures, and languages. Schools should not accept anything less if they are to move forward and value diversity and the diverse student populations in their institutions.

Using the CRT and LatCrit lens brings race and racism to center stage. By bringing racism to the foreground, communities and schools can acknowledge that racism exists (Bergerson, 2003). By conceding, educational institutions are able to move forward to challenge the policies and structures that have perpetuated racism. This opens the doors for educational institutions to move forward in meeting their previously unmet goals of providing postsecondary educational opportunities to an increased number of Latina/o students.

A friend told me about the pre-collegiate program. Pre-collegiate programs have been in existence for many years. The wealth of characteristics underscores the possibilities of what a pre-collegiate program might look like in the future as these kinds

of programs evolve. Ultimately, the goal of each pre-collegiate program is to address the academic, social, and cultural barriers that move Latina/o students closer to access and success in postsecondary institutions (Tierney, 2002). Researchers have identified the characteristics of the High School Puente Project as family involvement, culturally enriched teaching, counseling, mentoring, and support of college-bound peers (Cooper, 2002; Gladieux, 1996; Moreno, 2002). Although many inconsistencies exist among the authors as they report the pre-collegiate characteristics, these are the prevailing characteristics.

The High School Puente Project was a seminal pre-collegiate program. In contrast to the pre-collegiate program in my study, there were differences and similarities beginning with the recruitment and enrollment processes. The High School Puente Project targeted nonimmigrant English speaking Latina/o students beginning in the 9th-grade. Students were nominated by teachers and counselors and selected for the program based on four categories with an assigned range of effort and achievement. The first category included high achievers with good grades, good test scores, and evidence of good effort. The fourth category included students with low performance and low effort, but was recommended by teachers or counselors as capable of higher performance. The single academic requirement was that students could not score more than three years below grade level in reading. The Puente Project also required parent and community participation. Parents signed an agreement to academically support their children's college goals, including attendance at parent workshops. These workshops provided specific information such as financial aid or procedures for college admission. The Puente Project also had a goal of changing the consciousness of the school and the

community about the potential of these students by creating local support networks that include mentors, financial support, and visibility. In turn, pre-collegiate students were encouraged to give back to their communities.

In the pre-collegiate program I studied, 90% of the students enrolled were Latina/o although the primary target was students who would be the first in their families to pursue a postsecondary degree. Typically the students, beginning with the 6th-grade, were able to self nominate themselves for the pre-collegiate program. Teachers and counselors also could nominate students. This was in part because the pre-collegiate program was in the beginning stage and many educators were not aware of the program. Because there was no record kept of the citizenship status of students in the school district, the pre-collegiate program conformed to this standard. Since undocumented students were eligible to attend postsecondary institutions, these students also had access to the pre-collegiate program. All the pre-collegiate students will be the first in their families to attend college.

There were both advantages and disadvantages to the self-selection enrollment into the pre-collegiate program. The obvious example is students like Enrique, who knew he wanted to attend college, did not have a gate keeper. Andrea, who told the counselor she wanted to go to an “American university,” was referred to Daniel to help her. On the other hand, students like Alejandra and her brother who did not believe they could go to college would not have self-selected themselves. Without Daniel specifically nominating Alejandra, she would not have otherwise considered college her opportunity. Eligible students are required to maintain a 2.5 grade point average. In this respect, both the

Puente Project and the pre-collegiate program in my study focused on the student most likely to succeed.

Family involvement was considered an important component by both the High School Puente Project and the pre-collegiate program I studied. Both pre-collegiate programs required the participation of parents in an orientation interview in addition to signing an agreement supporting their children's college goals. Both programs required parents to regularly attend meetings. For the pre-collegiate program I studied, these meetings were called Academic Saturday. Although both pre-collegiate programs indicated family involvement in the school district was critical, neither program had well-defined goals and a curricula to match their initial statement.

Parent participation in the pre-collegiate process is a critical component that up to this point has not been adequately met. My research indicated that parents, who have not been educated in the United States, lacked the cultural capital and understanding of the educational system in the United States. For this reason, Latina/o parents were unsure of how to be advocates for their children through the K-12 and postsecondary educational processes. Additionally, none of the participants' parents were native English speakers. This further marginalized their participation and understanding of the American school system as well as their ability to ask questions and get answers. Although all the parents were supportive of their children's aspirations, they were unable to specifically help their children with the scholarship and application processes for college. For this reason, all the participants and their parents would have benefited from a more structured pre-collegiate curricula that specifically included the cultural, social, and economic

information required to navigate through the American K-12 and postsecondary school systems.

The Puente Project was supportive of the counseling and mentoring component and considered it the heart of the program. This was comparable to the pre-collegiate program I studied. The meetings between mentors and the students were scheduled bi-monthly. The mentors served the dual role of mentoring and counseling the students. Although the high school pre-collegiate students were mentored by volunteers from the community, the 6th- and 7th-grade pre-collegiate students frequently were mentored by Latinas/os who were either beginning college or possibly still in high school. These volunteers were not trained for the role of high school counselor. Moreover, the mentors lacked the time and resources to be counselors. Because the pre-collegiate mentors were not high school counselors, it was difficult for the mentors to advise efficiently the pre-collegiate students. However, the high school counselors frequently were not available for the scholarship and college application processes. This shifted the burden of counseling to the mentors, who are unprepared for the role.

All the pre-collegiate participants I spoke with felt the support of their college-bound peers. As a result students like Enrique, Giovanna, and Alejandra relied on college-bound peers for critical help. High school and college counselors should partner with the pre-collegiate mentors and formally step into this role. This would have the benefit of moving away from being student-centered towards school-centered, if done genuinely. If not implemented sincerely, no progress will be made and the status quo and ineffectual attempts to promote diversity in schools will prevail.

Notably absent from the pre-collegiate program I studied, but reported by the High School Puente Project, was the culturally enriched teaching component. The Puente Project reported instruction in writing and literature with the intent of fostering a cultural identity so students are empowered by their heritage and language (Laden, 1999). Research on the High School Puente Project did not detail specifically the content of the writing and literature curriculum; however, an example of embedding cultural literature in the curriculum would be to introduce classic Latina/o Spanish language writers like Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra as well as contemporary authors like Sandra Cisneros. Because the Latina/o participants I interviewed were for the most part educated in the United States, they had not been exposed to Spanish language authors in the schools. Exposure to their heritage and language through literature was absent. The summer program would be one appropriate venue to include culturally enriched teaching component in the pre-collegiate program. Embedding Spanish in literature in the general high school curriculum also should be considered. For postsecondary students, teaching general education classes in Spanish as they begin the higher education process while in ELL also has shown to help.

The primary role of pre-collegiate programs is to prepare students for access and success in postsecondary institutions. The characteristics of the seminal Puente Project were family involvement, culturally enriched teaching, counseling, mentoring, and support by college-bound peers (Cooper, 2002; Gladieux, 1996; Moreno, 2002). All the pre-collegiate programs admitted students who were most likely to successfully pursue postsecondary education based on the dominant culture's norms.. Although the participants benefited from the support of their families, the families all asked for more

involvement in the pre-collegiate program. The counseling and mentoring component was important, so important that the counseling and mentoring process should be a close partnership between high school counselors and pre-collegiate mentors. Culturally enriched teaching is an opportunity to implement and value the Latina/o histories, experiences, and cultures. The multicultural and school-centered solution would be to implement the culturally enriched teaching component throughout the K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions.

As a result of pre-collegiate programs, many Latinas/os have earned academic degrees; however, Latinas/os continue to be the least educated group in the United States (Fry, 2002). To close this educational gap, it becomes imperative that K-12 educational institutions include all their students in the educational process. Educational institutions must continue to evolve as they respond to new solutions.

Findings That Advance Current Research

The successes of pre-collegiate programs continue to enable more Latinas/os to be successful in postsecondary institutions. Incrementally, K-12 school districts are embracing pre-collegiate programs with the hope of increasing the educational opportunities for Latina/o students who will be the first in their families to access and succeed in college. In spite of these successes, 56% of Latinas/os drop out before graduating from high school while only 10% are enrolled in postsecondary institutions (Martinez, 2003; The Puente Project, 2003). Alejandra asks “so what’s the deal?” What’s the disconnect?

We don’t mix with Anglos and that’s the deal. Negative social capital is confirmed in research by Romo (2004). Romo reports parents pass on middle-class cultural capital

while others pass it on with the symbolic violence of exclusion, marginalization, and classism. Every student, parent, and school administrator has walked through the halls of a school and witnessed students grouped by ethnicity. That's the unspoken "deal" Alejandra observed. "You're suppose to hang out with your own race and leave the Anglos by themselves." For Latinas/os who move between the Latina/o culture and the dominant non-Latina/o White culture they are moving between "belonging" and "not belonging." The Latina/o students who are able to periodically venture into the dominant culture continually are reminded that they don't belong. Rejected by the Latina/o community, they are reminded by their peers who jeer "gringa" or "gringo" at them. Behind their backs other Latina/o students ask each other why a Latino boy is ashamed of his culture and pretends not to speak Spanish. In these instances, the Latinas/os students live in the borderlands.

Events in the dominant culture by non-Latina/o Whites also serve as a reminder that Latinas/os don't belong. The consequences for Latinas/os who reside in the non-Latina/o White community range from the overt prejudice that Alejandra encountered by the judge to the "big hat" heckling Andrea witnessed. The prejudice continued to change the lives of other participants. Monique felt embarrassed to participate and marginalized in group projects in her classroom. Alejandra and her Latina friend were rejected in their school sponsored speech club. Andrea reported that she was not respected in the counselor's office. Alejandra's brother was not genuinely asked to go to college. All the participants reported they did not feel welcome participating in school sponsored clubs. Systematically and consistently Latina/o students were excluded from access to the dominant culture during K-12.

It would be convenient and tempting for a non-Latina/o White student, who enjoys the access and successes of the dominant habitus, to minimize the extent by which many Latinas/os are denied full access to the dominant culture and the opportunities that “belonging” to the dominant culture provides. However, my data has shown the systemic and pervasive racism aimed at Latinas/os from non-Latina/o Whites who are assured membership in the dominant culture. Research has made it unacceptable for educators to no longer notice or willingly accept the racism imposed on the Latina/o students in their schools. I have also shown how deeply and personal the racism is felt by each participant.

These participants detailed the impact of racism in their schools and communities. They expressed sadness, fear, and sometimes self determination as they acknowledged how difficult their lives were because of the racism. So while racism is seen as casually imposed by the dominant non-Latina/o White culture, it is felt deeply and personally by the recipients of the Latina/o culture. I believe I have demonstrated that racism exists and is perpetuated by school policies and systems. Educational institutions need to look deeper at what diversity genuinely looks and feels like for all students.

Practitioner’s Voice

As a nation, Americans have spent decades fighting poverty by valuing education. In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson fought the war on poverty by investing in education and passing the Higher Education Act creating postsecondary funding for low-income students. In 1981 the first Puente Project was created. Many decades later, millions of dollars have been spent on pre-collegiate programs collectively known as early intervention, early outreach, and college access programs whose missions promote access and success for low-income underrepresented populations. As recently as 2003 the

Supreme Court acknowledged affirmative action as a means of increasing minority access to postsecondary institutions. However, we continue to see published papers titled “Latinos in Higher Education: Many Enroll, Too Few Graduate” (Fry, 2002). In the decades since 1965, the gap between the rich and poor has continued to increase making the current level an all time high and school failure for the Latina/o populations at epidemic proportions. Once again, I ask that same question that began my dissertation journey. As educators are we reaching out to every group in the community in which we serve?

My research reports the societal and economic inequities. There is a long list of statistics available. Fifty-six percent of Latinas/os drop out of school somewhere between K-12 and only 6% will eventually earn a baccalaureate degree (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002). It is difficult to separate access to education and income. A person with a bachelor’s degree earns an average of \$52,500; a high school graduate earns \$30,000 while a person with less than a high school diploma earns \$17,500. Low wages translate into poverty. While 24.3% of the Latina/o population lives in poverty only 7.8% of non-Latina/o Whites live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Nationwide a growing number of Latina/o children live in poverty. Latina/o children represent 17.7% of the total population in the United States but constitute 30.4% of all children living in poverty, and the numbers continue to rise (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Poverty and access to education are dramatically divided along race lines. These statistics are destined to become even more chronic when one considers Latinas/os are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). It is predicted that the Latino population will increase from 35.6 million to 102.6 million in the next 50 years, an

increase of 188% (High School Journal, 2004/2005). These demographics underscore the importance of access and inclusion to educational institutions by all populations in the United States.

There are many human faces and families behind these statistics. The participants in my study opened a window into their culture and life experiences and in the process described themselves as “embarrassed,” “inferior,” “afraid,” “less equal,” and “illegal.” It was Alejandra who candidly said “people might not see I belong.” All the Latinas/os I talked to experienced and spoke of racism. All the participants and their families lived with prejudice, were marginalized in the schools they attended, and lived in the borderlands of a country they called home. Throughout my research journey I have felt a great deal of emotion and empathy as I listened to the personal stories of the Latinas/os and their families. Three conversations stand out in particular. I will remind the reader of the stories and provide the reader with my personal voice. I have learned a great deal about the lived experience of racism from the participants and their families through these stories.

Recall the story told by Alejandra about the judging process at her school’s state-wide speech competition. As the only Latinas/os at the competition, she and her Latina friend knew they “didn’t belong.” They were reminded of their “not belonging” status by the participating students, the judges, and the sponsoring organization. Out of hundreds of participating teams Alejandra and her Latina friend were ranked first place by two judges, second place by one judge, and last place by one judge. For all the members of the dominant culture involved life went on. For Alejandra, her friend, and their families this became a life changing event. Alejandra and her Latina friend quietly talked between

themselves asking each other how they could be both first and last. They easily recognized the racism. When Alejandra returned home, she and her mother also talked about the judging process and the racism. However, outside the Latina/o community their voices were silenced.

When racism happens it is readily accepted as “normal” in the dominant non-Latina/o White culture. Alejandra’s high school speech teacher easily accepted the outcome of the judge as did the other judges. The non-Latina/o White students were taught how racism persists in the dominant culture. I knew this event was not the first racist dictum handed down by that particular judge. I likened that judge to a serial killer, killing one person, one dream at a time, over and over again. Those who resided in the dominant culture watched. Who’s paying attention? Who speaks up? Long ago Alejandra, her mother, and the Latina/o community were silenced by the unrelenting and demoralizing affects that racism extracts from the individual and the community who endure it.

The second story was told by Enrique. As a young adolescent Enrique experienced persistent fear associated with his undocumented status. As he spoke to the community about the Dream Act and how it could give hope to the lives of many children of undocumented workers, he recalled the deep emotional memories as he revealed a face behind the statistics of his “illegal” status. It was Daniel who spoke to me about the cumulative and negative effect the term “illegal” extracts from an individual over time. Enrique was acutely aware that many Americans are against immigration. “I’m scared. I’m so scared that somebody might find me and deport me.” For this reason his mother

worried about him when he wasn't home on time. Enrique's younger brother and sister must also have lived with this fear. Afraid, they all are silenced.

Enrique's fear kept replaying in my mind. As a non-Latina White I had no association or point of reference for Enrique's and his family's experience. I wondered how it might feel to live in my home and my community and yet be afraid that "somebody might find me." School policies are "don't ask, don't tell." My thoughts eventually turned to the immigration policies of the United States and our broken borders. Our borders were broken when I lived in New Mexico over 30 years ago. Decades later our borders still are not fixed. As a country, the United States has not tackled the immigration policies and like the schools, the government prefers the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. In an effort to "fix" our borders the United States is currently building a wall on the American/Mexican border at a time when the walls that divide countries around the world are coming down. The non-Latina/o Whites, who are the gatekeepers of the dominant culture, are satisfied to continue with the current immigration policies that continue to chronically abuse and marginalize whole populations for decades. Is this what we really want to accept? Where are our voices?

The third story that persisted in my mind was the story Alejandra told about the groups of Latina/o students in the school's hallway. The high school's protocol quietly told of the racism that was perpetuated across every school in America. "You're suppose to hang out with your own race and leave the Anglos by themselves." Although the Latina/os are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture in order to "earn" the benefits provided by the dominant culture, Latinas/os are continually reminded of their "real" place in the schools. No non-Spanish speaking person needs "gringa" or "gringo"

translated for them. Silenced, the Latina/o students retreat back to their segregated group. Privilege feels good for those who have inherited it by their non-Latina/o White status. Those who reside in the dominant culture are safe and secure in their privileges. Why would anyone in the dominant culture advocate for change? In truth both the victim and the perpetrator suffers the collective consequences of racism.

Glaring distinctions of preferential treatment by race are evident in our communities and in our educational systems. This systemic racism is created and perpetuated through structures, systems, and processes that guide our educational institutions. This is also where racism is learned by all our children and perpetuated both in our schools and in our communities. This ensures that racism is taught and tolerated by the next generation. The current and dominant non-Latina/o White culture does not exhibit any authentic intention to move beyond the racism that exists in the classrooms, the school sponsored clubs, the hallways, and our communities.

For those who want to debate the fact and consequences of racism, we only have to recall the 94 % failure rate of Latinos in the educational systems between K-16. My eyes widen as I absorbed these undeniable statistics. As a member of the non-Latina/o White dominant culture my gut response was to distance myself from the non-Latina/o White gatekeepers who have created policies and structures for our educational systems. In the past, we have all groped for our personal excuses, abdicating responsibility. It is time for educators and their communities to accept the challenge and make no more excuses. It is unconscious and unethical for the widespread and systemic racism to continue in the schools and the communities of America. Finally, after all these years and resources, it is time for educational institutions to recognize that the current structures,

systems, and processes have not been working. We will not hear from those who reside in the borderlands; they have effectively been “scared” and silenced. It is Paulo Freire who wrote in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* how the Latina/o lives in silence and continues to silence their peers with “gringo” and “gringo” labels.

The oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of the domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires. Moreover, their struggle for freedom threatens not only the oppressor, but also their own oppressed comrades who are fearful of still greater repression (Freire, 2003, p. 47).

Empowerment of the oppressed happens through education. Freire suggests that transformative and empowering consciousness happens when students can generate knowledge from their own point of view (2003). It is this empowerment through education that moves the oppressed towards freedom.

I end my research by acknowledging that pre-collegiate programs do help at least part of the 6% of Latina/o students who do successfully earn a postsecondary degree. However, by intent the structures, systems, and processes of pre-collegiate programs are student-centered and designed to transition only a small number of Latina/o students into the dominant non-Latina/o White culture. These students are frequently hand picked by the school’s gatekeepers, and are made to feel lucky and privileged to be admitted into the pre-collegiate program. Many capable students are not chosen and left behind. By the reported standards of the dominant culture, pre-collegiate programs transition many Latinas/os into postsecondary institutions. The dominant culture is said to be promoting

diversity but remains secure in not having to incrementally change the policies and structures that being truly inclusive of minority populations would require. Below the surface there are many dichotomies that impede progress.

As the Latinas and Latinos in my study described their pre-collegiate experiences I listened closely to their voices. What most hindered their postsecondary journey was the systemic racism instigated and perpetuated by the non-Latina/o Whites in dominant culture who work in our K-12 educational and postsecondary institutions, and live in our communities. Educators can no longer focus on the 6% of the Latinas/os successes while ignoring the 94% of Latinas/os who fail at least in part because of the systemic and debilitating racism.

Our schools and communities haven't done the necessary work to address their societal responsibilities for perpetuating racism. The next step is for schools to initiate school-centered responses that would be transformative at structural, system, and process levels. This would necessitate that the way schools currently do business would end. It is unethical for K-16 educational institutions and communities to continue to abdicate responsibility and accountability. I believe we must become insistent and vigilant in ending racism and abandoning the premise and promises of the dominant privilege by moving away from the structures, systems, and processes that enable racism to continue. We must speak up; we have a voice.

Recommendations

I conclude chapter 5 with recommendations for schools and recommendations for further research. I begin with recommendations for schools that provide suggestions for school-centered programs, multicultural education, and parental involvement. Next I

provide recommendations for our communities. These recommendations revolve around undocumented students and scholarship opportunities. I conclude this chapter by making recommendations for further research that includes schools transitioning to multicultural school-centered institutions and my reflections on listening to the Latina/o voice.

Recommendations for Schools

K-12 schools, in partnership with parents, provide the impetus that sparks and nurtures the dream to go to college. Research has been very specific on the school-centered multicultural directions schools should take. It is now up to educators to respond and implement the research.

School-centered programs. A student-centered pre-collegiate program identifies a specific group of students and then develops strategies to prepare them for postsecondary institutions. Like the Puente Project, most pre-collegiate programs are student-centered. These pre-collegiate programs have been effective, and K-12 educational institutions should continue to initiate and grow pre-collegiate programs. Many Latina/o students have attained access and success in college because of pre-collegiate programs. However, many Latina/o students remained excluded or on the fringes of the educational system (Loza, 2003). School failure is widespread for many Latina/o students.

School-centered programs attempt to restructure and reform schools as a whole and focus change on school policies, structures, systems, and processes that include all students (Loza, 2003). In an environment where Latinas/os are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States and with only 57% possessing high school diplomas, inclusion becomes important (Baez, 2004, High School Journal, 2005). As the Latina/o

population continues to increase proportionally, it is time for schools to initiate school-centered programs that are inclusive of all Latina/o students. Researchers can assist in determining how school-centered policies and structures will look.

Multicultural education. It is necessary that educational institutions respond to the multicultural reality of the communities they serve (Sogunro, 2001). Cultural diversity is promoted when multicultural organizations implement a multicultural curriculum. Because of the connection between diversity and multiculturalism, it is important to review the terms canon and multiculturalism.

Canon is the traditional knowledge that is produced by White European males, and is deemed superior to the knowledge of other populations (Rhoades & Valadez, 1966). Because canon knowledge involves “value judgments about the quality or aesthetics of specific works, ideas, ways of knowing, and forms of knowledge,” it is believed as the appropriate knowledge to acquire by all educated people in a society (Rhoades & Valadez, p. 7). This stance requires border knowledge to be unworthy of exchange in mainstream educational settings (Rhoades & Valadez). As a result, canon knowledge suppresses knowledge outside the mainstream of the dominant culture.

The traditional American mainstream culture opposes different ways of being. Similarly, educational institutions traditionally and methodically have excluded from academic study any ethnicity unfamiliar to the dominant culture (Pradl, 2002). It is (Bergerson, 2003) who asserts that the American educational model is not as neutral as it claims to be. Instead, he argues that any curriculum that ignores issues of racism serves to further oppress while supporting the status quo. For this reason, members of non-dominant cultures have little opportunity to develop the confidence that make it possible

to venture into the dominant culture mainstream. The research becomes more explicit when we listen to the voices of the participants who are required to navigate between “belonging” and “not belonging.” Living between two cultures and residing in the borderlands, however, becomes problematic.

Latinas/os feel opposition to assimilate into the dominant culture (Harbour, Middleton, Lewis, & Anderson, 2003). Other researchers confirm the uncertainty Latinas/os feel as they either maintain separate Latina/o identities while struggling to value their culture and language, or the loss and isolation they feel as they leave one culture behind and accept the dominant culture (Shaw, Valadez, & Rhoades, 1999). For the participants who live in the borderlands between “belonging” and “not belonging,” they feel the life sentence that will always exist because “we are from different cultures” and “we don’t mix with Anglos” (Alejandra).

I suggest multicultural education is the solution to these persistent and enduring problems. Educators can no longer sit back and declare it is not their problem, and there is no solution. The move to multicultural schools begins with a shift from cultural deficit thinking to cultural valuing (Grant & Wong, 2004; Paul, 2003; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Research advocates a culturally sensitive approach which would view bilingual and bicultural skills as enhancing students’ ability to positively respond to their communities and a multicultural economy (Rolon, 2002/2003). So rather than assimilating Latinas/os into the dominant culture, the more appropriate multicultural response would be to value and give meaning to the Latina/o culture and the Spanish language. K-12 schools can begin by adapting a culturally sensitive model that views the Spanish language and Latina/o culture as positive. This begins by valuing and validating

the language skills of Latina/o students and providing continued language options for Latina/o students. Native speaking Spanish students should have the option to advance their native skills in reading, writing, and speaking or learn an additional foreign language.

Many researchers have recommended multicultural and school-centered approaches. In keeping with the research valuing culturally enriched teaching, I also would recommend the instruction in Spanish language literature in K-12 schools. Additional research is needed to reveal how K-12 schools can migrate to multicultural school-centered educational institutions. This multicultural approach would place value in the Latina/o experiences, culture, and language. Sogunro (2001) agrees with researchers, acknowledging the importance of multicultural education, but is uncertain on best practices to implement a multiculturalism that reflects cultural diversity. I concur.

Parental involvement. All pre-collegiate programs acknowledge the critical role Latina/o parents play in the educational successes of their children (Diversi & Necham, 2005; Jose-Kampfner & Aparico, 1998; Olivos, 2004; Torrez, 2004). For this reason 70% of pre-collegiate programs report a parental involvement; however, parental involvement is mandatory by only one-third of these programs (Perna & Titus, 2005). It is also reported that 75% of the surveyed Latina/o parents have a strong desire to see their children graduate from high school and continue to postsecondary institutions (Torrez, 2004). Despite these high expectations only 10% of surveyed parents report having a student who is actively enrolling in a four-year institution (Torrez). Research confirms that many Latina/o families are not getting sufficient information regarding adequate

academic preparedness for postsecondary education (Bohon, Macpherson & Atilas, 2005; Torrez).

The disconnect between what research reports and what actually happens is confirmed and must be addressed by educational institutions. Educational institutions should use research to guide their pre-collegiate curricula. My research confirmed that Latina/o parents do want more participation in the K-12 educational process. Beyond having the ability to ask questions and get answers, Latina/o parents want the larger question answered: “You can go to college. Sure, but how” (Alejandra)? I suggest that pre-college programs create specific student-centered curricula based on research to provide answers for the questions students and their parents ask about the K-12 and postsecondary institutions and educational processes. It would also be appropriate and school-centered to include all Latina/o parents to participate in these programs. This would create a partnership between educational institutions and all Latina/o families.

Recommendations for Communities

It is predicted that the Latina/o population will increase 188% in the next 50 years (High School Journal, 2004/2005). For this reason, the communities and schools have an important and ethical role in partnering to create a community that is inclusive of all the populations they serve. The participants in my study, who will leave home and earn a baccalaureate, will all return home to their communities to live and work. The communities have a vested interest in all their populations to be educated and contributing members.

Undocumented students. The term “illegal” is a political reference for an undocumented person who works and resides in the United States. The word itself has

criminal associations and undertones. The struggles associated with being “illegal” are both physical and psychological. The children of undocumented workers have inherited the term “illegal” from their parents.

The consequence for the undocumented students who are persistently identified as “illegal” is that they live in continual fear. Enrique described the continual fear that was a part of his everyday experiences. “I’m scared. I’m so scared that somebody might find me and deport me” (Enrique). Alejandra also spoke about how undocumented students viewed the educational systems. Being marginalized by their undocumented status has the consequence of “bringing them down to where they don’t even finish high school. What’s the point” (Alejandra)? Undocumented students believe if they are illegal they are not welcome to fully participate at K-12 or postsecondary institutions.

I advise schools and communities to be sympathetic and compassionate to the duality of these students’ inherited positions at a minimum. The word “illegal” is inappropriate and badly chosen when describing these Latina/o students. As children of undocumented parents, Latina/o students should not be branded as “illegal.” Undocumented students should be able to fully participate in all educational processes.

Scholarship opportunities. The inequality in income between the rich and poor in the U.S. is at a historic high (Hout & Lucas, 1996). Today 30.4% of Latina/o children continue to live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Although the postsecondary participation rates of low-income minority students have increased in recent years, there is a greater inequality in access to postsecondary institutions, and the gap between the rich and poor has widened (Gladieux, 1996). Educational elitism continues to persist in the United States.

Closing the economic gap requires that our communities bridge the educational gap. The cost of college appears disproportionate to the many Latinas/os who are supported by their mothers, who are the primary wage earners of single-parent families. For these Latina/o students access to postsecondary institutions necessitates access to scholarship monies. If the documented students are dependent on scholarships, the undocumented students have an additional barrier. For the undocumented students who acknowledge that their undocumented status increases the cost of college, they are thinking “yaw right, but how” (Alejandra)? For the undocumented students who were prejudiced by the talk “you can’t go to school if you don’t have papers,” they believed they cannot go to college (Alejandra). Scholarships are the defining opportunity for many of these students.

I encourage communities and schools to build partnerships that create scholarships for all Latina/o students regardless of documentation status. This will send the message to Latina/o students and their parents that they are welcome in K-12 institutions, postsecondary institutions, and the communities where we all live.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research has helped educators understand the many contributions of pre-collegiate programs. Pre-collegiate programs have initiated and fostered diversity in our schools. However, the commitment to diversity is ongoing, and educational institutions must continue to move forward. How educators move their institutions forward in their commitment to embrace diversity should be grounded in research.

The following questions should guide future research.

1. How can educational institutions address the social and cultural strengths and needs of Latina/o students to encourage academic achievement?
2. How can educational institutions foster ethnic identity by viewing bilingualism and biculturalism as an asset and immigration as a source of pride?
3. How can educational institutions foster positive ethnic identities that empower Latino students with leadership roles and encourage their voice and participation?
4. What are the policies and structures in educational institutions that most need to change in order to honor the complexity of the Latinas/os language and culture?

Transitioning to multicultural school-centered institutions. The goal of multicultural education places value on the historical, cultural, and language contributions from the diverse groups of our population. Multicultural education honors the multiple ways of thinking. School-centered multicultural education provides equitable educational opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. In the process, multicultural schools prepare all our children for work in the multicultural workforce they will inevitably encounter. I recommend additional research to provide strategies and policies for educational institutions as they transition to multicultural school-centered institutions.

Listening to the Latina/o voice. Research reports about the cultural barriers that are regularly invisible to non-Latina/o Whites but are a part of everyday of life for many

Latinas/os (Lujan, Gallegos, & Harbour, 2003). These cultural barriers that are indiscernible to non-Latina/o Whites have also been substantiated by the participants in my study and their parents. It is also reported that the voices of those who live in the borderland are frequently silenced (Auerback, 2002). For these reasons, researchers suggest the cultural barriers are best described through the voices of Latinas/os. I concur.

The data in my study originated from the Latina/o voices that included the participants in the pre-collegiate program and their parents through a series of face-to-face interviews. During the first interview, with only the participant present, I established the areas of questioning I would pursue in my study. When I arranged second interview that included the participants' parents, all the participants invited me into their homes. The familiarity and trust established in the first interview was apparent as the participants translated for their parents. For the participants, who were very close to their mothers, it was apparent this was not their first conversation about their journey to college, and they were proud to share their journey. The last interview clarified the conversations from the previous interviews. The participants had time to rethink, reconsider, or add to their responses. It was this interview that Alejandra was comfortable enough to talk about the unspoken deal that "Latinos stay in groups with Latinos" (Alejandra). It was also in this last interview that Enrique exposed his struggles as an undocumented student and his new friendships with American students. With each subsequent interview the participants were able to share more of their personal stories with me. It is imperative as research continues that researchers include the voices of the Latina/o students, their parents, and families. Without the voices of the participants' families my data would not have been as

rich. The participants and their parents have co-authored my study. They have told me their very personal stories and have allowed me to give a voice to their stories.

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