Standing in the Gap: A Study of College-Bound Latinas' Resilience in Completing High School Within an At-Risk Environment

by

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Liberty University

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Of the Requirements for the EDUC 980 Course

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Abstract

Shane York. STANDING IN THE GAP: A STUDY OF COLLEGE-BOUND LATINAS' RESILIENCE IN COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL WITHIN AN AT-RISK ENVIRONMENT Under the direction of Dr. Ellen L. Black, School of Education, Liberty University, April, 2012.

The purpose of this study was to look at the life experience factors that led to high school graduation through the eyes of resilient Latinas between the ages of 18 and 25. A grounded theory approach was used in combination with Paulo Freire's praxis and a resiliency conceptual framework to derive constructs directly from the data itself. Participants were selected through a purposive, snowball method until saturation was met. Extensive qualitative interviews were employed to gather the data used to derive theory. All data were coded and reviewed in light of the three research questions. Validity and trustworthiness were established through thoroughness of design, appropriate choice of interviewees, transparency, reflexivity, rapport, insider research, use of an interview guide, flexibility, self-reflection, member checks, rigorous design, relevance, full disclosure of methods, and frequent debriefings with the chair and committee.

Descriptors: resiliency, Latina, risk, education, high school graduation, personal strengths, protective factors, qualitative, grounded theory

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the teenagers whom I had the pleasure of coming into contact with during my tenure as an educator in Santa Ana. More than anything, I was the one receiving an education about life and success from them. They taught me more than I could ever hope to teach them. I owe any success I have to that transformational experience. I met my wife during this time and she, like gasoline on an open flame, has set a fire burning inside me. This fire manifests itself in a desire to gain knowledge and use knowledge as a tool to better serve those who surround us. I love her dearly and our son who happened along during the writing this manuscript. Without my wife, this would not have been possible.

I would like to acknowledge my parents for their loving support. The same goes for my in-laws. All of my colleagues have done a wonderful job of picking up the slack as I dragged into work after pulling all-nighters and the multiple hiatius' flying across the country to take classes. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the chair of my committee, especially for the day I told her I quit and she informed me that quitting was not an option.

This body of work is dedicated to anyone who refuses to succumb when it seems as if the entire universe has conspired against you, yet you have resolved to make it anyway. There are an unlimited number of reasons to fail, but you only need one reason to succeed. Finally, I would be remiss without thanking God who has loved such an unworthy individual as myself. Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Between April of 2000 and 2010 the U.S. resident population for 50 states and the District of Columbia increased from 281,421,906 to 308,745,538, a reported increase of 27,323,632 (9.7%) over 10 years. During the 2010 Census, individuals were asked questions based on race and Hispanic origin. According to the results, of the 27.3 million increased residents, 15.2 million were Hispanic, making this the fastest growing minority group (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) and the largest population of color (Malott et al., 2010).

The 2009 Census estimated 13.7 million Hispanics living in California, roughly 37% of the state's population (Pearson Education, 2009). The 2007 census reported over 45 million Latina/os as the youngest and fastest growing minority group in the United States comprising more than 15% of the U.S. total population (U.S. Census Bureau, General Demographics, 2007). Furthermore, the 2009 Census reported an increase of 312,000 Hispanics in California that led all states and makes Hispanics the largest minority group in California. The reported population in Santa Ana, California is roughly 79.6% Hispanic (Pearson Education, 2009). Clearly the U.S. Census data report Hispanics as a major ethnic group in the United States, California, and—related to the present study—the city of Santa Ana in particular.

Also on the rise since 2009 is spending on U.S. education by the Obama administration (Grunwald, 2010). Since 2009, President Obama has pushed an ambitious agenda sending $100 billion throughout the states with the hopes of spurring reform

(Cavanagh, 2011). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports world rankings every 3 years in its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report (OECD, 2011). This report compares the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in 70 countries across the world. The United States ranked 14 in reading skills, 17 in science, and 25 in math. This report further stated 18% of U.S. 15-year-olds do not reach reading proficiency and that the United States has dismal school enrollment, third from the bottom, and a graduation rate that dropped from second place in 1995 to its current 13th place ranking (Zeitvogel, 2010). These statistics show the decline in educational standards is not being counteracted by the tertiary approach the government is taking to help improve our nation's most at-risk populations.

With the obvious influx of Hispanics to U.S. population and decline in educational standards, it is time to switch from the tertiary pathology model (deficit model) of dealing with at-risk populations (Canter, 2006, 2010; McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whately, 2007; Payne, 2005). Instead of focusing on deficits and poor performance that in some ways have become a self-fulfilling prophecy, focus should center on strengths and resiliency (Bernard, 2006; Henderson, Benard, & Sharp-Light, 2007).

Latina students deserve a quality education; unfortunately their achievement does not reflect the quality they deserve. One out of every five K-12 students is Latino (Malott et al., 2010; Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Twelve percent of all high schools in the United States produce half of the nation's dropouts and 75% of minority dropouts (Mellander, 2011). Many of these schools serve Latinas who have the highest dropout rate of all groups in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Daisy and Jose-Kampfner

(2002) report Latinas dropping out of school at 26%, which is a far greater rate than any other group, including 13% for Blacks and 6.9% for Whites. As Latinas drop out of school at higher rates than any other ethnicity, reports of distinct challenges they face pour forth. These challenges include negative cultural stereotypes (Rodriguez, 2000), having to take care of the members of their family of origin (Sanez, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007), socioeconomic disadvantage (Gloria & Rodriguez 2009; Nieto, 1999), identity (Torres, 2004), validation (Rendon, 1994), lack of a sympathetic adult (Miller, 1991), misinformation (Zalaquette, 2005), making poor life choices (Henderson, 2003), and subpar schools (Mellander, 2011).

The combination of such issues contributes to a well-documented cultural clash between the Latina and the White middle class world of education (Bensimon, 2007). Much research has been presented to attest to the failure of Latinas; however, little attention has been paid to factors that explicitly contribute to the resilience and academic success of Latinas (Valverde & Associates, 2008). The specific needs of Latina students need to be examined in light of strategies for supporting high school graduation as well as college enrollment and completion (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Caminos, 2006).

Research by Bozic and Lauff (2007) show Latinos enrolling in college at 58%, which is far lower than Blacks 62%, Whites 72%, and Asians 82%. When these Latinos enrolled in college, they tended to "undermatch" (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). That is to say they applied to and enrolled in less selective institutions that graduate students at far lower rates than more selective institutions. This is a key factor in the Latino percentage of students not obtaining college degrees (Arbona & Nora, 2007;

Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Nunez & Kim, 2012). Only 13% of Latinos earn a bachelor's degree and only 4% earn a professional degree (Mellander, 2011).

Despite the majority of research focusing on the negative aspects of education, Latinas have made progress. The number of Latinas entering college has increased, as have the number of Latinas completing associate and bachelor's degrees (American Council on Education, 2002). Perna and Thomas (2008) have identified four contexts that affect college enrollment: the student, family, school, and community. It is not enough to make progress though. While the number is increasing, enrollment continues to lag behind all other ethnic groups, and the percentages of Latinas entering into higher education is falling behind those of other ethnic groups (Zalaquett, 2005).

Personal resilience strengths of the student are associated with healthy development and life success (Narayanan, 2009). These personal factors associated with resilience transcend ethnicity, culture, gender, geography, and time (Henderson, 2004) and can be employed by all adolescents (Burrow et al., 2010). Sources of resiliency support can be found in the family (Rivera, 2011). Schools are an excellent place to foster resiliency in adolescents and the support and provision of protective factors (Burrow, O'Dell, & Hill, 2010). More globally, the community can foster resiliency in students (Van Breda, 2001).

With the Hispanic population on the rise nationwide, in the State of California and in the City of Santa Ana, schools need to focus on this group of people through skillful and supportive educators (Giles, 2008; Masten & Oradovic, 2006) who increase the academic and social outcomes of students (Hallinan, 2008).

Researchers have suggested more studies be conducted in the lives of Hispanic females between the ages of 18 and 25, heretofore identified as *Latinas* (Fuerth, 2009), teacher and student relationships (Hallinan, 2008), educational strategies that promote success for Latinas (Franquiz & Salazar, 2004), Latinas transitioning from high school to college (Sanchez, Esparza, Berardi, & Pryce, 2010), acculturation and academic achievement (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2008), the choices Latinas make as they transition into adulthood (Sanchez et al., 2010), the experiences of Latina immigrants (Ojeda, Flores, Meza, & Morales, 2011), and protective factors for Latina students (Cavazos, Johnson, & Sparrow, 2010).

The aim of this project was to fill gaps in current literature and research by capturing the stories of Latinas who have successfully graduated high school and enrolled in college. This was achieved through a qualitative grounded theory study that derives theory directly from the data (Brown & Lloyd, 2001). This project captured the authenticity and authority best realized in the form of powerful life stories of resilient Latinas (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Problem Statement

The problem is children are at risk of failure to thrive emotionally, mentally, and physically to the extent their schools, homes, and communities do not foster, teach, or exemplify resiliency. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008) and the U.S. Department of Education (2007), Latino and Latina students are the least likely demographic to graduate from high school and enter postsecondary education. Four of the six Santa Ana Unified School District high schools are ranked as the worst in Orange County, with Target High School being ranked as the worst (Orange County Register,

2010). Target High School is ranked as a 1 out of 10 by the state, the worst ranking a school can get (California School Rankings, 2009). The population of Target High School is 97% Hispanic, 48% English Language Learner (ELL), 77% on free and reduced lunch meal plans, and touts a 38% dropout rate (California Department of Education, 2010).

The city of Santa Ana has more people living per housing unit than any other city in the United States and is the fourth most densely populated (United States Census Bureau, 2007). The Orange County Register (Edds, Salazar, & Irving, 2010) reports 5,000 identified gang members policed by 362 sworn Santa Ana Police Officers and reports Santa Ana as the largest city in the county, with the most crime, and the highest number of gangs. Numerous sociocultural studies of Latinos in similar settings to Santa Ana show parental occupational attainment, family income, and language minority status as variables associated with parents' low academic achievement (Arias, 1986; Behnke et al., 2008; Lutz, 2007; Parra-Cardona, Bulock, Imig, Villarruel, & Gold, 2006; Rumberger, 1983, 1987). Similar reports document Latinos dropping out of school at a far higher rate than the normal population (Brown, Rosen, Hill, & Olivas, 1980; Hirano-Nakanishi, 1986; Mellander, 2011; National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, 1984; National Council of La Raza, 1992; Nunez & Kim, 2012; Rudolph Chavez, Quintana, & Salinas, 2011; Rumberger, 1983; U.S. Census, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; Valverde, 1987). In the city of Santa Ana, its homes, schools, and children are at high risk of failure.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to capture the voice of Latinas who have successfully graduated from a high-risk high school while growing up in a high-risk home and city environment. This research helps to facilitate an understanding of the elements that contributed to the resilience of Latinas who graduated high school and enrolled in college. This study examines how resilience contributed to successful high school graduation and college enrollment by building theory from the ground up based on the data collected through the qualitative interviewing process.

By using a qualitative grounded theory method guided by the conceptual framework provided by Paulo Friere and resiliency, theory was derived directly from the data. The developed theory and subsequent collected data fill an identified gap in the literature and provide information to practicing educators in Santa Ana as well as families, community stakeholders, policy makers, and individuals in areas outside of Santa Ana, California.

Sloan (2006) reports a marked lack of student voice in the educational process. Tompkins (1990) reminds us that what the students think, feel, and say is ultimately what is most important. What students want more than anything else is to be heard (Sloan, 2006). Throughout this process, the Latina students themselves were the guides and experts as they shared their pursuit of education. As a result, a theory of resilience was built from the ground up through the purposive sampling of resilient Latinas. This project captured the powerful and authentic voice of resilient Latinas.

Positive interaction between teachers and students has proven to be highly beneficial (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). With the results of this study, teachers,

administrators, and policy makers can be intentional about spending time listening to students and hearing the voices of the Latina students whose backgrounds and experiences differ from their own. This study will help to improve school policy, fulfilling the academic needs of the nation's fastest growing ethnic group. As the number of Latinas in our school systems continues to grow, listening to the stories of successful Latina students who have successfully navigated the challenging personal experiences and diversity of backgrounds increases in importance. Recording their perspectives illuminates context, which will be used to better understand and ultimately support the unique journey of today's students as well as tomorrow's.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study finds its genesis in the 41% high school dropout rate of Latinas (Gewertz, 2009). Education Week (2009) reports 1.3 million students failing nationwide in 2009 with California's students failing most often at 175,011 dropouts. Some of our nation's students are succeeding while others are not (Feldman & Snyder, 2005). Research has identified many factors that contribute to student mental and physical wellbeing, and these factors significantly impact a student's ability to succeed academically, socially, and beyond high school (Burrow et al., 2010; Puskar et al., 2010).

Outside the home, a student spends more time with teachers at school than any other place (Henderson & Milstein, 1997). Teachers at school have the opportunity to impact the lives of children by counteracting risk factors through forming an environment promoting resiliency (Burrow et al., 2010; Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Specifically this study helps inform teacher practice so that at-risk students who normally would have been left behind, so to speak, will be provided with an opportunity to succeed. By using

the voice of Latina's who have successfully graduated from a high-risk high school, home, and city environment, of Santa Ana, the population being studied will be better served through an improved educational system (Comas-Diaz, 2006; Marlott, Alessandria, Kirkpatrick, & Carandang, 2010). Additionally, on a wider scale, schools and districts educating similar populations may be able to use the results to better inform their practices as well.

As stated above, many researchers have pointed to gaps in the literature that this study specifically proposes to fill (Altschul et al., 2008; Cavazos et al., 2010; Franquiz & Salazar, 2004; Fuerth, 2009; Hallinan, 2008; Sanchez et al., 2010; Sanchez, Esparza, Colon, & Davis, 2010). The U.S. Census Bureau (2010), California Department of Education (2010), Orange County Register (2010), and others have provided information showing the City of Santa Ana and its population to be at high risk of failure (California School Rankings, 2009). This study specifically proposes to gather information directly from individuals who have succeeded in order to better inform practices that promote resiliency (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

- Research question 1: What significant life experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment?
- Research question 2: What significant school experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment?

- Research question 3: From the perspective of educationally resilient Latinas, what should educators do to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment?

Research Plan

The purpose of this study is to share the lived experiences of young Latina women who grew up in Santa Ana, California and to examine the emergent factors that influenced their persistence to high school graduation in the face of adversity. I worked qualitatively through a grounded theory method, with a conceptual framework of resiliency to identify and highlight protective factors. These factors allow children to overcome negative influences that often block achievement such as high school graduation.

Definitions

The following definitions will apply specifically to the terms used in this study:

- *Advanced placement* (AP) courses are the series of high school classes that allow college level coursework to be completed at the high school level.
- *Alienation* refers to lack of certain essential conditions for human health such as connectedness, a lack of bonding, and/or a lack of belonging (Burns, 2003).
- *Anomie* refers to lack of *normalness* or not knowing what normal is (Burns, 2003).
- An *at-risk* individual is one who is facing two obstacles to full development in the form of inner obstacles of unmet developmental needs and outer obstacles of increasing environmental stress (Burns, 2003).

- *College preparatory* (CP) courses are the series of high school classes designed to prepare students for college.
- A student is considered a *dropout* when they do not graduate from high school.
- A *highly-at-risk* individual is an at-risk person who has three added factors: lack of coping skills, lack of support, and poor self-concept (Burns, 2003).
- *Autonomy* can be explained as having a strong sense of independence, an internal locus of control, a sense of power, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-discipline, and impulse control. This attribute focuses on the ability to act independently and exert some amount of control over one's environment. Furthermore, it relates to the ability to separate oneself from a dysfunctional family environment and stand apart psychologically from a dysfunctional parent (Benard, 1993).
- The term *familismo* refers to the traditional Latino family values, which include cohesiveness, collectivism, interdependence, loyalty, responsibility, and a sense of belonging to the family (Falicov, 1998; Gaines, Rios, & Buriel, 1997).
- *Latina* refers to a female person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture in origin regardless of race.
- *Latino* refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture in origin regardless of race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).
- *Machismo* as defined as "a strong or exaggerated sense of manliness; an assumptive attitude that virility, courage, strength, and entitlement to dominate are attributes or concomitants of masculinity" (*machismo*, n.d., para. 1)

- The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) act of 2001 is the comprehensive education reform presented by President George W. Bush to congress. This reform act is aimed at closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged minority students and their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).
- *Normalness* refers to a culture that has at least moderately clear values and consistent sanctions on what should not be done, coupled with rewards and encouragement for what should be done (Burns, 2003).
- *Protective factors* are those traits, conditions, and situations that alter or reverse potentially destructive outcomes (Benard, 1993).
- *Resilience* can be defined as the capacity to spring back, rebound, and successfully adapt in the face of adversity. Specifically for the present study, it means to develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today's world (Henderson, & Milstein, 1996). Resilience is a set of qualities or protective mechanisms that give rise to successful adaptation despite the presence of high risk factors during the course of development (Benard, 1991). Also resilience can be defined as that quality in children who, though exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to school failure, substance abuse, mental health, and juvenile delinquency problems that they are at greater risk of experiencing (Linquanti, 1992).
- A *sense of purpose* or *sense of future* includes having healthy expectancies, goal-directness, success orientation, achievement motivation, educational aspirations, persistence hopefulness, hardiness, belief in a bright future, a sense of

anticipation, a sense of a compelling future, and a sense of coherence (Benard, 1993).

- *Social competence* includes the qualities of responsiveness, flexibility, empathy, caring, communication skills, a sense of humor, and other prosocial behavior (Benard, 1993).
- *Socioeconomic status* refers to the family's economic and social position in relation to their surrounding society (NCES, 2008).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

For a little more than three decades, behavioral scientists have studied the phenomenon that has come to be known as resilience. Much of this research materialized from the deficit/pathology model of psychology, but has taken a turn towards strengths rather than deficits. Resilience has come to provide three parts to the phenomena: (a) positive developmental outcomes associated with children at risk, (b) continuous competence amidst prolonged stress, and (c) recovery from trauma (Benard, 2004). Within these three conditions research has provided a common core of personal propensities and sources of support stemming from family, community, and extended networks (Benard, 1993; Burns, 1996). These factors, both risks and resiliency, have been shown to transcend ethnic, geographic, and social class boundaries (Henderson, Benard, & Sharp-Light, 2007).

The present study follows a theoretical framework that makes clear the importance of an approach that analyzes the reasons why high school students in general, and Latinas transitioning into college in particular, either succumb to or overcome risk factors. This theoretical framework must encapsulate the point at which risk factors oppressing or threatening Latina high school students intersect with the protective factors sheltering them. Even more important is the acknowledgement that our world is not static, but in a constant state of transformation. With an education, individuals earn the power to guide this transformation negating accepted limits, thus introducing a path to unbounded possibilities. Imperatively, this framework employs Latinas as the primary

ontological orators in acting upon and transforming the academic success of future generations of Latinas.

The Latin phrase *scientia potentia est,* "knowledge is power," provokes reflection upon the idea that those who educate themselves have the power to transform their lives. Macedo put it another way in his introduction to Friere (2002), "If students are not able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to use the already-acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing" (p. 19). As presented in Chapter 1, Latinas on the whole are not transforming their lived experience into knowledge. Failure to perform academically is their oppressive burden.

The remainder of Chapter 2 will outline a theoretical framework that unites theory and practice. The term *at-risk* will be generally defined as it applies to all persons and will then be specifically applied to Latinas. A pathology/deficit model will be outlined and promptly rejected in favor of a resilience model. Personal and protective factors will be illuminated for the individual student, teacher, and the school. Finally, a summary will tie Chapter 2 together and transition to Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework

If *scientia potentia est,* then education has the power to change lives. Aristotle said, "The educated differ from the uneducated as much as the living from the dead" (Geib, 2006, para. 4). Thomas Jefferson said "Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day" (Geib, 2006, para. 3). Paulo Freire referred to education as having the power to liberate oppressed people from the social, economic, and political conditions that disenfranchise

them (Gutek, 2005). People's consciousness of the realities of life can be raised to a greater consciousness through the transformative power of education.

> A pedagogy for the 21st century would create agents of change capable of identifying needs, gaps, and opportunities and creating innovative solutions for sustainable social good. It would prepare students to leverage the knowledge, skills, and experience they gain within their academic majors to interface with a world as ripe with opportunity as it is rife with challenges. (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2010, p. 57)

Latinas are capable of looking critically at the world, examining what they see, and acting to transform life both individually and collectively for the better. This is the intention of education and the purpose of the educator.

In 1970, Paulo Freire introduced his ideas in a book titled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. His central theme was that education must be the central instigator in building movements of radical change (Gottesman, 2010). Freire ontologically proposed an objective reality. He wrote, "objective social reality exists not by chance, but as a product of human action" (Freire, 2002, p. 51). Furthermore, "World and human beings do not exist apart from each other; they exist in constant interaction" (Freire, 2002, p. 50). For Latinas, their plight as at-risk, experiencing low socioeconomic status and educational failure have not come about by chance, but by human action. Just as a distinct set of events have disempowered and marginalized Latinas, a distinct set of events will lead them to equality.

Freire's (2002) explanation of praxis adds to the theoretical framework of this study, "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). This critical

intervention must take place between Latinas and the teachers in solidarity with Latinas. This is because teachers who are in solidarity with Latinas, helping them to become resilient, are distinctly positioned within the educational system to help Latinas recognize the objective reality of their failure to thrive academically. Therefore, although Latinas themselves are the only ones idiosyncratically positioned to fully understand their at-risk position, it must be the Latinas themselves who are the authentic vehicle of their own academic progress and achievement. The teachers' job is to bring the situation to the forefront of consciousness for Latinas and undergird the process, because it is difficult for the at-risk Latinas to recognize their risk factors as anything other than the way things are and must be.

Latinas have often been participants in studies or programs. The educational horizon is deluge with programs and materials, which tout multicultural content for students and teachers (Swartz, 2009). These programs and materials also extol their ability to meet state and federal grant requirements by providing research-based practices. As Buras (2008) points out, these *rightist* (neoconservative) versions of multiculturalism have proven little more than quick cash grabs for schools.

Opportunities for Latinas to participate in the dialogue with regard to the issues that affect them are essentially non-existent. The oppressive reality, which has absorbed Latinas and submerged their consciousness, has functionally normalized their failure to thrive. The programs and materials noted above see Latinas as containers and receptacles to be meekly filled. Freire (2002) likens this banking method of education to an act of depositing in which the teacher does not communicate, but rather makes deposits of bestowed knowledge to those who know nothing. The student receives, files, and stores

the deposits, and in the end the Latinas themselves are filed away through lack of creativity in this misguided system. “For apart from inquiry… individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2002, p. 72).

If knowledge emerges through invention and pursing the world with each other, then at least equally important is the voice of Latinas themselves. Voice is to be given so that a sense of ownership over the marginalized world may be had.

> Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. (Freire, 2002, p. 45)

This study rejected the pathology/deficit model and adopted a strengths based resiliency model, fundamentally altering the idea that children and their families are damaged, seeing them instead as challenged by life’s adversities (Walsh, 2003a). Resilience can be defined as the capacity to spring forward (Walsh, 2003a), rebound, and successfully adapt in the face of adversity. Resilience enables one to develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today’s world (Henderson, 1996). Resilience is a set of qualities or protective mechanisms that give rise to successful adaptation despite the presence of high-risk factors during the course of development (Benard, 1991). Also, resilience can be defined as that quality in children who, though exposed to significant stress and

adversity in their lives, do not succumb to school failure, substance abuse, mental health issues, and juvenile delinquency problems they are at greater risk of experiencing (Linquanti, 1992).

Social resilience gives a similar explanation, except views the family or community as a system or unit in itself (Van Breda, 2001). Instead of individual stressors, family or community level stressors and responses are looked at and weighed against how they foster or hinder resiliency within individuals. A basic premise is that stressors have an impact on the entire family, derailing the functioning of the family system. In turn, the family mediates recovery by rallying in times of crisis, to buffer stress, reduce dysfunction, and support healthy adaptation (Walsh, 2003a). Social resilience allows families and groups to weather problems (Cottrell, 1976), utilize resources so that its people can flourish (Iscoe, 1974), and cope with the challenges and adversity of living (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). Boss (2001) reports the power that is to be gained from a family facing adversity through which relationships are enriched in loving ways they might not otherwise have been (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985). Higgins (1994) reports the resilient family has the ability to bounce forward, so-to-speak, using adversity and integrating the experience into their lives. Competent families and social communities are much like resilient individuals because they positively cope with risk factors.

The literature consistently points to a pathology/deficit model of tertiary programs designed for, but not by, Latinas and applied to them (Swartz, 2009). This model sees Latinas as the cause and effect of the problem, providing them with little opportunity to critically examine their own plight and remedy it (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). It is only through this critical invention and reinvention that

Latinas will create a distinct set of events leading to their equality (Goodhart, 2004). In keeping with the praxis presented by Friere (2002), Latinas are best positioned to enact this praxis of reflection and action, while educators are best positioned to work in solidarity with them. The combination of Latinas and educators working in solidarity will lead to a markedly improved objective human reality based upon human action. According to Friere's (2002) perspective, I would expect findings that indicate (a) Latinas who have been supported by this type of solidarity with educators believe that such support has enabled them to reflect on the risks in their environments and culture and (b) such awareness prompted them to act in ways that would enable them to counter the risk factors and deliberately choose an opposite course.

Definition of At-Risk

The concept of risk deals with environmental factors that singly or in combination have been shown to render a child's failure to thrive more likely. Adapted from the medical field, this term is used to predict vulnerability in a child's life including school failure, drug abuse, delinquency, criminal activities, unemployment, failed relationships, ill health, and even death (Benard, 2004; Burns, 1996; Howard, Dryden, & Johnson, 1999; Rutter, 1980; Veselska et al., 2008). These youth are placed at risk by a number of factors including poverty, welfare dependence, divorce, single-parent families, large family size, lack of parental supervision, parental criminality, parental psychopathology, inadequate parenting practices, family violence, familial antisocial behaviors, low intelligence, lack of education, maltreatment, early sexuality, teenage parenthood, association with deviant peers, peer rejection, drug availability, substance abuse, and many more challenges (Burns, 1991; Howard et al., 1999; Office of Juvenile Justice and

Delinquency Prevention, 2003; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997). Young people are at risk to the extent that their family, friends, school, community, and society are at risk. They tend to mirror the general conditions of society (Burns, 1996; Henderson, 2003).

An at-risk young person is facing two types of obstacles to full development. These can be inner obstacles of unmet developmental needs and/or outer obstacles of increasing environmental stress (Burns, 1996). All children go through stress at times as well as face unmet needs. Alva (1991) reports that Mexican Americans who experience discrimination and poverty while growing up develop feelings of helplessness that stand in the way of academic motivation and performance. Vasquez (2009) reported that this discrimination and poverty left her void of cultural space and reflected her fringe status as the norm. A child who grows up with too much stress and/or too many unmet developmental needs is more vulnerable to risk (Rhodes, 1991). A child who is more vulnerable to risk is more likely to experience developmental problems. Problems that continue to persist may instill in children the belief that failure cannot be overcome (Alva & Padilla, 1995).

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines *epicenter* (n.d.) as "the part of the earth's surface directly above the focus of an earthquake" (para. 1). When applying this term to the risk model, alienation and anomie would be the epicenter or aspect of the child's life from which all other risk factors emanate. A child experiencing alienation is lacking the certain and essential conditions for human health (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These essentials are bonding, belonging, and connectedness. As human beings we are social people. We learn, live, and love together. Children who have no one to connect to, bond with, and do not feel that they belong are experiencing alienation.

Anomie is a breakdown of standards and values creating instability in the child's life. Another way to put this is normalness. Children who grow up with a lack of structure fail to grasp what normal is (Glenn, 2000). For society in general, normal relates to the surrounding culture and its clear values, consistent sanctions on what should not be done, and rewards for what should be done. A child experiencing anomie does not understand what is normal and lacks an internalized structure for dealing with problems in life (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Children experiencing alienation and anomie are vulnerable to other risk factors (Burns, 1996; Howard et al., 1999). Alienation from self, family, and community coupled with a breakdown in understanding normalness creates an environment ripe for developmental problems. These developmental problems characterize a lack of internalized structure for dealing with problems. Life in general and children in particular are presented with stressful problems. Dealing with stress and coping with adversity determines how well we do in life (Feldman & Snyder, 2005). These factors have direct implications to how well children survive and thrive (Puskar et al., 2010).

Children who are not thriving in the face of adversity usually participate in multiple at-risk behaviors (Burns, 1996; Veselska et al., 2008). At-risk behaviors are known to lead to other at-risk behaviors, acting like multipliers. Youth participating in one at-risk behavior are far more likely to be involved in one or more other at-risk behaviors (Howell, Leyro, Hogan, Buckner, & Zvolensky, 2010). For example, an adolescent who is at-risk for school failure is 62% more likely to get involved in alcohol use. An adolescent using alcohol is 42% more likely to use tobacco. An adolescent using tobacco is 77% more likely to become sexually active, and so on (Benson, 1990).

At-risk status is therefore not only a symptom, but a set of symptoms with deep underlying causes. Potentially each one of the youth who reside in high poverty areas can be said to be at risk. Being at risk clearly exists on a continuum from high-risk to normalness, with many steps in between. Risk factors are not predictors, but rather conditions of vulnerability. Due to the comprehensiveness of risk in contemporary society, it is helpful to differentiate the at-risk child from the high-risk child.

The high-risk adolescent is at risk plus has three added factors: lack of coping skills, lack of support, and poor self-concept (Burns, 1996). Using this definition the percentage of youth considered high-risk can be significantly reduced. We are left with the specific group of adolescents who have unmet developmental needs, too much stress in their lives, and who lack the appropriate coping skills to face this stress. These high-risk youth do not have the support they need nor do they possess the necessary self-esteem. This is the portion of our youth who represent our dropout, suicide, teen pregnancy, gang involvement, and drug and alcohol abuse statistics.

The Term Latino

The term *Latino* represents several heterogeneous social and demographic groups of people including U.S. citizens, Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Latin Americans, and many other blended races and nationalities. This may include persons who are White, a range of European nationalities, Native Americans, Black, Arabic, and Asians (Flores & Yudice, 1990). These groups may refer to themselves as Mexicanos, Hispanics, Chicanos, or Latinos. It is not uncommon for the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* to be used interchangeably. Perez and Salazer (1997) note that when citing statistics there is no difference between the terms *Latino* and *Hispanic.* One multicultural specialist notes

that *Latino* tends to currently be the preferred term by Latinos themselves within the United States, though there are regional differences in this preference (M. E. Castaneda, personal communication, March 19, 2012).

These groups can be diverse. Each group may display differences from one generation to the next. Sanchez (1997) illustrates this point by stating that Mexican-Americans might be born in Mexico or the United states. They may live in rural or urban areas and have differing socioeconomic status, occupations, educational attainment, and speak different languages. Many Latinos have lived in the United States their entire lives while others have recently emigrated from Latin American countries. Socioeconomic differences arise between those of the upper, middle, and working class backgrounds (Nieto, 2005). Some homes speak English, some Spanish, and others a mixture. Some Latinos learn English before Spanish, while others learn Spanish before English and some speak English or Spanish exclusively. Many Latinos are biliterate, while others are illiterate. Some have attended school in other countries, some in the United States, and some have attended no schooling at all. There is much diversity in the people group who are described by the label *Latino*.

Despite these differences, Latinos share common bonds that strongly unite their culture. Zambrano (1995) points to a language and customs of a common Spanish heritage, as well as similar sociopolitical experiences of prejudice and discrimination in the United States. Latinos share culture, which transcend national boarders such as *familism* or *familismo,* which is the strong emotional value of commitments to family and family life (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Rudolph et al., 2011; Zambrano, 1995). Coma-Diaz (1997) explains *familismo* as relationships beyond the nuclear family, extending in

emotional proximity, interpersonally and cohesively. Latinos include as family their children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, half-brothers, half-sisters, and more. It is not uncommon for many Latino families to share one household with each other. Because familial ties are so close, familial obligations are expected to take precedence over individual wants or needs.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a dynamic and complex multifaceted key component to identity development (Marlott et al., 2010). Latino ethnic identity is developed through a sense of pride in one's group (Yip & Fuligni, 2002), common religion, cultural traits, language, and shared history (Cohen, 2004). Schwartz, Zamboanga, and Jarvis (2007) have noted that identification with an ethnic group such as Latino increases positive self-esteem and psychological adjustment. The process of ethnic identity development takes time and thorough exploration (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Phinney (1993) and Maricia (1980) identified three stages through which ethnic identity moves. The first stage is the unexamined childhood ethnic identity in which little to no consideration is given by the child. The second stage is exploration of ones own ethnic membership. Pahl and Way (2006) identify this stage as happening in early adolescence. Stage three is ethnic identity selection and is marked by the individuals' selection of his or her ethnicity label. This final stage happens most often around the college years (Phinney, 1993).

As children get older, ethnic identity increases in importance and forms the basis for social identity (Pizarro & Vera, 2001). Researchers have identified many positive associations with having a strong ethnic identity as social identity forms and becomes

permanent (Kiang, Perreira, & Fuligni, 2011). These positive effects include identity acting as a buffer against stress (Mossakowski, 2003), higher self esteem (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004), and school engagement (Shin, Daly, & Vera, 2007).

Familismo

The term *familismo* refers to the traditional Latino family values that include cohesiveness, collectivism, interdependence, loyalty, responsibility, and a sense of belonging to the family (Falicov, 1998; Gaines et al., 1997). Attitudes, behaviors, and family structures within the immediate and extended family structure are included. The extended family provides a support structure, which embraces the sense of union and connection within the family (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). Family connectedness is important in the Latino culture (Behnke et al., 2008; Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002; Miranda, Estrada, & Firpo-Jimenez, 2000; Rudolph et al., 2011). In many cases, *familismo* means that the family must be put before all personal needs (Davidds-Garrido, 2006; Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006, 2007). Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, and Perez-Stable (1987) and Coohey (2001) suggest that putting the family first is the most fundamental aspect of *familismo.*

In Mexican-American families, *familismo* is synonymous with close, warm, intergenerational relationships (Behnke et al., 2008). Coohey (2001) reported that higher levels of *familismo* reduced Latina child abuse. This family closeness is reported to help Latinos manage contextual difficulties such as low socioeconomic status, employment, dangerous neighborhoods, violence, loss of work, and discrimination (Deng et al., 2006; Linares et al., 2001; Miranda et al., 2000; Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005). The close-knit family structure also helps to negate the effects of a

difficult host culture (Gains et al., 1997; Harwood et al., 2002) and mediate a positive physical, emotional, and educational well-being or Latino youth (Bird et al., 2001).

Familismo places value in being a parent. Latino parents want good things like safety, a good job, and a caring family for their children (Fontes, 2002). Guiding major life decisions is part of the parent's role and responsibilities (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). Hard work and sacrifice for the family well-being is of paramount concern for the Latino *familiso* (Falicov, 1998).

The amount of time parents spend with their children is correlated with their well-being (Sayer, Gauthier, & Furstenberg, 2004). Jeyenes (2003) reported the positive benefits for Latino families when parents were more involved. Lugalia (2003) reported on the benefits of parents spending time with their children in activities outside of the school. However, Ludalia (2003) reported a disparity in the number of outings between White parents and Latino parents. White parents were far more likely to take their children to activities than Latinos, regardless of socioeconomic status. Lee and Bowen (2006) noted the importance of parents structuring time for activities such as playing together, family outings, eating meals together, and placing restrictions on television.

Familismo Stressors

Low socioeconomic status refers to the subjective evaluation of economic hardship experienced by Latino families (Behnke et al. 2008; Conger & Conger, 2002). Latinos are amongst the most financially troubled group in the United States (Dennis, Parke, Coltrane, Blacher, & Borthwick-Duffy, 2003). Low socioeconomic status creates a painfully pressured hardship condition. The income earned by many Latino families makes social upward mobility virtually impossible (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). Latino

families of low socioeconomic status often must severely cutback daily expenditures on necessary goods and services and many times still cannot afford to pay monthly bills (Zunker & Cummins, 2004).

Constantly living under this pressure can negatively affect a family's cohesiveness, heightening conflict and negative interactions between family members (Roosa, Morgan-Lopez, Cree, & Specter, 2002). Poverty and low socioeconomic status have been correlated with child neglect (Slack, Holl, McDaniel, Yoo, & Bolger, 2004). Roosa et al. (2002) express great concern because poverty and economic pressures affect so many Latino families. Dennis et al. (2003) and Parke et al. (2004) report that high levels of economic pressure often result in depression, which significantly effects family cohesiveness.

Negative life events such as loss of loved ones, intrafamily strains, pregnancy, childbearing, illness, family constraints, and legal problems create perceived stressors in Latino families, which can affect family cohesion (Behnke et al., 2008). Others report cultural barriers (Thoman & Suris, 2004), racism (Zayas, 2001), violent neighborhoods, and drugs (Vega & Gil, 1999). Longitudinal research by Pianta and Egeland (1990) show strained parent-child relationships when families experience such negative life events. Furthermore Mexican American families have been shown to face more negative life events than European Americans (Gomel, Tinsley, Parke, & Clark, 1998; Kilmer, Cowen, Wyman, Work, & Magnus, 1998). Since Latinos face more negative life events, they become habituated, or in other words, develop expectations of having negative life events (Boss, 2001; Deng et al., 2006). For example, many Mexican-American families

experience low socioeconomic status and condition themselves accordingly (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006).

Negative outcomes have been associated with youth raised in violent neighborhoods (Roche, Ensmiger, & Cherlin, 2007). It is necessary for Latino families in violent neighborhoods to display constant vigilance in order to negate the negative effects of such living conditions. Common problems in such neighborhoods include illicit drugs, gang activity, truancy, and teen pregnancy (Perreira et al., 2006). Studies have shown that more restrictive parenting strategies in such neighborhoods help to protect children and facilitate positive growth (Dearing, 2004). Permissive parenting in such neighborhoods has been linked with adolescent delinquency (Roche et al., 2007).

Migration

Latino families migrate to the United States for diverse reasons. Many families migrate from South America to the United States and back many times. Perreira et al. (2006) found parents decided to migrate so that their children might have better educational opportunities, the family might earn a better income, settle in a safer environment, and reconnect with family already in the United States. Mariceli and Cornelius (2001) reported Latinos from Mexico are likely to settle in California if there is an economic crisis, a demand for labor, or if they have friends or family already in the United States. Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of females migrating to the United States from Mexico (Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001; Menjivar, 2012; Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012).

Migration creates many challenges for the immigrant family. Parra-Cardona et al. (2006) report migrant farm workers as one of the groups facing the most disadvantage in

the United States. These challenges include racism, unfamiliar environment, economic hardship, loss of family connections, change in family roles and responsibilities, learning a new language, learning a new culture, and alienation. All of these factors can make the family feel disconnected from society and place them at risk (Perreria et al., 2006).

Latinas at-Risk

The United States Department of Education (2007) reports Latinas dropping out of high school at a notably higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group. Latinas are disproportionately completing postsecondary education at much lower rates than other racial and ethnic groups (Nunez & Kim, 2012; U.S. Census, 2008). Latinas between the ages of 16 to 24 are twice as likely to drop out of high school when they were not born in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Upon entering school, 61% of Latinos are ELL's who have limited skills in the areas of reading, vocabulary, and language (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006; Preciado, Horner, & Baker, 2009). Mellander (2011) reports that only half of the Latina population earns a high school degree on time. Lutz (2007) found Mexican Americans to be the least likely of Latinos to graduate from high school and enter college. Between 3% and 8% of Latinos attending 2-year colleges in California made the transition to 4-year universities (Gandara & Orfield, 2006). Garcia and Bayer (2005) found Mexican Americans to be the least likely of Latinas to graduate with a 4-year degree. Rudolph et al. (2011) found Mexican American Latinas especially prone to interrupt or terminate their education in order to care for the family.

Becerra (2010) reports Mexican American youth are failing to attend college at percentage rates equal with their population percentages. About 35% of Latina high

school graduates attend college (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2006). While the number of Mexican American Latinas entering into college has increased in recent years (Santiago & Brown, 2004), the number of Latinas who graduate is far too low (Fry, 2002). Cooper (2011), Gilroy (2011), and Mellander (2011) report only 12.9% of Latinas who begin collegial studies actually attain their degrees.

The environment of the school can lead to students feeling alienated (Cooper, 2011). Negative teacher interactions make students feel unwelcomed (Rolon-Dow, 2005). Stereotypes about the inevitable academic failure of minority students are abundant (Syed, 2011). Although often challenged by researchers and educational practitioners, the stereotypes are resistant to change (Good & Aronson, 2008). In order to succeed, Latinas must adopt White Anglo values (Buras, 2008; Swartz, 2009). While researching racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, classism, and the oppression of Mexican American females, Bettie (2003) found those students who chose to adopt a White Anglo, middle-class culture were able to succeed. Meador (2005) also found that when female Mexican American students adopted White Anglo, middle-class values and culture, they were able to become successful in academics.

Valenzuela (1999) explains that the parents of Latino and Latina students are alienated from the schooling process because their cultural norms are devalued. Mexican American immigrants entering the United States have little education, and little social and cultural capital, hampering their ability to climb the U.S. social ladder (Feliciano, 2005).

Educational institutes largely ignore the characteristics of Latino culture. This failure to develop a cultural responsiveness manifests itself in a failing to raise the

academic achievement of Latinas. Schools often operate with limited understandings of Latino family norms. Language and gender are often attributed as reasons for failure rather than channeling their power to be used as strengths. Ibarra (2004) points out that academicians point towards traditional Latino values as barriers to educational success.

Gender

According to De La Cancela (1986), *machismo* is a "socially constructed, learned, and reinforced set of behaviors comprising the content of male gender roles in Latino society" (p. 291). Estrada, Rigalia-Oiler, Arciniega, and Tracey (2011) describe it simply as the socially approved way of being a Latino man. Ruiz-Balsara (2002) reports the *machismo* attitude amongst Latinos is an educational impedance to the aspirations of Latina students. Ferrari (2002) linked *machismo* to predict the use of physical punishment and lack of nurturing behaviors. Davidds-Garrido (2001) report Latinas as likely to measure their self-worth by the approval they receive from their families. Typically Latino families have traditional roles for men and women (Castillo & Cano, 2007). Often Latina mothers express to their daughters that to be the woman of the home is the most important responsibility (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Peer culture encourages Latinas to pursue a more traditional gender role such as spouse, homemaker, or mother (Reid & Coma-Diaz, 1990), rather than a professional role (Gandara, 1995), which is reserved for the man (Williams & Best, 1990). Men are expected to provide for the family while women are expected to stay at home and care for basic needs of the family (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008). From a young age, Latinas are expected to help raise their siblings and share in the housework (Rodriguez, 1994).

Many Latinas sacrifice their own goals to conform to family expectations, which often means someone else is able to achieve (Davidds-Garrido, 2006; Triandis & Trafimow, 2001). There is an expectation to respect the wishes of the elders, even if the respect is not mutual (Davidds-Garrido, 2006; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). This respect of wishes may include housekeeping, childrearing (including siblings), and serving as a conduit to society for their parents (Davidds-Garrido, 2006). It is also reported that the White middle-class norms of American schools lead Latinas to be labeled as underachievers and school dropouts (Romo, 1998).

Lopez (2003) reports women describing significant differences in the way they were raised when compared with males. The women in this study reported that they grew up sequestered to their homes. Being sequestered to home lies in stark contrast to the liberties their male siblings are afforded from a young age. This gendered division excuses sons from household responsibilities, which are automatically assigned to the daughters. Lopez (2003) reports that this gendered division prevents the men from identifying with the lives of Latina women.

Latino families perpetuate significant disparities in how sons and daughters are raised. Girls are subjected to more household responsibilities and stricter rules, especially in the area of sexuality. On the other hand, boys are afforded much more leniency, including freedom from household responsibilities and rules in the area of sexuality.

The tradition of *marianismo* was coined by Stevens (1973) as the worship of the Virgin Mary. This tradition upholds women as morally superior to men, thus demanding higher standards of behavior for women to model. *Marianismo* is associated with virtuous and proper behavior (Jolicoeur & Madden, 2002; Rudolph et al., 2011). When

coupled with *verguenza* or shame, modesty, and embarrassment of the female body, girls are raised to be ignorant of sexuality. Taylor (1995) reports virginity is equated with family honor and that Latinas are expected to remain sexually abstinent until marriage. For Latinas attending school in the United States, a cultural clash can follow, creating strain on the family relationships. There is a distinct discrepancy between traditional Latino values and the mainstream American values perpetuated by schools.

In 1985, Bem proposed the gender schema theory, which interrelates components of social learning and cognitive development theory. He argued that as soon as people are cognitively able to encode and organize information, they begin to adopt gender roles according to their culture's definitions of masculinity and femininity. Gender and ethnicity interweave themselves with race, ethnicity, and class in a complicated subterfuge (Davis, 1981; Reid, Comaz, & Diaz, 1990).

Latino families have strict male and female roles, which means that Latinas are socialized to assume their respective gender role (Rudolph et al., 2011). Males are expected to display *machismo*, that is to say, to be strong, honorable, and responsible as they provide for and protect the family (Arciniegra et al., 2008). Females are expected to display *marianismo*, that is to say, to show virtue, humility, and a devoted suffering for the family (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Rudolph et al., 2011). These values can be very empowering, usually for males, and undignified, usually for women. For Latinas, both gender and ethnicity designate them as homemakers and caregivers (Mendez-Luck, Kennedy, & Wallace, 2009; Reid, Comaz, & Diaz, 1990).

Biculturalism

Biculturalism for the Latina can be understood as navigating both the American and Latina cultures. In its most favorable form, the bicultural Latina will be well adjusted in her cultural stance between people of both backgrounds (Padilla, 2006). Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) state that Mexican Americans must function in both the mainstream culture as well as make contributions to Mexican culture. Furthermore, the pre-school and public school experiences are much different in their sociological processes related to language, heritage, cultural values, and teaching cognitive styles, calling for dual socialization (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974; Rudolph et al., 2011). Latinas are exposed to the socialization processes of two cultures. Acculturation to the mainstream does not necessitate the renouncing of the culture of origin for the new one, but rather the adoption of the new into a conglomeration. Bicultural Latinas maintain their sense of ethnic identity while at the same time appropriating a second (Rudolph et al., 2011).

Mothers of different acculturation levels display different parenting practices. Mothers with higher acculturation parenting practices more closely resemble those of their Euro-American counterparts (Teichman & Contreras-Grau, 2006). Golash-Boza (2006) found that Latinas from Mexico are the least likely group to adopt the American label and most likely to retain the label of their original national origin. Adoption of the native language is correlated with the acculturation process. Children who adopt American values, language, and behaviors through the acculturation process can be viewed as rebellious, causing arguments within the family (Perreira et al., 2006).

Latinas who experience discriminatory practices are less likely to identify as Americans and more likely to hyphenate their labels such as Latino-American (Golash-

Boza, 2006). It is not uncommon for Latinos who immigrated from Mexico to report facing discrimination in the community, at work, or at school (Perreira et al., 2006). Latinas who speak Spanish as their primary language also report discrimination. Children in the school system who speak Spanish as their primary language report being placed in special education and lower grade levels than appropriate (Para-Cardona, Bullock, Imig, Villarruel, & Gold, 2006). Latinas who experience discriminatory practices have a harder time adopting the new culture and becoming bicultural.

Hegemony

In 1971 Antonio Gramsci communicated the need of educators to understand the ideology of dominant cultural structures. He described schools as the arbiters of values, beliefs, attitudes, and social practices of the dominant culture, class, or order. The dominant culture seeks to assimilate the subordinated cultures through the hegemonic process, which is both consensual and coerced.

Schools participate in the hegemonic process through their selection of books, teacher discourse, and the practices that make up daily school life (Walsh, 1996). Knowledge, social structures, belief systems, and culture are disseminated to students as universals under the posture of a neutral objectivity. Schools create, support, and maintain the norms of society. Outwardly schools are equally responsive to all students and cultures; however, a distinct demarcation of groups is legitimized through curriculum, standardized testing, graduation rates, placement in special education programs, and ability grouping (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

Attempts to address underachievement often place blame on the students and their cultural deficits (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002). This deficit-based view often compounds underperformance (Robinson & Biran, 2006). The ecosystemic factors associated with hegemony have negative effects on an individual's functioning (Carter, 2007). Research by Goodman and West-Olatunji (2009) has reported the negative influence hegemony has on the mental health of Latinos.

In response to the academic failure of historically marginalized people groups, diversity has become a pervasive term in education. The educational marketplace has become flooded with materials promoting diversity. Training manuals, games, textbooks, videos, and other materials are but a few of the items flooding the diversity marketplace. Theses materials promote the effective teaching of failing urban schools and the ability to capture federal grants through research-based practices (Swartz, 2009).

Boethel (2003) describes the terms *diverse* and *diversity* as what is other than the mainstream of U.S. society. Ladson-Billings (1999) describes diversity as other than the White middle class. When teaching about diversity, Latinos, women, and all other people of color are lumped into a general category of *other*. Scholarly writing and pedagogy has distorted the treatment of people of color and women, providing the justification for using diversity as an oblique reference (Swartz, 2009).

The United States is a racially diverse nation. Living, working, and learning amidst people of varying group identities is not a new experience. However, groups of people in society can segregate themselves into homogeneous settings, which can cause a discomforting and conflicting experience (Goodhart, 2004). This discomforting and conflicting experience can be seen as reflected in the educational diversity discourse, as

the great contributions of only a few colored or female individuals are reported in textbooks. According to Swartz (2009), these engagements with difference not only limit knowledge, but are patronizing.

Educational Ability Grouping

It is important for the academic success and persistence of minority students that they are engaged in school (Syed, 2011). Researchers have reported students who are placed in classrooms with lower expectations are less engaged academically (Carroll, Tyson, & Lumas, 2000). These students face barriers around every corner of their academic career, especially in science, technology, and mathematics (Cooper & Burciaga, 2011; Eccles, 2005).

Ability grouping, also know as tracking, can be traced back to the roots of compulsory schooling itself (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Tracking allows students to be placed in like groups with the primary goal of facilitating similar academic instruction and achievement (Ansalone, 2004). In practice, however, minority and low-income youth are segregated and overrepresented in remedial tracks (Oakes, 2005). This has serious academic ramifications for ethnic minority students and their overall performance and psychological well being in comparison to the higher tracked students (Jost, 1999; Mickelson & Heath, 1999). Tracking sends the message to students in the lower tracks that college is not for them, and research has documented this case taking effect as early as elementary school (Stambler & Weinstein, 2010).

Researchers have reported that not only students, but teachers are tracked as well. Some teachers are relegated to teaching only lower-tracked classes, even when they are supposed to be divided evenly (Kelly, 2004; Mehan, 2007; Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna,

2002). Mehan (2007) explains that in order to detrack schools, major structural change needs to be made to teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and values as well as changes to the curriculum and instruction.

Creating a College-Going Culture

A major component of this structural change involves creating a college-going culture, facilitating the bridge from high school to college (Mehan, 2007; Oakes, 2005). By detracking, schools can offer multiple pathways to college and career (Mehan, 2007). Destin and Oyserman (2010) show through their work with socioeconomically disadvantaged minority children that creating education-dependent adult identities predicts better grades in middle school students. These students were eight times more likely to succeed. These identities aimed at ethnically diverse youth help foster a successful transition into college (Oyserman et al., 2006). Students who get involved in A.P. classes are more likely to graduate high school and attend college than those who do not (Scott, 2010).

The Department of Education has increased the number of A.P. courses offered at schools representing low income and minority schools (Ndura, Robinson, & Ochs, 2003). In 2001, 15 million dollars were allotted for A.P. curriculum (Viadero, 2001), and in 2005, 125 million dollars was allotted so that high schools may create avenues for students to earn college credit via A.P. courses (Honawar, 2005). Research reported by Viadero (2001) has shown a correlation between A.P. class accessibility and higher education attainment.

Stephens (1999) reports Latinos and Latinas are 32% less likely to attend schools with an A.P. curriculum. This may be due to the socioeconomic differences, which cause

many Latino families to reside in segregated economically disadvantaged urban communities (Chenoweth, 1997; Viadero, 2001). Ndura et al. (2003) also report teachers and counselors discourage Latino and Latina students from taking A.P. classes and instead recommend non-college-preparatory classes.

Not all high schools in the United States offer A.P. courses. It is estimated that only 60% to 67% of high schools offer A.P. courses (Honawar, 2005; Viadero, 2001). Latinos and Latinas are far less likely to enroll in A.P. classes or to attend schools that offer A.P. classes because of the neighborhoods they live in (Chenoweth, 1997; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002; Viadero, 2001). Samuels (2005) reports that only 13% of Latino and Latina students enrolled in an A.P. class. Researchers have suggested institutional tracking (Valenzuela, 1999), teacher recommendation (Ndura et al., 2003), and lack of social and cultural capital (Valadez, 2002) as barriers to Latino and Latina enrollment in A.P. classes. There are also few Latino and Latina students represented in A.P. classes, making it less likely that Latinos and Latinas will enroll in A.P. classes because they will feel socially uncomfortable (Ndura et al., 2003; Saunders & Maloney, 2004; Viadero, 2000).

Within the next decade, the college-age population is estimated to be at least 50% Latino (Bowen et al., 2009). While the number of Latinas enrolling in higher education is on the rise, the percentage of Latinas enrolled remains disproportionately lower (United States Department of Education, 2007). Swail, Cabrera, and Lee (2004) report 40% of Latinas who enroll in college do so at a 2-year college, while 22% enroll at 4-year schools. Less than 25% of those students complete their bachelor's degree (Fry, 2004). Cardoza (1991) reports Latinas as the least likely group to attend college. Buriel and

Sanez (1980) report Latinas placing their focus and attention on marriage and having children.

Pathology/Deficit Model

NCLB is a highly visible educational agent, which brings to light the failure of schools, students, and Latinas. This failure has thrust the ideological and institutional framework to the forefront of Latina and schooling discussions. When looking for explanations of failure, an easy target has been Latinas and their families. The use of Latinas as both the problem and cause of the problem has done little more than maintain the status quo. As the experts have imposed this diagnosis upon Latinas and their families, in a way it has transformed the collective consciousness of both the expert and the Latinas. Thus the experts and Latinas have followed this diagnosis and maintained the status quo.

More recent research has posited that this maintained status quo in achievement gaps should be attributed to the natural excrescence of a system which negotiates one culture into a higher status than another. In the United States, the White male middle class Euro-American culture has negotiated a higher status than that of the Latina. Since Latinas fall outside the White middle class male culture, the values and experiences of Latinas become marginalized and focus on deficits (Swartz, 2009).

Research within the pathology/deficit model focuses on individuals who are already experiencing problems (Hill & Robinson, 2010; Howard et al., 1999; Van Breda, 2001). These individuals may be having problems such as drug or physical abuse, school or job failure, and criminality. These troubled individuals are identified and their lives examined in light of personal history, environmental conditions, and specific correlates

found in their lives (Haight, Marshall, Hans, Black, & Sheridan, 2010). These correlates are also known as risk factors.

When at-risk individuals who are struggling are approached from a pathology/deficit model, they are often labeled (Saleebey, 1997). Once labeled, the individual is defined by the label and treated through that label (Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, & Kisthardt, 1989). For example, an individual diagnosed with schizophrenia is viewed as a schizophrenic and treated as a schizophrenic from that point on. Furthermore, pathologising terminology and complex jargon disempowers at-risk individuals and creates a schism between them and others seeking to provide help (Saleebey, 1997). The pathology/deficit approach is toxic to those it seeks to help treat (Van Breda, 2001).

The research on the pathology/deficit model is limited because of its inability to show cause and effect. For example, should a young person become involved in gang activity, drugs, promiscuous sex, and drop out of school, it would be hard to say which one caused which. Does gang activity lead to dropping out of school, or does dropping out of school lead to gang activity? Do drugs precipitate academic failure or may an academically struggling student turn to drugs as a coping strategy?

Resilience Model

In response to this cause-effect dilemma, researchers began to develop longitudinal research projects (Okamoto, Helm, Po'A-Kekuawela, Chin, & Nebre, 2009; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). This research included children and young adults who were assessed at various points in their development. Consistently and amazingly, these research projects noted at-risk and high-risk children becoming healthy, competent, functioning adults (Walsh, 2003a). "A consistent yet amazing finding over the last two

decades of resilience research is that most children and youth, even those from highly stressed families or resource-deprived communities, do somehow manage to make decent lives for themselves" (Benard, 2004, p. 7). Kaufman and Ziegler (1987) found that the majority of abused children do not become abusive parents. Research has shown that individuals are hard-wired to bounce back from adversity (Henderson, 2003; Howard et al., 1999), and that 70% to 75% of youth growing up in traumatic high-risk conditions overcome the odds to lead successful lives (Benard, 2006; Zimmerman, 1994).

Researchers Werner and Smith (2001) followed 700 at-risk children from birth to adulthood. While they displayed multiple risk factors at a young age, as they grew older, these factors began to fade away and the at-risk children grew more like their peers without risk factors. Werner and Smith report recovery by at-risk youth by mid life in that they were satisfied with life, in stable marriages and jobs, had children, and were responsible citizens within their communities. By age 40, only one out of six participants were reported as doing poorly (Werner & Smith, 2001).

More recently, researchers have linked resilience to college students who have persisted academically (Beasley, Thompson, & Davidson, 2003; Weigold & Robitschek, 2011). Female high school athletes who focus on problem coping strategies, which included social support rather than avoidance and blaming, have been shown to be resilient (Yi, Smith, & Vitaliano, 2005). Social networks have been shown to build resilience through positive attitudes and a network to undergird students through stressful times (Yates & Masten, 2004). Steinhardt and Dolbier (2008) developed resilience in students by teaching them coping strategies. As will be shown in the paragraphs that follow, the components of resilience push beyond the stultifying dogma and collectivism.

Resilience provides an explanatory and normative analysis of the ideas and structuresthat shape the relationship between the Latina and educational success.

Personal strength and protective factors. Personal resilience strengths are the independent attributes, also known as internal assets or personal competencies, associated with healthy development and life success (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Maton et al., 2004; Narayanan, 2009; Vakalahi, 2001). In and of themselves, they do not cause resilience but rather can be seen, observed, and measured. Four often-overlapping categories of personal strength are habitually recognized as (a) social competence, (b) problem solving, (c) autonomy, and (d) sense of purpose (see Appendix A). Different researchers often use different names for these personal strengths, but the terms used for these categories all point towards the same constructs (see Appendix B). The research consistently points to the small set of global factors associated with resilience. These personal and global factors associated with resilience transcend ethnicity, culture, gender, geography, and time (Henderson, 2004). The four categories that make up personal strength can be accessed and employed by all adolescents through the facilitation of support and provision of protective factors (Burrow et al., 2010).

One healthy adult is all that is needed to help an at-risk child reach his or her potential. Students who worked with the same adult on a consistent basis over time showed marked improvements both academically and emotionally, two components that help to ensure high school graduation (Chemers, Zurbriggen, Syed, Goza, & Bearman, 2011). Researchers have shown that this adult can be a parent (Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & O'Brien, 2010), but does not have to be the parent (Beardslee, 1983; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). This adult can provide nurturing that

can help protect from and overcome risk factors. This nurturing produces a bond between the adult and child. Furthermore, this adult can act as a mirror to reality (Werner, 2007). This mirror assists the young person to clarify difficult feelings and challenges and to solve problems. The child learns proper and positive ways to deal with life's challenges (Henderson, 2003). Finally, this adult can provide a sympathetic witness. The adult listens to the child's story and believes in him or her (Miller, 1991).

Some parents with low levels of educational attainment place a greater expectation on their children using their current disadvantage as motivation for their children to complete higher education (Chang, Chen, Greenberger, Dooley, & Heckhausen, 2006; Syed, 2010). These parents encourage their children with verbal encouragement and financial sacrifice. Often they cannot provide educational support because they lack knowledge of the educational system (Auerbach, 2006). Furthermore, these parents can discuss roadblocks such as stigma and prejudice their children may face, helping them to prepare and eventually overcome these barriers to success (Hughes et al., 2006).

Peer groups can provide support for students laboring towards academic success (Abrahamson & Barter, 2011; Biggs & Tang, 2007; Furman & Burhmester, 1992; Palmer, Maramba, & Holmes, 2011). A student's peer group can either be a help or hindrance (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; Cooper, 2011). Cooper (2011) reported that peers as a support system were more important than family in young adults' who were transitioning into college. Students placed an importance on feeling like they belonged at college. This was facilitated through having a group of peers who shared their interests, helping them to feel welcomed and that they belonged. White students were reported to

have an easier time with this student peer group transition because they were more likely to have friends transitioning to college. Underrepresented minorities were more likely to struggle when not easily transitioning into a peer group (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008). In order to counteract this struggle, research by Cooper, Burciaga, Dominguez, and Su (2008) show that for Latino students attending a community college, families can remain the most salient source of support.

Students may receive support from many different sources such as family, friends, teachers, or other community members, which help to foster academic success (Brackenreed, 2010; Cooper et al., 2002; Plunkett, Henry, Houltberg, Sands, & Abarca-Mortensen, 2008; Roblyer, 2006). This dynamic and complex nexus helps to reduce and offset the unwelcomed negative effects standing in a student's path to success (Reis, Azmitia, Syed, Radmacher, & Gills, 2009). For example, if the family cannot help to navigate the educational system, they can provide emotional support. Syed (2011) has reported emotional support as the strongest predictor of math grades among Latino adolescents. Furthermore, Syed (2011) reported student success could be built when parents' foster academic aspiration and teachers provide the instrumental support for achievement. Research shows the students who have a network of support across multiple domains such as peers, family, and teachers succeed at much higher rates than those who do not (Reis, Azmitia, Syed, Radmacher, & Gills, 2009)

Schools and resiliency. The amount of time adolescents spend in school is second only to time spent with the family. Beside the family, schools are the most likely place our students will build the capacity for resiliency (Alva & Padilla, 1995; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Schools effective at fostering resiliency in adolescents consistently

participate in caring and personalization (Burrow et al., 2010; Fiske, 1992; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). These attributes are best built through personal relationships (Brackenreed, 2010; Henderson, 2004). Relationships, which provide caring and personalization, are built by educators with resiliency-building attitudes. Resiliency building educators convey hope and optimism through personal relationships despite challenging behavior a student may display (Canter, 2010; Howard et al., 1999). Individuals with hope and optimism are more resilient and thrive where others fail (Beavers & Hampson, 1990; Cohn, Brown, Fredrickson, Mikels, & Conway, 2009).

Schools promoting resiliency ensure that every student has a caring relationship with an adult at school (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Naturally some adults will develop close relationships with students, but resilient schools go farther. It is their goal to ensure a positive and personal interacting relationship with an adult at school for every student. Many of these schools develop programs that specifically match each student to an adult (Smink, 1990). Once matched, the adults make a point of meeting with students on a weekly basis.

The core values instilled by regular interaction between adults and students on the school campus create a feeling of community. Mutual respect, responsibility, fairness, and helpfulness are all byproducts of the resilient school climate (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Evans, 2010; Kinney, 2009; Schneider & Duran, 2010). Feeling safe both psychologically and physically is key in student learning (Cohen, Fege, & Pickeral, 2009; Harris, 1998).

Part of students feeling safe includes programs designed to provide early intervention. Student assistance provided by counseling and support programs often

provide critical help to students struggling to achieve academically (Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001; Ryan, Kaffenberger, & Carroll, 2011; Whiston, 2003). Having a plethora of programs demonstrates to students they are cared for. Furthermore, services can be established through outside professionals, local businesses, community leaders, social services, law enforcement, and community programs.

Schools can combine with community programs in partnerships. Schools can serve as family resource centers, provide family support groups, parent education, and other family resources (Brackenreed, 2010; Sanders, 2001). Providing such services and acting as a hub for the community generates a sense of belonging. Positive developmental outcomes, motivation, and achievement are byproducts of such programs (Levin, 2009; McDonald & Moberg, 2000).

Focusing on students' strengths and success is key to building positive relationships (Park, 2009; Zimmerman, 1994). It is not uncommon for teachers to become frustrated and focus on problematic behavior; however, if teachers only focus on problematic behavior, at-risk students will fail to improve (Canter, 2006, 2010; McKinney et al., 2007; Payne, 2005). This does not mean the best approach is to ignore inappropriate behavior, but rather to balance the scale by providing positive feedback upon strengths as well (Ackerman, 2007; Horner, Fireman, & Want, 2010; Mendes, 2003; Mendler, 2000). The literature consistently points towards a student's strengths as the way to move from risk to resiliency (Craney-Gallagher & Mayer, 2006; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Park, 2009; Patrick, Mantzicopoulous, Samarapungavan, & French, 2008; Ross, Bondy, Gallingane, & Harnbacher, 2008).

Over time, students in schools that build resilience show a decline in problem behavior (Levin, 2009; Park, 2009; Rutter, 1979). These schools provide social, emotional, and cognitive support despite a student's level of risk. Furthermore, students will acquire social competence, problem solving skills, a sense of autonomy, as well as plans and a hope for the future from resilient schools (Benard, 2004). The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's (2002) National Cross-Site Evaluation of High-Risk Youth Programs conducted a 5-year study producing results that show schools that foster bonding and connectedness have an even more powerful effect than that of the family.

Resilient educators. The primary way students learn in school is through observation. Research consistently shows the power of educators to foster resiliency in children (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Prado, 1992; Garmezy, 1991; Gottesman, 2010; Sloan, 2006). A great way for students to learn how to be resilient is to observe their teachers modeling resilient behavior (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Plunkett et al., 2008). It is unrealistic to expect students to be resilient if they do not have resilient teachers (Cooper, 2011). If educators find themselves in high-risk situations failing to cope, it will be impossible to promote resiliency amongst students (McKinney et al., 2007). It is not realistic to expect students to move from risk to resilience if their primary role models at school do not demonstrate qualities of resilience.

Trust was established as an essential factor for improving learning by Stanford professor Bryk (2002). There are four essential components he has identified in order to build trusting relationships between teachers and students: (a) respect, (b) competence, (c) personal regard for others, and (d) integrity.

Respect. Respect starts with the teacher recognizing the important role the teacher plays in a student's education (McNeely et al., 2002; Smyth, 2005). The patterns of interaction between teacher and student represent a crucial position in the subjective climate and educational experience of students (Alva & Padilla, 1995; Canter, 2010). This must be viewed by both the teacher and student as a mutually dependent relationship (Lo & Howard, 2009; Meier, 1995). Teachers must communicate in such a way as to genuinely listen to students and openly receive information from them. Improving the respect in the teacher student relationship rests heavily on the student's willingness to voluntarily associate with teachers and remedy concerns.

Competence. Competence is the ability of the teacher to successfully execute roles and responsibilities. Interpersonal dynamics between teachers and students influence a student's ability to sustain the difficult tasks involved in learning (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004). Teachers must masterfully deliver the curriculum while maintaining control and disciplining students without demeaning them. Competent teachers are also up to date on data driven instruction and innovation (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Fullan, 2007).

Personal regard for others. Personal regard for others manifests itself in the form of reducing student vulnerability in the classroom. A reduction in vulnerability is viewed as having positive personal regard for others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Preciado, Horner, & Baker, 2009). The amount of praise verses criticism put forward by teachers to students impacts student potentiality in school (Alderman & Green, 2011; Dweck, Gotez, & Strauss, 1980; Matheson & Shiver, 2005). Teachers who show they care for students beyond their formal paid class time intensify relational ties. This further

increases the student's experience of social affiliation, personal meaning, and value. Social relationships between teachers and students underscore the fundamental capacity of a student's learning and ability to improve academically (Alderman & Green, 2011; Bensman, 1994; Murray & Pintana, 2007).

Integrity. Integrity is the consistency between what a teacher says and does in the classroom. The foundation of trust is consistency. Teachers must establish clear-cut rules with students and show consistency (Alderman & Green, 2011; Canter, 2009; Wilson & Corbett, 2001). Inconsistency is the fastest way to destroy trust. When students do not know what to expect they have trouble learning (Canter, 2010; Mayer, 1993). Students want to be associated with honest, inspiring, and competent teachers. Students trust in a teacher's ability to teach when the teacher's character is strong. Students are able to mirror and identify their own characteristics with teachers they trust. Trusting a teacher who exhibits positive qualities makes students feel better about themselves.

Summary

Latinos are a diverse people group who come from many backgrounds. Here in the United States, many Latinos live biculturally. Latinos are expected to socialize in two cultures, adopting them into one conglomeration and maintaining both (Rudolph et al., 2011). *Familismo* helps the Latino family to stay true to traditional family values of their primary culture (Falicov, 1998; Gaines et al., 1997; Rudolph et al., 2011). However, many Latino families retain the strict male and female roles of *machismo* and *marianismo*.

The *machismo* attitude expects Latinas will assume the role of homemaker (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Arciniega et al., 2008), while the *marianismo* attitude expects

the Latina to adopt a devoted suffering for the family (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Rudolph et al., 2011). Many Latinas sacrifice their goals in order to allow others in the family to succeed (Davidds-Garrido, 2006; Triandis & Trafimow, 2001). The adoption of these two attitudes in the Latino community has created an oppressive culture for Latinas.

The White middle class culture school system has created a hegemonic system, which is also oppressive to Latinas. Schools participate in the hegemonic process through their selection of books, teacher discourse, and the practices that make up daily school life (Walsh, 1996). Standardized testing, graduation rates, placement in special education programs, and ability grouping all place Latinas at risk (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Lee et al., 2007; Orfield et al., 2004). The norms and values perpetuated in school are the norms and values that permeate society. Outwardly schools seek to be culturally sensitive; however, much of the cultural focus takes shape in the form of programs aimed at minorities in exchange for extra state and federal funds (Buras, 2008; Swartz, 2009).

These attempts to provide programs for Latinas often place the blame on the student claiming cultural deficits (Ford et al., 2002). This deficit-based view often compounds underperformance (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Latinas are dropping out of school at alarming rates in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2007). Only half of the Latinas entering school will earn a degree on time (Mellander, 2011), while Mexican Latinas are the least likely to graduate from high school and attend college (Lutz, 2007). Mexican American Latinas are the least likely to graduate with a 4-year degree (Garcia & Bayer, 2005) and the most likely to terminate their education in order to take care of the family (Rudolph et al., 2011).

Freire (2002) suggested education as a path to liberate oppressed individuals. With the power of an education, Latinas have the opportunity to reverse risk factors through reflection and action. There is no one better than the Latina herself situated to best understand the dire effects of the situation and no one better situated than the Latina herself to liberate her from this oppression. Liberation will be had through recognition by Latinas working with educators in solidarity. It is the educator's job to undergird the process of liberation from risk of failure to success.

The community and home are powerful predictors of the types of behaviors students will come to school with (Livingston, Testa, Hoffman, & Windle, 2010). It is therefore of the utmost importance that students, especially at-risk and high-risk students, enter strong, supportive, resiliency-building classrooms (McKinney, Robinson, & Spooner, 2004). Teachers in these types of classrooms provide positive role models, support, bonding, and positive uplifting environments. A skillful and supportive group of educators can provide the foundation needed for academic and life success (Giles, 2008). By caring for, respecting, and praising students, teachers increase the academic and social outcomes of students (Hallinan, 2008). For many adolescents living in high-risk environments, teachers and school are the main hope for moving from risk to resiliency.

The characteristics of resiliency are critical to student, family, and educator success. Everyone has innate resiliency characteristics that allow them to foster positive adaptation within the context of remarkable adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), and the above mentioned theoretical framework seen through the lens of resiliency allows strengths to develop under stress and in the face of adversity (Walsh, 2003b). These strengths and assets equip students, teachers, schools, and families to thrive in the

face of trials, grow through adversity (Cowan, Cowan, & Schultz, 1996), and emerge stronger following the struggle (Coles, 1997). Over time the essential characteristics of the resilient person foster the capacity to struggle well, surmount obstacles, and go on to live life fully. These individuals and families do not just bounce back but rather bounce forward, integrating the positive aspects of meeting and overcoming challenges in their lives (Walsh, 2003a).

When approached from a pathology/deficit perspective, these characteristics go untapped. When approached from a resiliency perspective, positive strengths build resiliency through protective factors. Schools are an excellent avenue for developing a comprehensive model that includes both academic and personal success for all students. An empowered, motivated, and resilient staff will be able to meet the challenges of students today. Schools can begin the process of fostering resiliency by starting with teachers who can then provide for students. When schools partner with or provide support in place of parents, all students benefit.

Many educators have sensed resiliency in their students, but have lacked the terminology needed to talk about and create an environment that fosters resiliency (Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Becoming acquainted with the terminology needed and absorbing the resiliency paradigm into practice, teachers are becoming effective resiliency builders. The absence of specific resiliency-fostering classrooms and programs is a huge barrier to student success. Implementation of resilient classrooms and programs by resilient teachers can help to mitigate problems students come to school with.

While resiliency research has been around for several decades, serious and significant gaps in the literature were identified through this literature review. Sanchez et

al. (2010) suggest more research in the lives of Latinos transitioning from high school to college as well as the role of mentors in the lives of transitioning Latinos. Fuerth (2009) suggests future research is needed in the area of Latina students in general, Latinas who are first generation, full-time Latina students, and Latinas transitioning into careers. Franquiz and Salazar (2004) suggest future studies focus on educational strategies and structures that engage students in healthy construction of personal identity, educational structures and strategies that help to construct positive academic identities, and resources students can draw on to construct positive dispositions towards culture during and beyond high school. Sanchez et al. (2010) suggest future research should be focused in the areas of the choices Latinas make, experiences and decisions made during the transition into adulthood, socieo-economic status, and family obligation. Altschul et al. (2008) suggest examining acculturation's relation to academic achievement. Hallinan (2008) suggests teacher expectations and student attachment should be further explored with regard to student success. Mouttapa, Weiss, and Hermann (2009) suggest examination of family functioning, self-image, substance use, and Hispanic subgroups such as Mexican Americans as needed areas of research. Cavazos et al. (2010) suggest future studies in personal protective factors as well as coping responses in Latino students. Numerous suggestions have been made to incorporate the voice of the students into action (Arnot, McIntyre, Peddler, & Reay, 2004; Cook-Sather, 2009; Cushman, 2006, 2009; Macbeath, Demetriou, Rudduck, & Meyers, 2003; Mitra, 2008; Rodgers, 2006; Rudduck, 2007; Schultz & Cook-Sather, 2001; Silva, 2001; Sloan, 2006; Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007; Wilhelm, 2011; Zenkov, Harmon, van Lier, & Tompkins, 2009).

All of the above identified gaps in the literature point towards giving resilient Latinas a voice. A qualitative research design best fits capturing the voice, story, and rich essence of Latinas who have successfully graduated high school. Chapter 3 outlines the procedures and design used to capture this information and contribute to the growing body of knowledge and literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Stories of urban life in Santa Ana, California are often told in the form of tragedies, as dire endings rampantly accentuate disaster. It is high time we switch our focus from what is not working, to what is working. Even more important is focusing on the voice of those who have succeeded from within this city. As Sloan (2006) notes, to be effective educators, we must listen to the students. The rich essence of stories captured through this qualitative research design engaged the voice of Latinas who have the ability to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges (Walsh, 2003a) and successfully graduated high school then attended college. The use of grounded theory facilitated a study of experiences and formulated theory directly from this data. A qualitative grounded theory study captured the authenticity and authority best realized in the form of powerful life stories (Brown, 1991; Connolly, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Design

Qualitative research. Conducting qualitative research requires me to focus on meaning over measurement as I report the stories of participants (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) thus allowing the evaluation of intersecting people, places, times, and ways to formulate theory that can change individual practices, alter procedures, and shift policies (Wuest, 2011). Qualitative researchers do more than capture reality; they condense and represent it, shaping it into something recognizable through translation and development of knowledgeable arguments, much as wet clay is shaped by the potter (Smart, 2010). Furthermore, a positive aspect of qualitative research is that it is reflexive and contains autoethnographic elements (Holloway & Biley, 2011).

This is identified by Walshaw (2009) as writing oneself into the research. Madison (2005) states we should not distance ourselves from the research, as we are not blank slates. Taking a critical stance on the researchers' own reactions to the study, position, location in the study, and the relationships encountered, is a powerful part of the qualitative research process (Finlay, 2002).

The natural setting of qualitative research produces complex conversation of depth on select occurrences and phenomena. Conversations and data collection occur simultaneously with data analysis allowing the researcher to reorient throughout the process, creating for better results (Asselin, 2003; Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007; Crabtree & Miller, 1999). These conversations can be recorded for transcription and analysis. According to Curry, Nembhard, and Bradley (2009) qualitative methods should be used to generate the data needed for a comprehensive understanding of a problem, gain insight into causal mechanisms, and study populations all from the detailed perspective of the individuals involved. Such an approach can help create a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest. An additional benefit of qualitative research is that it gives voice to participants, especially when the participants are vulnerable, marginalized, or powerless (Lather, 2009). In the end, the researcher, participants, and reader all shape research together (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Mazzei, 2009).

This study employed the qualitative method of interviewing participants. The conceptual framework of this study dictated perceptions of Latinas who successfully graduated high school and enrolled in college as a top priority. A qualitative methodology is perfectly situated for such purposes as generating meaning via one-on-one interview.

Participants were interviewed qualitatively. Qualitative interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and evaluated for meaning. Each participant was given a transcription and meaning was derived jointly between participant and myself.

Grounded theory. Resilience and youth development have a complex interaction in the lives of adolescents; therefore, a complex theory is needed to study their happenings. Green and Britten (1998) point out that the researcher should first select the research questions, followed then by the appropriate method for answering the questions. Grounded theory is the appropriate choice for these studies. As a research method, grounded theory may take different forms including Glaser and Strauss' (1967) classic grounded theory or Strauss and Corbin's (1998) later approach. A practical grounded theory guide is provided by Charmaz (2006) as well as Clarke's (2005) use of situational analysis maps in grounded theory.

Qualitative studies and grounded theory offer many options and variations when selecting a method. According to Corina and Vessey (2011) the qualitative researcher knows the development of theory is the researchers responsibility and that strict method cannot replace the interpretation, insight, and creativity of the researcher. The researcher is not limited to using one specific approach, and it is suggested by Glaser (1992) that an approach of forcing the same paradigm into every grounded theory research project does not fit the true idea of emergence from the data. A force of paradigm would limit the research project. At its core, grounded theory derives constructs directly from data the researcher has gathered as opposed to drawing on existing theory (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Grounded theory can adapt and accommodate evolving patterns and observed

behaviors to formulate and facilitate the understanding and explanation of social phenomena (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Use of grounded theory is specifically appropriate for this study I am looking at the distinct experiences of a specific population. As Roberts and Taylor (2002) point out, such an approach to research is effective in empowering an exploration of distinctive social settings and the persons who exist in a given time or place. Furthermore, Wuest (2011) tells us, "Grounded theory allows for a broad area of exploration beginning with the situated experiences of women... [and] extends to exploration of relevant social and structural conditions" (p. 876). Additionally, when researchers employ the perceptions and perspectives of participants, effectiveness and relevance are enhanced (Kelly, Lesser, & Smoots, 2005; MacDonald et al., 2011). First data were collected from the participants, then theory was derived directly from the data. The resulting data were grounded in the real life experiences of the participants.

Grounded theory relies on in-depth interviews as a means of gathering data from the perspective of the participants themselves. This process of in-depth interviewing allowed the collection of data from the perspective of those who experienced the phenomena as well as the meaning they assign to those experiences (Seidman, 1998; Wuest, 2011). Use of a qualitative method such as grounded theory allowed the collection of empirical data that numbers cannot represent (Brown & Lloyd, 2001; Raduescu, & Vessey, 2011). Furthermore, a qualitative grounded theory approach provides a means by which the social milieu can be realized from the perspective of those who inhabit it. In order to successfully navigate the world of the participant, given social

context and culture, a study that makes use of in-depth qualitative interviewing is a requirement (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2007).

Individual interviews best unearth complex social processes. Interviews capture essential features of a phenomena from the perspective and through the personal words of the participant through collection and interpretation of data in accordance with rigorous and broadly established procedures of sampling, data collection, and analysis (Curry et al., 2009; Ojeda et al., 2011). Such research illuminates beliefs, values, and motivations that lie beneath the surface. Such research has the powerful ability to examine unique social environments (Birks et al., 2007). An interactive approach that is sensitive to the language and concepts used by the participant allows the exploration to yield data such as nonverbal, contextual, and embedded meanings within participants' narratives that would be unattainable otherwise (Merry et al., 2011). This allows the interviewer to explore what the participantss say in much detail, uncovering new ideas that may not have been anticipated at the outset (Britten, 1995). Lofland and Lofland (1995) describe the qualitative process as flexible and iterative, as well as creative and intuitive. When clear guidance is given and questions are clearly articulated, Cannon (1989) points out that participants are willing and able to provide the researcher with the information sought, even in stressful circumstances. Patton (1987) suggests that good questions in qualitative interviews should be open ended, neutral, sensitive, and clear to the interviewee. Further, good questions may come from the following six types of questions: (a) behavior or experience, (b) opinion or belief, (c) feelings, (d) knowledge, (e) sensory, and (f) background or demographic.

I first developed questions jointly with the committee chair and committee members, followed by selection of method. This study employs use of a grounded theory method to allow for theory generation from the ground up. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 illustrated the need for Latina voice, specifically the need for Latinas as the ontological orators of their own solutions. The conceptual framework also charged Latinas as supremely situated to identify the root and escape from the problems oppressing them. This was facilitated through the grounded theory methodology employed as I worked in solidarity with the Latina participants.

Research Questions

The research was guided by, but not limited to, the following questions:

- Research question 1: What significant life experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment?
- Research question 2: What significant school experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment?
- Research question 3: From the perspective of educationally resilient Latinas, what should educators do to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment?

Participants

This project was limited to Latinas between the ages of 18 and 25 who attended Target High school for 4 years, graduated with a high school diploma, and were currently enrolled at the college level making progress towards graduation. This project focused on four Latinas who persisted to high school graduation in Santa Ana and collegiate

enrollment in the face of adversity. Upon contact, all participants willingly agreed to participate and share their personal experiences.

In order to select cases that are likely to be information rich (Gall et al., 2007; Curry et al., 2009) with respect to at-risk Latinas who have graduated high school from Santa Ana, California, a purposeful sampling procedure was employed. This small sub-sample represents the overall population of female students in Santa Ana, as key informants (Mays & Pope, 1995; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). All participants were graduates of Target High School, which is located at 1801 South Greenville, Santa Ana, CA 92704. Target High School is part of the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD). SAUSD covers seven K-5 schools, nine 6-8 schools, eight 9-12 schools, five special schools, and one charter school. In total, SAUSD has 56,937 students. In particular, Target High School has an enrollment of 2,465 students. Of this number, 2,382 are Hispanic or Latino (96.6%). The English language learner (ELL) population is 1,191 (48.3%). Students on free and reduced price meals number 1,868 (76.7%). Of the senior class, 379 graduated and 138 dropped out (37.5%) according to the California Department of Education (2010).

This age range was selected specifically because younger participants are more likely to exhibit impulsive decisions due to their maturing nervous system, while those in the 18 to 25 range are more likely to think abstractly and make connections between cause and effect (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2002; MacDonald et al., 2011).

Participants were selected as key informants. These key informants were best situated to produce information rich qualitative interviews, which best represent, the population as a whole. Based upon the above stated criteria, administrators, teachers and

coaches from Target High School recommended a number of key informants that were narrowed down to the final four selected for the purposes of this study. The method for narrowing the recommended participants is detailed later in this chapter.

Setting

In qualitative research, the evidence is distinctive and lies within the humanistic arena (Morse, 2006). The experiential and behavioral nature of the participants in context is of the utmost importance (Holloway & Biley, 2011). Participants of the study have lived in the city of Santa Ana, California during their 4 years of high school. With 355,662 people, Santa Ana is the 55th most populous city in the United States. Furthermore, Santa Ana is the fourth most densely populated city in the United States behind New York, San Francisco, and Chicago. For every square mile in Santa Ana there are 12,471 people (United States Census Bureau, 2007). With approximately 78,000 houses and 355,662 people, there are on average 4.6 persons per housing unit. This is the highest proportion in the nation. In comparison, New York averages 2.8 persons per housing unit.

The surrounding neighborhoods of Target High School's physical location are accustomed to violence. The Orange County Register (Edds et al., 2010) reports the Santa Ana Police Department as having 362 sworn officers trying to contain more than 5,000 documented gang members. Santa Ana is the largest city in Orange County with the most crime and highest number of gangs (Edds, 2010; Edds et al., 2010). Violence in the surrounding neighborhoods occurs on a daily basis. All participants have lived within the attendance boundaries of Target High School. Therefore, the participants of this study have been witness to events. Finally, Target High School holds a statewide ranking of 1,

which is the lowest ranking a school can hold (California School Rankings, 2009). Additionally, the Orange County Register ranked Target High School as number 65 out of 65 schools, making it the lowest rated school in the county (Orange County Register, 2010). Participants selected a convenient public meeting place of their choice. Each interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours and was surfeit with salient stories.

Procedures

Glaser (1992) suggested several guidelines to be used when conducting grounded theory research:

1. Start with a set of observations that represent and meet the aim of the study. I, as described in detail later in this chapter, encountered in my professional work several Latinas who did not follow the typical trend of succumbing to the many external pressures that keep them from attaining college entrance. These examples provided an impetus to conduct the present study.
2. Seek the full array and diversification of expanding categories through sampling. As described further in the sampling section of this chapter, several qualified informants were sought in order to get a broad spectrum of described experiences. The survey allowed the me to gain valuable data at the same time as ensuring that those contacted for interviews met the full criteria for inclusion in the study as interviewees.
3. Deliberately sample in order to test, expand, and confirm the validity of a category. In this context, the category would be that of resilient Latinas, and the deliberate sample allowed for testing, expansion, and confirmation.

4. Further sample selection through relationships and interrelationships developed between categories. Unfortunately, for the present in-depth study of one district, using participants who I knew, the maximum number of qualifying participants was small. Further sampling was beyond the scope of the study.
5. Identify the point of saturation. Further study in this area would likely uncover additional valuable information. The present study did not approach the point of saturation of this topic.

Sampling method. To begin searching out possible participants, I contacted Target High School's former principal, assistant principal, two counselors, and three teachers via phone. The administrators, counselors, and teachers recommended 18 possible participants. Eliminating participants I did not know reduced the pool to 9 possible participants. These nine were contacted via telephone, email, and Facebook. After carefully explaining the intended purpose and parameters of the study, any questions or further requested information was provided to contacts. Two were eliminated upon initial contact, as they were not enrolled in college. Two additional possible participants were eliminated as she was on a break from college. One possible participant never responded. The remaining four participants agreed to participate in the study.

I further solicited possible participants from participants contacted by phone as well. Snowball or chain sampling techniques facilitate purposeful sampling and involve asking people who are well situated to recommend participants (Patton, 1980; Abrams, 2010). Finally, the final number of four was reached. Additional relevant information about the study was provided to the final group of potential participants by email.

Through email, the participants were presented with letter asking them to participate and with the informed consent letter that outlined the study. The short researcher-designed demographical survey was also included in the email via a link to Zoomerang.

I determined the sampling strategies used to identify participants based upon the purpose of the research project (Britten 1995; Field, 1989). Events, incidents, and experiences are common objects of purposeful qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Since qualitative researchers do not assume a normal distribution of experiences, interactions, or settings, it is recognized that certain informants are better situated to provide significant insight and understanding (Abrams, 2010). Mays and Pope (1995) tell us the purpose of a systematic, non-probabilistic sampling is to identify specific groups of people who possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the study. Furthermore, qualitative researchers are often interested in unusual or extreme cases because of the unique insight they provide (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Sandelowski (1995) points out that a demographic variable such as sex becomes an analytic variable when the variable is selected for study by virtue of the participants' gender and that such studies are best investigated one group at a time.

Because Latinas who have successfully graduated from high school in Santa Ana, California are a particular subgroup of the larger population and have similar backgrounds and experiences, homogeneous sampling was used as outlined by Patton (1980). It was decided that if well-situated people identified a name of an individual repeatedly, this individual would be considered an "encultured informant" or an individual who is in a position to have key knowledge (Spradley, 1979, p. 47).

Insider research. I personally knew the participants selected. The term *insider research* is used by Kanuha (2000) to describe a researcher who is better situated to perform qualitative interviews because of a previously established relationship. Ojeda et al. (2011) advocate knowing your participants thoroughly, which allows the researcher to obtain more relevant information. Bartunek and Louis (1996) suggest that connectedness to the research setting and questions are an advantage to the insider researcher. An insider researcher provides a deeper understanding of context, alternative viewpoints, soundness and richness of interpretations and conceptual analysis, and richness of findings (Thomas, Blacksmith, & Reno, 2000). Qualitative researchers obtain descriptive data and report phenomena from the participant's point of reality (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) and it is the insider researcher who is best situated to represent this data.

Sample size. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research has no defined rules about sample size (Baum, 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Rubinstein, 1994; Tuckett, 2004). Statistical significance is not the priority of the qualitative researcher as sample sizes are determined by factors such as depth, duration of the interviews, and what is feasible for a single interviewer (Britten, 1995; Mays & Pope, 1995). Selecting the number of participants in qualitative research is determined by the preference of the researcher (Sandelowski, 1995), and data saturation can be reached with a small number of interviewees (Gauthier, 2010). Kvale (1996) answers the question of qualitative sample size by stating, "Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (p. 101). Curry et al. (2009) suggest the correct sample size is reached when no new concepts emerge from the participants. Furthermore, if interpretations and

theories of the data collected are to remain strictly localized, then sample size is not a crucial factor (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

The power of a purposive qualitative sample lies in the information obtained rather than the number of informants (Sandelowski, 1995). The qualitative researcher deliberately chooses participants in order to identify germane cases and characteristics in light of the questions being studied (Brown & Lloyd, 2001). Breadth and depth are two choices the researcher is faced with (Patton, 1980). Sampling in qualitative research generally examines small numbers aimed at depth and detail (Brown & Lloyd, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tuckett, 2004). For the purposes of this study, depth was chosen and information from a small number of participants was gathered (Ezzy, 2002; Mays & Pope, 1995; Ragin & Becker, 1989).

Rapport development. When discussing the role of the researcher's relationship with participants, Malinowski (1922) uses the term going native. The researcher's role is then to forego the role of outside observer and become a participant in the lives of the participants, thus enhancing the reliability and credibility of the research. Skaff, Chesla, de los Mycue, and Fisher (2002) require relationship building and extended efforts as a prerequisite to culturally competent qualitative interviewing. Other researchers have challenged the reflexive relationship between us and them, researcher verses participant, concluding an advantage to the researcher who blurs the line between us and them (Fine, 1992; Harding, 1987; Kanuha, 2000; Minh-Ha, 1989; Rosaldo, 1989). Ojeda et al. (2011) conclude that without spending time with those in the Latino community, the researcher would be seen with skepticism as an outsider.

Bias management is part of the qualitative research process as the insider researcher gathers data from interviews. The use of a qualitative inquiry process calls for study-specific questions instead of utilizing pre-established questionnaires or survey instruments (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). In this way, the researcher becomes an instrument through which the data for the study is collected and generated (Poggenpoel & Myburg, 2003). The researcher can avoid bias through the creation of open-ended questions as opposed to the more limiting closed-ended method of questioning (Chenail, 2001). Poggenpoel & Myburg (2003) also suggest the researcher take the humble position of using a team for triangulation and peer evaluation to avoid bias.

In this study, after reviewing the literature and starting with a base of questions provided by Saleeby (1997), I generated the open-ended study-specific questions in collaboration with the chair and committee to avoid researcher bias. After conducting the interviews, I humbly debriefed with the chair and committee for triangulation and peer evaluation to further avoid bias. It should be noted, however that the researcher's critical stance in combination with the perspective of the participants is the main point of conducting a qualitative/grounded theory study. For this reason, bias can be avoided, but the perspective of the participants and researcher cannot be removed (Finlay, 2002; Halloway & Biley, 2001; Madison, 2005; Smart, 2010; Walshaw, 2009).

The insider researcher who decides to go native has the advantage of an *emic* perspective that is subjective, informed, and influential, versus the traditional *etic* perspective that is distant and removed (Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990). The insider researcher also enjoys the benefit of inside information that the unfamiliar researcher cannot have (Kanuha, 2000). This inside information represents "feelings of empathy and

emotions that insiders share from knowing their subjects on a deep, subtle level," (Hayano, 1979, p. 101). The insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of research results of a population that nonnative researchers cannot have access to (Kanuha, 2000).

In order to obtain descriptive data, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) describe the four stages of rapport development between participant and researcher: initial, exploration, co-operative, and participation. They further explain that only at the final participation stage does the truest collection of data take place. McConnell-Henry, James, Chapman, and Francis (2010) explain that the participation stage can be reached upon commencement of the interview when a pre-existing relationship has been established. Furthermore, they report the data to be richer both in breadth and depth because time is not wasted establishing a comfortable forum for the participant to open up in. FitzGerald (1995) places trust as the paramount factor between participant and researcher when participants are expected to open up and share personal experiences. Higher levels of trust are reported by Thomas et al. (2000) because they used insiders with a shared history throughout the research process. Finally they state this approach enhanced the trustworthiness of their findings (Thomas et al., 2000). An insider research study enjoys many advantages, including a huge time savings by not having to develop rapport, a better understanding of the participants' perspective, a common bond that encourages participants who might not participate with someone they do not know, and a researcher who is better situated to disaggregate the data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; FitzGerald, 1995; Kanuha, 2000; McConnell-Henry et al., 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Thomas et al., 2000).

The literature, chair, committee and I agreed that this research study would be better served by forgoing an outside perspective through selecting information rich participants whom I had preexisting contact with. This in turn enhanced the credibility and reliability of the research by eliminating an “us” versus “them” mentality. I was therefore not seen as an outsider, allowing for the advantageous use of emic perspective. Depth and breadth was enhanced as I saved time by skipping straight to the fourth stage of rapport development through a previously established relationship with all four participants.

Interview process. I chose to interview all four participants face to face as each of the participants resided within driving distance. Participants were asked to select a public place to meet and conduct the interview. The only parameters were a public location and an environment that would be conducive to an audio recording. Gisele selected the UCLA bookstore. Maria selected the UCI library. Christina and Ruth both selected local restaurants.

An open range of experiences was gathered until saturation was reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Theoretical saturation occurs when new data no longer emerges through relevant coding categories (Brown & Lloyd, 2001; Patton, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) related to the phenomena of interest and the relationships among categories is solidified (Ezzy, 2002; Higginbotham, Albrecht, & Connor, 2001; Nielsen et al., 2010; Patton, 2002; Pirie, 1997). Curry et al. (2009) cite theoretical saturation as the most commonly used criterion for determining adequate sample size. Additional participants and subsequent data were gathered until saturation was reached.

Researcher's Personal Biography

I grew up in Huntington Beach, California, which is approximately eight miles from Target High School. According to the 2010 census, there are 202,566 people living in Huntington Beach. With 75,662 housing units, the average house has 2.6 people residing in it. Eighty percent of the population is White, with Hispanics comprising 14.6% of the population.

Edison High School is one of nine schools in the Huntington Beach Union High School District (HBUHSD) and is the specific high school I attended. HBUHSD has six 9-12 schools and three special schools. In total, HBUHSD has 16,162 students. In particular, Edison High School has an enrollment of 2,616 students. Of this number, 1,655 (63.3%) are White and 302 (11.5%) are Hispanic or Latino. The English language learner (ELL) population is 53 (2%). Students on free and reduced price meals are 161 (6.1%). Of the senior class, 533 graduated and 26 dropped out (5%) according to the California Department of Education (2010).

After graduating from high school, I earned an Associate of Arts degree from Golden West College, Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Education with a minor in sports psychology from California State University of Long Beach, Master of Arts in Education from Vanguard University of Southern California, Dropout Prevention Specialist degree from National University, Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from Liberty University, and am currently enrolled in the Doctorate of Education degree program at Liberty University. Furthermore, I hold both teaching and administrative credentials.

While at Vanguard University earning my teaching credential, I was placed at Target High School for student teaching. I successfully completed student teaching and applied for a state governor's teaching fellowship grant. This grant paid for my master's degree in exchange for signing a contract to teach at Target High School for 4 years. I was employed by the Santa Ana Unified School District as a classroom teacher for 7 years and 1 year at the district office as the district outreach consultant. Holloway and Biley (2011) point out the importance of research being conducted by researchers who not only have an enthusiasm for the research being conducted but also by researchers who have prior experience in the area of study. Both qualifications are met by the time I spent working in Santa Ana. After 8 years in SAUSD, I was hired as an assistant principal into the Fullerton Joint Union High School District first at Fullerton Union High School and then moved to Troy High School also as assistant principal.

Data Collection

Self-report surveys. At the outset, surveys were used to gather information. The use of simple survey-based research can provide "rich sources of perceptual data that reflect the stakeholder's point of view" (Dodd & Bowen, 2011, p. 19). A short demographic survey was used to collect basic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, and GPA. This survey was used to help ensure potential participants met the minimum requirements for participation (Appendix C). The Resiliency Quiz developed by Henderson (2002) was used to collect basic resiliency information (Appendix D). Part one categorized participant's level of caring, support, expectations, and opportunities for participation, bonds, boundaries, and life skills. Part two required participants to select

the resiliency builders they believe they use most often as well as the ones they need to develop.

In order to assess the number of protective assets each participant had during high school, the checklist for teens (Benson, Galbraith, & Espeland, 1998) was used (Appendix E). This checklist helped to identify the strong and weak asset areas each participant was working with during the high school experience. Another important area to rate was the prevalence of a positive role model in each participant's life during high school. The literature and research clearly identify role models as an essential part of resiliency (Beardslee, 1983; Miller, 1991; DuBois et al., 2002; Henderson, 2003; Werner, 2007). Therefore the Rate Your Role Models Checklist (Benson et al., 1998) was used to assess the quality of role models during the high school years (Appendix F).

The School Motivation Survey (Benson et al., 1998; Appendix G) measured students' intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, or lack of motivation during school. The Interpersonal Competence Survey (Benson et al., 1998; Appendix H) measured the relationship skills of participants during high school. The Cultural Competence Survey (Benson et al., 1998; Appendix I) measured contact with other races, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures. The Resistance Skills Survey (Benson et al., 1998; Appendix J) measured participants' ability to resist negative peer pressure and avoid dangerous situations in high school.

All surveys were meant to provide surface level information, and their purpose was to sketch a rough outline of the participants' views of what they were like in high school. The surveys were a beginning point, not an end. Before participants were interviewed, all surveys were recorded and analyzed. In total, the time spent completing

all surveys should have taken no more than 1 hour for each participant. Furthermore, the surveys were meant to help get the participants back into a high school mindset and reflect on the past. As participants begin to reflect on the past, the reflection provided the needed bridge into the recorded interview process.

Interviews. Clearly articulating the role of the participant, aim of the study, and use of appropriate questioning techniques alleviated the problem of a participants' desire to please the interviewer (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Consideration to selecting a quiet, comfortable location that is convenient for the participant, yet free from interruptions, is important as well as arranging a time that is convenient for the participant (Birks et al., 2007). The semi-structured interviews I designed took place with each participant individually. They were used concurrently with the aforementioned surveys to find out what participants think and feel about their lived experiences (Miles & Gilbert, 2005). A semi-structured interview format consisted of open-ended questions within a defined area of exploration that the participant could pursue in detail (Britten, 1995). The main purpose of the interviews was to gather descriptive data in the words of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Using the specific words of the participants, I was able to develop insights on how participants interpreted the life experience factors that led to their high school graduation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). All interviews were conducted in a similar fashion and the same general questions were asked of each participant.

Each interview began with informal discourse and a short review of the surveys to build rapport between the interviewer and participants. Early on in the interview I briefly re-informed the participant of the purpose and reiterated the confidentiality of the

interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Finally, the semi-structured interviews were focused around a limited number of topics and a few general questions meant to probe the participants' interpretations of life experience factors that led to successful high school graduation. As Britten (1995) points out, a general list of questions can be developed; however, wordings cannot be standardized because the interviewer uses the participant's own vocabulary when framing supplementary questions and introducing new questions. To maintain focus and control of the interview I was mindful to the purpose of the interview, asked the right questions, and gave appropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback (Patton, 1987). In the case that clarification was needed, follow up probes were used appropriately.

A preamble was included preceding the questions to emphasize that there were no right or wrong answers (Ruppenthal et al., 2005). Additionally an interview guide was provided to participants prior to the interview to assist in preparing participants for the topics from the past to be explored (Birks et al., 2007). Although the interview guide was used, there was not an over reliance on the interview guide (Seidman, 1998). Over reliance on an interview guide can impose the perspective of the researcher on the process, resulting in a participant reciting what she thinks the researcher wants to hear.

Solid rapport between the participant and interviewer was established to ensure a secure level of cultural comfort and trust before any of the main research topics were introduced (McCaffery, 2003). The interview process began by discussing topic areas the participant was comfortable with (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), which helped to build rapport and reduce anxiety (Minichiello, Sullivan, Greenwood, & Axford, 2004). Use of verbal and nonverbal strategies such as active listening, facilitation, appropriate use of body

language, and eye contact established an atmosphere conducive to unreserved communication (Birks et al., 2007).

Follow up document reviews were conducted through the use of email (Schonlau, Asch, & Du, 2003). All interviews were transcribed and sent to participants via email for member checking (Kvale, 1996). Participants were asked to review the transcribed interviews and verify the accuracy of the information gathered including the accuracy of interpretations and important themes (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011; Lincoln, 1995).

To the extent that it was possible, all data were gathered electronically and analyzed digitally (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002). Surveys were administered through Zoomerang and email. All interviews were done in person and recorded by iPhone. All digital recordings were transferred to the computer and transcribed for analysis. All files were stored on a password-protected computer. I was the only one who had the password to unlock the computer.

Data Analysis

All data were reviewed and interpreted in light of the research question. Surveys, oral recordings, and transcription were reviewed to reveal common practices, beliefs, opinions, and issues between participants. A unitizing system was developed in order to facilitate the analysis and synthesis of the findings. The information was isolated and coded with the developed system. This led to the use of quasi statistics. The simple numerical results readily derived from the data helped support the implicit conclusions (Gall et al., 2007).

Personal interview analysis provided a rich and full understanding of the participants' experiences. As noted by Curry et al. (2009), a single researcher conducting interviews, collecting and coding data is both sufficient and preferred, particularly when the researcher is inextricably enmeshed in the data collection and analysis. Through the examination and discovery process, the researcher reflects and validates by use of additional member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Sandelowski, 1993). As participants reviewed and provided validation of the data, they had the chance to identify and illuminate any discrepancies (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

Data from surveys and personal interviews were reviewed in light of individual experience, as well as academic, family, and community factors. All data were categorized by organizing the information derived from unitizing into categories of similar meaning (Guetzkow, 1950). These data were enumerated by calculating a tally for the number of times important categories were mentioned (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). From the interviews, quotations were selected to illustrate points based upon their representativeness (Patton, 1980). Use of quotes helped to further illuminate the experience factors of participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Finally, with the above collected data, diagramming was used to produce graphical representations depicting the relationships between core concepts and categories (Kesby, 2000).

Throughout the process I consistently consulted with the chair and members of the committee. An audit trail documented the research process so the chair and committee could inspect all aspects of the project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through the inspection of the audit trail, the chair and committee reviewed the triangulation of all data (Denzin, 1978; Eyles & Donovan, 1986; Knafl & Breitmayer,

2008; Krefting, 1990). Various methods including surveys, interviews, memos, and more were checked for corroboration across variants.

Trustworthiness

The data analysis procedures listed above in combination with thoroughness of design, appropriate choice of interviewees, and transparency of the methods provided trustworthiness to this study. Holloway and Biley (2011) point out the importance of the personal involvement and positive aspect of researcher subjectivity, resulting in data that is not objectively neutral. This is called reflexivity and makes qualitative research readable, relevant, and trustworthy in its own right (Brown & Lloyd, 2001). Skaff et al. (2002) reports building and maintaining relationships as an important part of the qualitative research process. Thomas et al. (2000) list the insider researcher as a great way to increase the trustworthiness of a study as well as richness and depth.

To ensure proper interviewing techniques, I studied the principals of the inherent complexities of the interview process. A detailed reading of texts, literature review, practice, and guidance from the chair and committee all ensured proper technique of the interview process. Furthermore as suggested by McCaffrey (2003), fundamental communication strategies such as the use of open ended questions ensured interviews were guided, but in depth. An interview guide that is presented to the participant and used by the researcher can help to focus the interview; however, to ensure trustworthiness of the responses from each participant, Seidman (1998) reminds the researcher to remain flexible. Patton (2002) explains that to add trustworthiness to the participant's response, the researcher should make sure to use singular questions rather than asking two questions at the same time.

Deeply probing questions such as when, why, how, and under what circumstances did success of participants occur ensured the findings accurately describe reality. Richness provided enough context to make the data understandable. Clear examples illustrated main themes, as well as variations and refinements. I was not after one theme, but rather examined the research question in context, even when the context became complicated.

To ensure validity when researching people you know, it is exceedingly important to have protective measures in place. Kanuha (2000) suggests the researcher must separate reporting of subjective experiences from those of the participants. McConnell-Henry et al. (2010) suggest this can be done through frequent debriefings with an experienced researcher, and Tilley and Chambers (1996) explain success through a continual process of self-reflection. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose member checks in which the researcher presents the data to the participants as a critical step in establishing credibility and objectivity. Asselin (2003) reports that through emphasizing one's role as a researcher, trustworthiness of results can be established because role confusion is avoided. Furthermore, Asselin reports that more time spent between researcher and participant enhances comfort, which increases accuracy of results.

Construct validity was secured through collaboration with the chair and dissertation committee to create clear and concise research questions, surveys, and oral interviews that operationalize the concepts being studied. Brown and Lloyd (2001) also suggest validity may be increased by presenting the methodology and results in such a way that any reader, especially ones not familiar with the technical jargon, may judge. Internal validity was reinforced through a rigorous design, relevant participants, and full

disclosure of methods. All coding was done by myself, then double checked by the chair and other dissertation committee members to ensure validity. Finally, the findings of this study can be easily replicated in other contexts due to thorough documentation. The trustworthiness of the data was maximized through the adaptability and careful attention paid to the various factors aforementioned (Merry et al., 2011). Rigorous procedures such as these ensured the findings accurately describe reality.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure the proper use of ethical standards and informed consent, I worked closely with the chair and faculty sponsor. The Instructional Review Board (IRB) expedited review form was submitted under the direction of the chairperson. All informed consent procedures as outlined by Liberty University were followed. Informed consent was reviewed both in writing and verbally before collecting data (Ojeda et al., 2011).

A major ethical consideration was the anonymity of participants (Ojeda et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2000). A participant may not want to *avergonzar* (bring shame) to their family by revealing private information, therefore confidentiality was emphasized to participants (Ojeda et al., 2011). Due to the personal nature of the interviews, all participants were assigned pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality. In order to further secure the confidentiality of participants, interview transcripts were stored on a password-protected computer. No access to the computer was granted to any other individual for any reason.

Thomas et al. (2000) point out the need for the researcher to avoid participants feeling coerced into participating in the study due to a researcher's power or leadership

position. In this study I had no power or leadership involvement with the participants. The prior relationship was established through a teacher or coach (researcher) and student or player (participant) relationship. I have not worked as a teacher or coach for more than 5 years, neither have the participants interacted with myself in this capacity for up to 7 years. As stated, participants had been identified as encultured informants through a snowball sampling method (Abrams, 2010; Patton, 1980; Spradely, 1979), meaning the participants have been recommended by their previous teachers, coaches, and administrators and not by myself alone.

Sensitivity to gender. In light of the difference between my gender (male) and the gender of the participants (female), gender sensitivity must be addressed (Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Min-Ha, 1989). A successful qualitative interview involves both the researcher and participant jointly constructing meaning (Mishler, 1986); however, De Vault (1990) adds the construction of meaning can be influenced by gender as assumptions are assessed and confirmed by both parties. It is important to remain cognizant of the language used (Britten, 1995) when interviewing females as well as the "construction of topics, listening to respondents, transcribing, and editing interview material and writing about the respondents' lives" (De Vault, 1990, p. 96). The qualitative format of the interviewing process helps to combat misleading and potentially invalid answers (Suchman & Jordan, 1990). Qualitative interviews "allow people to negotiate their responses, taking into account the multiple expectations they have about the interviewer's belief" (Williams & Heikes, 1993, p. 289). Furthermore, Williams and Heikes (1993) point out that all interviews are necessarily and inevitably partial and that a researcher should take note of the difference in gender and in turn establish rapport in

order to achieve reliable in-depth results. Additionally, researchers have had much success when offering "a forum for each woman to consider how her contribution would help benefit others" (Ruppenthal, Tuck, & Gagnon, 2005, p. 746). Finally, at no point was I alone with the participants. All interviews were held in a public or open area where participants would feel less vulnerable (Aroian, Katz, & Kulwicki, 2006; Skaff et al., 2002).

Sensitivity to race. Challenges arise when interviewing participants from different cultural and immigrant groups (Merry et. al., 2011). These challenges include lack of understanding of the purpose, intimidation of the research process, concern for the migration status of themselves or their family members, language barriers, assumptions of English proficiency, and other cultural barriers (Aroian et al., 2006; Fuller, 2003; Merry et al., 2011; Ruppenthal et al., 2005). Birks et al. (2007) draw attention to three factors in particular that researchers should take note of when interviewing participants from another culture: researcher-specific, participant-specific, and context-specific factors (see Appendix K).

In order to negate these obstacles, researchers can use different strategies. These strategies include building trust and rapport, paying attention to cultural and religious particularities, acknowledging the challenges faced by minority populations in social context, responsiveness, reflectiveness, flexibility, and conducting research where participants are comfortable (Aroian et al., 2006; Fuller, 2003; Curry et al., 2009; Merry et al., 2011; Ruppenthal et al., 2005). The researcher's interviewing skills can be prepared for the complexities inherent in the research process through a detailed reading of texts, guidance from an experienced researcher, and practice. This enabled me to properly use

the valuable time spent with research participants (Birks et al., 2007). Getting to know the culture and environment, especially of minority groups considered at-risk, may be established through spending time with and getting to know the individuals and culture. Undoubtedly, this ability to establish a working knowledge and rapport had a huge impact on the final outcome of the research (McCaffrey, 2003). Additionally, Ruppenthal et al. (2005) show that having interviews conducted by members from different ethnically diverse background causes participants to give more explicit and extensive cultural information because they do not assume the interviewer knows from the context and generally understood meanings.

A qualitative research method is uniquely suited to study special populations, including those who are underrepresented and those with low literacy. This method capitalizes on a participant friendly approach that is more effective and less intimidating than surveys for those who have been marginalized (Curry et al., 2009). Qualitative interviews share control of the process, giving the unheard persons a voice (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) through use of their own words (Ponterotto, 2002). McConnell-Henry et al. (2010) stress the importance of trust, which is best substantiated through a pre-established relationship. This pre-established relationship built on *confianza* (trust) can also counteract unfamiliarity with research procedures or suspicions that participants often feel (Ojeda et al., 2011; Paniagua, 2005). These methods honor the Latino cultural value of *personalismo* or interpersonal connections (Ojeda et al., 2011). Through this process of giving voice to the voiceless via *personalismo*, theory is generated rather than tested (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996).

Merry et al. (2011) point out that while insiders with a similar background may be able to empathize with participants, an outsider researcher is just as important because a different lens through which participants' experiences can be viewed is offered. In order to not underestimate the complexities inherent in the interviewing process, Birks et al. (2007) suggest the researcher review the literature, then practice and prepare with persons who are from the cultural group to be interviewed. I established a thorough understanding of the unique facets of environment and culture through the literature review, practicing interviewing techniques throughout the doctoral process, and a decade of work as an educator and coach in the city of Santa Ana and Target High School. This time spent living and working in Santa Ana is relevant to the cultural background of the participants and was applied through avoidance of inappropriate questions, observation of cultural etiquette, and attention paid to the subtleties of verbal and nonverbal communication (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, I have gained cultural competence through knowledge of the culture and skills appropriate to conducting research with individuals of Latina culture (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Each participant brought her own unique history that must be examined in light of the complex interplay of culture and social phenomena (Merry et al., 2011). Adapting the questions by paying careful attention to factors throughout the process enhanced the trustworthiness of data. In order to elicit greater depth and breadth of information from an individual of another culture, McCaffrey (2003) suggests using open-ended questions. Patton (2002) urges researchers to keep the questions to one at a time in order to reduce confusion for the participants being interviewed, while at the same time Birks et al. (2007) remind qualitative interviewers to be careful not to modify their own

communication technique to the extreme. This could appear patronizing to the participants and affect both the flow and direction of the interview.

Sensitivity to emotionally-charged topics. Exposure to stressful, traumatic, and even life threatening events occurs to a large portion of the population (Peres, Mercante, & Nasello, 2005). Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, and Nelson (1995) report 51.2% of women experience at least one such event in their lifetime. Individuals process events in their own unique manner. Studies have shown two individuals experiencing similar events process memories and handle emotions differently (Breslau, 2001; Eugene et al., 2003), showing there is no singular or universal reaction to trauma (Hull, 2002; Jones et al., 2003). Research has further shown that although many people experience major traumatic events, it is more common for people to move on with their lives with only minor disruptions to their lives (Bonanno, 2004). Shalev, Tuval-Mashiach, and Hadar (2004) point to resilience as a rule, rather than the exception. However, in light of the nature of the qualitative interview process and the possible delicate subject matter, counseling and psychologist professionals were on standby in case repressed memories would have arisen and a participant would have needed professional support at any point.

Summary. A qualitative grounded theory methodology was used for this study as it specifically aligned with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. Freire (2002) suggested that Latinas, being the oppressed, should be the primary voice in identifying the problem and generating solutions to the problem. This fits perfectly with the qualitative interviewing method, which gives voice to Latinas and allows the theory to emerge straight from the data. Participants were selected as key informants based first upon recommendation from administrators, counselors, teachers, and coaches. After

conducting the interviews, the data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed in light of the research questions. Trustworthiness was increased based upon the tenets of insider research, rapport, sampling procedures, saturation of interviews, questioning techniques, debriefings, member checks, self-reflection, and ease of presentation. All these descriptions provide both an assurance of trustworthiness and the steps needed for a researcher to replicate the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The central motivation of this study was to explore the lived experiences of young Latina women who grew up in Santa Ana, California through an examination of the emergent factors that influenced their persistence to high school graduation and collegiate enrollment in the face of adversity. One goal is to impact the school system in Santa Ana and similarly populated districts by educating educators as to the reasons some Latinas from high-risk environments are academically successful, able to graduate, and matriculate into college. Results from this study contribute specifically by helping educators in Santa Ana and contribute to the field of education in general as educators may be encouraged to adapt methods of teaching and learning for similar students.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data subsequent to the data gathering. A presentation is made in Chapter 4 of the participants, review process, and the following themes that emerged from the data: inside the home, Santa Ana/neighborhood, target high school, opinion of education, extracurricular activities, education about the school system for parents, access to AP/honors classes, and having one positive adult to turn to.

Demographics of Participants

Demographic information was obtained via an online survey, hosted by Zoomerang, for each of the four participants and is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Four Participants

	Ruth	Maria	Gisele	Christina
Age	19	19	22	20
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Number of siblings	2	2	3	4
Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino of any race	Hispanic or Latino of any race	Hispanic or Latino of any race	Hispanic or Latino of any race
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single
Educational background	Currently attending college	Currently attending college	Currently attending college	Currently attending college
Current academic status	Enrolled in a 4-year college/university	Enrolled in a 4-year college/university	Enrolled in a 4-year college/university	Enrolled at a 2-year community college
Name of institution	University of California Riverside	University of California Irvine	UCLA	Golden West College
Number of years enrolled	2	3	5	3
Anticipated years until graduation	3	2	1 more quarter	6 months
Current employment status	Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)	Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)	Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)	Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)
Place of employment	Boudin South Coast Plaza	University of California Irvine	UCLA housing and hospitality services	Mrs. Field's Cookies
Job title	Cashier	Work study	Student supervisor	Shift leader

This study focused on the lived experiences of young Latina women who grew up in Santa Ana, California through an examination of the emergent factors that influenced their persistence to high school graduation and collegiate enrollment in the face of adversity, therefore all participants were female, Latina, over the age of 18, and currently enrolled in college. Three were enrolled in a 4-year university, while one was enrolled at a 2-year community college. Two of the participants were 19, one was 20, and one was 21. One was a second year college student, two were in their third year, and the last was

beginning her fifth year. All four of the participants were working part time, less than 40 hours a week. Three of the four lived at school away from home, while the fourth lived at home. This pool of participants offered an abundance of experience from which data was gleaned.

Maria, Gisele, and Ruth identified themselves as Mexican, while Christina identified herself as El Salvadorian. Maria, Gisele, and Ruth stated their parents had little to no education at all, while Christina stated her mother had some education in El Salvador. Maria and Ruth stated their parents spoke little to no English, while Gisele and Christina stated their parents spoke some English. Maria and Ruth identified with a very low socioeconomic class, while Christina and Gisele identified with more of a middle working class socioeconomic status. Despite these differences, they shared common customs and bonds of culture as reported by research on Latinos (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Rudolph et al., 2011; Zambrano, 1995).

Research Questions

Open-ended interviews were conducted with participants based upon the three guiding research questions.

- Research question 1: What significant life experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment?
- Research question 2: What significant school experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment?
- Research question 3: From the perspective of educationally resilient Latinas, what should educators do to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment?

I adapted a set of questions from Saleebey's (1997) work in the area of discovering internal and external strengths. The questions were not designed to be exhaustive, nor were they designed to be part of a strict protocol. The questions were designed as a guide that was emailed to the participants in advance so they might be prepared for the interview. Participants were instructed to answer the questions based upon their perspective from the time spent in high school. The questions were divided into five categories and appear in the following sample.

- Survival questions. How have you managed to survive (or thrive) thus far, given all the challenges you have had to contend with? How have you been able to rise to the challenges put before you? What was your mind-set as you faced these difficulties? What have you learned about yourself and your world during your struggles? Which of these difficulties have given you special strength, insight, or skill? What are the special qualities on which you can rely?
- Support questions. What people have given you special understanding, support, and guidance? Who are the special people on whom you can depend? What is it that these people give you that is exceptional? How did you find them or how did they come to you? What did they respond to in you? What associations, organizations, or groups have been especially helpful to you in the past?
- Exception questions. When things were going well in life, what was different? In the past, when you felt that your life was better, more interesting, or more stable, what about your world, your relationships, or your thinking was special or different? What parts of your world and your being would you like to recapture,

reinvent, or relive? What moments or incidents in your life have given you special understanding, resilience, and guidance?

- Possibility questions. What now do you want out of life? What are your hopes, visions, and aspirations? How far along are you toward achieving these? What people or personal qualities have helped you move in these directions? What do you like to do? What are your special talents and abilities? What fantasies and dreams have given you special hope and guidance? Who helped you achieve your goals or discover those special abilities you had in the past?
- Esteem questions. When people say good things about you, what are they likely to say? What is it about your life, yourself, and your accomplishment that gives you real pride? How did you know when things were going well in your life? What were you doing, who were you with, how were you feeling, thinking, and acting? What gives you genuine pleasure in life? When was it that you began to believe that you might achieve some of the things you wanted in life? What people, events, or ideas were involved?

The intent of the above five groups of questions was to provide an assessment of the participants' significant high school context, happenings, life experiences, and educational experiences that led to their success. Each group of questions was found to provide an abundance of relevant data. This data was recorded, transcribed, read and reread, isolated, and coded with a unitizing system.

Disinterred Themes

Throughout the qualitative interview process, Saleeby's (1997) five categories of questions were used to answer the three guiding research questions. Clear themes arose

from each individual that were common amongst all four participants. These themes were subdivided and categorized by each of the three guiding research questions.

Research question 1 asks: What significant life experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment? Two themes clearly contributed to life experiences and graduation from high school: Santa Ana/neighborhood and inside the home. Research question 2 asks: What significant school experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment? The following themes clearly contributed to school experiences and graduation from high school: Target high school and opinion of education. Research question 3 asks: From the perspective of educationally resilient Latinas, what should educators do to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment? From the perspective of academically resilient Latinas, the following themes contributed to school experiences and graduation from high school: Extracurricular activities, education about the school system for parents, access to AP/honors classes, and having one positive adult to turn to.

Santa Ana/Neighborhood

All of the four participants reported that their Santa Ana neighborhood caused a significant disturbance. Of the various facets that each individual participant generally mentioned about Santa Ana, there was one hallmark theme represented: gangs. Each of the four participants represented gangs as an easy option for a lifestyle for those who were interested.

Ruth reported gang disturbance outside of the mobile home park where she lived:

> [We lived] in mobile homes. It's in Santa Ana. It's a closed area….There used to be a lot of gangs around there, but not anymore because there is a lot of

> police….But outside of that there is a lot of gangs and stuff like that. There's been a lot of people killed or young kids killed by our house."

Ruth had friends that were in gangs. She recalls one in particular, "I know some friends who were in gangs and stuff. One of my friends was...he used to...deliver stuff to like other gangs. He never really told me anything [about his deliveries]. He just told me that he would do jobs for them and he would get paid really good."

Gisele reported gang disturbance at City Middle School. Gisele recounted a story of other kids bringing drugs to school and offering them to her. Furthermore, Gisele had multiple family members who were involved in gangs.

> I did know family members though that were in gangs, which is funny. I know we always heard stories about them. "Oh, your cousins are in jail." He was in a gang. Then my other cousin, girl cousin, she is dressed up like chola with the tatted eyebrows, tatted up, and all that kind of stuff."

Maria reported a disturbance due to gangs on the streets surrounding her house. It was not uncommon to see gangsters congregating, fighting, or committing drive-by shootings. Maria remembers attending Mountain Elementary school, which was full of gangsters. It was easy to join gangs at Mountain Elementary because there were gangsters all around that area. She recalled, "Then there was Townsend; it was around where the elementary school that I went to was, called Mountain Elementary. There was a lot of gangsters there. I was just really lucky, but I was really influenced by people that were gangsters and stuff. They were taggers. They would fight a lot like claiming their territory. They would smoke weed most of the time." Gangsters were a big influence in her life. Maria reported a disturbance due to the gangs near Christina's house. She recalls

living down the street from Christina where the gang activity was much stronger. “That’s where one of my friends lives. And there’s a lot of gangsters, like there’s a lot of drive-bys.”

A major portion of Christina’s interview was spent speaking about the disturbance of gang activity in her life. According to Christina, where she lived, children were prepared by their families to join gangs early on.

> I guess you could say the kids that are in a crew or gang, and at that young age, at 10, 11, 12 years old there are kids that have crews that prepare them to get into real gangs, and that has a lot to do with their families. ....I knew a lot of kids that were like “my brother was in a gang or in a crew so I am following in their footsteps.”

Everyone in Christina’s neighborhood belonged to a gang. She recalls not being allowed out of the house without an adult. Gunshots would ring out day and night. Kids would be outside with spray paint cans drawing on the way to school. One day she would see the kids on the block or at school and then they would disappear. After a while she would here they were in juvenile hall for shooting or stabbing someone amongst other crimes committed.

> So I would see them at school and I would say “hi” because I saw them in my neighborhood. After a while though I stopped seeing them and I just kept hearing from certain people that they were like in juvenile hall or that they were in jail because they shot this person or they got caught or they stole something or like the pulled a knife on someone or something happened.”

Out of the four, only Christina chose actual involvement in gang activity. Christina was expelled from middle school for joining a gang and tagging. She reports the following:

> At that time I started hanging around I guess with the little crew people or whatever and I got into trouble because one of them was like "oh, lets tag up this wall" or whatever and I did it. Then I got caught and I got suspended and then I got expelled from that school.

Once in high school she accelerated her downward spiral by continuing to associate with known gang members. She even associated herself with one of the leaders of a local gang, as described in the following excerpt:

> I had a friend. His name was Enrique and he was into [gangs] and he was a main head. He was one of those people who were in charge, and if they tell you to do something you better listen to them. If they tell you don't touch that person, you don't touch that person. I guess there are certain territories where we can't be and everyone knows this. Like especially around Townsend and stuff. Certain people from certain places can't be around certain areas because you'll get shot or hit up or something. So his crew that he was in, he couldn't be seen on my side of the street or my side of town because then there would be a lot of problems. So he would walk me to the corner and then he would be like "I can't go any further." He would be like "I'm by myself and I'm going to get jumped or something." I would see people that had actually gotten jumped and stuff. You know? They jumped this kid right in front of my face and I was like "wow." Its kind of scary. You know? Its dark and you see people and its like wow. I guess he's one of

> those, like when he would tell me it would just hit me. I would talk to my other friends and they would be like "you should stay away from people like that." You know?

Inside the Home

Abuse. All four participants reported that family caused a significant disturbance. Two of the four reported verbal abuse. Gisele reported the verbal abuse made her afraid of her father. He was a loud and aggressive man whom she and her siblings were afraid of. It was not uncommon for him to verbally abuse them. She recalls, "My dad was very intimidating. He always made it seem like if you miss a day of school because you didn't want to go, you would not want to see him at home when he came in. He was a very intimidating man." There were several times Gisele had to call the police on her father because he would often scream, yell, and "get physical" with her mother.

Maria reported verbal abuse from her father specifically and her entire family in general:

> [My dad] was always complaining about me and Gabriella being bad daughters, and we always said "you don't even live with us so who really cares?" But like my dad wouldn't see it like that or my aunt wouldn't see it like that. Like they would just....I don't know, invent things about me and just say that I was, you know....bad things like I was easy and that I was going to do things that are bad and that I was going to get pregnant. They would say a lot of bad things about me, so because like when I was younger my grandma like put me down a lot or just caused me to question myself a lot.

She recalls conversations about who was the "easiest" and who would get pregnant first.

> My family members like in Christmas they would ask questions like this, ”who do you think is going to get pregnant first, Maria or Camilla?“ and they would vote. And I was like there embarrassed, like really? Are you saying this when I am 14? So they would say like my aunt Anna specifically. She would ask things like that and most of the time I would loose. There were sometimes I would win. Like sometimes people would vote that I was going to get pregnant first most of the time, but then some of the times people would be like “Camilla.”

Maria recounted the constant verbal putdowns and accusations with disgust.

Two of the four participants reported a significant disturbance inside the home due to physical abuse. Christina recalls her mother physically abused her.

> So with me and my other brother if we messed up it was always like she would just smack us and tell us like you know, “you’re good for nothing. You’re this and that. You’re stupid or you’re retarded. Why are you doing this or why are you doing that?” My dad had told her a few times “you can’t go around hitting your kids like that. Its not right.” I always got it worse than my brother.

Gisele recalls her father getting arrested for physically abusing her mother on more than one occasion. One time in particular Gisele called the police on her father for abusing her mother. He was arrested and let out on bail the next day. Gisele’s recounts a story of her father returning home and attempting to strangle her to death for calling the police on him. The following is a summary of that story:

> That Friday something happened where whatever it was I called the police. I called the police and they came and because he had hit my mom they took him to jail and he got out the next day or whatever on bail. I remember I was just like

> "ok what do I do?" because always as a child you wanted to keep peace? Because if you would do anything wrong that would ignite everything else. My dad was kind of like behind me and I was like "oh what do you want" or "what's going on?" Then he comes over and he tries to choke me. I pull up my legs because he had me on the bed. I covered myself so he couldn't put as much pressure on me. I was yelling like my life was going to end. I don't remember how long it was but it just felt like forever. My sister comes over and I remember her saying (gasping) "papi," you know "dad," and he kind of looks over and then lets go. I just start bawling because you know my dad was just trying to choke me. I called the police. I think I had some marks here. I had a phone and I had hit him in the head so he was kind of bleeding. So I had some blood here and then my shirt the worst part. I had this shirt and it was all loose and everything. I was wearing and undershirt but it was loose from when we were struggling. Eventually it was upsetting that the police came an hour later. You know they come and take pictures of me and everything and he goes away. After that he was in jail.

Unstable relationships. Two of the participants reported a significant disturbance inside the home due to the extramarital affairs of their fathers. Christina recalled the following:

> So when I found out about my dad's affair I didn't talk to my dad for about a year. He got mad at me. He was like "I'm your dad. You're supposed to talk to me." I was like, "I don't want to talk to you. I'm having problems with you," and that caused a lot of my problems in high school. Dealing with relationships when

> I had a boyfriend or something. I didn't trust anyone. I didn't want to talk to anyone. It was just kind of like because of him.

Maria recalled her mother and father were married, but they separated when she was age three. At age seven she went to live with her father, and she was surprised to find her father had a second family. Maria's father had never divorced her mother, but he now had another woman he was living with and three additional children. She stated, "He was living with his other person....that time was really weird. I think he was living with his other....his other wife....other lady....I don't know how to explain her." This was not pleasant for Maria, and subsequently she moved back in with her mother.

Poor living conditions. Three of the four participants reported a significant disturbance due an overcrowding of people living in the house. Ruth recalled, "There were six people living in [our mobile home]. My family and one of my brother's friends. My brother and his friend live in one room. My parents, my mom and my dad live in the other and my sister and I live in the other." Gisele recalled crowded conditions also:

> It was three of us sharing because Carlos wasn't born yet. We were in a bunk bed in a room and then my uncles were sharing a rented bedroom and my parents were in their own bedroom. Around the side of the house near the kitchen was another room that was being rented to another uncle.

Maria recalled similarly crowded conditions:

> The room was really really small. I think it was two in one bed and then like the rest on the floor. I think I slept on the floor. So lets say that room was about four people most of the time. Then it was five. And it was six and seven....seven and then eight and then all of us. It was probably like 15 people.

One of the four participants reported a significant disturbance due to the uncleanliness of the house:

> The house that we moved into was horrible. There was graffiti everywhere. The trashcans were horrible. In the back yard there were beer cans everywhere. There was broken glass everywhere. The windows were a mess. There used to be rats there and there used to be like a whole bunch of cigarettes everywhere and stuff.

Immigration status. All four participants reported a significant disturbance caused by their parent's illegal citizenship. Ruth recalled the following:

> Well, as I said [my parents] immigrated here. So for like 20 years they didn't have papers. So they were always scared to go out. We never traveled anywhere, and they didn't visit their family for 18 years. They didn't visit their parents for 18 years. So it was hard for them.

Christina recalled the following about reasons for immigration:

> [My aunt] brought [my father] over here because there was a war at the time that was going on over there. My grandmother called her and told her "you need to get the kids out of here" because my grandma had to keep paying so they wouldn't take my dad and his brothers to war. [My mom] came when she was 6 months pregnant with me and she crossed three borders like that, and its hard, and you hear her talk about it and it comes....she comes to tears in her eyes because she's like "it was hard for me."

Maria recounted a story that was not recorded about her mother being deported to Mexico. During this time her mother gave birth to her youngest sister and then paid a "coyote" to help them illegally cross the border to get back.

Parents' work. All four reported a significant disturbance caused by their parents working long hours. Christina recalled consistently being required to care for siblings:

> So my younger brothers, I always had to watch out for them. I always had to take care of them. My parents would get home and call and be like "where are you? You know I have to go to work. You need to come watch your brothers." I would be like "why am I watching your kids? They are your kids. Why do I have to watch them? Why do I have to take care of them?"

Gisele recalled, "I at a young age saw my parents working hard. Every day waking up at four in the morning and then coming back to work. Especially my mom. I think my mom has always been my rock. I saw her wake up at four in the morning, get ready for work, come back, and then it didn't stop there. You don't end there and just go to bed and take a nap. It was like they make food, continue on, do laundry, doing everything until the end of the night and start again."

Maria recalled, "I remember that my mom worked from 7 a.m. to like sometimes, like she would come back home at 9 p.m. So it just made me really sad, and I just thought about her because like she worked really hard for me."

Ruth recalled, "My dad he's a construction worker. So he's on the roof every day for long hours, so it's hard labor."

Illegal behavior. Gisele reported a significant disturbance inside the home caused by her father's drug abuse:

> I never noticed an actual drug problem until junior or senior year of high school. It was just bad where I think he just got to the point where he did it—he was at home and he didn't care if we saw him. It was frustrating to the point where if I

> was doing a paper and I had left it on the dining table and I walked away and he was in his high state, he would grab it and hide it somewhere. So I would come back and be like, "Oh my God where is my paper I was working on?" So it was that kind of stressful situation.

Maria reported a significant disturbance inside the home due to being left unsupervised for days at a time.

> And then there was one...there was like a period of time where I was like six that my mom left....Like she didn't leave really, but she would like, my dad works in like a truck so he drives the truck around to other states as well. So like my mom would live with him and so me and Gabriella were there in the house by ourselves. So me and Gabriella would just do whatever.

Target High School

AP and honors courses. Three of the four participants reported AP and honors courses and AP teachers as contributing to their school experience in a positive manner. Beginning her freshmen year, Gisele recalls taking all honors and AP classes. Gisele reported, "I can see how that people in honors and AP classes get the best deal. They get a lot of support from teachers." Gisele continued with the following:

> Being an honors student, an AP student, and having friends in my sports classes who where not in AP classes and seeing the lack of resources they were getting from the same school. It is so stratified within the school. The smart kids get the best and the most information. So I feel very thankful because in a way I don't want to say I was babied throughout, but I had people taking care of me. They not only believed I could do it, they were like "this is how you do it and come in after

> school." Obviously you do have to be very determined. You can have resources and not have taken advantage of them, but I had the opportunities and I just realized that I had a lot more information than a lot of people."

Ruth reported, "Most of [my classes] were honors. I had all honors since freshmen year. I had like my sophomore year I had like one AP class. My senior year I had most of them or all of them AP classes. So they were mostly honors or AP. Most of [my teachers encouraged us to go to college], obviously because [in] AP they always thought that college was the next step. So [my teachers] always encouraged us to like to go to a college or university."

Maria reported on her honors and AP classes. "I got good grades in honors and AP classes. They would talk about college a lot and they were like, my teacher always encouraged us to go to college." Ruth reported the following:

> [My teacher] Mr. C, he helped. He talked about his experience. Like he had two jobs and he had a child when he was in college and he went to UCR. So knowing that someone who went through all that struggle could do it, then that helped me and encouraged me to do it as well. So that's the main teacher that I remember.

Maria reported similarly, " Mr. P loved me, so he always would always like... he would just help me to like get good grades obviously. Mr. M would support me in the way that he, if I would ask him any questions about like for example college he would have them for me."

One of the four participants reported relationships with other honors and AP classmates as having a positive influence on her academic outcome. Gisele reported the following:

> The friends I did hang out with like if I was to go to their house tended to be my friends, mostly from my honors and AP classes. I always feel like if you have good enough friends, they are never going to force you to do something you don't like or put you in a situation you are uncomfortable with.

CP classes. One of the four students reported specific negative class experiences. Maria reported that she was not always in honors and AP. When she first started high school she was in the English Language Development (ELD) program, "I was in ELD because I didn't really speak English well and I had like really low classes because...it was really recent that I came from Mexico." She reported a negative school experience in ELD and College Preparatory (CP) classes:

> [In my classes], especially my freshmen year because I wasn't like in honors you know or anything. So I had a lot of kids that were...they were in gangs and stuff like that. I took U.S. history and that was a regular class, so I had of course a couple of gangsters and a lot of people that talked about weed and in the class they would just explain what was some of the herbs were to get really high. And I don't really remember about it but they would talk a lot about those kinds of things. And then they would show me videos where gangs would like come together. So there was one gang and the other one would come together and fight. And they would get so... its just bad. It looks really really scary because they get...they don't have no mercy. They just go for it.

Three of the four participants reported negative experiences with CP teachers. Christina reported a negative experience with the teachers in CP classes at Target High

School. She was the only one of the four participants to take no honors or AP classes. Christina reported a lack of connection between the teachers and the students.

> My teachers always tried too, but like at Target High School they don't have teachers who care as much. I had teachers that I would talk to and they would be like "yeah you can do it" but it wasn't so much of a push. It's really sad because I think that teachers try, but they always say "these kids are so stubborn." They kind of just give up and it sucks.

Maria also reported a lack of connection between the teachers and students in CP classes:

> I think that they were good teachers, most of them. Maybe some of them like didn't really seem like they cared, but I think most of them did. I just feel like some of them didn't know how to like make it seem like they cared. Like some of them I would feel like they cared and I could tell, but like I feel like for the other kids it like the other kids were like "oh, yeah this guy doesn't care about me. This teacher doesn't care about me." A lot of kids don't understand teachers, but I feel like some of the teachers don't know how to let the kids know that they actually do care.

Gisele reported a lack of connection between teachers and students in CP classes:

> If you are in these remedial courses, a lot of times you are made to believe you are stupid. Your teachers lead you to believe that you are in these classes and you are dumb. You get that kind of feeling from them and in turn you rebel. You are like, "you know what screw you. I'm not going to do this." So I think that had a lot to do with it.

Academic counselors. Three of the four participants reported positive experiences with their academic counselor. Ruth reported academic support when applying for college: "There were people to help me. Like counselors....Mr. A helped me as well. Mostly my coach and Mr. A [my counselor], [helped us to] apply to all the colleges that we wanted to."

Gisele reported academic support when applying for college:

> That was the harder part, so I think that is where my counselors came in and took that replacement. If I had a question like I didn't know what to fill out here in the tax information, you would go to them and they would tell you. So I think if I didn't have them I would have easily gotten lost. I think it would have been a lot more discouraging to try to get here to UCLA where I am at right now.

Maria reported a great deal of personal support from her academic counselor as well as applying for college:

> Well Ms. G., when I was going through a lot of drama, she, I would tell her a lot about [my boyfriend] and she always said like "you need to break up with him because he is doing bad to you. You have a future. You are bright." She would always give me advise about stuff like that. She was a big guide. She helped me through my college stuff when I had to apply and stuff like that.

Athletic coaches and sports. All four of the participants reported positive experiences with athletic coaches. Ruth reported the following:

> High school was pretty good. I think sports had a lot to do with that. In sports my coaches, they always taught me to be responsible and through the game they taught us real life, like always be on time. That taught us to be responsible outside

of the game, not just in sports, and that helped me a lot. It helped me to grow as a person. Gisele reported similar ways that sports affected her:

> When I was captain it was a learning experience for me. It was like "no, I can't be captain. I am not the best person on the team." That's not how it usually happens. That was something new to me. It was a whole new responsibility. I think that just learning to realize you don't have to be the best to be a good leader, but you can set a good example, to me was very good. I fed off that. So actually when you think about it, those experiences make me a better person. [My coaches] were able to help me become the person I am, and in turn become a person who is college bound.

Christina reported, "I guess you can say I really did get blessed with the people that came into my life because my coaches made such an emphasis. It was like if it wasn't that I had gotten pushed so hard by these people that I probably wouldn't be here right now. It was pretty much our coaches [who pushed us]. That was pretty much it. But it was just that thing that we knew that they cared about us so much and that they did so much for us and that was the reason why. It was because they wanted us to feel successful. I guess it was because we spent more time with them than anyone else that it was like having a whole new set of parents. Another set of parents away from home. So that's how I saw them."

Maria reported, "My coaches would kind of like, they would really guide me through life. It was kind of like step by step. My coaches wouldn't like tell me this is how you need to do it, but like kind of put examples that made me understand how life is and how I need to live and especially because I am a Christian and they are too. I would kind

of understand them in that way. My coaches are really good at explaining things so that I can understand what they mean, and I know that they do things because they care about us and I could trust them for that."

Peer influences. Three of the four participants reported relationships with other athletes as having a positive influence on their academic outcome. Ruth reported, "In high school sports helped me a lot. That's what always pushed me to attend school and always keep up my grades because without having good grades we would not be able to play. Being part of the team helped me grow as a person. It helped me be more responsible and I made a lot of friends that I still keep in touch with and that are a great part of my life. My coaches made a big impact in my life as well."

Gisele reported, "I think sports definitely helped me be successful because of the friendships you make there. I met amazing people and I was a very happy person because of that. I enjoyed going to school because of that. I think that is part of the success. If you want to go to school and you are there, it is the start. Just to go and stuff. I think the sports programs I did were great. Being in sports, those great group of girls gave you something to look forward to going to school. I'm not going to school dreading like "oh my God I have no friends. I don't care about anyone." It's just like "oh my God, I want to go to school and see what is going to happen today or we are going to do this tomorrow." Through the good and the bad we all formed these kind of lasting friendships and memories. Those were the things in my senior year I enjoyed the most. I really feel if I would have just been in the school and done the straight *A*s and not had such a group of friends bonding, I don't think I would have felt it was such a successful year or experience. I don't know exactly what I said to someone the other day, but sometimes I

feel especially in high school and middle school it's more than about just the content that makes you successful. Its the peer groups and the support that get you through and motivate you."

Christina reported, "In my junior year I was too tired to hang out with anyone other than the team. The girls on the team didn't do things that they weren't supposed to. So it ended up helping because I ended up drifting away from the people that were bad influences I guess. I ended up being better off with people that were like "we got to study." People would comment like, "lets go here" and I would be too tired and say, "I'm just gonna chill and watch a movie. You want to come?" Since they didn't click with [my sports teammates] they would be like "no its ok." So after a while we just stopped hanging out."

Two of the four participants reported negative student attitudes of CP students as having a negative impact. Gisele reported seeing people making out intensively in the halls, getting pregnant, doing drugs, and getting into trouble. The students who were in CP classes participated in all of these things plus seemed proud to get *D*s and *F*s. Gisele recalls the students in regular classes congratulating each other on their low grades, "Its kind of like "I'm too cool. I do this and I got a D. Oh man you got a D? Me too! Go ahead and put it here."

Maria reported, "[Half the girls had no desire to finish high school. They just wanted to get married] or just do whatever. Kind of like guys. Like whatever, who cares about high school if I am going to work either way even if I go to college? We didn't really see an option of going to college. It was really expensive and lot of them, a lot of us, don't have the money for it. So we would think, "oh we're going to work either way

so who cares about high school" I guess? A lot of them would think about just working. Just earning their own money. Just not really considering college."

One of the four participants reported not having a boyfriend until her senior year in high school as having a positive impact on her high school experience. Gisele recalled, "I didn't start dating or have a boyfriend until high school. My first boyfriend was in high school and it was my senior year of high school. So I went all throughout without one. I don't want to say no one should have a boyfriend until senior year of high school and that's how you cannot get pregnant. I just felt like what helped me to not get distracted."

Specialized academic programs. Two of the four participants reported specialized academic programs as contributing to their school experience in a positive manner. Gisele recalled, "[The Extended Opportunity Program (EOP)] is a partnership with UC Irvine and you pretty much, on Saturdays we did math classes. It was pretty much a class that was going to get us started on algebra early on. So if they thought that you were doing good in math you would be signed up for the program and it was college bound. So it was partnered with UCI and they were just kind of ingraining on you your A through G requirements." Maria recalled, "Well in school I was in AVID. So that's kind of like college related. Mr. M [my AVID teacher] would support me in the way that if I would ask him any questions about like for example college he would have them for me."

Opinion of Education

Two of the four participants reported their parents placing a high value on education as contributing to their school experience in a positive manner. Ruth recalled, "[My parents] always said that without education we wouldn't succeed, and that it was everything. Like they always made it a big importance like everything that we did. It

always had to be education first and then everything else. Like nothing came before school." Christina recalled the following:

> [My parents were] always like "you got to get through school." It was a lot easier in elementary because I just always wanted to make them so happy. You know? I got good grades because of them. I was always like "mom and dad you guys know I want to make you guys proud of me." I was blessed to have parents who put such a high emphasis on education.

Three of the four participants reported their parents' expectation of high grades as contributing to their school experience in a positive manner. Ruth recalled, "In the beginning, like junior high, it was a big deal like getting *A*s and *B*s but in high school [my parents] expected it. They didn't really demand it. It was expected." Christina recalled, "I always had my parents that would be like "ok you need to have good grades." Maria recalled, "So she would always tell me to like finish high school and you can do what ever you want, but like you have to get good grades because its important."

Three of the four participants reported their parents placing a high value on high school graduation as contributing to their school experience in a positive manner. Ruth recalled, "Since I was young, education was a big thing, like I said. So [for my parents] it was an expectation to graduate. It wasn't just "well maybe she'll graduate." No, it was like "you're gonna graduate." Christina recalled, "[My parents] had received a call at school that [my brother] was close to failing and they were on him like "you have to graduate. If you don't graduate" they were basically saying that they would disown him." Maria recalled, "Then she said once you are out of high school you can choose. You can do whatever you want. Right now you need to go to school."

One of the four participants reported her parents expected her to attend college after high school as contributing to her school experience in a positive manner. Ruth recalled, "[My parents] expected [I would attend college]. All like everything since I was in junior high they always thought college was a way out. Not to have the same life as they did. They always wanted something more for us."

One of the four participants reported placing a high value on high school graduation as a way to get a better job as contributing to their school experience in a positive manner. Christina recalled the following:

> So yeah I got a job and I paid for my own stuff. It was hard, but I liked it, balancing school, sports, and work. I had motivation to keep on going. I was like "I can do this." Working at McDonalds was one of the worst experiences ever (laughing). It was those jobs where I was like, "this is why I need to stay in school." I worked for spring break the whole week. I was supposed to work 2 days only and I ended up working the whole week and I hated it. It was a 1-week 8-hour shift every day.

Recommendations by Academically Resilient Latinas

Ruth reported extracurricular activities as something educators should get students involved in to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment. Ruth reported the following:

> [People didn't really approach me to be in a gang]. Not for me. I think because we were always in sports. We were never really...they never really talked to us or anything. I know some friends who were in gangs and stuff. The family had a lot to do with it. A lot of my friends that were involved in gangs didn't have a mom

> or didn't have a dad, so they didn't have those role models to guide them. I think that was a big part of it. I guess the extracurricular helped because we didn't really have a lot of time. I would get home at like five or six and I just did homework and I was just too tired to do anything else. The other people, they had a lot of time left to do other stuff. So I think that also had an effect on them. I think that spare time.

Ruth attributes her avoidance of gangs and drugs to participation in athletics. She recalls not getting pressure from gang members to join because she was involved in sports. "The gang members had a lot of free time to hang out," she recalled. They never talked to her because they knew she was involved in something else.

Christina reported having classes to educate the parents as something educators should implement to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment. Christina reported the following:

> I don't think its as much the students. I think its the families. I think they need to talk to the parents. I think parents should get together and be told, "why would you want your child to suffer the same way you have?"…For me what I see is the purpose of family is if your parents have hit this bar, then you need to hit it higher. Not necessarily say that your parents gave you such a bad life, but like my parents gave me a good life. I had a good life with my parents, but I want my son to have a better one than what I did. I think that is the idea that is supposed to go with family, but a lot of the times you hear about these kids, about what they go through with their parents tell them. It's kind of like "wow." As a parent it's hard. A lot of people are like "you don't know what you are talking about." Well, I am

> a parent and I would never want to tell my son "you are worthless and you are never going to amount to anything." You know? What your parents tell you I think really does affect you. Then there are other parents that are kind of lenient and kind of like, "well, if you want to then ok, but if you don't its ok. Don't do it." It's kind of like you have to push your kids to do it. It's hard on everyone, but if it was easy, everyone would do it.

A lot of the parents, she stated, have no idea why school is important or what it takes to succeed. If the schools at every level from elementary, middle, to high school held parent information classes, then they would understand the importance and have the skills to support their children.

Gisele reported involvement in AP and honors classes as something educators should implement to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment. Gisele reported, "They get a lot of support from teachers. The AP and honors classes place the appropriate emphasis on high school success and college as the next level." Gisele recalls that the students and teachers are all working with an emphasis on the same goals. The students in the remedial courses were not given the same instruction or information.

> One of our sports players, Laura, and I still remember because I use this a lot in the education classes I take when we are trying to compare different classes and information given. I remember I was asking her it was a couple days before the FASFA was due and then I was walking by and I was like "hey did you already turn in your FASFA?" I had already done it. I had it and she was just like "oh what's FASFA? That's when I was just like, I can't believe this. She is a senior,

> she is graduating and she has no idea what FASFA is and its due in 2 days. I wonder how they would have turned out if they had a teacher that said, "no you are smart"?

It would have been nearly impossible, Gisele recalls, to have been as successful without the AP and honors classes.

Maria reported having positive adults to turn to as something educators should implement to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment. Maria reported the following:

> The interesting thing about high school that I learned or that I am learning right now, that I noticed that through middle school and high school I was never...like I always had someone there so I was never independent or by myself. Like I was dependent to someone in some way. Like not specifically my mom or my dad.

She had two AP teachers and coaches to turn to, which really helped. Before AP and athletics she had no one to turn to.

> [My teachers] would talk about college a lot and they were like my teacher always encouraged us to go to college, but when I was a freshmen like whenever [my teacher] would...like I would only listen to the disciplinary things. [My teacher] would say "you shouldn't do this" and I knew that he cared. I could tell when somebody cared. Like I would compare my aunts or my family members... compared to like Mr. M or my coaches. I would think like "ok if they tell you something we care about you." But like there is a way of telling me things I guess because whenever my aunt would say "you shouldn't do this," I feel like she was not advising me but accusing me, not caring about what I have to say. She

> wouldn't care about what I thought was best. I don't know. It was just all about her, nothing about me I felt.

She could speak with her sister about coping with the struggles of life, but it took the guidance of an adult outside to help her succeed. This adult that the student could turn to would need to be able to answers about life in general, high school success and life beyond high school as well:

> My coaches would....I don't know. At first, I didn't understand. Right now it's kind of like they would really guide me through life. It was kind of like step by step. My coaches wouldn't like tell me "this is how you need to do it," but like kind of put examples that made me understand how life is and how I need to live and especially because I am a Christian and they are too. I would kind of understand them in that way....My coaches are really good at explaining things so that I can understand what they mean and I know that they do things because they care about us and I could trust them for that.

Maria recalls turning to several different people for this information and support; however, if it was only one person that would have been good enough.

Summary

The results presented in Chapter 4 are based upon four interviews with Latinas who have the ability to withstand and rebound from significant life challenges, to successfully graduate high school and enroll in college. First, data was gathered through the use of short informational online surveys in order to get to know the participants. Information gathered in the surveys was used to guide the qualitative interviews with the participants.

Participants were interviewed about their significant life and school experiences and questioned about issues that relate to Saleebey's (1997) work in the area of discovering internal and external strengths. The qualitative interviewing process revealed that family life inside the home and life outside the home in Santa Ana had great impact. Both the homes and City of Santa Ana placed the participants at great risk of failure. Significant to the school experience of the Latinas in this study were the experiences at Target High School as well as the opinion they formed of education. Finally, suggestions were made in response of question three for Latinas to participate in extracurricular activities, provide education about the school system for parents, open access to AP/honors classes for Latinas, and having one positive adult to turn to. In Chapter 5, I present a discussion of the findings and make recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of research with regards to the lived experiences of young Latina women who grew up in Santa Ana, California and to examine emergent factors that influenced their persistence to high school graduation in the face of adversity. I worked qualitatively from a distressed pedagogy and resilience conceptual framework to identify and highlight protective factors as indicated by four Latina women over the age of 18 and currently enrolled in college. Conclusions were drawn based upon findings. Data collected during the interviews identified the significance of life experiences with relation to graduating high school in a high-risk environment and enrollment in higher education. Through the process of interviewing these four Latina participants as they looked back on their significant life experiences, a picture of the city of Santa Ana, particularly the neighborhoods surrounding Target High School, was established.

In this chapter, a summary of findings will be presented in light of the information presented in Chapter 1, the literature review in Chapter 2, the methodology in Chapter 3, and the findings of Chapter 4. A discussion of the implications based upon the findings will be presented in light of the relevant literature. The limitations are discussed and recommendations for future research are presented as a logical extension of the findings. Finally, a summary will draw the dissertation together and bring closure to this study.

Summary of Findings

Based upon the qualitative interview process, clear themes arose from each individual. Once the data was gathered, commonalities amongst all four participants became clear. The individual and common themes were subdivided and categorized by

each of the three guiding research questions. The following is a summary of findings by each research question:

Research question 1. What significant life experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment? Through the qualitative interview process two themes emerged in response to research question 1: Santa Ana/ neighborhood and inside the home.

Santa Ana/neighborhood. All four participants reported heavy gang activity in their neighborhoods and schools, and they indicated a significant disturbance in their life experiences due to gang activity. The participants indicated that gangs were bad; however, they did not see the individual gangsters that made up the gangs as bad themselves. Rather, the participants saw the gangsters as individuals who had problems just like anyone else. The participants indicated that they had grown up with and around gangs since elementary school, thus they had known the gangsters from a very young age.

Each participant reported knowing and associating with identified gang members. This study has shown that gangs were a problem for the participants and their friends. In the Santa Ana neighborhood that all four participants grew up in, it was easy to get involved with gangs. Anyone who wanted to join a gang could easily get involved. The participants recalled at ages as young as 10, friends were being prepared to be full-fledged gang members. This had a lot to do with the families. If their parents, siblings, or extended family were in gangs, they would be prepared from a young age to join gangs as well.

I was expecting to find protection from gangs provided by a supportive and protective family. This was not the case. Instead the participants found protection from gangs by choosing to get involved in extracurricular activities. Participants clearly articulated the choice between gangs and school activities. Being involved in extracurricular activities associated with school acted as a protection from gang life and gang activity. The type of extracurricular activity did not seem to matter as much as the amount of time the extracurricular activity took up. Participants clearly stated that the high school kids that did not occupy their time with extracurriculars occupied their times with gang activity and drugs. Extracurricular activities occupied all their free time, leaving none left over for gang activity.

Another added benefit of extracurricular activities was the type of persons who they surrounded themselves with and became friends with. By default, the students they associated with were also involved with extracurriculars. Since these students did not have time to spend with gangs and drugs, they formed their own groups apart from gangs and drugs. Participants stated that extracurricular activities did not directly cause them to get better grades and pursue college, but rather that the type of person who they became friends with through extracurriculars was like-minded in their goals. This like-mindedness acted as a further protection against gangs and drugs, strengthening their resolve. Participants indicated they would ask known gang members to join in the extracurricular activities, to which the gang members would decline. Over time, participants indicated the friendships with gang members dwindled and eventually dissolved all together. In effect, by associating with people involved in extracurricular

activities, the participants drifted away from their friendships with gang members and gang activity altogether.

The data collected during the interviews indicated significant reasons each participant choose to get involved in extracurricular activities. Ruth indicated that her parents placed great emphasis on doing well in school and playing sports. She occupied all her free time with school, school related activities, and sports from a very young age. Because of this emphasis on school and sports, Ruth made very few contacts with gangs and gang members. An added protection for Ruth was that she lived in a gated community as well. The gang activity went on outside the gates of her mobile home park. The mix of these three elements helped to shield her from gang and drug involvement.

Initially, Christina chose gangs and drugs in response to her mother's physical abuse and her father's marital infidelity. Her parents did not encourage her to join gangs, in fact they actively spoke out about gangs and drugs. Christina disregarded her parent's advice, choosing to get involved in gangs and drugs because of the abuse and infidelity. At one point Christina recalled going almost a year without communicating with her parents. She felt as if her parents were not there for her; however, the gangsters were open and receptive. Gangs and drugs were an easy choice for Christina because they were so readily available and many of the gangsters expressed similar backgrounds and circumstances at home. She could relate to their background. It was at this point in Christina's life that she started to get into trouble at school, eventually leading up to her expulsion in middle school.

In Chapter 4, Christina detailed her involvement with one of the local gang leaders. It was this same gang leader who helped her to finally get away from gangs and

drugs. This gang leader encouraged her to get involved in school and extracurriculars. Christina recounted his words of encouragement as he encouraged her to play sports and attend class, which he told her she was good at. Christina remembers this as a turning point in her life. She got involved in sports and started attending class again. As she started hanging around with the athletes, she began to stop hanging around with the gangsters. She recalled inviting some of her old gangster friends to participate in the new activities, but they declined and eventually ceased communication.

Gisele choose school and extracurricular activities as a way to escape the traumatic home life her father had created through use of drugs and violence. Her father was often high on drugs, as well as verbally and physically abusive. School and extracurricular activities occupied a lot of her time, allowing her to be away from home a lot. Gisele began to see at a young age that excelling in school could lead to college and college could get her away from the abuse at home. School and extracurricular activities provided motivation and protection to Gisele early on.

Maria chose school and extracurricular activities in defiance of the expectations her family had for her. Often her father would use derogatory language when speaking to and about Maria, accusing her of being sexually promiscuous and expressing that she would “amount to nothing.” This attitude was generally perpetuated by her entire family, but by her father, grandmother, and aunt in particular. Maria recalled the frustration this caused her and the desire to prove them wrong. It was because of these negative interactions with family members that she chose to occupy her time with school and extracurricular activities.

Inside the home. I identified life in the home as having a significant impact on the educational experiences of all four of the participants. I expected to find strong parental support for all four participants. This was only true for one of the participants, Ruth. Ruth reported her parents as placing a high emphasis on school. For Ruth, supportive parents had a significant positive impact that caused her to do well in school.

As shown in the Chapter 4 findings, the most significant finding was a negative home life that propelled the additional three participants towards success. I found three of the four participants, Gisele, Christina, and Maria to have families that were verbally and physically abusive. For Gisele this abuse became her main motivation to get into college. For Gisele, having a verbally and physically abusive father had a significant negative impact. This negative impact, however motivated her to do well in school. Christina also stated the physical abuse severed communication between her and her mother. For Christina though, this led her into gang and drug activity.

In addition to the verbal and physical abuse, two of the four fathers, Christina's and Maria's, had extramarital affairs. Coupled with her mother's physical abuse, the extramarital affair of her father led Christina to gang and drug activity. Maria had a different reaction to her father's extramarital affair. When coupled with her father telling her she would never amount to anything, Maria used the negative emotions to avoid her father and spend her time in school and extracurricular activities, producing a positive outcome. She was constantly told she was promiscuous and would be the next one to get pregnant. Maria chose to do the opposite. It made her so angry that she refused to let herself become pregnant. She became involved in school and extracurricular activities instead of the negative activities her family often pushed her towards.

Two participants, Christina and Maria, admitted that the lecherous affairs of their fathers led them to have damaged relationships with boys in middle and high school. I found that for Christina and Maria, the affairs of their fathers led to a damage in their social skills with the opposite sex, but had no adverse effect on their educational outcome.

Research question 2. What significant school experiences contributed to graduation for Latinas in an urban environment? Through the qualitative interview process two themes emerged in response to research question 2: Target High School and opinion of education.

Target High School. I identified the 4 years at Target High School as having a significant impact on the educational experiences of all four participants. The interviews showed an advantage in the amount of information given to the AP and honors students that made college more accessible. The participants reported having friends in both AP and regular classes to compare. The students in regular classes were perceived as having a lack of resources, creating stratification within the school. The students in the AP classes were perceived as the smart kids and teachers therefore put appropriate time and effort into counseling them.

Interviews with the three participants in AP and honors classes revealed a strong push from the AP and honors teachers to graduate high school and attend college as having a positive effect on high school success. The goal of the teachers in AP was to get the students to college. The participants reported the attitudes of the regular teachers as either trying to help those students avoid dropping out or to graduate, but not as trying to encourage them to attend college. The three participants in AP courses reported their

teachers had belief in their scholastic abilities and that they promoted college preparation. These three were constantly encouraged to do well in school and attend college by their AP teachers.

The data from the interviews indicated having one or more specific teachers to turn to had a positive effect on high school graduation. Two of the four participants indicated specific teachers as having a major positive influence on their 4 years in high school. Ruth reported, "[My teacher] Mr. C, he helped. Knowing that someone who went through all that struggle could do it, then that helped me and encouraged me to do it as well. That's the main teacher that I remember." Gisele reported, "Mr. P loved me. So he always would just help me to get good grades obviously. Mr. M would support me in the way that he, if I would ask him any questions about, like for example college, he would have them for me."

The data from the interviews indicated a negative experience with CP teachers, which did not help lead to high school graduation. Christina was the only participant to take all CP classes. She recalled the teachers not caring much about her or the other students. There was no push for them to do well or to graduate. Giselle recalled that the teachers perpetuated the idea that kids in the regular courses were stupid or dumb. Teachers saw these students as a waste of time and energy. This attitude created a rebellious attitude within the students who in turn did not trust the teachers at school.

Data collected from the interviews revealed a negative attitude about school held by students in CP classes. The participants recounted scenes of students bragging about how bad their grades were. The students in the CP classes had no desire to finish high

school, especially the girls. The participants recounted statements like, “Who cares about school?” and “College is not an option for us.”

The interviews indicated students in CP classes were more concerned with gangs and drugs than schoolwork, which did not help lead to graduation. The participants recalled stories of gangsters watching videos of fights on their phones and talking about going to smoke weed and do other drugs. The participants recalled being scared while in class with these students.

The data from the interviews indicated that having a constructive group of peers had a positive effect on high school graduation. This positive group of peers was formed through a combination of AP classmates and extracurricular activities. The participants recalled that these friends produced a positive rather than negative pressure. While the CP or regular students pressured the participants to join gangs, do drugs, and have sex, the AP classmates and friends obtained through extracurricular activities pressured them to get good grades, do well in sports, and attend school related functions. The attitudes of the AP students and athletes were education centered. They had goals and aspirations of attending college. Each of the four participants were able to surround themselves with a constructive group of peers that had a positive effect on their high school graduation. This peer group had common goals and were all working towards high school graduation and college enrollment.

The data from the interviews indicated the high school counselor had a positive effect on the college enrollment process and matriculation from high school to college. Three of the four participants reported their counselor playing a key role in facilitating the process. Counselors helped the participants to obtain information about the colleges

they were interested in attending. Furthermore, they helped the participants to become acquainted with the process of applying for and matriculating into college. The participants were also given advice as to what colleges to look into as a good fit for them to attend. The participants indicated little to no help from parents in the application process. The counselors often replaced parents in this process. Without the help of the high school counselor, they would have easily gotten overwhelmed, which would have prevented them from attending college.

The data from the interviews indicated the athletic coaches had a positive effect on high school graduation. All four participants expressed the atmosphere that was created by their coaches via athletics was an integral part of their high school success. It was reported that their coaches taught them more than sports. In general they were taught life lessons and responsibilities that helped them to be successful in high school and motivated them to attend college. The participants also expressed that various coaches often acted like a second set of parents for them. When they did not have parents they felt they could turn to, the participants indicated they could trust their coaches to help them navigate both school and personal difficulties.

Opinion of education. I identified the family and participant opinion of education as having a significant impact on the educational experiences of all four participants. The data gathered from the interviews indicated the parents who spoke highly of education had a positive effect on high school graduation. Ruth and Christina had parents who spoke highly of education and placed great importance on school success. The data gathered from the interviews revealed one of the ways the parents placed a high value on education was to stress the importance of grades. Ruth and Christina reported that their

parents stressed getting good grades from a young age. While Maria's parents did not place a high importance on education, she recalls her mother teaching her that getting good grades would allow her to do whatever she wanted. All three participants expressed encouragement to get good grades from their parents as a positive support, which helped facilitate academic success.

The data gathered from the interviews revealed a second way the parents placed a high value on education was to stress the importance of high school graduation. Ruth expressed that high school graduation was expected from her, and she spoke of this expectation in a positive light. She recalled her parents taught her high school graduation was the natural byproduct of getting good grades and participating in extracurricular activities. She received much encouragement from her parents.

Christina expressed high school graduation was expected of her; however, punishment was a consequence if she did not. She recalled a time when her brother received bad grades and her parents threatened to disown him. Later, when Christina explored out-of-state colleges as an option, her father forbid her from going. These two events when coupled together were negative experiences for Christina. She used these two negative experiences as motivation to graduate from high school and attend school out of state.

Research question 3. From the perspective of educationally resilient Latinas, what should educators do to improve the likelihood of educational success for Latinas in an urban environment? Through the qualitative interview process four themes emerged in response to research question 3: extracurricular activities, education about the school system for parents, access to AP/honors classes, and having one positive adult to turn to.

Participant perspective on educational success. Research question 3 addressed what the participants thought educators could do to better support academically at-risk Latinas. Data collected from the participants reveals the suggestions of the participants for how educators can have an impact on the educational experiences of future generations of young Latina women growing up in Santa Ana, California, who attend Target High school, to influence their persistence toward high school graduation in the face of adversity.

Educating parents about the importance of schooling and the process was Christina's number one suggestion to improve the success of Latina high school students. A lot of the parents, she stated, have no idea why school is important or what it takes to succeed. If the schools at every level from elementary, middle, to high school held parent information classes, then they would understand the importance and have the skills to support their children. Christina recalled many parents and students alike seemed to be lost throughout their academic tenure. She recalled never really knowing why she went to school. A lot of her friends were forced to go to school, but mainly because they wanted to avoid legal troubles. Many of the parents were illegal and did not want to get into trouble with the law, so they forced their kids to go to school. Christina believes that by educating the parents to the positive aspects of education and how an education can help the whole family, Latinas will be more likely to persist to graduation and attend college.

The main emphasis for improving the success of Latina high school students in Ruth's opinion was involvement in extracurricular activities. Ruth attributes her avoidance of gangs and drugs to participation in athletics. She recalls not getting pressure from gang members to join because she was involved in sports. The people who were

involved in sports or any extracurricular activity were able to avoid participation in gangs and drugs. The gang members had a lot of free time to hang out she recalled. It was as if students in her neighborhood had only two options. They could get into something that was related to school or they could get involved in gangs and drugs. The gangsters never talked to her because they knew she was involved in something else. By getting Latinas involved in school type activities and extracurriculars, Ruth believes they can not only avoid gang and drug involvement, but they can persist to graduation and college enrollment.

Involvement in AP and honors classes would likely improve the success of Latina high school students' educational success in Gisele's opinion. The AP and honors classes place the appropriate emphasis on high school success and college as the next level. The teachers of AP classes perceive college as the natural extension of the class, because by definition an AP class is a class with the goal of obtaining college credit. Gisele recalls that the students and teachers are all working with an emphasis on the same goals. Everyone in the class was motivated to succeed. Gisele recounted that being surrounded by likeminded people really had its advantages. When the other students in the AP classes participated in activities like studying and joining clubs to build their college resume, she was encouraged to do likewise. It was easy to avoid trouble, because nobody else was looking for trouble. The students in the remedial courses were not given the same instruction or information. It would have been nearly impossible, Gisele recalls, to have been successful without the AP and honors classes. Gisele believes Latinas who are placed in AP classes have a better chance at high school graduation and college enrollment.

Maria chose having someone to turn to in order to get help as the main way to improve the success of Latina high school students. She had two AP teachers and coaches to turn to, which really helped. Before AP and athletics, she had no one to turn to. She could speak with her sister about coping with the struggles of life, but it took the guidance of someone outside to help her succeed. Having an adult to turn to who was able to answer questions about life in general, high school success, and life beyond high school was of the utmost importance. Many of the students, Maria recalled, had nobody to turn to that could answer the important questions. She emphasized that when the students had no adult to turn to, they turned to gangs and drugs instead. Maria recalls turning to several different people for this information and support; however, if it was only one person, that would have been good enough. Maria believes having an adult to turn to will allow Latinas a better chance at high school graduation and college enrollment.

Discussion of Findings and Implications for Practice

The conceptual framework as seen through Freire's (2002) praxis in light of resiliency was a perspective supported through this study. As stated in the literature review, Freire proposed that the oppressed, in this case the Latinas of this study, would be best situated to identify problems, work in solidarity with teachers uniquely positioned to help them succeed, and that through their reflection and action, could transform their situation. This is exactly what was revealed through this study. All four Latinas identified the oppressive reality of their situation. The students in the regular CP classes were treated as containers and receptacles to be meekly filled by rightist versions of research-

based practices. All four Latinas in this study rejected this treatment, rejected the gangs, and rejected failure as an option.

The participants' views aligned with research showing Latinos to be a diverse group (Flores & Yudice, 1990; Perez & Salazer, 1997; Sanchez, 1997). Maria, Gisele, and Ruth identified themselves as Mexican, while Christina identified herself as El Salvadorian. Maria, Gisele, and Ruth stated their parents had little to no education at all, while Christina stated her mother had some education in El Salvador. Maria and Ruth stated their parents spoke little to no English, while Gisele and Christina stated their parents spoke some English. Maria and Ruth identified with a very low socioeconomic class, while Christina and Gisele identified with more of a middle working class socioeconomic status. Despite these differences, they shared common customs and bonds of culture as reported by research on Latinos (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Rudolph et al., 2011; Zambrano, 1995).

Each of the four participants expressed that their family held the traditional family values known as *familismo* (Falicov, 1998; Gaines et al., 1997), though to different degrees. None of the participants expressed the extended family as a source of support (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). Three of the four—Maria, Christina, and Gisele—expressed the expectation that they would place their own goals in a subordinate position to those of others in the family (Davidds-Garrido, 2006; Sarkisian et al., 2006, 2007). Only Ruth expressed *familiso* as a warm, close relationship that helped her manage the contextual difficulties of low socioeconomic status, employment, a dangerous neighborhood, violence, and discrimination (Behnke et al., 2008; Coohey, 2011; Deng et al., 2006; Linares et al., 2001; Miranda et al., 2000; Updegraff et al., 2005).

Gisele, Christina, and Maria described many stressors that placed a strain on *familismo* for their families. This was consistent with recent research in the areas of low socioeconomic status and financial hardships (Behnke et al. 2008; Conger & Conger, 2002; Dennis et al., 2003) and prevention of upward social mobility (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). All four families had to cut back at times on daily expenditures and sometimes still could not make monthly bills (Zunker & Cummins, 2004). Living under these constant pressures negatively effected family cohesiveness by heightening conflict and negative interactions between family members (Roosa et al., 2002).

All four participants stated their families had migrated to the United States. Each of the four participants expressed their parents reasoning for doing so as the possibility for a better life (Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001; Menjivar, 2012; Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006; Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012). This migration caused challenges including racism, unfamiliar environment, economic, loss of family connections, change in family roles and responsibilities, learning a new language, learning a new culture, and alienation, which are findings consistent with previous research (Perreria et al., 2006).

Research has shown ethnic identity to be a dynamic and complex component to identity development (Marlott et al., 2010). The participants' views aligned with research showing pride in their ethnic heritage (Yip & Fuligni, 2002), as well as common religion, cultural traits, language, and a shared history (Cohen, 2004). As reported by Phinney and Ong (2007), the process of acculturation took time for the participants as well as thorough exploration as they navigated the traditional culture of their heritage and that of Santa Ana, California.

Ruiz-Balsara (2002) reports the *machismo* attitude amongst Latinos as an educational impedance to the aspirations of Latina students. This was consistent with what was found in this study for three out of the four participants. Gisele reported having to take care of her younger siblings and that her two younger brothers were shown preferential treatment. Christina reported having to take care of her younger brothers and that as they grew older they were afforded more liberties than she had been afforded. Maria reported measuring her self-worth by the approval of her family (Davidds-Garrido, 2001) and stated that she was encouraged to take a more traditional role (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). All four participants reported peer culture as applying pressure to take a more traditional gender role (Reid & Coma-Diaz, 1990). All four participants reported *marianismo* and *verguenza* as significantly influencing the way they were raised, which is consistent with previous research. This created a cultural clash between what was expected at home and what was expressed at school as U.S. culture (Taylor, 1995).

Consistent with current research, all four participants expressed frustration with educational ability grouping (Syed, 2011). The students who were placed in regular CP classes had lower expectations and were less engaged academically (Carroll et al., 2000). The students in regular classes were not afforded the same opportunities and faced barriers around every corner (Cooper & Burciaga, 2011; Eccles, 2005). This sent the message that college was not for them, and many of the students in regular classes wrote off college as a possibility early on (Stambler & Weinstein, 2010).

Three of the participants in this study participated in AP courses. Each of the three participants expressed that this created a college-going culture that helped bridge the gap between high school and college (Mehan, 2007; Oakes, 2005). Consistent with

research that shows students enrolled in AP classes are more likely to graduate high school and attend college, each of the three enrolled in AP courses graduated and enrolled in college (Scott, 2010).

According to previous research, resilience is the quality in children who, though exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to school failure, substance abuse, mental health, and juvenile delinquency problems that they are at greater risk of experiencing (Linquanti, 1992). This study is of relevance to Linquanti's theory, because all four participants were subjected to significant stress and adversity in their lives. While Christina briefly dabbled with gangs and substance abuse, in the end none succumbed to the substance abuse, mental health, or juvenile delinquency problems they were at high risk of experiencing.

The research on social resilience is neither supported by nor discredited by the present study. The basic premise of social resilience is that stressors have the ability to impact the entire family by derailing its functioning. The family then rallies in times of crisis, buffering stress, reducing dysfunction, and supporting healthy adaptation (Walsh, 2003a). In this study, the majority of the disruption was caused and maintained by the parents of Christina, Gisele, and Maria. It was resources outside of the family that led to the buffering of stress and fostering the ability to bounce forward. Ruth's family alone appeared to match the model of the social resilience theory.

Longitudinal research projects were developed by researchers such as Okamoto (2009) as well as Werner and Smith (1982, 1992), to examine the cause-effect dilemma of high-risk children. This research showed these children becoming healthy, competent, functioning adults (Walsh, 2003), even those from the most highly stressed families

(Benard, 2007). Bendard (2006) and Zimmerman (1994) showed that 70% to 75% of the youth they studied growing up in high-risk conditions overcame the odds to lead successful lives. It is obvious to state that the present study supports these findings, simply because a purposive sample was selected. Academically resilient Latinas from a high-risk environment were chosen after they were identified as successful and studied retrospectively.

Personal strength and protective factors are associated with healthy development and life success (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Maton et al., 2004; Narayanan, 2009; Vakalahi, 2001). The four overlapping categories of personal strength—(a) social competence, (b) problem solving, (c) autonomy, and (d) sense of purpose—are shown to transcend ethnicity, culture, gender, geography, and time (Burrow et al., 2010; Henderson, 2004). Each of the four participants supports the research on personal strength and protective factors. As shown on the self-reported surveys and through the qualitative interview process, all four participants show (a) social competence, (b) problem solving capabilities, (c) autonomy, and (d) a sense of purpose.

Having one emotionally healthy and involved adult has been shown to help an at-risk child reach their full potential (Beardslee, 1983; DuBois et al., 2002). It is clear that the participants in this study had multiple healthy adults helping to nurture and provide protection that in turn helped the participants to overcome risk factors. Ruth reports that her parents, her teacher Mr. C., her counselor, and her coaches were healthy adults that provided this support. Christina reports her coaches as healthy adults who provided this support. Gisele reports her mother, all of her AP and honors teachers, counselor, and coaches as healthy adults who provided this support. Maria reports her AP teachers, Mr.

P., Mr. M, her counselor, and her coaches as healthy adults who provided this support. These healthy adults further helped to mirror reality, clarify difficult feelings and challenges, solve problems, teach proper ways to deal with life's challenges, and provide a sympathetic witness (Henderson, 2003; Miller, 1991; Werner, 2007).

Second only to the family, children spend the largest amount of time at school. This gives the school a unique opportunity to build resilience in students (Alva & Padilla, 1995; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). The most effective way for schools to foster resilience is through relationships (Henderson, 2004). This study supports the research presented on a schools' ability to foster resilience. Every adult outside of the family who was mentioned as a positive influence was brought into contact with the participants through the school. The healthy adults promoting resiliency were teachers, counselors, and coaches. A decline in problem behavior for both Maria and Christina was seen over time, supporting the findings of Zimmerman (1994) and Rutter (1979). Participants acquired social competence, problem-solving skills, a sense of autonomy, and plans and hope for the future, supporting Benard's research (2004). The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's (2002) National Cross-Site Evaluation of High-Risk Youth Programs' 5-year study that showed the school to have an even more powerful effect than the family was supported by this study through the success of Christina, Gisele, and Maria. Each of these three participants related numerous times school and school related activities as their way of escaping their negative home and neighborhood environments.

Implications for practice. This qualitative study of academically successful Latinas from a high-risk environment has implications for students, teachers, parents, school officials, and policy makers. This study emphasizes the need for high schools to create learning

environments where teachers increase positive interactions with Latinas inside and outside of the classroom. Teachers need to give voice to Latinas, placing trust in the collaboration that comes from teacher and student working in concert to foster resilience and academic success. As voice gives way to expressed hardships with family and home life, teachers need to implement a culturally sensitive classroom environment and school-wide experience. Latinas benefit from teachers who understand the context of their unfolding family needs and environmental risk factors. At-risk Latinas who are able to connect with an adult at school can increase their chances of graduating from high school and moving on to college.

When combining the results of this study with past research, the obvious conclusion is that every student needs one healthy adult to act as a buffer against alienation and anomie. Professional development in the area of intercultural sensitivity should be provided for school site administrators, teachers and coaches. Intercultural sensitivity training allows for adults to act as a healthy adult who can chaperone at-risk youth through the ebb and flow of life's challenges. By contacting school site administration, counselors, and teachers, this study successfully used a purposive method for selecting students who had displayed resilience and success. This method could be used, but with the reverse intention of identifying at-risk youth. A purposive method for identifying at-risk students should be implemented school wide. Once identified, each school should have a team of professionals who evaluate the recommended at-risk youth and in turn pair them with healthy and competent adults. The team would further monitor student progress and success through the ongoing updates from the healthy adult assigned to meet with the student on a regular and ongoing basis.

The response of the participants in this study revealed the importance of AP classes in their success. A caring adult placed students in AP classes, not because the students themselves had researched the benefits of AP classes. School sites should then recognize the advantages gained by placing students in AP classes, educating them about the benefits of AP classes, as well as educating their parents about AP classes. Taking AP classes and educating both the student and parents about the AP classes could help them to navigate and graduate high school, creating an attitude of high school success and future collegial attendance. Placing high-risk Latinas in honors and AP classes can help increase their chances of graduating from high school and moving on to college.

One of the barriers to Latinas being enrolled in AP classes is that few of them are currently enrolled in AP courses, and the research clearly points out they are actively discouraged from enrolling in AP courses. To overcome this barrier, schools should come up with creative methods for enrolling Latinas in AP courses. For example, schools could implement a policy by which any student wanting to try an AP course would be allowed. If the school suspected the student may not be ready, the parents could sign a waiver stating they understood the school advised against it; however, they would be allowed to try anyway. Schools could also make it a requirement that every student take at least one AP course in their 4-year tenure during high school. This class could be offered with an option of receiving credit or a grade for the course. If the student meets the minimum requirement for success, the student should be allowed to take additional AP courses.

Another option would be for schools to offer blended courses. For example, the school could offer English 3/AP English 3. In this course every student would cover English 3. The students wishing to receive credit for AP English 3 would be given the

additional coursework to complete while the students not interested in AP credit would opt out of the work. This would allow the student interested in AP coursework to avoid the risk of enrolling in an exclusively AP course that they could not get out of. If the coursework became too much, the student could at any time simply inform the teacher they would no longer be striving for the AP credit and henceforth complete the requirements for regular credit.

Schools can also offer AP courses outside of the normal school hours. Many times students are constrained to certain classes they are required to take for credit. Schools can creatively offer the non-traditional AP student the opportunity to take an AP course outside of the 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. hours. A select number of courses may be offered between 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. before school or from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. after school. If schools provide the necessary scaffolding, Latina students could not only earn the normal number of credits, but also earn more credits by taking the extra courses.

High schools should consider informing middle school eighth graders at matriculation about AP courses. Since the benefits of taking AP courses can be seen throughout the high school tenure, as the present study reported, the earlier a student can be placed in AP classes, the better. Conversations between middle schools and high schools about encouraging Latinas to take AP classes should take place so that the students may get the information as early as possible. It is also possible that middle schools may benefit from offering AP classes or AP prep classes at the middle school level.

Another suggestion for high schools is to offer pre-AP courses at the local high school. Every high school has feeder middle schools that send kids from their middle

school into the high school. Each high school knows who its feeder middle schools are. The high school can approach its feeder middle schools and develop pre-AP classes taught either outside of the normal hours of the school day or during summer school. This would be the perfect opportunity for middle school Latina students to become acquainted with the local high school they are planning to attend and also become acquainted with taking higher-level courses. Offering pre-AP level courses also adds the benefit of placing likeminded students in contact with each other earlier. Research from this study shows Latinas benefitting from relationships with likeminded peer groups. If Latinas can establish likeminded peer groups in middle school, they will already enter high school with a strong support system.

The participants of this study further voiced the benefit of schools providing programs to occupy their time. Extracurricular programs such as clubs and sports teams increased opportunities for positive interaction with likeminded peers and supportive adults. Careful thought should be given to fostering improvement of extracurricular activities Latinas can get involved in to provide resilience support. Schoolteachers, counselors, and administrators must find ways to make explicitly clear to students that there are programs available to each student on campus. Students need help and guidance in joining and sticking with programs that provide them with shelter from the surrounding negative environments.

At-risk Latinas who join extracurricular activities, clubs, or sports teams decrease their chances of joining gangs, getting involved in drugs, getting pregnant, and thus increase their chances of graduating from high school and moving on to college. Creating opportunities for high-risk Latinas to get involved in honors and AP classes,

extracurricular activities, and connect with an adult who can help chaperone them through high school seems to outweigh a negative home, city, and school environment. Furthermore, if high schools can create partnerships with local feeder middle schools and help to foster these practices before Latinas matriculate, solid likeminded peer groups can be established prior to entering high school and maintained once matriculated.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations. The biggest limitation to this study was the lack of literature with respect to Latinas' educational success. There is much research to be found in the area of Latinas and their failure to succeed academically. Literature pointing to the negative aspects of dropout, teenage pregnancy, family dysfunction, gangs, drugs, low test scores, and more provided rich description of what is going wrong. Little to no literature was found on what is going right. Even less literature was found representing and voicing the views of successful Latinas themselves.

Qualitative research by its very nature requires the researcher to focus on meaning over measurement as the researcher reports the story of participants (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), then condense and represent reality by shaping it into something recognizable through translation and development of knowledgeable arguments (Smart, 2010). As Ary et al. (2006) point out, this can produce its own limitations to the study. Qualitative interviews are very personal; however, the study only went as far as participants were willing to go. Due to the sensitivity of the information, such as participants' reporting about personal family information, participants may have held back information. Participants also spoke about witnessing illegal activity. Participants may have withheld information, fearing problems could be caused for friends

and family members, even though throughout the interviewing process the interviewer took great care to ensure confidentiality and sensitivity.

This study was limited to students who graduated from Target High School in Santa Ana California. The participants of this study were chosen purposively and specifically because they were Latinas between the ages of 18 and 25 who have graduated from Target High School. The sample used within this study limits the ability to generalize the results to the Latina population at large within the United States as a whole. A larger more diverse sample size might allow for recognizing differences within the Latino culture.

All males were excluded from the study as well as possible participants who did not graduate from high school. Students from other high schools were eliminated as possibilities. While the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and parents are all important, they were all excluded for the purposes of this study. The results of this study may not be transferable to students on a non-Latina background or male students. A more diverse population might include males and females, graduates and non-graduates, different levels of socioeconomic status, and differing backgrounds among other characteristics within the Latino culture.

This study focused on the perceptions of academically successful Latinas after they had already graduated from high school and had the opportunity to look backward. It is possible that the study may have generated different results had it been conducted while the participants were actually in high school. Over time events have the opportunity to become more or less clear. There is the chance that events may, over time, appear more or less important or may have not happened exactly as they now remember them.

The participants in this study were limited to the specific geographical location and demographics of Target High School. In particular, Target High School is 97% Hispanic and a Title I school with a 76% socioeconomically disadvantaged population. The parents of the participants in this study speak limited to no English at home. Many of these students speak English as a second language.

The Latina participants in this study were all children of immigrants. Two of them were the first generation born in the United States and two were the youngest born in the United States. Furthermore, many of the parents and siblings were not legal citizens. Many more are first generation American citizens. Their parents have immigrated to the United States either legally or illegally. It is because of these factors that families are not fully assimilated into mainstream culture. In fact, the surrounding neighborhoods largely reflect a low socioeconomic Mexican culture as opposed to an American middle class. The participants also did not represent students from all Latin American countries or Latina students whose families had lived in the United States for many generations.

Self-reporting was used and is a limitation in this study, as self-reports are not always accurate. Participants may have skewed their answers due to uncomfortable feelings about personal or demographic characteristics such as immigration status, socioeconomic status, or other personal characteristics. Participants may have answered in ways that would make themselves, their families, or the community look better to impress me. Qualitative interviews in general lend themselves to concern regarding the accuracy of data collected from retrospective interviews based upon personal perceptions.

Recommendations. The findings of this study suggest further areas of research. This study investigated the perceptions of four academically resilient Latinas who

graduated high school from a high-risk environment and went on to college. Since this was a qualitative study conducted by one researcher and reviewed by one committee, the time and resources were limited. Provided with the time and resources of a larger team, this type of study may be conducted with a larger number of participants. Not only a larger number of participants, but a replication of this study might be conducted to cover a widening number of schools in Santa Ana, California. Responses from a larger population of participants covering a wider variety of school settings might produce meaningful results related to differing contexts.

The current study was limited to Latinas. Broadening the scope to include additional studies with males may affect the outcome. This study could be repeated using males to explore the effect gender might play on the outcome. Furthermore, this study could also be replicated, but using members of another ethnicity. At Target High School, Latinos are the majority demographic, as stated in Chapter 3. This study used Latina females because the numbers suggest they are at higher risk of dropping out in Santa Ana. Other studies could use purposive sampling to select individual participants who are not Latino, not as highly at-risk, or who persevered academically, then compare the factors that were beneficial to their success.

One of the main implications of this study is that students in AP and honors classes not only are afforded a more rigorous curriculum, but get more information and help towards attending college. A suggested area of further research would be to study the effects of honors and AP classes on high school graduation and enrollment into college when compared to students enrolled in a less rigorous course of study. Consideration of the AP enrollment criteria can be evaluated to let more participants into

the program. This can help inform researchers about how the AP program affects high school success, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

Another suggested area of study involves the parents of at-risk youth. Future research could compare parents of at-risk youth who are given information on the importance of education as well as how to help their children succeed compared to those who are not given extra help and information. The participants of this study indicated that their parents were ignorant in terms of navigating the educational system. A study which implemented information of not only the educational system, but of the importance of AP programs may be of benefit. Such a study can illuminate for the educational community the benefits of such a parent outreach program to influence parent perceptions regarding success in high school as well as enrollment in college.

Due to the nature of the findings as a qualitative/grounded theory study, a recommendation would be for future studies to be conducted quantitatively. This study focused on meaning and measurement instead of numbers and percentages, however both are important. Quantitative research conducted by either a single researcher or a committee will only enhance the trustworthiness and validity of this study by removing personal bias and subjectivity.

A final suggested area of further research is in the area of rebellion. It is suggested by the results of this study that the four participants rebelled against their environment. The participants in this study chose to rebel positively or bounce forward instead of bounce backward. It is suggested that researchers search for correlations between a positive rebellion or bouncing forward instead of a negative rebellion or bouncing backward. Much of the research in the area of resiliency has been on protective factors.

Little evidence has been found with regard to attitudes and actions from within the student. Much of the research has been produced from factors external to the student. As stated in Chapter 1, a gap exists in the literature regarding student perception of success. Such studies as have been described in this section could be conducted with the goal of filling the gap.

Conclusion

The open-ended qualitative interview format provided for significant response from the participants, which was analyzed and used to formulate the following conclusions. The participants were left unsupervised for great periods of time due to the great number of working hours by the parents. Given the high levels of crime and gang activity, the participants had two choices: (a) get involved in gangs and drugs, or (b) get involved in school and extracurricular activities. Each participant had to make a conscious choice due to the prevalence of gangs and drugs surrounding the participants. Admittedly there are a myriad of interrelated factors that influence decision-making; however, it is important to note in the participant's own words the overarching motivation for choosing school and extracurricular activities. One message particularly emphasized throughout the recorded interviews with the participants was the choice of culture. As the participants chose to surround themselves with culture of school and extracurricular activities, this web of relationships allowed them to absorb the habits of thought and behavior that propelled them to high school graduation and college enrollment. This enriching counter culture immersed them in an achievement ethos. This achievement ethos emphatically instilled the norms, habits, and messages in the

participants that allowed them to use their teachers and classmates as a ladder to high school graduation and college enrollment.

Many students may have the ability to bounce forward with extra guidance and structure from teachers and school officials. Individuals outside of the immediate family can have a huge influence on a student's life. Educational efforts have the goal of producing students who achieve well academically. No Child Left Behind requires all students to be proficient. Public school officials and policy makers should take note that relationships do matter. The results of this study show that positive relationship between high-risk Latinas and their teachers have the ability to outweigh many negative barriers to school success, including verbal and physical abuse, neglect, language barriers, gangs, violence, teen pregnancy, drugs, alcohol, and dropping out of high school.

Public school officials and teachers may not inherently see the benefits of creating positive relationships between high-risk Latina youth and teachers. No Child Left Behind places a great emphasis of accountability on performance of high stakes tests. This study proves that at least one major component of getting students to pass high stakes tests and graduate from high school is the student's access to one positive adult who can guide them personally through the academic horizon. This adult can be a parent, but does not have to be. In the absence of parents who can help, a teacher can fill the gap.

To serve the high-risk Latina population better, reduce dropout rate, and increase the college enrollment of this subgroup, schools must focus on the issues linked with this problem. Data from this and other studies should be used to properly address individual school populations. Creative solutions need to include the student, parent, and teacher. In the absence of an involved parent, schools and teachers need to realize that high-risk

Latinas can still thrive academically with the support of a teacher or coach who is willing to help them bounce forward by standing in the gap.

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Appendix A: Personal Strengths

Social Competence	Problem Solving	Autonomy	Sense of Purpose
Responsiveness Communication Empathy Caring Compassion Altruism Forgiveness	Planning Flexibility Resourcefulness Critical thinking Insight	Positive identity Internal locus of control Initiative Self-efficacy Mastery Adaptive distancing Resistance Self-awareness Mindfulness Humor	Goal direction Achievement motivation Educational aspirations Special interest Creativity Imagination Optimism Hope Faith Spirituality Sense of meaning

Appendix B: Resiliency Constructs

Resilience (Benard)	Social Competence	Problem Solving	Autonomy	Purpose/ Future	Others
Resilience (Wolin)	Relationships	Insight	Independence, Initiative, Humor	Creativity, Morality	
Maslow	Need for Love / Belonging	Need for Challenge & Mastery	Need for Power, Respect	Need for Meaning	Need for Safety
Positive Psychology VIA Strengths	Humanity (kindness / loving)	Wisdom	Temperance, self-control	Transcendence, courage , perseverance	Justice & wisdom
Emotional Intelligence (Goleman)	Empathy, handling relationships	Problem solving	Self-awareness, emotional control	Self-motivation	
Kumpfer (1999)	Social / behavioral	Cognitive	Emotional management	Spiritual	Physical well-being
Search Institute of Internal Assets	Social competence, positive values	Social competence	Positive identity	Commitment to learning	
Youth Development (Pittman)	Social	Intellectual, Cognitive / Mental	Emotional, Conflict Resolution, Self-Regulating, Coping	Spiritual	Physical
Institute of Medicine / Youth Development	Connectedness, cultural competence	Planfulness	Efficacy, autonomy, initiative	Civic engagement, optimism, mastery & achievement	Good health habits
Multiple Intelligences (Gardner)	Interpersonal	Logical-Mathematical, Linguistic	Intrapersonal	Intrapersonal, Existential	Musical, Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Naturalist
Erickson's Development Stages	Trust, cool, generosity	Industry	Identity, autonomy, initiative	Integrity	
Vallant (2002)	Empathy, stability, gratitude, forgiveness	Planning		Future orientation, optimism	
SCANS Report	Sociability, listening, speaking	Reasoning, problem solving, creative thinking, decision-making, metacognition	Self-management, self-esteem	Responsibility	Integrity / honesty, reading, writing, mathematics
Durlak	Social	Academic	Psychological	Psychological	Physical
Megaskills (Rich)	Caring, teamwork	Common sense, problem solving	Effort, confidence, initiative	Motivation, responsibility, perseverance	Focus
Strayhorn (1988)	Empathy, trust, social skills	Frustration tolerance, exploration, discovery, problem solving	Independence, self-awareness	Meaning	

Appendix C: Demographic Survey Form

For each item, please select the appropriate response.

1. Current age: _____
2. Age at time of high school graduation: _____
3. Gender: _____
4. Ethnicity
    a. Hispanic or Latino of any race
    b. Asian, non Hispanic
    c. White, non Hispanic
    d. African American, non Hispanic
    e. Filipino, non Hispanic
    f. American Indian, non Hispanic
    g. Pacific Islander, non Hispanic
5. Number of years spent in high school: _____
6. Current academic status:
    a. Enrolled in a community college
    b. Enrolled in a four year college/university
    c. Enrolled in a proprietary/trade school
    d. Not enrolled in post high school institution/program
7. Current employment status:
    a. Employed part-time
    b. Employed full-time
    c. Not employed

8. Employment status while in high school:
    a. Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)
    b. Employed full-time (40+ hours per week)
    c. Not employed
9. Grade point average (GPA) at time of high school graduation (based on 4.0 scale):
    a. 4.0
    b. 3.0 - 3.9
    c. 2.0 - 2.9
    d. 1.0 - 1.9
10. Average number of days absent each year in high school:
    a. 0 - 5 days
    b. 6 - 10 days
    c. 11 - 15 days
    d. 16 - 20 days
    e. More than 20 days
11. Total number of discipline/behavioral referrals during high school:
    a. None
    b. 1 - 5
    c. 6 - 10
    d. More than 10
12. Participation in federally funded free or reduced lunch program while in high school:
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Did not apply for assistance

13. Legal guardianship during high school:
    a. Two Biological parents
    b. Step parent
    c. Mother only
    d. Father only
    e. Maternal grandparent(s)
    f. Fraternal grandparent(s)
    g. Other relative (specify) _____
    h. Other _____
14. Number of siblings _____
15. Number of siblings in home while in high school: _____
16. Number of siblings who completed high school: _____
17. Mother's educational background:
    a. Did not complete high school
    b. High school graduate
    c. Attended college; did not receive a degree/diploma
    d. Two-year degree
    e. Four-year degree
    f. Post-graduate degree
18. Father's educational background
    a. Did not complete high school
    b. High school graduate
    c. Attended college; did not receive a degree/diploma
    d. Two-year degree

e. Four-year degree

f. Post-graduate degree

19. Occupation of parents while you were in high school:

    a. Mother _____

    b. Father _____

20. Did you become or were you a parent while in high school:

    a. Yes

        i. If yes, number of children?

        ii. If yes, at what age did you first become a parent

    a. No

21. Number of years you have lived in current neighborhood:

    a. 1 - 5 years

    b. 6 - 10 years

    c. More than 10 years

22. What are your hobbies or interests?

    a. _____

    b. _____

    c. _____

    d. _____

    e. _____

    f. _____

Appendix D: The Resiliency Quiz

PART ONE:

Do you have the conditions in your life that research shows help people to be resilient? People bounce back from tragedy, trauma, risks, and stress by having the following conditions in their lives. The more times you answer yes (below), the greater the chances you can bounce back from your life's problems "with more power and more smarts." And doing that is one of the surest ways to increase your self-esteem.

Answer yes or no to the following. Then celebrate your "yes" answers and decide how you can change your "no " answers to "yes. "

1. Caring and Support

    _____ I have several people in my life who give me unconditional love, nonjudgmental listening, and who I know are "there for me."

    _____ I am involved in a school, work, faith, or other group where I feel cared for and valued.

    _____ I treat myself with kindness and compassion, and take time to nurture myself (including eating right and getting enough sleep and exercise).

2. High Expectations for Success

    _____ I have several people in my life who let me know they believe in my ability to succeed.

    _____ I get the message "You can succeed," at my work or school.

_____ I believe in myself most of the time, and generally give myself positive messages about my ability to accomplish my goals-even when I encounter difficulties.

3. Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

_____ My voice (opinion) and choice (what I want) is heard and valued in my close personal relationships.

_____ My opinions and ideas are listened to and respected at my work or school.

_____ I provide service through volunteering to help others or a cause in my community, faith organization, or school.

4. Positive Bonds

_____ I am involved in one or more positive after-work or after-school hobbies or activities

_____ I participate in one or more groups (such as a club, faith community, or sports team) outside of work or school.

_____ I feel "close to" most people at my work or school.

5. Clear and Consistent Boundaries

_____ Most of my relationships with friends and family members have clear, healthy boundaries (which include mutual respect, personal autonomy, and each person in the relationship both giving and receiving).

_____ I experience clear, consistent expectations and rules at my work or in my school.

_____ I set and maintain healthy boundaries for myself by standing up for myself, not letting others take advantage of me, and saying "no" when I need to.

6. Life Skills

_____ I have (and use) good listening, honest communication, and healthy conflict resolution skills.

_____ I have the training and skills I need to do my job well, or all the skills I need to do well in school.

_____ I know how to set a goal and take the steps to achieve it.

PART TWO:

People also successfully overcome life difficulties by drawing upon internal qualities that research has shown are particularly helpful when encountering a crisis, major stressor, or trauma. The following list can be thought of as a "personal resiliency builder" menu. No one has everything on this list. When "the going gets tough" you probably have three or four of these qualities that you use most naturally and most often. It is helpful to know which are your primary resiliency builders; how have you used them in the past; and how can you use them to overcome the present challenges in your life.

PERSONAL RESILIENCY BUILDERS

Individual Qualities that Facilitate Resiliency

Put a + by the top three or four resiliency builders you use most often. Ask yourself how you have used these in the past or currently use them. Think of how you can best apply these resiliency builders to current life problems, crisis, or stressors. (Optional) You can then put a check by one or two resiliency builders you think you should add to your personal repertoire.

[ ] Relationships - Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships

[ ] Humor - Has a good sense of humor

[ ] Inner Direction - Bases choices/decisions on internal evaluation (internal locus of control)

[ ] Perceptiveness - Insightful understanding of people and situations

[ ] Independence - "Adaptive" distancing from unhealthy people and situations/autonomy

[ ] Positive View of Personal Future - Optimism, expects a positive future

[ ] Flexibility - Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations

[ ] Love of Learning - Capacity for and connection to learning

[ ] Self-motivation - Internal initiative and positive motivation from within

[ ] Competence - Is "good at something"/personal competence

[ ] Self-Worth - Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence

[ ] Spirituality - Personal faith in something greater

[ ] Perseverance - Keeps on despite difficulty; doesn't give up

[ ] Creativity - Expresses self through artistic endeavor

Note. Adapted from "The resiliency quiz," by N. Henderson, 2002. Paso Robles, CA: *Resiliency in Action*.

Appendix E: Checklist for Teens

Check each statement that's true for you.

- I feel loved and supported in my family.
- I can go to my parents for advice and support. We talk with each other often about many different things, including serious issues.
- I know at least three adults (besides my parents) I can go to for advice and support.
- My neighbors give me support and encouragement. They care about me.
- My school is a caring, encouraging place to be.
- My parents are actively involved in helping me succeed in school.
- I feel valued and appreciated by adults in my community.
- I'm given useful roles and meaningful things to do in my community.
- I do an hour or more of community service each week.
- I feel safe at home, at school, and in my neighborhood.
- My family has both clear rules and consequences for my behavior. They also monitor my whereabouts.
- My school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.
- My neighbors take responsibility for monitoring my behavior.
- My parents and other adults in my life model positive, responsible behavior.
- My best friends model responsible behavior. They're a good influence on me.
- My parents and teachers encourage me to do well.
- I spend three or more hours each week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or arts.
- I spend three or more hours each week in school or community sports, clubs, or organizations.
- I spend one or more hours each week in religious services or spiritual activities.

- I go out with grinds with nothing special to do two or fewer nights each week.
- I want to do well in school.
- I like to learn new things.
- I do an hour or more of homework each school day.
- I care about my school.
- I spend three or more hours each week reading for pleasure.
- I believe that it's really important to help other people.
- I want to help promote equality and reduce world poverty and hunger.
- I act on my convictions and stand up for my beliefs.
- I tell the truth - even when it's not easy.
- I take personal responsibility for my actions and decisions.
- I believe that it's important for me not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
- I'm good at planning ahead and making decisions.
- I'm good at making and keeping friends.
- I know and feel comfortable around people of different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds.
- I resist negative peer pressure and avoid dangerous situation.
- I try to resolve conflicts nonviolently.
- I feel that I have control over many things that happen to me.
- I feel good about myself.
- I believe that my life has a purpose.
- I feel positive about my future.

Note. Adapted from "What teens need to succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future," by P. L. Benson, J. Galbraith, and P. Espeland, 1998. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Appendix F: Rate Your Role Models

For each person you consider a role model, answer the following questions. Note: A role model might be someone you know or someone you've never met. It might be someone who's living or no longer living, even someone who lived centuries ago. The questions are all in the present tense; you may want to change some to the past tense. Example: "Someone who takes positive risks" would become "Someone who took positive risks." Is the person ...

1. someone who inspires you?

   Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

2. someone who motivates you to do and be your best - to dream big dreams and reach for the stars?

   Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

3. someone who helps you believe in yourself?

   Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

4. someone who is a positive influence on you and others?

   Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

5. someone of principles and good character?

   Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

6. someone who exhibits strong personal values and beliefs? (Examples: integrity, honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness, courage, compassion, etc.)

   Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

7. someone who takes positive risks?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

8. someone who behaves wisely and responsibly?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

9. someone who uses good judgement?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

10. someone who lives a clean and healthy life?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

11. someone who respects himself or herself?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

12. someone who respects life?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

13.someone who values learning?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

14. someone who genuinely cares about other people?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

15. someone who works for equality and social justice?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

16. someone who gives back to the community and serves others?

Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

17. someone who has strong personal goals and a sense of purpose in life?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

18. someone who knows how to make plans and decisions?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

19. someone who has done commendable things?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

20. someone who takes responsibility for his or her actions and decisions?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

21. someone who has overcome obstacles and adversity?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

22. someone who admits and learns from mistakes?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

23. someone who gives you hope for the future?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

24. someone you want to be like someday?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

25. someone who's worth looking up to and admiring?

    Yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

SCORING: If you answered yes to all or most of the questions, that person is a great role model for you. If you answered no, think again about whether that person is a

good role model for you. If you answered don't know, find out more before you make up your mind.

Note. Adapted from "What teens need to succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future," by P. L. Benson, J. Galbraith, and P. Espeland, 1998. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Appendix G: School Motivation

Take this quiz to learn where your motivation lies:

1. Do you lose track of time while learning?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

2. Do you discover new things about yourself while learning?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

3. Do you enjoy learning for its own sake?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

4. Do you love the challenge of figuring out a difficult subject, problem, or concept?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

5. Are you curious about many different things?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

6. When you have a choice between a learning experience and entertainment, do you choose the learning experience?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

7. When you're interested in a topic, do you pursue it beyond what you get from your teachers and textbooks?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

8. Do you seek out extra credit projects and opportunities for independent study?

   Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

9. When you have a question about something, do you hunt for the answer, even if it has nothing to do with your schoolwork?

Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

10. Do you delight in learning new things?

Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

Note. Adapted from "What teens need to succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future," by P. L. Benson, J. Galbraith, and P. Espeland, 1998. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Appendix H: Interpersonal Competence Survey

How are your friendships? Are you doing your part to keep them healthy and strong? Rate your own relationship skills. Read each of the following statements, then decide if this is something you *never do, occasionally do,* or *often do.*

1. I call a friend on the phone just to talk.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

2. I ask a friend's opinion on an issue.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

3. I trust a friend with a confidence.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

4. I tell a friend when he or she hurts my feelings.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

5. I give a friend a compliment.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

6. I listen to a friend who needs to talk.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

7. I refuse to listen to gossip or rumors about a friend.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

8. I tell a friend how I really feel about him or her.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

9. I do something nice for a friend just because.

   Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

10. I let a friend know that our friendship is important to me.

    Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

11. I suggest something a friend and I can do together.

    Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

12. I do something a friend wants to do, even if it's not something that really interests me. Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

13. I treat a friend with kindness and respect.

    Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

14. I'm there for a friend who needs me.

    Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

15. I stick up for a friend who's being picked on or bullied.

    Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Often ☐

Note. Adapted from "What teens need to succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future," by P. L. Benson, J. Galbraith, and P. Espeland, 1998. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Appendix I: Cultural Competence Survey

How much contact do you currently have with people of other races, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures? How much contact do your friends have? Find out by taking this inventory.

1. I see people with different cultural backgrounds in my neighborhood.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

2. I see people with different cultural backgrounds in my community.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

3. I talk to people with cultural backgrounds that are different from mine.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

4. I watch TV shows that positively portray people with different cultural backgrounds.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

5. I listen to music from other cultures.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

6. I hear others talk positively about people from different cultures.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

7. I eat foods from other cultures.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

8. I study in school about people with a variety of cultural backgrounds.

   Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

9. I read positive stories about people from many different cultures.

Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

10. I attend cross-cultural events.

Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

Note. Adapted from "What teens need to succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future," by P. L. Benson, J. Galbraith, and P. Espeland, 1998. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Appendix J: Resistance Skills Survey

Deep sea divers know that when they enter the ocean, they're going to experience tremendous pressure. They take proper precautions so they can return to the surface safely. As a teen, you experience pressure every day of your life - and much of it comes from people you consider your friends. Negative peer pressure can be as forceful, relentless, and potentially lethal as the water that surrounds a diver.

Which of these things do you feel pressure about now?

- ☐ to look a certain way
- ☐ to wear certain types of clothes
- ☐ to have a certain attitude (cool, sexy, tough, bored, stoned, crude, rude)
- ☐ to listen to certain types of music
- ☐ to watch certain TV programs/movies
- ☐ to have a girlfriend or boyfriend
- ☐ to have sex with your girlfriend or boyfriend
- ☐ to have unprotected sex with your girlfriend or boyfriend
- ☐ to get pregnant or get someone pregnant
- ☐ to smoke cigarettes
- ☐ to use alcohol or other drugs
- ☐ to bend or break family rules, school rules, or laws

☐ to act less intelligent than you really are

☐ to spend more money than you have

☐ to be friends with some people but not others

☐ to drop an old friend to please new friends

☐ to join in when your friends tease or bully someone

☐ to treat authority figures (parents, teachers, etc.) disrespectfully

☐ to get involved in certain types of activities

☐ to drop out of a club, organization, or group you enjoy

☐ to not join a club, organization, or group that interests you

☐ to treat school and learning as if they aren't important to you

☐ to help someone cheat on a test

☐ to shoplift, steal, or vandalize someone else's property

☐ to join a gang

☐ to avoid, distrust, or feel superior to people of other cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds

☐ to laugh at bigoted jokes

☐ to treat your parents and siblings as if you can't stand them

☐ to prove yourself by doing something risky or dangerous

☐ _____ (what else?)

Note. Adapted from "What teens need to succeed: Proven, practical ways to shape your own future," by P. L. Benson, J. Galbraith, and P. Espeland, 1998. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.