

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE RETENTION OF URBAN, HISPANIC HIGH SCHOOL
MALE GRADUATES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Robin Elliott-Ghalleb

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to investigate the factors that contribute to the retention of urban, Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. Originated through the works by W. E. B. Du Bois (1968), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) and Derrick Bell (1992) pioneered Critical Race Theory (CRT), which reported that the United States Education system has historically failed to adequately provide access to all students. Hispanics continue to have the lowest rates of high school and college degree attainment. This study's purpose was to address the phenomenon of low retention rates of urban, Hispanic males by identifying influences on the participants' abilities to overcome family and non-family risk factors. For the purpose of this study, 10 participants were bounded by their socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity, age, gender, residential address (residents of East Harlem, New York), and successful completion of high school. The following research questions guided the study: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion? How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals? Data collection consisted of informal, semi-structured, audio-recorded individual interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. Through the voices of the participants, relationships, effective support structures and social-emotional support emerged as themes. The results of this study will potentially assist policymakers and educators in identifying the urgency of providing systemic reform to increase achievement of Hispanic males.

Keywords: Achievement gap, graduation, Hispanic males, minority, student retention

Dedication and Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my selfless, loyal and compassionate mother and father. My earliest memories include me sitting at the kitchen table at the young age of five and trying to write a story. I would interrupt my mom from cooking dinner and ask, “Is this okay?” Your response was, “That’s great Robin!” I always remembered looking up to you and asking for guidance and assurance. I could not wait to finish writing this dissertation so I could hear your exuberant voice. Your response was and still is, “That’s great, Robin!” And to my father who is not here on earth to see the finished product of all of his years of sacrifices, this dissertation is one of the direct results of your continuous, positive influence on my life! I am extremely thankful and blessed that my three siblings and I have been taught the value of working hard, and for that, I cannot thank you enough. To my sister, Brenda, who jokingly encouraged me for months and months by asking, “Are you still writing?” Your strength and resilience is a testimony to everyone. My brother, Greg, who was my first influence in the pursuit of this degree, thank you for leading the path to endless opportunities! And to my extremely caring and hilarious sister Sondra, who I know would have loved to celebrate with me at this time, this is for you! Last but not least, my best friend Marcy, who always had the strongest faith in my ability to complete this research, even when mine was challenged. You were always my biggest fan and I will forever be yours!

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has provided me strength and fortitude, and I will be forever grateful for your faith in me. Thank you! I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

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List of Abbreviations

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Culturally Relevant Education (CRE)

English Language Learners (ELL)

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit)

Socio-economic Status (SES)

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One provides the framework for this investigation, which consists of the factors contributing to retention of urban, Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. This chapter provides the (a) Background, (b) Situation to Self, (c) Problem Statement, (d) Purpose Statement, (e) Significance of the study, (f) Research Questions and (g) Definitions of key terms. From the lens of Du Bois' Critical Race Theory (1963) and Tinto's Integration Model (1975), this chapter begins by addressing the gap in empirical literature and explores potential risk factors of low SES, language acquisition, limited social support, cultural factors, and low academic expectations.

This chapter also explains why this study was selected and how the data could assist policymakers and educators in identifying the necessity of immediate, systemic reform to improve educational outcomes of urban, Hispanic males. The phenomena of experiences from the participants' narratives are investigated through these guiding research questions: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion? How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals? The chapter concludes with a detailed summary of the chapter.

Background

The United States Census Bureau reports that the American nation is experiencing an ongoing ethnic shift due to rapidly increasing numbers of Hispanics in the United States. It is estimated that Hispanics have made up more than 50% of the nation's population increase

between the years of 2000 and 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, almost 20% of Hispanic males dropped out of high school in 2008, the highest among any demographic in the country (Fuller, 2011).

The results of recent studies remain comparable to previously reported data as early as 1983 that Hispanic males continue to be the demographic with the largest high school dropout rate (Velez, 1989). Numerous studies have documented that African-American males enrolled in school often lag behind their peers academically, have less access to rigorous coursework, experience racial bias from school personnel because of lower expectations, and are more likely to drop out (Noguera, 2012). Although it would be reasonable to expect that Hispanic males face similar challenges, there are few comparable studies that reveal their experiences (Rogers & Freelon, 2012). Bell (2010) explored the literature regarding the dropout rates of African-American and Hispanic males and identified that 73% of the participants quit school because of various factors such as home problems, medical needs, loss of focus, and socialization with friends and peer pressure.

Twenty-six percent of Hispanic males quit high school because of the difficulty of the work and their relationships with the teacher (Bell, 2010, p. 25). These disadvantages may also hinder their opportunities for stable employment (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). By contrast, student success occurs when students enter into high school, college, and university, and are able to complete the programs through either personal intrinsic motivation, school organized advising interventions, tutoring programs, or counseling (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006).

The United States Department of Education (DOE) also identified key components of effective public schools to improve attrition rates. Besides data-based early-warning systems,

these strategies include: creating more personalized learning environments for students, providing extra support and academic enrichment for struggling students, assigning adult advocates to students deemed to be at risk of dropping out, and providing rigorous and relevant instruction to engage students in learning (Editorial Projects in Education, 2011).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) by Du Bois (1968), Bell (2010), and Ladson-Billings (1998) with an emphasis on Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) explores which factors are necessary to promote ethnic/racial equity of African-American and Hispanic students to combat a historically racist society. Bean's (1983) research examined how organizational attributes and reward structures affect student satisfaction and persistence. Tinto's definition demonstrates how student attrition can involve many interrelated factors and studying those factors that lead to attrition can be a complex process (Ascend Learning, 2012). Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model defined student attrition as:

A longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the academic and social systems of the college during which a person's experiences in those systems...continually modify his goals and institutional commitments in ways which lead to persistence and/or to varying forms of dropout. (p. 1)

Minority males are consistently at risk for academic failure for various reasons, such as inadequate test scores, increasing referrals for special education services, and high rates of disciplinary action, such as suspension and expulsion (Davis, 2005). The contributing factors for the high dropout rate have been identified as socioeconomic status (SES), educational opportunities, cultural expectations and norms, and race relations (Rumberger, 2004). Identified risk factors such as SES, suspensions, expectations, and teacher relationships may indicate whether or not Hispanic students will drop out of school. SES, which is typically measured by

parental education, occupational status, or income, is one of the strongest and most consistent correlates of dropping out (Rumberger, 2004).

Hirschman and Pharris-Ciurej (2008) indicated adolescents from single parent families, those with high rates of residential mobility, and those dealing with many other factors are at a higher risk of educational failure. A study by Baltimore (1995) reported that Hispanics may face obstacles such as language proficiency, family income, place of birth, family support, availability of role models, and orientation toward the dominant culture (as cited in Walsh, 2013). The long-term consequences of Hispanic and African-American males dropping out of school are what Ponjuan calls a “silent crisis” (Ponjuan, 2013). Studies suggest that suspensions in middle school may have significant, long-term repercussions for students (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010).

African-American and Hispanic males are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school (Fergus & Noguera, 2010). The typical ninth grader that was incarcerated attended school 58% of the time, failed one quarter of classes and read at sixth grade level at the end of eighth grade. Two thirds had been suspended at least once in eighth grade (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010). In a national study analyzing 9220 middle schools, Hispanic males faced a 16.3% risk of suspension. Having a prior history of suspension increased the likelihood of the student dropping out by 78% (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010).

As the rate of Hispanic males dropping out of school rises, the number of Hispanic males being imprisoned rises as well. Hispanic males are becoming the fastest growing group being imprisoned, increasing from 10.9% of all state and federal inmates in 1985 to 15.6% in 2001 (Carson & Sabol, 2012). Among adult men in 2010, African-Americans were incarcerated at a rate of 5,525 per 100,000, compared to 1,146 for Hispanics and 671 for Caucasians. There are

283,000 Hispanic prisoners in federal and state prisons and local jails, making up approximately 15% of the inmate population (Carson & Sabol, 2012). These studies confirmed that high attrition rates are significantly correlated to criminal activity (Grattet & Hayes, 2014). The situation of Hispanic educational attainment is cause for national concern (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006).

Situation to Self

When I moved to East Harlem 13 years ago, I was shocked to be one of the few Caucasian residents in the neighborhood. As hundreds of Hispanics were forced to move from “El Barrio” to less expensive communities, I observed my Hispanic neighbors share stories about their struggles to graduate from high school due to the financial challenges and neighborhood violence. This encouraged me to inquire about experiences that could potentially provide support to this underserved population. As a result, I acquired a passion to ensure that marginalized, struggling adolescents with limited resources have opportunities and the necessary tools to assist them with their unique challenges.

As a southern, Caucasian female, my experiences are extremely different from Hispanic males. I understand what it is like to financially struggle, but failing to graduate high school was not an option. Within my educational career, I have observed numerous cases of Hispanic males not receiving necessary academic support. The observations of over-identification of hundreds of Hispanic males in special education, especially in middle school, deeply saddened me and further inspired my research.

This study was conducted from an advocacy/participatory worldview. This worldview potentially focuses on bringing about change, and at the end of this type of study, researchers create an action agenda for change (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). Kemmis and Wilkinson

(1998) state that an advocacy worldview is significant as it addresses an important societal concern and places an emphasis on freeing individuals from societal limitations. This research was an attempt to reform the lives of marginalized individuals by providing a voice for the participants. My philosophical assumptions allowed me to identify my beliefs and biases while using them to recognize the existing phenomenon within the study (Creswell, 2007).

Problem Statement

The majority of people not attending college are Hispanic and African-American males (Ponjuan, 2013). Of all of the indicators of academic achievement, educational attainment, and school success, African-American and Hispanic males are noticeably distinguished from other segments of the American population by their consistent clustering at the bottom (Schott Foundation, 2010). The problem is that the high school graduation rate in the United States for Hispanic students continuously declined from 32% to 13% in comparison to their counterparts from 1990-2012 (United States Department of Education, 2014). Despite a high rate of attrition in Hispanic males, few studies have explored the factors that contribute to this phenomenon (Velez, 1989). Saenz and Ponjuan (2011) note that “The lack of reliable data on Hispanic males further hampers the evolution of a research agenda for this group” (p. 6).

Purpose Statement

Given the significant gap between Hispanic male graduation rates and other subgroups, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the factors that contributed to the retention of Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. This study attempted to investigate the factors that assisted them in overcoming family and non-family risk factors in their lives. In this study, the definition of retention in educational settings “refers to students’ continued study until successful completion” (Fowler & Luna, 2009, p. 69). Retention

was an act where “some students persist and graduate, and others do not” (Woodard, Mallory, & De Luca, 2001).

The design for this study was a qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study with a naturalist inquiry approach. From a phenomenological lens, this study attempted to address the gaps in the literature by investigating the factors that contributed to the low rates of retention of Hispanic male graduates in the U.S. Through the use of the participants’ voices, the phenomena of experiences from their stories were investigated. This research attempted to assist policymakers and educators in identifying the immediate need of providing systemic reform with the goal of identifying positive strategies to improve educational outcomes of urban, Hispanic males. The factors that potentially influence the retention of Hispanic male high school graduates was the inquiry of focus in this study.

Significance of the Study

Describing the phenomenon of retention of Hispanic males is significant in several ways. This study sought to contribute to the literature, as most empirical research does not differentiate between Hispanic and African-American males. The research of Noguera (2012), Schott Foundation (2010), and Villavicencio (2013a) aimed to improve the trajectory of African-American and Hispanic men, but there are limited data that focus exclusively on the specific factors affecting Hispanic males. Roach (2013) identified factors that contributed to high school graduation of African-American and Hispanic males, which included high expectations of parents and other family members. Other major factors cited by students included having a desire to escape poverty and having meaningful relationships with caring teachers and other adults in their schools (Roach, 2013). Peters (as cited in Noguera, 2012) stated, “The challenge we face in educating our African-American and Hispanic males has a prescriptive solution. We

must create ‘conditions’ in our schools that identify and support their dreams and aspirations” (p. 45).

Compared with African-American males, the problems that Hispanic males face are unique in that they range from language proficiency, immigration, and cultural differences where there is a greater pressure to contribute to the family financially and emotionally (Noguera, 2012, p. 1). As a result, this study attempted to gather pertinent strategies in the data that may be valuable in increasing the academic achievement among exclusively urban, Hispanic male high school graduates. Lastly, given the potential negative consequences for Hispanic students who dropout, this study is significant as it can potentially guide policy makers and administrators towards identifying effective initiatives to immediately address this issue. Harper (as cited in Roach, 2013) stated, “It is necessary to develop a policy that helps students achieve success in our educational system. It is better to educate our Hispanic students rather than to incarcerate them in our prisons” (p. 1). The growing gap has become unnoticed and under examined by educators and policy makers (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011).

In the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s policy brief, *Closing the Gap*, the organization made a specific priority to close the gender gap by increasing postsecondary participation and success rates for Hispanic and African-American males (Ponjuan, 2013). This study attempted to build upon the new initiatives by Saenz and Ponjuan such as Project MALES, Excelencia in Education, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, and the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color to potentially promote systemic reform. Ponjuan (as cited in Fuller, 2011) stated, “The time is now. We need to help all our boys succeed in education, more critically, for the young men of color who are vanishing from our educational institutions and our communities” (p. 1).

Research Questions

Given the stated purpose of this study, the following questions framed the investigation:

Research Question 1: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? Bell and Freeman (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998) identified the ineffectiveness of the current approaches and limited advancement in racial equity. This question investigated which structured school and community supports provided the participants the ability to persist. African-Americans comprised 16% of the nation's public school students in 2013, with those numbers projected to fall to 15% by 2022 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013). However, Hispanics made up 25% of the nation's public school students in 2013, with an increased projection to 30% by 2022. Despite the large population of Hispanics within the U.S., current research focuses on the trajectories of African-American males and reasons why they fall behind Caucasians. Noguera (2008) described the negative factors contributing to the achievement gap between African-Americans and Caucasians such as experiencing lower expectations due to racial bias, less accessibility to academic rigor, and are more likely to experience attrition (Noguera, 2008). The missing exploration in current research is the participants' perceptions of both negative and positive factors that influenced them to succeed, despite the adversities.

Research Question 2: How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion? Research by Villavicencio, Bhattacharya, and Guidry (2013), Fergus and Noguera (2010), Hirschman and Pharris-Ciurej (2008), Rogers and Freelon (2012), and the Schott Foundation (2010) indicate societal issues that negatively influence both Hispanic and African-American males. These studies do not analyze specific challenges that apply solely to Hispanic males such as language,

ethnic identity, immigration, and cultural practices. The questions in this study sought to address unique challenges Hispanics face, which are significantly different from their African-American counterparts. Studies by Fry (2003, 2012) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2010) differentiate between U.S. born and foreign-born Hispanics as they indicate a huge disparity between graduation rates of both groups. For the purpose of this study, the participants were not bounded by specific ethnicities or immigration status in order to focus on specific factors that potentially contributed to their success in the U.S. education system. This question attempted to explore the participants' personal characteristics that provided the fortitude to successfully complete high school.

Family structure continues to be a key factor for successful Hispanics living in the U.S. (Bermúdez, Kirkpatrick, Hecker, & Torres-Robles, 2010). Additionally, cultural traditions are indicated as being protective factors. These findings are consistent with Martinez, DeGarma and Eddy (2004), work related to the concept of family schema, a family's shared values, goals, priorities, expectations, and worldview. Family involvement, strong kin networks, and family support were identified as being important resilience factors. Other individual resilience factors were social competence, intellect, and motivation (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). This question sought to guide the research by identifying factors such as academic resources, extra-curricular activities, social supports, and mentorship that contributed to the participants' success.

Research Question 3: How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals? Tinto's (1975) Integration Model studied how institutions analyzed how students interacted with academic and social system of colleges. Based on this theoretical framework, this question examined persistence factors of college males based their interaction and involvement with the institution. To further

examine persistence factors in males, this question explored the relationships of structured school programs' staff and their influence on academic achievement in Hispanic male high school students. Research by Fry (2003, 2012) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2010) solely analyzed educational experiences of Hispanics with an emphasis on interrupted schooling in first generation immigrants. The missing voices were the participants' perceptions of the additional societal factors that influence high school completion, such as relationships with peers, community, and family members. Numerous authors investigated issues and achievements of Hispanic students in U.S. classrooms while seeking answers to high dropout rates and low graduation rates, underrepresentation in post-secondary education, and poor performance of these students (Rumberger, 2004). Most studies concentrated on how sociocultural factors contribute to students' failure in school, such as family income, language background and family characteristics (Schneider, Martinez & Owens, 2006). The purpose of this research question was to describe various, significant relationships which influenced the participants' persistence to complete high school.

Definitions

1. *Achievement gap* - a discrepancy in student achievement due to factors of ethnicity, language fluency, and socioeconomic status (Elward, 2011, p.2).
2. *Data saturation* - the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges with respect to the newly constructed theory (Creswell, 2007).
3. *Dropout* - a dropout was defined as one who was not currently attending high school, and either (a) did not graduate with his or her class, (b) earned a GED or other nontraditional diploma, or (c) did not complete his or her high school education (Zabloski, 2010).
4. *Hispanic* - refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central

American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. “Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, p. 2). For this study, the terms Hispanics and Latinos were used interchangeably in the review of literature and research cited within the study.

5. *Latino* - people of Latin American origin (Walsh, 2013).
6. *Mentoring* - “the act of anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge and opportunities to those less experienced, for whatever period the mentor and mentee deem this help to be necessary” (Burlew, 1991, p. 214).
7. *Persistence* - student persistence is defined as the continual pursuit of a student in a degree program leading toward the completion of the program and therefore being awarded a college degree in the student’s field of study (King, 2005, p.3). For this study, the concepts of persistence and retention are not used interchangeably.
8. *Regents* - New York State standardized examinations in core high school subjects which students must pass in order to earn New York State Regents Examination Diploma. This type of diploma certifies students will not be mandated to take remedial courses at four-year colleges and universities (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016).
9. *Retention* – “refers to students’ continued study until successful completion” (Fowler & Luna, 2009).
10. *Social Capital* - “key resources and support provided by institutional agents specifically, high-status, non-kin, agents who occupy relatively high positions in the multiple dimensional stratification system” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Summary

Chapter One described the factors that influence the low retention rates of urban, Hispanic males in East Harlem, New York. Hispanic males continue to have the highest dropout rate in comparison to other subgroups in the United States. Limited qualitative research exists that discusses exclusive, specific risk factors for Hispanic males such as language proficiency, place of birth, family support, racism, stereotyping, lack of positive male role models, and orientation toward the dominant culture. These factors may result in academic failure, school suspensions, criminal activity, and low-income earning potential as adults. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the phenomenon of factors that influence the retention of Hispanic male high school graduates in East Harlem. This study is significant because its purpose is to inform policymakers of the immediate necessity for transformational, national initiatives in public education that provides additional support, interventions, and equitable educational opportunities for a specific, underserved subgroup.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter will discuss the guiding theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory (CRT), specifically Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit Theory), and how it has influenced race and equality in the education of Hispanic males in East Harlem, New York. Through the use of this framework, this study examined society's marginalization of non-Caucasians as I investigated the phenomenon of factors that influenced Hispanic males to overcome barriers and successfully navigate through the educational system. This chapter will address family and non-family risk factors that affect Hispanic males such as low SES, language acquisition, social support, cultural factors, and low academic expectations. Academic resources, positive male mentors, teacher-student relationships, and achievement gaps between races and genders will also be explored.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study is Critical Race Theory (CRT), specifically Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit Theory). Historically, the United States Education system has not adequately provided access to all students. Racism was developed by society and then became a form of society deciding who controls the power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). From the lens of the LatCrit Theory, this framework identified barriers that impeded the academic and financial success of Hispanic males while investigating factors that contributed to the successful completion of high school, thus increasing their ability to acquire and sustain gainful employment.

Bell (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1998) argued that "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 95). CRT is a result of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which was a development that challenged traditional legal scholarship. Modern,

critical legal scholarship, therefore, builds upon literature by Bell, Freeman, Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, Thomas, Delgado and Stefancic. In the past two decades, scholars have referred to CRT's established legal scholarship, revolutionary work of Ladson-Billings and Tate, and Solórzano, who introduced the study of CRT to K-12 and higher education, respectively (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Du Bois, a sociologist and leader in Critical Race Theory, applied sociology to the lives of African Americans, a topic that had been ignored by sociologists (Kumasi, 2011). He has been credited with laying the groundwork of critical social theories that address race and power. Notable examples of Du Bois' influence is the framework of double consciousness and the academic achievement of African-American students (Kumasi, 2011). The purpose of this framework was to attempt to explain the social and emotional struggles that African Americans experience as a result of having to negotiate their racial identity in a society that is overshadowed by Caucasian standards, values, and cultural and language (Kumasi, 2011).

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stated that institutional racism is prevalent in the dominant culture and prevails over individual racism. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) also identified that the current power structures are based on Caucasian privilege and supremacy. Theorist Garrett Duncan stated that society rejects race as a factor of the quality of life, thus favoring gender and class-based approaches to understanding discrimination in the United States (Kumasi, 2011). The use of CRT as a conceptual framework in this study could be "applied to our understanding of educational inequity" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 55).

Delgado (1995), a forerunner of CRT, supported this movement and continued to contribute to Garrett's theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT acknowledges that racism is entrenched in the core of the American society. CRT expert Ladson-Billings (1998) proposed

that this theory should be used in discussions of education equally to its use in legal discussions. Bell and Freeman (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998) contributed to CRT as they identified the ineffectiveness of the current attempts to have a racially equitable society. Many scholars examined curriculum using a CRT lens to offer logistical means to redesign curriculum after they identified how it is manipulated by supremacy of Caucasians (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Akom observed that access to the American dream is based on race and is extremely limited (as cited in Kumasi, 2011). Understanding the uniqueness of the American culture is essential as it provides a necessary backdrop for how the Hispanic-American culture fosters their men's navigational tools toward their academic goals. A major component of CRT is the concept of the perpetuity of racism in society. D. Bell (2010), one of the founding fathers of CRT, states that racism is a permanent component of American life. The acceptance of the permanence of racism involves adopting a "realist view" of the structured society in America.

Ladson-Billings (1998) described circumstances where stereotypical categories label specific subgroups of students. The emergence of degrading stereotypes toward non-Caucasians is disguised behind categories that become normative references to specific racial groups. Categories like "school achievement," "middle classness," "maleness," "beauty," "intelligence," and "science" classify Caucasians while terms such as "gangs," "basketball players," "welfare recipients," and the "underclass" are categorized as "blackness" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9).

LatCrit and CRT legal scholars suggest that lawmaking should be interpreted within this historical and cultural context. LatCrit and CRT challenge assumptions about race's neutral stance. LatCrit is involved with advocating for the Hispanic community which considers how ethnicity, language, and immigration contribute to the connections between classism, racism, and sexism. LatCrit theory and practice is not supplemental or competitive with CRT. LatCrit

places the needs of Hispanics at the core of the theory and practice in a way that inquires and creates more knowledge (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Both CRT and LatCrit include an evaluation of power that the traditional educational approach ignores. It is based from the lens that society has historically ignored or devalued the minorities' views. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) stated that worldviews are based on a strong belief in meritocracy, independence, and neutrality, and that it is difficult for examinations to identify discrimination and white privilege without legitimizing those systems and subordinating other perspectives.

To maximize the use of CRT in education, researchers must remain cognizant of the positions of race within societal structures. CRT infers that race should be the center of focus and mandates scholars to explore school practices and policies that are inherently and systematically racist. CRT has been criticized because of the perception that the focus on race overlaps with social class and gender (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Related Literature

It was reported that students who drop out from school are more likely to require social services during their lifetimes because they are more likely to experience lower income and unemployment. This results in an overrepresentation in the adult corrections population compared to high school graduates (as cited in Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2011) stated that almost 7,000 students become dropouts daily. Chalker and Stelsel reported that dropping out of school occurs frequently: "every 29 seconds - an average of 124 students an hour, and 2,979 a day" (as cited in Clayton-Molina, 2015). Walden and Kritsonis cited "There is a crisis in secondary education in the United States, and the dropout rate is increasing yearly" (as cited in Martinez et al., 2004).

Hispanic students' school dropout rates are approximately two to three times the rate of non-Hispanic students. Yosso and Solórzano reported Hispanic males are more likely to drop out of high school, to join the workforce rather than attend college, and to leave college before graduating (as cited in Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Today, the Hispanic population has become the largest and fastest growing minority group in America, yet they are the least educated among their peers (Crosnoe, 2005). The Hispanic population made up 16% of the overall population and projected that it will almost double to 31% by 2050 (as cited in Walsh, 2013). As the federal and state education budgets decrease with the increasing Hispanic student population, this situation can only worsen. Information is clearly needed on what factors increase and decrease risk for Hispanic student academic failure (Martinez et al., 2004).

It is difficult to find current and meaningful research focused on the causes that explain this phenomenon of underperformance of Hispanic males in high school (Saenz, Perez, & Cerna, 2009). Crosnoe (2005) reported, "Considering the problematic history of this population in the U.S. educational system and the consequences of these historical patterns for the stratification of American society, the value of studying the academic experience of Hispanics has never been greater" (p. 584). As the Hispanic population consistently increases, there is a large probability that the achievement gap will widen between Hispanics and other subgroups. As of 2003, there was a 38% increase in the Hispanic student population, compared to a 13% increase in African American public school enrollment and a decline of 1.2% in Caucasian public school enrollment during the same time period (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). In 2012, 25% of public school students in the U.S. were of Hispanic origin (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013).

Fry (2013), a leader on Hispanic culture and its economic impact, analyzed the population of Hispanic public school students and observed that the population varies across different

school levels (Pew Research Center, 2013). Among pre-school students, 29% are Hispanic; among kindergarten students, 27% are Hispanic; and among elementary school students, 25% are Hispanic (Pew Research Center, 2013). Only among public high school students is the Hispanic below one-quarter of the general population. Hispanics are New York City's second-largest ethnic group as the population rose 8.1% to 2.34 million. U.S. Census (2010) reported that 28% of New Yorkers are of Hispanic origin (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Crosnoe (2005) conducted a study on Hispanic students in the American educational system and reported, "Being able to serve Hispanic students effectively is one of the most pressing problems facing the American education system in the new century" (p. 561 – 562). Despite Crosnoe's early warning in 2005, this population continued to struggle in the American public school systems (Crosnoe, 2005). Haycock (as cited in Serrata, 2009) stated "The gaps [particularly in higher education achievement when considered] by race are also stark, with African Americans between [the ages of] 25 and 29 attaining bachelor's degrees at nearly one half – and Latinos at one-third the rate of Whites" (p. 2).

In comparison to other subgroups, Hispanic male student persistence and graduation rates are lower (Serrata, 2009). In 2008, approximately 62% of Hispanic adults over the age of 25 had completed at least high school or the equivalent. Comparatively, 92% of Caucasians, 89% of Asians/Pacific Islanders, 83% of African Americans and 78 % of American Indians/Alaska Natives completed high school (NCES, 2010). It was reported that 14.5% of Hispanics ages 25 and older had earned a bachelor's degree. Conversely, 51% of Asians, 34.5% of Caucasians, and 21.2% of African Americans had earned a college diploma (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Some research has addressed the high school dropout crisis among Hispanics; however, there is limited research from the Hispanic dropouts' perceptions (Tavitian, 2013). Tavitian

(2013) explored the perceptions of Hispanic dropouts in California. The participants in the study reported that receiving bad grades created feelings of isolation and being no longer accepted in the school. Additionally, the participants reported that they identified themselves as failures and these negative experiences were the reasons they dropped out of high school (Tavitian, 2013).

Clayton-Molina (2015) conducted research to identify factors of attrition in Hispanic high school students and determined the influences on their decision to drop out of school were the lack of involvement in school activities, loss of interest, teenage pregnancy, and non-inspiring, non-supportive teachers. The study also indicated that the participants described factors such as a dysfunctional home life, lack of parental support in school, and lack of communication at home. In addition, participants reported that they were not given adequate opportunities to succeed in school and that the parent-student relationship was a significant factor of attrition (Clayton-Molina, 2015).

Family Risk Factors

Hispanics residing in the U.S. are especially susceptible to risk factors. These risk factors increase their chances of living in poverty, making it more difficult to rise out of a life of financial struggle for themselves and their families (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Family risk factors for delinquent behaviors are incarceration of a parent, harsh and ineffective parental discipline, lack of supervision, and coercive relationships in the home (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). Social capital” is based on two principal categories: family structure and parent-child interaction (Dika & Singh, 2002). “Family background” is essentially derived from three forms of capital: family income, parental educational level, and familial and community relational networks (Dika & Singh, 2002).

According to Lopez (2009), over 70% of the Hispanic dropouts stated that one of their

reasons for dropping out of high school was due to a lack of support from their parents. Dent and Cameron (2003) identified that the within-home factors contributing to the problem of dropping out of high school include the SES of the family, the educational attainment of parents, and the level of parental responsibility for their children. The family has long been recognized as one of the most important factors in child development (Gewirtz, Forgatch, & Wieling, 2008). Luthar and Goldstein (2004) observed, “all things considered and across diverse settings, it is the family that is the single most influential of external influences, being the earliest, the most proximal, as well as the most enduring of children’s social environments” (p. 503).

Economic needs often force families to live apart as parents and partners may only find work in different locations. Family separation is common for Hispanic families, even when families immigrate to the U.S. together. Tummala-Narra (as cited in Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013) reported that a leading risk factor for Hispanics is the effect of immigration, which includes navigating a new culture, strained family and work roles, and limited access to resources. In addition to these difficulties, navigating through a new system built around institutionalized racism often creates financial challenges and a loss of cultural and familial support (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013).

Socioeconomic Status

One significant risk factor that affects academic achievement is poverty. Compared to other subgroups, Hispanic Americans are highly likely to be uninsured and live in unsafe neighborhoods. Additionally, they are more likely to have lower SES, lower graduation rates, limited access to mental and health services, and limited access to a high quality education (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Payne (2012), an expert on the impact of poverty on academic performance, reported that poverty is a common risk factor for many conditions, including the

development of antisocial behavior and emotional or behavioral disabilities.

Byrnes (2008) found that children in urban areas have more accessibility to more resources such as better healthcare and proper nutrition as opposed to children in rural areas. In 2010, 46.2 million people in the United States were living in poverty. Of those people living in poverty, 11.9 million were immigrants or the U.S.-born children of immigrant fathers (Camarota, 2012). Compared to non-Hispanic Caucasians, Hispanics are more than twice as likely to live in deep poverty (National Center for Law and Economic Justice, 2012).

According to Orfield and Lee (2005), Hispanics and African Americans comprise 80% of the student population in extreme-poverty schools where 90% to 100% of the population is considered poor (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Hispanics are the most segregated group in the country's public schools, and those schools are under-resourced (Payne, 2008). The segregation results not only from discrimination but from the effects of zip codes, SES, tax funding of schools, and other causes. Mutua states that the problem of stigmatization begins early in the education pipeline, as children from economically poor African American or Hispanic families are labeled at-risk even before they enter school (as cited in Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

Since desegregation, institutions all across America have tried to overcompensate and ensure that students of poverty and of various demographics have access to high quality education, strong educators, and resources (Payne, 2012). Payne (2012) researched the discrepancy between achievements of students of higher SES in comparison to students with lower SES. There has been significant disparity between the quality of instruction offered and the quality of achievement gained by students in poverty (Payne, 2012). In comparison to peers of different financial status, poor children are at higher risk for developing achievement

problems and social-emotional and health problems, as they require additional resources and support to achieve academic success (Payne, 2008).

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was passed to ensure all students received adequate resources and quality instruction by highly qualified teachers in order to address issues of poverty in education (Byrnes, 2011). Schools and districts were required to disaggregate standardized test scores by student characteristics in order to enable adequate comparisons between subgroups. McKinsey and Company (2009) reported that poverty became a focus of federal education accountability as it created a greater awareness of racial disparities. This awareness targeted more interventions for diverse groups of students with the goal of reducing achievement gaps.

Every state has assessed the ethnic achievement gap by graduation rates and test scores (McKinsey & Company, 2009). The continuity of this achievement gap is disadvantageous to the Hispanic population. In 2009, President Obama noticed the achievement gap and reported that dropping out was not just affecting the students, but the nation. As a result, it is devastating to the United States and its economic stability and global competitiveness (McKinsey & Company, 2009).

Research indicates that poorer children are offered less vocabulary rich environments in comparison to peers of higher SES (Payne, 2008). Major contributing factors to widening the literacy gap are single household families (Byrnes, 2011). Hart and Risley's literacy study determined that children of poverty were introduced to vocabulary significantly less than children of professional parents (as cited in Payne, 2008). By age three, children of poverty have heard approximately 10 million words in comparison to other children that were exposed to approximately 30 million words in the same period.

Additionally, Payne (2008) stated that these children have families with little formal education and often learn rules about how to behave, speak, and acquire knowledge that differ from systems used within schools. The ability to navigate through the education system might be hindered by this lack of familiarity (Payne, 2008). Joos, a linguist, identified that every language includes five registers of formal language. These categorized registers are: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate (as cited in Payne, 2008). People use the casual and intimate registers socially with friends and family. School and work utilizes both formal and casual speech (consultative) and the precise word choice and syntax (formal register). Students from families with little formal education may often rely on casual and intimate registers.

The majority of “at-risk” students from impoverished households receive little academic support at home; therefore, encouragement and resources come mostly from public schools (Payne, 2012). Teachers need to be aware that many students identified as “at-risk” lack some resources. Ineffective interventions frequently involve resources that students do not have (Payne, 2008). Specific interventions must be in place to raise achievement for low-income students (Payne, 2008). Richburg-Burgess and Gadsden (2012) defined targeted instruction as an educational intervention for struggling students that targets individual learning needs. The instructional design of a targeted instruction for Hispanic students must consider the impact of cultural factors (Richburg-Burgess & Gadsden, 2012). In addition to low SES, challenges facing Hispanic American students are language acquisition and managing their cultural identities (Kumasi, 2011).

Cultural Factors

Cabrera and Padilla (2004) found that it is critical for Hispanics to successfully maintain the linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of their culture as they navigate the values of the

dominant culture. Greater levels of ethnic identity and family interdependence have influenced higher academic achievement and consistent parental support (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). Numerous studies documented that having a sense of ethnic pride, cultural orientation and continuity are aspects of biculturalism (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013).

Given the risk factors threatening the well-being of Hispanics living in the U.S., qualities such as self-esteem, self-mastery, and personal sense of belonging are important personal characteristics that affect the quality of health and interpersonal relationships (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). Campbell (2008) conducted a study of Mexican immigrant women and found that these attributes led to a strong desire for employment, education, and autonomy. For children and adolescents, many studies have demonstrated the powerful effects of positive ethnic identity (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). According to Blume and DeReus (2009), not having the benefits of Caucasian privilege can be especially problematic for Hispanics living in the U.S., which continues to increase their sense of marginalization (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013).

French and Chavez (2010) studied compensatory models, focusing on four dimensions of ethnic identity: centrality, public regard, private regard, and other group orientation. They found that the participants' fear of confirming stereotypes was the most prevalent. Additionally, the centrality of ethnic identity to self-image and the feeling that their peers believed Hispanics were good people also were associated with lower levels of depression. Overall, the negative effect of their fear was more dominant than their protective nature of ethnic identity (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013).

Language Acquisition

Many of the dropouts reported poor English skills and a disinterest in school lead them to drop out (Lopez, 2009). Students whose language and cultural practices differ from those of the

dominant Caucasian culture are often perceived to be inadequate (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Today in public schools, there are more than five million English language learners (ELLs) and approximately 80% of them are Hispanic Americans. Despite the efforts of countless individuals and organizations, the needs of ELLs are not being addressed adequately. Nationally, almost half of the ELL students attend schools where 30% or more of their fellow students are also ELL students (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000).

With more than 154,000 ELLs in New York City's public schools (14% of the entire student population), one out of every four students in these schools was not proficient in English upon entering the system. Furthermore, 41% of students come from families that speak a language other than English at home, and 168 home languages are represented in the student population. It is very evident that, overwhelmingly, ELLs are not succeeding in this system. While there has been some improvement in graduation rates, ELLs in New York City are still graduating at rates approximately 20 percentage points below the rate for the city's students overall, and the 7% of ELLs graduating on time and ready for college and careers signals a crisis in college readiness (New York City Department of Education, 2013).

Seastrom reported that in the U.S., 31% of ELL high school teachers did not have a major, minor or certification in the field of bilingual education (as cited in Noguera, 2008). Without appropriate instruction, students are often misclassified, placed in special education programs, and evaluated on what they know. As the limited number of Hispanic students succeed, graduate from high school, and transition to college, they experience challenges in expectations, roles, and responsibilities in English rather than what they know in another language (Noguera, 2008).

Non-Family Risk Factors

In a study by Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006), the high school dropouts stated that they quit school for numerous reasons. Participants indicated that they had boring classes, increased numbers of absences, friends that were not interested in school, too much freedom, and failing grades in school (as cited in Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). Crisp and Cruz (2009) observed the negative impact of discriminatory behavior inside and outside the classroom. Some challenges Hispanic students may face are limited exposure to literacy activities (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). Students with limited success in reading had a higher chance of participating in criminal activities, drugs and alcohol abuse, and living in poverty as an adult (Bell, 2010). Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, and Morrison (2012) found that limited literacy skills are associated with higher high school dropout rates and increased rates of referral to special education and children with weak literacy skills are also more likely to be underemployed and engage in criminal activities (p. 3-4).

Dolan (2009) reported that participants (dropouts) did not consider the consequences of dropping out or the effect that it would have on their futures. According to Dolan's data, there was no warning of the consequences of not completing high school. One female participant was told by the school guidance counselor that she did not have any other options, thus resulting in her dropping out against her will (Dolan, 2009). The lack of academic guidance pertaining to course selections and college choice impedes Hispanics from attending four-year colleges (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006).

Teacher-Student Relationships

Teacher assessments of language acquisition of students influences classroom instruction. The relationship between Hispanic students and their predominantly non-Hispanic teachers can

discourage engagement and participation (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). Dolan's (2009) study stated that students are struggling and teachers are unsupportive. The success of Hispanic students is a reflection of the effectiveness of schools in America (Dolan, 2009). According to the results of Dolan's (2009) study, teachers neither motivated the students nor inspired the students to partake in any extracurricular activities at school. One participant reported feeling as though he was overlooked and that the teachers saw him as a failure. It is important for educators to know the values and beliefs of Hispanic students (Dolan, 2009).

Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2010) cited the long-lasting effects of early teacher-student relationships on children. Specifically, students who had more conflict with their teachers or showed more dependency toward their teachers in kindergarten also had lower academic achievement in mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA). More behavioral problems existed, such as poorer work habits and more discipline problems through the eighth grade (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009). These findings were significant considering the extent to which students' behavior problems related to problematic teacher-child relationships. Hamre and Pianta (2001) determined that these findings were greater for boys than for girls (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2010).

Gender Achievement Gap

Among non-family protective factors, school-related factors are the most frequently identified in the normal development of vulnerable children (Cefai, 2007). Males are twice as likely to be labeled as "learning disabled" and in many schools are 10 times more likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities such as ADD. Boys now make up two-thirds of the special education classes and account for 71% of all suspensions. There is also evidence that boys suffer from low self-esteem and lack of confidence as learners (Noguera, 2012).

Saenz and Ponjuan (2009), experts on access and equity in higher education, studied gender differences and how it affects the achievement gap between Hispanic females and males. Hispanic males should be supported as they are more likely to enter school with limited reading and writing skills. In school, boys are struggling to learn how to read and express themselves. Statistics indicate that Hispanic males are a year and a half behind females in reading and math skills when they enter third grade. Saenz and Ponjuan (2011) reported that society mandates the constant negotiation of norms, behaviors and gender roles and Hispanic males have to recognize what it means to be a young man at a young age. Saenz and Ponjuan (2011) also indicated that the problems Hispanics face stem from elementary schools, as more than 80% of the country's elementary school teachers are Caucasian females. It was also reported that this indicates a broader systemic issue around teacher training programs for the next generation.

Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) emphasized the achievement gap of Hispanic males within participation and success in higher education. Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) stated that there was a lack of research on the topic and in particular a lack of understanding on such perplexing trends. Zaidi (2010) conducted a study to determine that boys and girls learn differently based on differences in their abilities to develop cognitively and acquire reading skills. Male and female brains develop differently, and even age differently at the neuroanatomical level (Zaidi, 2010). This study explained why there is a larger population of males with developmental and learning disabilities in comparison to females. The male fetuses require the maintenance of higher numbers of nerve cells in the cerebral cortex than female fetuses, thus creating a higher loss of needed neurons and damaging the developing brain (Zaidi, 2010). This research showed significant differences in fetuses between males and females within 16 through 36 weeks of pregnancy (Zaidi, 2010).

Data collected by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES; 2010) identified that the deficit in reading skills is more prevalent in young males than females. According to Zaidi (2010), extremely low birth-weight and premature infants, especially males, pose a greater risk of perinatal brain injury and later neurological and cognitive impairment. This contributes to the lack of development of skills necessary to learn how to read and function academically in all subject areas. The ability to read on grade level is a fundamental skill required for children to achieve academic success (Zaidi, 2010). This study reinforces the concept that male and female brains develop and function differently, thus contributing to the gender achievement gap (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

A study conducted in Canada identified that girls have been historically and consistently outperforming boys in school. It is assumed that boys perform better in subjects like math and science; however, this stereotype has been challenged by an international review of 308 studies involving more than 1.1 million children. Findings from this study suggest that girls do better than boys in the classroom regardless of the content, from the years 1914-2011 (Lohman, 2014). Boys are an average of a year to a year and a half behind girls in reading and writing skills (Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

A study of twelfth grade students identified as boys in an inner city school scored one-grade level lower than females in 2007 (Stotsky, 2012). Proportionally fewer college-age males are actually enrolling in college than in years past, and the degree attainment gaps between Hispanic males and females is widening (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008). In addition, NCES (2010) reported that more than three in five degrees earned by Hispanics in 2009 were earned by females (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). In a study by Saenz, Perez, and Cerna (2009), NCES reported that boys in grades four through eight are twice as likely as girls to be held back a grade.

Additionally, the rate is even higher for minority males (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008). Gurian and Stevens (2005) suggest that boys are being educated within a system that is unaware of the potential mismatch of the male learning style in current instructional practices. There is a significant population of minority males that do not score proficiently on high-stakes assessments.

Racial Achievement Gap

When compared to their Caucasian peers, middle-class African-American and Hispanic males lag significantly in grade-point average and on standardized tests. These patterns have become so prevalent that educators and too many members of the public at large have begun to accept this as the norm (Noguera, 2012). Orfield and Yun (1999) stated that 75% of Hispanic students attend segregated schools in which minorities comprise 50% or more of the student population. Thirty-five percent of Hispanic students attend intensely segregated schools where minority students comprise at least 90% of the student population (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield (2003) reported that one-ninth of Hispanic students attend schools where 99% to 100% of the student body is composed of minority students.

Noguera (2012) indicated that Hispanics are more likely to be absent from gifted and talented programs, advanced placement and honors courses, and international baccalaureate programs. Since the late 1960s, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has reported the pervasive problem of overrepresentation of minority children in certain disability categories (Noguera, 2012). The disparities are even more pronounced for Hispanics and African Americans. Hispanic students labeled as special needs students are about twice as likely as Caucasian students to be placed in a restrictive educational environment (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Moreover, Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) focused on the academic and societal challenges males face that influence college attendance and graduation.

Parrish stated that Hispanic students were more likely to be overrepresented in special education (as cited in Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Education Law Center reported that 36% of Hispanic students classified as having learning disabilities, compared with only 20% of Caucasian students classified as having learning disabilities (as cited in Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). This reveals that Hispanic students spend the majority of the instructional day in separate classrooms or schools. This results in making their college pathways that much more difficult to navigate (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Factors that Influence Retention

America's Promise Alliance (2009) reported that the states can no longer carry the encumbrance of high school dropouts as the state had the resources and authority necessary to make a positive impact. It was also indicated that the state had the tools that could help identify those potential dropouts; tools to develop intervention plans to learn from and use repeatedly. A high school diploma can significantly alter the trajectory of a student's life.

A high school diploma is a student's gateway to higher education, a career and a productive life. Our top priority as a state is to ensure that every student is educated to the same high standards and provided with the same opportunities and support that they need to complete high school and graduate college and career readiness. (America's Promise Alliance, 2009, p. 2)

Cultural

Studies by Gallo, Penedo, Espinosa de los Monteros, and Arguelles (2009) identified important connections between resilience, Hispanics' cultural characteristics, and health

outcomes. Hispanic cultural values such as familism contributed to better health outcomes than for non-Hispanics. Familism is defined as a social pattern in which the family assumes a position of ascendance over individual interests (Gallo, Penedo, Espinosa de los Monteros, & Arguelles, 2009). Embracing familism as a value contributed to a familial stability, which was linked to better physical health behaviors, higher likelihood of seeking medical attention, better psychological health, and perceived lower stress levels (Gallo, Penedo, Espinosa de los Monteros, & Arguelles, 2009).

Research also identified that maintaining strong religious beliefs, having a sense of determination, and a positive disposition can strengthen a sense of resilience (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). It is essential to support Hispanics' fear of confirming stereotypes in order to protect young Hispanics' sense of well-being. This will reduce the pressure to conform. Family members, teachers, and community leaders can be instrumental in helping young Hispanics to strengthen their ethnic identities and lower their risks for confirming negative stereotypes (French & Chavez, 2010).

Adolescence is typically a period when young people attempt to establish an independent identity and become more detached from their parents. For racial minorities, adolescence is also a period when young people begin to solidify their understanding of their racial identities (Noguera, 2008). As they become increasingly aware of themselves as social beings, their perception of self tends to be highly dependent on acceptance by others. For some adolescents, identification with and attachment to peer groups sometimes takes on so much importance that it can override attachments to family, teachers, and parents (Noguera, 2008).

Relationships

There are intense notions that African American and Hispanic males work against their school success. Noguera (2012) explained that the biggest obstacle to students' success is the adults who do not believe in them, causing these young men to develop behaviors based on those assumptions. Teachers and school leaders must believe in all students' abilities to be successful, and they must strive to uphold the academic abilities of African American and Hispanic males. All district administrators, principals, teachers, and support staff should be challenged to empathize with the students and families in the communities in which they serve (Noguera, 2012). Research by Birch and Ladd (1997), and Hamre and Pianta (2001) reveals that positive teacher-student relationships are demonstrated by teachers' reports of little dependency, low conflict, and high degree of closeness and support. Teachers are capable of fostering students' resiliency in academic achievement, supporting students' adjustment to school, contributing to their social skills, and promoting academic performance (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015).

Further work describes that children with less conflict and stronger rapport with teachers developed better social skills as they approached the middle school years than those with more strained relationships in kindergarten (Berry & O'Connor, 2009). Teachers who experience close relationships with students reported that their students were less likely to avoid school, appeared more self-directed, more cooperative, and more engaged in learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Students reported liking school more and experiencing less loneliness if they had a close relationship with their teachers. Students with positive teacher-student relationships also showed better performance on measures of academic performance and school readiness (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Schools provide opportunities for students to form an attachment or bond with a caring adult, a relationship that is demonstrated to increase a student's potential to overcome challenges

and experience success (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997). A key quality is the ability to identify one's strengths. Positive teacher-student relationships help students understand the importance of thinking and acting flexibly in the face of challenging circumstances and adversity (Neenan, 2009). Teachers have to make their students feel successful in the classroom to support the cycle of success leading to further motivation (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009).

Mentorship

Learning should occur in an environment in which staff and students value the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged learners and believe in their abilities to thrive. Researchers have explored the role of mentoring to encourage teachers to build and maintain supportive, caring relationships with students through various activities. Having a classroom community that involves teachers and students sharing appropriate aspects of their personal lives and participating in common activities will strengthen the relationship between teachers and students (Gambrell, 2007). Setting up specific structures to support mentorship and the use of effective practices among the entire staff seems critical not only for enhancing teachers' capacity, but also for supporting their morale and confidence (Villavicencio & Grayman, 2012).

A recent study by Baber (2012), a professor of higher education at the University of Illinois, interviewed 11 African American and three Hispanic males who were high school juniors or seniors or first-year students at three community colleges in Illinois. The men were participants in the College and Career Readiness of Illinois program, an academic preparation initiative being tested at seven community colleges in Illinois, which aims to reduce remedial coursework at college entry (Carillo, 2011). This research demonstrated how mentorship significantly developed personal characteristics to succeed, despite barriers.

To examine this challenging educational trend, Saenz and Ponjuan (2011) created a new

mentoring program named Project M.A.L.E.S. (Mentoring to Achieve Latino Educational Success). This innovative outreach-mentoring program focused on increasing Hispanic males' entry and degree completion rates at the University of Texas at Austin (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). It was determined to be effective in increasing the graduation rates of the students. The literature indicates that mentors can be family members, teachers, coaches, or school guidance counselors that serve as critical support systems for Hispanic students. Further recommendations included utilizing college students and other community members to serve as role models for Hispanic males in order to develop a culture of success in early grades. This can potentially provide the necessary knowledge, skills, behaviors, and supports needed to support Hispanic graduates (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011).

Resources

This gap of inequitable academic achievement will most likely continue to increase unless the causes are well defined and specific academic interventions are developed for Hispanics to support them in overcoming the obstacles they experience with college completion (Long, 2011). Research by Long (2011) explored the correlation between persistence and library usage in college. Targeted interventions were utilized in an endeavor to enhance the academic achievement of Hispanic students. Targeted instruction (TI) is an individualized intervention that targets students depending on their specific needs (Richburg-Burgess, 2012). It was determined that holistic assessments of students were essential to the development of TI (Richburg-Burgess, 2012). The instructional design must consider more than just the students' learning needs. Santamaria cited that the TI must also analyze academic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity differences and be culturally responsive (as cited in Long, 2011).

Findings from various studies concluded that children can maximize their potential from

opportunities for development, thus increasing academic achievement. In related research, Christiansen and Christiansen (1997) found that children who overcame adversity often reported having an interest, hobby, or skill that garnered them some form of positive recognition, which “seems to provide a means of developing and maintaining self-esteem and value and, in turn, increase resilience” (p. 3). Schools provide settings for students to engage in meaningful extracurricular activities that foster a sense of belonging and improved self-efficacy (Noguera, 2009). Whether it is academic, athletic, musical, or artistic, when students have experienced success in a task, their self-esteem and self-efficacy are improved (Winfield, 1994).

A major resource that schools should utilize is collaboration between teachers of ELLs, particularly those with knowledge of language development and disciplinary knowledge, to enhance ELLs’ academic performances. Research has demonstrated the importance of opportunities for students who speak more than one language to have their language and culture integrated within the curriculum. Students’ knowledge of academic subjects must be linked with developing their language skills. Schools benefit from a high quality ELL program that is designed to meet unique needs of ELLs (A Key Issues in Public Education, n.d.). Moreover, schools integrating language and content as well as the positive effects of hands-on, project-based, collaborative instructional approaches are more effective (Hakuta, & Santos, 2012).

The middle school experience is significant in determining future academic success (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010). Villavicencio (2013b) proposed three fundamental steps to turn around middle schools, such as addressing behavior, aligning needs, goals, and actions, and creating a positive work environment for teachers. In this study, principals and teachers identified the essence of establishing order in their school buildings as a vital condition for improvement. Principals specified an alignment between school-wide goals, staff actions, and

school needs. Furthermore, the principals of the turnaround schools reported that a necessary condition for improvement in their buildings was creating a positive school climate (Villavicencio & Grayman, 2012).

Balfanz found that the youths most at risk of incarceration were clearly identifiable by middle school and nearly all had “struggled profoundly” in school (as cited in Losen & Skiba, 2010). Schools should avoid out-of-school suspensions and provide fair and effective discipline in middle schools that support safe learning environments (Comer & Poussaint, 1992). Research indicated that students should not be prevented from the opportunity to learn, and strong and caring discipline should be used instead (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010). Unlawful discrimination in the use of exclusionary school discipline should be investigated. Villavicencio and Grayman (2012) recommended that middle schools can be reformed by increasing the use of data, especially data disaggregated by race and gender, on school discipline. Additionally, schools and districts with high suspension rates should be identified and provided technical assistance on effective alternative strategies (Villavicencio, 2013b).

High Quality Instruction

Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) disclosed that boys of all ethnic groups increasingly find achievement obscure and school an unreceptive environment. Having high quality, research-based, direct instruction is a key factor in providing students with necessary support to prepare students in ELA and Math for postsecondary education. Saenz and Ponjuan explained that one way to address the achievement gap is to restructure classrooms and curriculum, to emphasize learning through technology while recognizing that boys and girls learn differently (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). Winters (2010) revealed that charter schools could increase minority access to New York City’s esteemed high schools by offering a higher quality elementary and middle

school education than the traditional public schools system.

Charter schools were developed as an alternative to provide students at risk of failing public schools with a high quality education. Research by Winters (2010) reported an increase of access to New York City's esteemed high schools by offering charter schools. Recent research suggests that students benefit substantially academically from attending one of the city's charter schools (Winters, 2010). Data provided by the New York City Department of Education reveals that African-American charter school students were 60% more likely than their public school counterparts to earn a seat in one of New York City's specialized high schools in 2009 (Winters, 2010). For Hispanics, the rate of acceptance was twice as high for charter school graduates than for students from traditional public schools.

There are numerous ways educators can help create academic success for their students (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015). Daniels and Perry (2003) reported that teachers who use more learner-centered practices such as practices that show sensitivity to individual differences among students, include students in the decision-making, and acknowledge students' developmental and personal needs produced greater motivation in their students than those who used fewer of such practices. Oldfather indicated that teacher influence is one area over which the teacher has utmost control, so teachers must take advantage of this position and use it positively to motivate their students to be successful (as cited in Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015). Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) suggested that a democratic environment that promotes student choice inside a well-structured classroom creates an atmosphere that motivates students to learn.

Academic motivation, successful family and community relationships, and maintaining positive psychological and cognitive development are core components of biculturalism

(Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). Additionally, Ong, Phinney, and Dennis indicated that these were important protective cultural resources that allow Hispanic youth to succeed in school despite their socioeconomic vulnerabilities (as cited in Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013). Educators need to understand what motivates children, particularly males (Corcoran & Mamalakis, 2009).

Atkinson (2001) described motivation as the fuel that drives all humans in the quest for learning and knowledge (as cited in Tatum, 2009). Students' and teachers' motivation are critical indicators of success. Initially, teachers need to assist their students in developing a solid reading background in order to take positive steps toward their academic endeavors and ambitions. Strategies must be in place to increase males' desire to read, as gender plays a large role in students' motivation to read. Young boys also have developmental, gender, personal, community, national/international, and economic identities. Selecting and discussing texts through multiple identities is important for shaping meaningful literacy exchanges that will impact boys beyond a given lesson (as cited in Tatum, 2009).

Gambrell (2007) suggested interventions that address the unique needs of males involve weekly meetings that allow students to establish strong relationships and focus on literary skills. Middle school minority males must read books of high interest to their age appropriate peers. Research indicates that taking opportunities throughout the school day to read for entertainment encourages leisure reading (Gambrell, 2007). Through the increase in motivation and literacy skills, the gender achievement gap can be decreased, potentially resulting in the influence on the academic success and upward mobility of Hispanic males.

Students must participate and become actively engaged in lessons that are personal, meaningful, and relevant. Classrooms should be places where the students feel safe and comfortable, in order to take risks (Castleman & Littky, 2007). One strategy recommended by

Villavicencio and Grayman (2012) is to train school staff to prevent potential disruptive behaviors by offering socio-emotional support for students. School staff and principal should be physically present to prevent disruptions by attending to students' personal needs. Through meeting children's needs, modeling can teach children appropriate behavior as opposed to their maladaptive behaviors (Villavicencio & Grayman, 2012). Educators can encourage students to pursue things that are not traditionally associated with members of their group (Noguera, 2008).

To ensure a classroom that discourages segregation and promotes diversity, educators can ensure that students are not sitting in racially defined groups in the classroom. If teachers let students choose, they will more than likely to choose those whom they perceive to be "their own kind" (Noguera, 2012). For teachers, this can be as simple as mixing students and assigning them seats. Students can be assigned to groups in ways that ensure that students of different backgrounds have an opportunity to collaborate in small groups. Through this integration, students are more likely to gain familiarity with one another and may be more willing to break racial norms, thus forming friendships more naturally. This strategy is often far more effective than having an abstract conversation about tolerance or diversity (Noguera, 2012).

A substantial amount of literature emphasizes factors that contribute to persistence factors in Hispanics in post-secondary institutions. Persistence factors for Hispanic Community College students were indicated, such as academic experiences, college climate, time spent on homework, high grade point averages, and faculty/staff relationships. Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) found that positive experiences with staff and having a large population of Hispanic students were two major influences on the students' persistence decisions. Hispanics who perceived their campus as ethnically diverse were more likely to persist in college (Logerbeam, Sedlacek, & Alatorre, 2004).

Morales (2010) conducted a study on 120 Hispanic male community college students. Findings identified self-efficacy as the strategy most associated with academic success. This study identified the most effective counseling center services, financial scholarship programs, transfer center, library services, and academic advising. The individual factors that translated to academic success in this Hispanic community were high expectations, motivation to graduate, interest in a specific career, ability to speak/understand English, and relationship with their families. The institutional factor in this study most attributed to academic success was availability of student services.

Recommendations made by Morales (2010) indicated that customized programs are necessary to meet the needs of Hispanic students and foster transfer as well as relationships with four-year institutions and the students who transfer. In addition, Morales (2010) recommended a mentoring program within the community of Los Angeles where other successful Hispanic males support each other in community colleges. Similar findings by Serrata (2009) indicated success factors that develop persistence in community college students are motivation, planning, deferred gratification, breaking the cycle, having a career, and a perception of college as a way out of financial struggles.

Cabrera and Padilla (2004) designed a qualitative study to examine the role of culture in the academic achievement of two college students from immigrant backgrounds who graduated from Stanford University. They found that the cultural backgrounds of these students played a significant role in development of their sense of self, as well as serving as a source of heightened self-worth. Furthermore, both students served as translators between their new culture and family members, a role that caused each to learn to be more self-sufficient and responsible, thereby enhancing their sense of self-efficacy. Though uneducated, both students' mothers were

the driving force behind the students' academic attainment, and placed a high value on gaining an education (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). However, more research is needed to explore the academic achievement gap between Hispanics and other subgroups in order to increase the number of high school graduates that transition to college.

When surveyed, 88% of Hispanics ages 16 and older agreed that a college degree is necessary today (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Hispanic male representation in higher education has changed. In 1976, Hispanic males represented 55% of Hispanics in higher education. In 2004, 41% of all Hispanics enrolled in higher education were male. While Hispanic male enrollment in higher education has increased, female enrollment has increased even more rapidly. Hispanic male enrollment in higher education increased significantly for females (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

Saenz, Perez, and Cerna (2009) reported that even though the number of Hispanics attending college has actually increased steadily over the last few decades, the proportional representation of Hispanic males continues to slide relative to their female counterparts. The proportion of U.S. college students who were Hispanic increased from 4% in 1980 to 10% in 2000. In general, proportionally fewer college-age males are actually enrolling in college than in years past (Saenz, Perez, & Cerna, 2007). Hispanic students still have the highest and fastest dropout rates in the nation in light of showing a slight improvement (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Positive Initiatives

A significant gap in literature continues to exist that addresses factors which contribute to the number of Hispanic male graduates, specifically in New York City. The path of African-American and Hispanic males' towards college in New York City has attempted to be addressed

by the former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Young Men's Initiative (YMI). It was created in 2012 to address the challenges that hinder the advancement of African American and Hispanic men. The largest educational component of YMI is the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), specifically designed to increase the college and career readiness of NYC's African American and Hispanic males (Villavicencio, Bhattacharya, & Guidry, 2013). Klevan and Villavicencio (2016) documented the college-related outcomes and other indicators that help predict college readiness for African American and Hispanic male students. More initiatives in New York City are necessary to continue to address the plight of Hispanic males.

Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund reported New York advocacy organizations have joined forces as they allege that the New York City Department of Education and New York State Department of Education's high school admission process is discriminatory against African Americans and Hispanics (Latino Justice, 2012). As a result, they filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, stating that the entrance exam into specialized high schools is biased and it cannot ensure that there is any relationship between standards and students' test results. Their goal was to increase the acceptance of more African Americans and Hispanics in elite, specialized high schools in comparison to their counterparts.

Villavicencio's (2013b) contribution to the field comprised of the investigations of four dimensions of the lives of Hispanic and African American male students: education, criminal justice, employment, and health. In a partnership with New York City educators, city officials, philanthropists and others, they determined it was necessary to improve college readiness and career outcomes for African American and Hispanic males. NYC's YMI is currently the largest development of its kind in the country as its goal is to improve outcomes for African American

and Hispanic males. Expanded Success Initiative is now providing assistance to 40 public schools in New York City to help improve college and career readiness (Villavicencio, 2013b). Villavicencio's research served an instrumental role in enhancing academic success in the lives of Hispanic and African American male students in New York City. The Education Equality Project created an international report that stated, "the persistence of educational achievement gaps imposes on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession" (McKinsey & Company, 2009, p. 6).

According to Saenz and Ponjuan (2009), a comprehensive agenda must address early childhood education through college and emphasize family and community engagement; college and career-ready curricula; linked academic and social supports, and; affordability, transparency, and financial literacy (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). These studies concluded that increased educational opportunities for Hispanics is a national imperative. All educational institutions at all levels—local, state, and federal government; the private sector; community-based organizations; foundations; and Hispanic organizations—must act to increase equitable, educational opportunities for American Hispanics (Noguera, Hurtado, & Fergus, 2011).

Summary

In this chapter, I identified the framework of Critical Race Theory, which guided this study. This chapter contains discussion about significant factors that influence the retention of Hispanic males. Factors that were investigated in this research are low SES, language acquisition, cultural factors, lack of resources, and achievement gap between genders and races. Factors that contribute to the retention of Hispanic male graduates were investigated, such as providing access to resources, positive male mentorship, positive teacher-student and parent relationships, strong social supports, and accessibility of academic resources. The field is

saturated with research that focuses on factors which influence the persistence of Hispanic males in post-secondary institutions. Limited research has been conducted on challenges Hispanic males encounter; however, there is insufficient research on the contributing factors which influence high school completion of Hispanic males, particularly in New York City.

There are scarce initiatives in New York City that help support the achievement of African American and Hispanic males, but none that focus on the unique factors that solely affect Hispanics. This literature can potentially provide awareness of the necessity to improve the trajectory of the academic and socioeconomic plight of Hispanic males. This research contributes to literature as it will attempt to address the severe dilemma of the deplorable rates of imprisonment and attrition within this marginalized group and the actions utilized to navigate and overcome those barriers. Further research on factors that improve the quality of lives of other marginalized individuals can continue to benefit and enrich the field of research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Three is to describe the methods utilized in this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study that investigated the factors contributing to the retention of 10 Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. Chapter Three will thoroughly discuss this study's (a) design, (b) research questions, (c) setting (d) procedures, (e) researcher's role, (f) data collection, and (g) data analysis. The chapter concludes with a detailed summary of how I sought to investigate the contributing factors of retention of urban, Hispanic high school males, as they are a specific subgroup that is underserved in public education.

Design

All phenomenological research approaches draw on German philosophy and seek to understand the world or human experience as it is lived (Moustakas, 1994) investigated thoroughness in phenomenological research and concluded that a valid, phenomenological study must take into consideration the rigorous and appropriate procedures that provide insight in terms of illumination about a specific phenomenon. This approach attempted to accurately portray real, firsthand accounts of the event or phenomenon of interest (Schwandt, 2007). A qualitative study was utilized instead of providing a broad view of a phenomenon that can be generalized to the population.

Van Manen (1990) described phenomenology as both interpretive and descriptive. In this study I attempted to describe the factors that guided the participants towards successful completion of high school. Perspectives were integrated with the philosophical assumptions that constructed examinations of the people studied, and the changes that were needed, with the goal of identifying factors that influenced the specific subgroup of urban, Hispanic males (Creswell,

2007). Moreover, the phenomena of this study was examined through the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Additionally, I sought to make deep connections from each of the focus group and interview responses of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

This study was conducted from an advocacy worldview with the ultimate goal of making schools aware of the struggles of the specific subgroup of Hispanic, adolescent males. This worldview can be described in this manner:

An advocacy/participatory worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. This research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. (Creswell, 2009, p. 9)

Phenomenology offered me the ability to examine participants' cumulative experiences as they relate to a single event. Moustakas (1994) viewed experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of a phenomenon with the person experiencing the phenomenon. I selected a transcendental phenomenological design for this study as it required me to avoid bias and prejudgments (epoche) by bracketing myself out of the study. It also allowed me to see the phenomena for the first time. Additionally, Moustakas (1994) emphasized that in phenomenological research "I, the experiencing person, remain present. I as a conscious person, and not set aside" and "with an open, transcendental consciousness, I carry out the Epoche" (p. 87). In Giorgi's approach (2007), this was performed by seeking psychological

structures and to employ the psychological, not the transcendental reduction. This means that “only the objects of the experience are reduced, not the acts” (Giorgi, 2000, p. 65).

Reflexivity is the meaning given to events and situations that are shaped by people’s experiences as social beings. Reflexivity entails the researcher being aware of his or her effect on the process and outcomes of research based on the premise that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower. According to Patton (2002), reflexivity helps the qualitative researcher to become more cognizant of his or her beliefs and assumptions (as cited in Creswell, 2007). Having been a resident in East Harlem for 13 years provided me prior knowledge of some of the experiences these participants reported during data collection.

Research Questions

The research questions attempted to investigate the phenomenon of factors which contributed to retention of urban, Hispanic male graduates. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school?

Research Question 2: How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion?

Research Question 3: How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals?

Setting

Researchers should search everywhere in the world for lived-experience material that might reveal its fundamental nature (van Manen, 1990). This study was conducted in my community, East Harlem, New York. East Harlem consists of a 30 block radius between East

97th Street and East 125th Street. During the data collection process, I was able to spend time in the field observing three participants in their natural environment of the community in East Harlem. Three times throughout the study, I observed them walking down the street in East Harlem with some friends and sitting in a public library before interviews and a focus group session.

Hispanic males are much more likely to drop out of high school than other males. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that in 2004, 29% of Hispanic males 18 to 24 years old were high school dropouts, compared to 7% of Caucasian males and 14% of African American males (as cited in Serrata, 2009). In 2011, 25 districts were identified with the highest dropout rates in the United States. New York City led the nation with 39,669 students that were not expected to graduate. This indicates that one out of five students will not complete high school in New York City (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011).

This community was selected because, historically, it has been recognized as being comprised of a large population of Hispanics, as its nickname is “El Barrio.” Additionally, the neighborhood has a significant number of “failing schools” and an influx of public charter schools have been created in order to offer an alternative to public schools. Subsequently, East Harlem is experiencing a shift in demography due to gentrification within the community. Additionally, pseudonyms were given for the other neighborhoods, public libraries, community center and schools depicted within the study. Despite the changes in this unique community, limited empirical data have focused on the specific neighborhood of East Harlem.

Participants

Sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too large that it is difficult to extract thick, rich data. However, the sample should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve data

saturation, theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), or informational redundancy (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Purposeful sampling is the advanced knowledge of how the outcomes would appear. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued, “All sampling is done with some purpose in mind” (p. 199). Each participant was selected for his ability to provide information on retention due to specific experience with the phenomenon being investigated; in depth knowledge could be drawn from the data collected from this group (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Using a purposeful sampling framework, 10 participants that shared similar cultural backgrounds were asked to volunteer in the study. Participants in this study were identified as Hispanic public high school male graduates based on acquisition of a traditional high school diploma. Identified participants were bounded by their SES, ethnicity, age, gender, residential address and successful completion of high school. More specifically, participants were self-identified Hispanic males who were traditional high school graduates, between 18-28 years of age, and residents of a 30 block radius between the streets of East 97th Street and East 125th Street in East Harlem, New York. The National Center of Educational Statistics (2012) reported that the percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch includes all students at or below 185 % of the poverty threshold. Therefore, the participants were selected based on their eligibility to receive free or reduced lunch in high school. Additionally, the participants that were selected attended various public high schools, including charter and private schools, within the East Harlem community and were identified by school transcripts.

Snowball sampling is a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of similar participants. This method can be useful for identifying a small number of key cases that are identified by a number of key or expert informants as important cases or examples (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This

sampling procedure was appropriate for this study as it involved utilizing well-informed people to identify critical cases or informants who have a great deal of information about a phenomenon.

Upon initial selection of participants, I utilized snowball sampling to ask participants for friends, family members, and colleagues to participate in the study who met the specified criteria. The final number of participants (10) was determined based on data saturation. I continued interviewing participants until data saturation was achieved (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). This was determined because I was no longer seeing or hearing new information in the participants' responses. To ensure confidentiality, participants were given pseudonyms. Additionally, participants were not provided any financial compensation for taking part in this study.

Procedures

I obtained Liberty University IRB approval to begin performing this qualitative study (see Appendix A). Upon receiving IRB approval, the following procedures for participant selection and data collection were performed. Initially, I sent 75 recruitment emails (see appendix B) to colleagues and neighbors requesting potential volunteers who might be eligible and interested to participate in the study. The email requested that potential participants follow up with me via phone or email to identify eligibility and interest to participate in the study.

I have had a strong relationship with neighborhood high schools and local colleges and also inquired about potential participants that met the criteria. Since high school graduation lists are public information, I was able to obtain lists of East Harlem's public and charter school graduates in websites and local newspapers. The potential participants were asked by colleagues to contact me via phone or email if interested. With participants' verbal consent, colleagues and

neighbors asked the potential participants for permission to provide me with their contact information.

Additionally, I requested that colleagues from local colleges solicit details about the study to eligible students. The prospective candidates were asked to provide contact information and/or to contact me to determine eligibility. Potential participants were identified and contacted via phone call or email for initial meetings. I answered any questions the participants had concerning the study and an appointment for an in-depth one-on-one interview was made. Also, my colleagues and neighbors utilized snowball sampling by introducing me to the potential participants via email or face-to-face meetings.

All initial meetings were arranged in a public library where I provided an overview of the procedures and expectations of the study. During the meeting, I determined that the participants agreed and were eligible to participate in the study. Once the eligibility criteria were met, the participant read and filled out a consent form and FERPA release form. This provided me access to school transcripts in order to confirm free/reduced lunch status and eligibility in the study. Data included potential participants' addresses, and dates of high school attendance and graduation. Each participant received a copy of his signed consent form and FERPA form at the initial meeting. Also, participants were informed that they could contact me if any clarification was needed after data collection began. I lived in the community and began data collection by fully immersing myself within the East Harlem community to learn about participants and their families.

Data collection included interviews, one focus group, and document analysis. I used the dissertation committee as the experts in the field of education to peer review interview and focus group questions in order to ensure quality of questions and wording. I made revisions based on

the feedback from the committee. Audio-recording on two devices occurred during interviews and focus group sessions to ensure validity and accuracy. I continued collecting data until data saturation was achieved (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Data saturation was defined by participants' responses and occurred after 10 participants' responses during interviews and one focus group. Additionally, the dissertation committee reviewed post-data analysis and provide feedback. I monitored and adhered strictly to these procedures so that this study could be replicated at a later date.

The Researcher's Role

I am currently a professor at a college in Manhattan and have been a Special Education Coordinator at a charter school in East Harlem. Within my experiences, I have observed numerous cases of over-identification of Hispanic males in special education, especially in sixth through eighth grade. Despite the different cultures shared between my former students and me, my relationships with them allowed me multiple opportunities to observe their academic and social challenges. The challenges they experienced were high suspension rates, low standardized test scores, racism, isolation, language barriers, and limited relationships with peers of different ethnicities.

As a member of the East Harlem community, I also observed negative stereotyping by other cultures of this subgroup when participating in activities like walking and playing soccer in Central Park. Additionally, in my commute to work, I observe dozens of Hispanic, adult males standing in line at food pantries and at local not-for-profit agencies seeking job search support, employment skills, and government benefits. These negative observations have been disturbing, thus implanting a passion in me to actively support this marginalized subgroup.

In my career, I have also observed some successful Hispanic males that have overcome risk factors in order to graduate from high school and become financially independent and successful. This further instilled my passion to identify the contributing factors that supported academic achievement for Hispanic males. My desire was to investigate the factors that have potentially influenced the retention of the participants. I attempted to become the “human instrument” and not demonstrate any bias to the participants throughout the duration of the study (van Manen, 1990).

As a professor and member of the community, I have developed strong relationships with Hispanic males in the community. To avoid bias, I purposefully selected participants with whom I did not share a personal relationship. Prior to the study, I was unfamiliar with the participants. Seven participants were recommended by colleagues or friends and the remaining three participants were connected through the first participant I contacted. Two participants were former students of a school at which I was once employed, but there was no prior emotional involvement with either of them. This allowed me to investigate their lived experiences that contributed to their abilities to successfully complete high school.

Data Collection

A critical aspect of qualitative inquiry is the utilization of rigorous and varied data collection techniques. The “data” of human science research are human experiences (van Manen, 1990). According to Husserl, descriptive phenomenological philosophy as a basis for a phenomenological theory of science means that both the data collection and the data analysis need to follow descriptive phenomenology in order to achieve rigor (as cited in Englander, 2012). Giorgi (1985) stated that the major characteristics of a phenomenological psychological method include the researcher looking into the participants’ points of view, such as the

realization of subject consciousness perceived in the objects in order to understand human phenomena as it is lived and experienced. Qualitative research can be conducted in numerous ways, but in order to meet all the criteria of science, one needs to consider the consistency of method following (Englander, 2012).

The data collection utilized in this study was composed of 10 semi-structured interviews, one focus group, and document analysis. An important component of data collection is sketching ideas to highlight certain information in the description. Preparing and organizing data (transcripts of interviews, focus groups, and document analysis) described the case and its context (Creswell, 2009). LeVasseur (2003) recommended that researchers suspend their understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity and decide how their personal understandings were introduced into the study (as cited in Creswell, 2009).

Researchers should bracket themselves out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). To achieve this goal, my assumptions were bracketed out and the participants' experiences were described. Then I was able to determine the essential structures of the phenomenon or experience under study (Cohen & Omery, 1994). Since a person's thoughts and ideas tend to be inherently biased, the values and thoughts of a person can be represented in his or her data.

In order to remove my preconceptions, beliefs, and assumptions out of the research, I utilized reflexivity, which is defined as actively engaging in critical self-reflections to avoid biases (Johnson, 1997). I practiced reflexivity by creating a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and making regular entries during the research process. In these entries, I recorded the methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflection upon what was happening in terms of my own values and interests (see Appendix G).

All participants were provided equal participation in the interviews and focus groups. During the data collection process, the analysis occurred as a natural engaging process of actively paying attention to the descriptions that each participant voiced throughout the interviews (Creswell, 2007). The primary source of data for the inner perspective is interviewing. Patton (1990) stated that the purpose of interviewing is specifically “to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” (i.e. the perception of lived experience), and that is exactly the target on which this phenomenological study focused (p. 92).

Interviews

The individual descriptions of the various childhood and adolescent experiences in elementary, middle, and high school of each of the 10 Hispanic high school graduates were explored through semi-structured individual interviews. Utilizing several sources in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation is important (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). One individual interview was conducted with each participant, and each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The interview questions were scripted and peer reviewed by the dissertation committee to ensure consistency throughout all interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded by using two digital recording devices. There was no missing information or additional clarification needed, but the participants consented for a second interview to occur if necessary. Additionally, interviews were conducted after the participants and I communicated and developed a rapport and a level of comfort that encouraged them to share their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and then coded into themes.

Interviewers primarily use open-ended questions in order to provide rich, deep data. It is important to build on and exploring participants’ responses to those questions (van Manen,

1990). Thirteen open-ended, in-depth interview questions were developed to facilitate the participants' descriptive responses of factors that contributed to their ability to graduate. Two questions provided opportunities for participants to add information and/or clarify responses that may have been omitted (see Table 1). The purpose of the questions was to allow the participants to make meaning of their experiences and reconstruct their experiences within the topic. These questions indicated that their stories are important (Seidman, 2006).

As cited by Zabloski (2010), Riessman noted that the stories of the participants are "long, full of asides, comments, flashbacks, flashforwards, orientation, and evaluation" (p. 82). Riessman also states that the narratives of the participants provide a connection between their stories, stresses and setting, and the re-presentation of the story on the day of the interview. Bruner (2004) stated that these individuals "have now sat for their portraits . . . and their stories yield rich texts" (as cited in Zabloski, 2010).

Each participant's narrative exemplified his perception of the positive factors that influenced his decision to graduate from high school. It also served as a snapshot of the participant's lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In research, it is important to contribute to one's pedagogical thoughtfulness and allow textual reflection of the researchers' ability to interpret the sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld (van Manen, 1990, p. 2). Prior to the data analysis, I fully immersed myself in the data by diligently reading the field notes and each professional transcript of the interview sessions three times.

At the end of the interviews, I explained to the participants the purpose and necessity of obtaining high school transcripts. Additionally, I requested documents such as transcripts, memos, newsletters, journals, emails, certificates, college acceptance letters, or any artifacts and documents to be analyzed that supported the influences contributing to the graduates'

persistence. After the interview, I emailed five participants to request additional permission to access transcripts through the New York City Department of Education. These participants provided consent and followed protocol to gain transcripts from their public school and provided copies of the transcripts to me via email.

The interview questions investigated the participants' biographies and lived experiences that supported them in their achievement of completing high school. Questions one and two were ice breaker questions that set the tone of the interviews and created a rapport between me and the interviewee. Questions three, four, and five emphasized the roles of significant relationships in the participants' lives. The purpose of questions six and seven was to differentiate between the perceived risk and protective factors that contributed to the individual's success.

Question eight allowed the participants to establish an understanding of the experiences that supported them in their academic careers. Question nine was developed to provide insight on potential changes in schools based on their perceptions. The purpose of question 10 was to understand how the participants' cultural backgrounds and values provided them the power to overcome barriers. Question 11 was significant because it explored the participants' families' educational values. Questions 12 and 13 identified significant role models and relationships that supported the graduates. Questions 14 and 15 afforded me an opportunity to contact participants for additional information and clarification to questions that may not have been addressed in the interviews or focus groups. Table 1 contains a list of the interview questions.

Table 1

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

Questions

Introductions

1. What would you like to tell me about yourself?
2. How would you describe your experiences as a high school student?

Relationships

3. Describe relationships that have contributed to your success.
4. Describe the most significant relationships experienced during youth/adolescence.
5. Describe how your closest relationship supported you during your youth/adolescence.

Education

6. Please describe your challenges during elementary, middle and high school years.
7. Describe some of the positive factors that supported you in your academic career?
8. How do you believe these experiences have affected your ability to graduate from high school?
9. Are there specific things that schools could do to improve educational experiences?

Cultural

10. How has your Hispanic culture influenced you in terms of your education?
11. Please describe both your mother and father's views toward education and their role in your education.
12. What role models did you have in your life?
13. Please describe any mentoring relationships with family, church or community members which may have influenced your decision to graduate.
14. Is there any more information that you would like to add on this topic?
15. Are you willing to answer additional, clarifying questions if necessary by either person, email or phone?

Focus Groups

Focus groups can potentially be more effective than observations and document analysis because the participants can have the opportunity to hear what others have to say about the topic (Elliot, 2010). Themes can potentially emerge from the in-depth interview transcripts and through a group discussion to gain additional insight on the phenomenon that may not have been attained through the individual interviews (Creswell, 2009). One focus group was established and utilized to collect data from the interviewees. All participants were asked to participate in discussions but only three participants consented to participate in the discussion.

A date and time was arranged that was convenient for the participants, and I provided refreshments to encourage active participation. I secured permission to use the site of a community center which was centrally located near the participants' residences or jobs. The focus group session occurred during the summer when the participants were not attending school. The session was rescheduled three times per request by two of the participants. On the rescheduled date, the focus group participants arrived on time to begin the session. The purpose of the groups was to stimulate dynamic conversations that led to discovery, exploration, direction, and depth about the topics that were discussed.

The structured focus group was used to gather more information on the participants and was audio recorded to ensure accuracy. The focus group session was audio-recorded using two digital recording devices. The session lasted approximately one hour and began with an introduction and opportunity for each participant to meet each other. The sessions occurred in the community center in a face-to face setting with the purpose of observing the respondents as they engaged in discussions. I anticipated having one session per group, unless extracted data were incomplete. I informed the participants that I may request an additional session with the

participants; however, all anticipated data were collected and data saturation occurred by the redundancy and repetition of the participants' responses.

Using a positive introduction that welcomed all participants, I facilitated the discussions and took notes throughout the discussions (Krueger, 1988). Prior to questioning, I provided an overview of the topic, the session's ground rules, and a copy of emerging themes compiled from interview transcripts to each participant. As the researcher, I was an integral part of the success of the group as the participant, facilitator, and recorder. I took detailed notes during the participants' responses.

Because I anticipated participants' prospective intimidation, I did not include a second moderator to participate and take notes. It is important to be objective and utilize non-verbal gestures to actively engage all participants equally in the discussions (Creswell, 2009). Morgan and Krueger (as cited in Marrero, 2013), reported the effectiveness of focus groups in studies involving Hispanic populations as they potentially avoid intimidation created by existing power structures. The goal of the focus group questions was to determine the participants' deep feelings, insights, and perceptions while probing for elicited responses (Umaña & Bámaca 1994). Table 2 contains a list of the focus group questions.

Table 2

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

Questions
1. What is your definition of success?
2. What did you like best about your high school experience?
3. Think back over all the years in school and tell us your fondest memory.
4. Suppose that you are in charge, what would you do to make the community better?
5. Are these categories and themes indicative of your school experiences?
6. In what ways, if any, do these categories influence each other?
7. Are some categories more important than others?
8. Is this summary accurate?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

After the responses to seven open-ended questions were provided, I provided a brief summary and concluding questions. To ensure that validity was not compromised, the questions did not inquire about personal issues that could potentially generate a calculated retort. The goal of question one was to provide an ice breaker question that sought to create a permissive and positive environment as it set the tone of the discussion (Krueger, 1988). The purpose of questions two and three was to elicit key ideas that needed to be probed more thoroughly (Arnold, Lesmeister, & White, 2008). The goal of question four was to investigate the participants' perceptions of what changes should be implemented to potentially enhance the community of East Harlem. Questions five, six, and seven were inspired by the study of Hispanic college student retention (Marrero, 2013). These questions attempted to investigate the

phenomenon by attempting to identify relationships between the categories and emerging themes. Inspired by Krueger (1988), question eight provided a brief summary of the main points of the discussions as the final question concluded the session and allowed the participants to share any ideas that were not previously shared (Krueger, 1988).

Document Analysis

Yin (2003) stated that the qualitative researcher is expected to examine a minimum of two sources of data in order to seek confirmation through the use of different data sources and methods (as cited in Bowen, 2009). I conducted document analysis through various documents. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) divide existing documents in educational research into three basic categories: Personal documents, official documents, and popular culture.

I analyzed personal documents that were provided by the participants. These documents included e-mails, college scholarship award letters, internship offer letters, diplomas, and newspaper articles. Additionally, I could have used official documents like transcripts and memos from schools or districts but only chose to review high school transcripts to verify SES and address of school. Popular culture documents may include movies, music albums, books, and advertisements. Popular culture documents were purposefully omitted during this study. These materials may allow researchers to inquire how participants and groups make meaning of the messages found there (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Through the review of various documents, I was able to identify and support the emerging themes within the narratives of the interviews and focus group. These data isolated the conditions that created the phenomenon that was being investigated (Bowen, 2009).

Data Analysis

According to Moustakas (1994), "In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the

primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted” (p. 52). In this study, the investigation and interpretations of the participants’ perceptions of the shared phenomenon were described through the analysis of the collected data from individual interview sessions, a focus group session, and document analysis. In the initial step in data analysis, I used reflective logs in an attempt to bracket out my biases, beliefs, and assumptions in order to allow a probe of the phenomenon being presented (Moustakas, 1994, p. 60).

Van Manen (1990) noted that “when we raise questions, gather data, describe a phenomenon, and construct textual interpretations, we do so as researchers who stand in the world in a pedagogic way . . . pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience” (p. 1). In this study, I analyzed and reported on the data in the collection of professional transcriptions of 10 interviews, one focus group, and in a review of documents. The interview style and rich data quality transcripts were peer reviewed by a college professor for appropriateness. Each interview’s data were reviewed three times, and five interview sessions were transcribed within 48 hours of each interview. A professional transcriptionist transcribed all audio-recordings of interviews and focus group to ensure additional accuracy.

Epoche

Setting aside prejudgments is called “epoche,” a Greek work meaning to refrain from judgment (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche can prepare the researcher to receive new knowledge “and see them again, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p.85). The phenomenon is to be known innocently through a “purified” consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is the first step of all phenomenological research, and I utilized it to bracket out all biases while investigating the phenomenon in this study (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenological Reduction

In transcendental phenomenology “the researcher...analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). The goal of Phenomenological Reduction is to “illuminate the essence of the phenomenon as it provides the researcher the ability to pre-reflect and reflect” (Husserl, 1931, p. 114). Utilizing the process of phenomenological reduction means giving complete attention to the phenomenon that is currently appearing to one’s consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). In order to do this, the researcher has to bracket out personal and theoretical knowledge. This step requires the researcher to look and describe again and again while referencing structural qualities (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, I analyzed the document analysis and transcript data from interviews and focus groups using coding, bracketing, and phenomenological reduction to identify recurring themes in the participants’ experiences.

Upon analysis, “coding” was utilized to disaggregate data into emerging themes. I used direct interpretation and naturalistic generalizations of what was “learned” (Creswell, 2007). I also used open coding to analyze and categorize relevant concepts. Through this initial open coding analytical process, I translated the raw data throughout the interview transcriptions and the document submissions using a line-by-line approach (Moustakas, 1994). These were only a few of the methods that I used to ensure that the interpretations were of integrity and integrated within the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007).

These professional transcripts and field notes were repeatedly read, carefully reviewed, and discriminantly studied three times for commonalities. Initially, during the first round of manual coding, I used open coding and Nvivo coding. This initial process collectively established 146 unique codes/phrases from interview transcripts of the participants’ responses.

The data from the lived experiences of each of the participants was sorted to ultimately develop the emerging themes and subthemes. Each participant's narrative was compared to the previous one to identify similarities.

Second, I repeatedly read and carefully reviewed the transcript of the focus group session. I also discriminately studied the responses three times and compared to match potentially new data with the previously established codes from the personal interviews. Through analysis of the focus group transcript, 22 unique codes that did not match any previously established codes were established into new codes or themes (Frieze, 2014; Saldana, 2009). The data were recoded and sorted again and fused into 73 codes and concepts. Afterward, the codes were further merged into 40 codes.

Next, I categorized all of the data and organized these codes into established categories. The process of horizontalization supported my ability to identify apparent commonalities and/or differences in the narratives. This process ensured elimination of any overlapping statements and highlighted significant statements, phrases, or words expressed by the participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Ten codes that were not assigned to a specific category were then removed (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, 30 coded categories were developed and could not be categorized any further into meaning units. Through the interpretations of narratives in both interview and focus group responses, various categories were further examined to isolate subthemes. Initial, original subthemes which influenced the participants' ability to graduate from high school were identified, such as specific relationships with teachers, parents, families, friends, coaches, high school counselors/advisors and advisors from after school organizations.

Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation facilitates the researcher in obtaining structural themes from the

descriptions that have been acquired through phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994).

To engage in imaginative variation, the researcher varies different aspects of the phenomenon to the present one in order to determine which aspects are crucial to the emergence of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2007). The aspect is significant if the imaginative elimination of an aspect causes the phenomenon to subside. Moustakas (1994) explained this further:

The task of Imaginative Variation is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. . . Describing the essential structures of a phenomenon . . . In this there is a free play of fancy; any perspective is a possibility and is permitted to enter into consciousness. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97-98)

This systematic data is then to be predisposed to imaginative variation.

Through the lens of various perspectives of data analysis within this study, the essences of the phenomenon can potentially be identified. The investigator must determine if the transcriptions explicitly listed themes (Moustakas, 1994). Upon careful review and analysis of the rich, thick data extrapolated from the graduates' narratives, the theme of positive relationships unfolded. However, through additional review and interpretation of the data, the subthemes were inconclusive as each participant expressed unique, various relationships which provided different attributes that supported the graduates in various ways.

Adhering to the principles of transcendental phenomenology, the researcher should yield a fresh perspective of the phenomenon as opposed to the researcher's interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). I was then compelled to use a renewed, transformed lens to construe the innate meanings behind the various, positive, significant relationships which transpired through the stories of the

participants' lived experiences. I was cognizant that the universal, illuminating themes and subthemes were more comprehensive and intricate than the specific types of positive relationships identified.

Synthesis of Texture and Structure

NVivo software (11th edition), created by QSR International, was utilized to disaggregate the data by identifying patterns and assigning codes to those patterns and to store the data. Codes were grouped into concepts, which were used to produce the theories around the narrative structure which were composed. Furthermore, an audit trail was developed to provide a clear pathway leading from the data to the themes (Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012). From these themes, the researcher “develops a textural description...[of] what the participants experienced and a structural description...[of] how they experienced it in terms of conditions, situations or context” (Creswell, 2007).

The goal of data this analysis process was to provide opportunities for increasing the density and saturation of recurring categories, as well as for following up on unexpected findings. Interweaving data collection and analysis in this way may increase insights and clarify the bounds of the emerging phenomena. Also, the purpose of it was to understand the essence of the experience using the structural and textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

Trustworthiness

In this study I developed rapport with participants in order to obtain rich, thick data from interview and focus group questions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed the significance of research having procedures that increase credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. To ensure additional validity, interviews and focus group session were audio-

recorded on two devices to ensure accurate and audible sound. Transcript data were analyzed and compared to audio-recordings for additional accuracy (van Manen, 1990).

Member checking was utilized as it required me to check for appropriate interview style and rich data quality as I reviewed transcripts (van Manen, 1990). To increase internal validity and ensure that my conclusions were grounded in the data, all transcripts were returned to the participants to verify accuracy of the transcribed data. Since much social research is founded on the use of a single research method, and as such may suffer from limitations associated with that method or from the specific application of it, triangulation offered the prospect of enhanced confidence.

Webb, 1966 defines Triangulation as the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question, as it uses a series of triangles to map out an area (Moustakas, 1994). An early reference to triangulation was in relation to the idea of unobtrusive method proposed by Webb (1966), who suggested, “Once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced. The most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes” (p. 3). I used triangulation of data (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990) by providing three different methods of data collection.

Consequently, the triangulation of data allowed me to create the development and categorization of identification of themes. The purpose of the document analysis was solely to triangulate the data to corroborate with the participants’ responses. These documents were not coded during the analysis phase but utilized to reveal the essence of the phenomenon of factors contributing to the low retention rates of urban, Hispanic males in East Harlem. For the purpose of this study, triangulation helped me reduce the issue of the bias of a single investigator (Patton,

1990).

Credibility

Credibility was established by the lived experiences and life stories of the participants. Koch (1994) stated that credibility involves the researcher practicing self-awareness through the explicit analysis of interview tapes and transcribed text (Koch, 1994). In this study, interview and focus group questions were peer-reviewed by the dissertation committee to make sure they were appropriate for obtaining rich, thick data that answers the research questions (Koch, 1994). Furthermore, I was mindful of my own actions to avoid misleading and manipulating participants' responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability can be determined by the documented, traceable, and logical process of the research (Schwandt, 2007). Schwandt (2007) states that "An audit trail includes decisions and their rationale at each step in the study—raw data, field notes, data summaries, theoretical notes, and analysis. The audit trail helps to assist the reader in evaluating the soundness of the study" (p. 56). I used an audit trail in this study as an attempt to ensure that methods were logical and traceable, and all procedures, data, and notes were documented and stored. I used Nvivo software and assigned each participant a number, which was included in the code book. To ensure confidentiality, the codebook was maintained and stored in a separate location from existing raw data.

Transferability

Transferability was achieved as I was solely responsible for monitoring and describing the changes that occurred in the setting and how these changes influenced the data (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). The rich, thick descriptions that developed through data collection may allow other researchers to replicate this research to obtain similar or different results. This technique provided a more complete context for the study and allows the reader to fully understand the phenomena of the contributing factors of retention in the participants. Moreover, this study can be extended for further research.

Confirmability

In an effort to increase the validity of the data, biases were documented in a reflexive journal as they evolved throughout data collection. In order to produce confirmability, the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study were documented (Trochim, 2006). To enhance this study's confirmability, I included direct quotations to support conclusions. To ensure additional confirmability of this study, bracketing was utilized to reduce any researcher bias (Creswell, 2007). The audit trail was an additional attempt to provide confirmability (Schwandt, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must be developed prior to conducting a study, which is when researchers seek approval from IRB. Upon IRB approval, my method of identifying and contacting the participants was examined. Written consent to participate in the study and FERPA release forms was requested and obtained from all participants. Because I lived in the community of the participants, the customs and culture of the participants and sites were acknowledged; thus, sensitivity to the cultural differences was maintained. Potential ethical issues were addressed during data collection with respect for the site and the participants, and data collection did not create power imbalances and "use" the participants.

Ethical issues come during the data analysis phase when researchers do not side with

participants, shape findings in a particular direction, and do not respect the privacy of individuals as their information is reported. In the reporting phase of research, inquirers need to be honest, not plagiarize the work of others, refrain from presenting information that potentially harms participants, and communicate (Creswell, 2007). Due to the sensitivity of the identification process utilized and the depth of questions asked, the privacy of participants in this study was protected at all times. Participants were aware of the portion of the identification process that involved their ethnicity, as it was addressed with sensitivity and respect.

For additional ethical considerations, questions about legality of immigration status and origin of Hispanic backgrounds were purposefully omitted. It was clearly indicated that participants may decline interview questions that make them feel uncomfortable. However, all participants and focus group participants answered all questions. Pseudonyms for all participants and locations were assigned. In addition, participants' interview transcripts and images with captions were kept in a confidential location and only my dissertation chairperson and I had access to it. Moreover, all participants were made aware that any emails and/or electronic correspondence were secured and password protected to ensure additional considerations.

Summary

This chapter discussed the design for the study, which was a qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study with a naturalist inquiry approach. I described the factors that contribute to the retention of urban, Hispanic high school males in East Harlem, New York. Upon IRB approval, specific procedures for participant selection, data collection and data analysis were followed. Using a purposeful sampling framework, 10 Hispanic male participants that live in East Harlem were asked to volunteer in the study.

Data collection was composed of 10 semi-structured interviews, one focus group, and document analysis. All participants had equal participation in the methods of data collection. One semi-structured, individual, 60-minute interview session with each of the 10 participants occurred. Following data saturation (10 interviews), one 60-minute focus group was conducted. The interviews and the focus group session consisted of open-ended questions in order to probe for rich, deep data. The focus group session lasted approximately one hour and was audio recorded with two devices to ensure accuracy. The 15 open-ended interview questions allowed participants to reflect on previous experiences and relationships. Data analysis included coding and horizontalization to disaggregate the data into nine emerging subthemes and three themes. These procedures assisted me in investigating the phenomenon of factors that influenced the participants in completing high school.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present the results of a phenomenological study that investigated the factors that contributed to the retention of Hispanic male high school graduates in East Harlem, New York. This study explored the factors that assisted them in overcoming family and non-family risk factors in their academic and personal experiences. This chapter is divided into three main sections: (a) Participants, which includes individual descriptions of each participant as well as a group portrait; (b) Results; and (c) Summary. The Participants section serves as an overall depiction of the participants' ages, types of high school they attended, and current employment or college status. The overall distinct commonalities and differences of the group are explored and discussed in the group portrait sections. Through the participants' voices, these factors, with an emphasis on significant relationships, are thoroughly explored, interpreted and described in the results section. Chapter Four concludes by providing a summary (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008).

Participants

The participants were selected based on their SES, ethnicity, age, gender, residential address and successful completion of high school. In this study, I focused on the lived experiences of 10 self-identified Hispanic males between the ages of 18-28 years of age who received a traditional high school diploma from public, private and/or charter schools in East Harlem New York. Poverty is defined as living 125% under poverty line. These participants also received free/reduced lunch in high school, as verified by their high school transcripts. Table 3 gives an overview of the description of each participant.

Table 3

Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Background	Age	High School	Current Employment/ College Status
Adam	Two family household/ foreign born parents/ one sister	24	Small, private Parochial	College graduate/ potential international basketball player/ works part-time at a gym
Brian	Two family household/foreign born/ 2 older sisters/	22	Large, private Parochial	Full-time college student/ Senior/ Social Work Major
Charles	Two family household/foreign born parents/ only child	24	Large, public school	Part-time worker local gym in East Harlem
David	Raised by a single mother/ two younger brothers	20	Small, public school	Full-time college student/actively involved in specialized Biology programs
Eddie	Two family/ mother relocated from Ecuador/ father born in U.S.	21	Private Parochial	Full-time college student/ works part- time jobs and has completed four internships
Frank	Single parent household	20	Large Public	Full-time college student/works part-time jobs
Hector	Single parent/ moved from Puerto Rico, 9 th grade year	19	Small charter	Full-time college Freshman
Ivan	Two family/ U.S. born	25	Large, Public High	Full-time college student, Entrepreneur/ Real Estate /has 3 part- time jobs
James	Single parent/ U.S. born/ Currently living independently	21	Large public/ transfer	College graduate, Full- time career and entrepreneur

Kevin	Single parent/ U.S. born	20	during high school Small, public/ expelled/ attended three high schools	Full-time college student/ interns during summer at an agency
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Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants, schools, cities, colleges, teachers, mentors, advisors, counselors, coaches, families, organizations, etc. throughout the study. An individual description of each participant is included to provide details about specific background information (See Table 3). The age and current employment and/or or college status of the participants are listed. Additionally, the specific type of high school from which the participants graduated and the volunteered immigration status of the parents are indicated. All of the individual interviews occurred in a public library in the neighborhood of East Harlem, New York where the participants and the researcher live.

Adam

Adam, 24 years old, grew up in a two family home with a younger sister. He has consistently maintained positive, close relationships with his parents and sister. He is a graduate of a private parochial school and a college graduate. Prior to graduation, he attended three community colleges where he received scholarships and played basketball for each school. He is currently awaiting an offer to be an international basketball player and working a temporary, part-time job at a local gym in the area during this transition. He played basketball and baseball throughout his middle and high school years.

His overall interview responses about factors that influenced his ability to graduate from high school were positive. He stated that living in East Harlem made you tough and he described it as a factor that supported his ability to graduate from high school. During the interview, he

was asked to describe his high school experiences and he recalled enjoying high school a lot because of the relationships he made with classmates, teachers, and coaches.

Brian

Brian is 22 years old and currently a rising senior in a public college in another city and studying to be a social worker upon graduation next semester. Prior to attending this university, he received a full baseball scholarship each year at a two-year community college in NYC. Currently, he is not working while school is not in session. He spends his summer days playing baseball and spending time with his girlfriend and friends. Like typical college students, he lives with his parents during holidays and summers. Brian eagerly described himself as a 22-year-old Spanish male that likes to play baseball. He volunteered that he was Dominican and Puerto Rican and from the “projects” in East Harlem and excitedly beamed as he exclaimed, “I love my life!” Brian is an avid baseball fan and spends his summer days playing baseball as much as possible. He is from a two parent home that he shares with two older sisters when he is not attending college.

During his elementary and middle school years, Brian experienced minimal academic challenges. Self-identified as a “shy kid,” he graduated on time with his high school cohort from a tuition-based, private, parochial high school. When asked to discuss his challenges during elementary and middle school, he mentioned that he had difficulty staying focused. This was similar to his experiences as a high school student. He described his high school as being “very different.” He attended a large, single gender school for the first time during ninth grade. He further described high school as being exceedingly strict and difficult. He was frequently in trouble and always in detention.

Charles

Charles is 24 years of age, from a two family household, still lives at home and is currently working a part-time job at a local gym. He attended and played basketball at a community college for two years but would not provide further details. However, he mentioned that he is “transitioning” and “trying to figure things out.” He seemed exceptionally polite, was always smiling and frequently discussing his popularity. Additionally, he had three friends waiting for him outside in a café while we conducted our interview.

He experienced transitional issues moving from a different neighborhood during his middle school years. When asked to describe middle school, he anxiously giggled and responded that middle school was crazy for him. During his middle school years, he said that he did not do well in school. Consequently, he was retained in the seventh grade and received therapy to address his struggles. Charles also experienced numerous challenges that influenced him such as his neighborhood and several friends that made poor choices. In high school, he was forced to make a choice and “drop” his best friend that did not want to attend school and was going down a bad path.

David

Currently 20 years old, David grew up in a single parent home with his mom and two younger brothers. He has a relationship with his father but he has an extremely strong bond with his mother, brothers, and grandmother. David attended the elementary school where I once taught. He is currently a rising junior at a state supported university in upstate New York and he described himself as a “passionate scientist.” He was excited because he had been selected out of 600 students nationally to participate in a free, intensive, specialized 10-week biology summer

program at an Ivy League university in California. He explained how much fun he was having this summer and how appreciative he was of the opportunities that he has received.

David described being “bored” in elementary and middle school because he never found anything interesting. He expressed that he was always getting in trouble for not being able to focus and his mom was constantly receiving calls from his teachers and principal. Additionally, he added that he hated math in middle school. After transferring from a small charter elementary and middle school, he found himself isolated in his freshman year of high school and was finally exposed to something that interested him: science. He found his niche but still felt the loneliness of being the only person, particularly the only Hispanic male in the school to pursue chemistry. Furthermore, he acknowledged struggles of other Hispanic males such as neighborhood, poverty, negative influences, etc. He disclosed that his struggles were different, yet equally challenging.

Eddie

Eddie is a 21-year-old junior college student at a private, coeducational Roman Catholic University of approximately 16,000 students located in New York City. He is majoring in business and currently working as an intern for [FC] Studios. He is also working in retail now and is trying to find a balance between his job, internship, and school work. His dad was born in the U.S. and married Eddie’s mother at a young age when she relocated to the U.S. from Ecuador. He experienced many behavior problems in elementary, middle, and high school which caused negative labeling by teachers in each grade. After years of detention and suspensions in public elementary and middle school, he remembers how guilty he felt when his mom was being constantly bothered with phone calls and notes from his teachers and principals.

His mom then decided that she had no choice but to pay for Eddie to attend a small, private, parochial high school. Unfortunately, neither his behavior nor his academic

achievement in ninth grade improved. After consistent threats of suspension and expulsion, and his mom's financial struggle to pay for his tuition, he knew that he must shift his behavior and complete his work. It was a year later when he changed his trajectory and he credited that turning point to staying busy and "staying off the streets." He emphasized that young males in his neighborhood need to join teams, visit local libraries, community centers, pools, gyms and any other places that help them stay busy and "stay off the streets."

Frank

Frank is 21 years old, and a rising junior at a large prestigious liberal arts college based in New York City. He commutes approximately three hours to and from his college each day while he lives with his mother. He often works double shifts, over 40 hours a week at a restaurant in the neighborhood even while in school. He described elementary school as easy, except for minor behavior issues in second grade that were attributed to his diagnosis of ADHD at that time. He tried medication at an early age to treat the symptoms, but his mother did not like the side effects so the medication was discontinued. With a consistent positive attitude, Frank just tried to deal with the ADHD symptoms. Frank expressed that middle school was easy as he "breezed through it" and never had to repeat a grade or attend summer school.

By his own account, in addition to his impulsivity and anxiety, Frank's biggest challenges of applying for college, writing essays, taking SATs, and other events during his senior year were extremely stressful. Frank was the only participant that indicated a negative relationship with a teacher. During his senior year, he shared a traumatic experience with his English teacher. He perceived her as particularly strict, vulgar, and unfair. Although, he found this teacher and the transition difficult, he depended on his best friend and other friends to help

him through his difficulties. His overall perception of his high school experience was positive and he considered it enjoyable.

Hector

Hector is 18 years old and is extraordinarily religious and deeply rooted into his family and community. Born and raised by his mom in Puerto Rico, his mother urged him to move to NYC where she was born and raised. This created numerous struggles for Hector when he moved to New York independently at just 14 years of age and a freshman in high school. He lived with his aunt and two cousins until his mother joined him five months later. Upon his arrival to U.S. for the first time, he was not proficient in English and he attributed language as the cause of his difficulties and challenges in high school. In order to increase Hector's language proficiency and support his adaption to his new environment, he was integrated into an English Language Learners (ELL) class of 15 people during his freshman year. Unfortunately, Hector, along with 14 other students were forced to learn English by other methods due to the elimination of the program. Consequently, his limited language proficiency significantly affected his academics and ability to pass mandatory state exams (Regents) necessary for high school graduation.

He consistently failed math and english and had to retake Regents Exams every summer in high school. Hector did not think he was going to pass each grade, which would result in not graduating on time. Consequently, this fostered deep feelings of frustration, anxiety and deep depression until he was able to pass the Regents Exams. It was his senior year when he finally passed these specialized exams. Because of these difficulties, he regarded high school completion as an arduous task but he maintained his faith and stayed encouraged to endure the

challenges and graduate. He now feels proud and honored to attend college as a first generation high school graduate and college student in his family.

Ivan

Ivan is a busy, articulate 20-year-old college student who is majoring in criminal logistics. By the age of 20, he has recently obtained his associates degree, completed a real estate internship in Manhattan, and completed three other internships in various fields. He expects to earn his bachelor's degree within three years and graduate in April, 2017. He intends to use the real estate industry as his vehicle for financial freedom. Additionally, he is an avid reader, salsa dancer, athlete, and a dedicated son, big brother, boyfriend of two and a half years and wants to share his blessings with others. He expressed his appreciation for family, friends, and opportunities and mentors, especially his real estate mentors through [AIM] Organization. He knew he wanted to be successful but his grades were not reflecting that. Fortunately, he became involved in two mentoring organizations which provided him internships and opportunities for personal growth such as learning how to tie a tie, write a resume, apply for college, and learn interviewing skills in a professional environment.

Because of the mentoring organization he was involved in during his adolescence, his current goals reflect the organizations' goals as they include empowering personal growth and development in adolescent males in order to engage, educate, and empower them with competence, confidence, and character. Ivan strongly believes in being healthy and happy while he is committed to being an agent of change for the current state of adolescent, minority males. He admitted that high school was a struggle but he always knew that he was going to be successful somehow, even though he was not sure how. He is a firm believer that one must find

glory in their story. The glory is found within the struggle and now his college success reflects his resilience to endure his struggles.

James

James is a 25-year-old male college graduate who identifies himself as African-American and Hispanic. He spent his childhood growing up in subsidized housing with his mother and brother, who is one year younger than him. An exceptionally proud and confident entrepreneur, James transferred from a hispanic serving community college to a large college in New York City where he graduated Suma cum Laude with a Bachelor's degree in English Creative Writing. By his own account, his biggest accomplishment is his one-year-old son, which he described as the best thing happening right now. He recalled positive memories of his mother taking him and his brother to guitar lessons, piano lessons, and any activities that she could find, according to James. They attended the same schools until James graduated from high school six years ago. From a young age, his brother was his closest friend and they were exceptionally active in many community programs. This close relationship with his brother transpired to a professional relationship as James produces albums with him.

James explained that his high school experience was not pleasant. He attended a large public high school until 11th grade and did not like it at all because the area around there "got pretty bad." James and his brother witnessed a friend getting robbed and beaten after-school one day and there was nothing the police or school security could do about it. Additionally, he compared his high school experience to a hostile jail environment where the teachers were unfair and did not care. He confidently admitted that he has never been to prison in his life, but he definitely thought it felt like a prison in that school. His mom immediately transferred them to a

small high school where he had numerous positive experiences that encouraged him to graduate and pursue college.

Kevin

Kevin, a 22-year-old from a single family household as an only child, assertively and confidently introduced himself as a “statistical anomaly.” He is the first person in his family to attend college as he is currently a rising senior at Marshall University in upstate New York where he is studying political science and policy studies. Having had a strong interest in education policy and politics, Kevin is actively involved in his community and was a mentor through community-based organizations. Recently, he served as an intern with an agency that helps to promote equity and remove disparity between the academic achievement of minority males in New York City public schools. Additionally, Kevin is in the initial stages of acquiring IRB approval for research for his university to support the achievement of Hispanic males at his university.

In addition to typical adolescent issues in high school, Kevin’s problems consisted of an eating disorder and being a target of bullying. This led to a defiant attitude which caused disciplinary issues in high school. Kevin attended St. Joseph’s where the weight problem was disturbing for him through his freshman and sophomore year of high school. He adopted a healthier lifestyle and lost weight but constantly remained in trouble because of his issues with authority figures. As a result of these issues, he was expelled, and then transferred to [St. Ann’s Academy], a smaller catholic school. Kevin recalls high school as a decisive time in his life as he was going through many physical changes, and even an identity crisis regarding his race, ethnicity, and cultural background. It was not until his senior year that he realized that something needed to “drastically change” after he transitioned to his third high school. With

these new changes and supportive family and mentors, he was able to graduate on time from [C.E. High School].

Group Portraits

The most essential commonalities between the interviewed participants were a deeply rooted sense of support from their families, teachers, and community, specifically their mothers. Additionally, all participants reported a close, supportive relationship with their mothers and that these mothers shared strong values on education and supported them to complete high school. Every participant mentioned one adult that helped him see his future as a college graduate and ultimately become a high school graduate.

Frank, Hector, James, Kevin, and David were from single parent homes but still had overall positive memories of their childhood. David and Hector's fathers did not live with them during their childhoods or adolescences, but both described a current positive relationship with their fathers as adults. James, Frank and Kevin did not mention a relationship with their fathers at all during the interviews. It was not specified if all participants' parents graduated from high school, but four graduates shared that their parents are immigrants and did not complete high school.

The participants did not share if they have ever received Special Education Services but Frank was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Despite the similarities, various struggles existed for each individual such as typical teenage issues, negative peer influences, transitions, poverty, identity issues, single parent homes, and academic and behavior issues. Hector was the only graduate born outside of the continental U.S. and also experienced the challenges of limited language during his academic career. Moreover, he was the only graduate to receive English Language Learner (ELL) services in high school.

Out of the 10 participants, Adam and James were the only college graduates, as well as transfer students from community colleges prior to graduation. Additionally, they were first generation college graduates in their families. Out of the seven current college students, Brian and Kevin transferred from a Hispanic serving institution to their current university. All participants were able to graduate high school on time except Charles. Additionally, Charles was the only participant that was retained, and as a result received additional counseling services while he was in high school.

Furthermore, all participants except Charles were either in college or working full-time. Fortunately, there were programs and organizations focused on providing free, structured after-school activities, mentoring, and resources utilized by eight of the participants. All participants specified support and expectations of positive, significant relationships as being the most influential factor in their academic success. As interpreted by the researcher, mentoring relationships were identified as the most common, significant experiences among all of the participants.

Results

Through 15 open-ended, exploratory questions during individual interviews and nine focus group questions, the participants' voices were heard as they shared their narratives with me. Furthermore, the participants were allowed to provide any additional or clarifying information that they wanted to share. The participants' specific experiences and relationships with teachers, parents, families, friends, mentors, guidance counselors, and program advisors from after-school organizations were examined to identify reoccurring themes in their lived experiences. Through the lens of the critical race theoretical framework by Ladson-Billings (1998), the participants' responses ran parallel to the theory. Additionally, the themes and

subthemes highlighted in this chapter are also aligned with the culturally responsive teaching framework. By building on the strengths and the diverse learning needs of an increasingly multicultural society (Delpit, 1995), this framework supported by Włodkowski (2008), Baber (2012), and Billings and Tate (1995) was utilized as an additional lens to examine the participants' development of social capital as a contributing factor of the participants' abilities to persist and graduate from high school.

The next step was to understand the essence of the phenomenon in a composite description of the experiences representing the group as a whole. These rich, thick descriptions were developed through using the textual and the structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990, 2014). Through the initial analysis of the data, positive relationships immediately appeared as a common theme throughout the participants' narratives. I determined that the specific role of the relationships with the participants' teachers, mothers, and friends provided a deeper context to why the participants were able to persist and graduate from high school.

Through the interpretations and deeper analysis of the initial theme, the participants' perceptions of the attributes of these specific relationships needed to complete high school were evident. Three significant themes emerged: relationships, effective support structures, and social-emotional support (see Table 4). Consequently, the fundamental nature of support is what was elucidated through the participants' voices and became the overarching theme. Thus, nine subthemes were revealed within the data. The subthemes were identified as the characteristics of relational support that involve: (a) teacher support (b) family support, (c) friendships, (d) high school counselors, (e) structured programs, (f) extra-curricular activities, (g) providing a sense of accountability, (h) establishing a sense of belonging, and (i) enhancing identity development.

The most significant attribute these mentoring relationships was an increased gain of social capital.

Throughout their stories, participants shared commonalities as they identified a minimum of one familial and one school relationship at various times throughout their academic careers that helped them persist until high school graduation. Charles explained, “It was teachers really relating to the students, and it’s not even ethnicity and background, but it’s just feeling that they care.” David iterated, “There were a good number of teachers that actually cared about us, they care, yeah, for sure, and that made me want to do it too.” Mentoring relationships may also vary in emotional closeness, and unlike other types of relationships they can initiate formally or informally (Smith, 2013). The characteristics of mentoring relationships are defined and explored in this chapter.

Table 4

Summary of Themes and Subthemes with Coded Categories

Coded Categories	Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Teacher	167	Teacher support	Relationships
Mom	133	Family support	
Dad	66		
Parents	36		
Peer/Friend	110	Friendship	Effective Support Structures
College	149	High School Counselors	
Application Process	15		
Focus	52		
Mentor	111	Structured Programs	
Support	48		
Program advisor	9		
Motivate	24	Extra-curricular Activities	
Coach	24		Social-Emotional Support
Social	12		
Sports	5		
Role Model	59		
Trouble	32	Providing a Sense of Accountability	
Life Decisions	11		
Helped	75		

Close/Connections	35	
Relate	6	
Neighborhood	57	Provides a Sense of Belonging
Police/Cops	45	
Negative Experiences	34	
Transition	11	
Hispanic	6	Enhancing Identity Development

Theme 1: Relationships

Numerous studies in post-secondary education have established a connection between student involvement, mentoring/role modeling, and establishing positive relationships with staff in student engagement and college completion (Baber, 2012; Tinto, 1993; Wlodkowski, 2008). “Teachers are an important source of social capital for students, and teacher-based forms of social capital reduce the probability of dropping out by half” (Croninger & Lee, 2001, p. 333). Brian affirmed, “Certain people always wanting me to do better, always have positive relationships with people. And I give respect to make sure that respect is given back. So, that was a huge positive factor for me academically.” Adam reported, “I think those things have been my friends, my coaches, my parents, have been the backbone and have always been there for me.”

Subtheme 1: teacher support. Hispanic students said that developing relationships with faculty helped them develop a stronger sense of self-competence and academic ability. All participants discussed that they all had at least one teacher who was significant in their ability to

graduate from high school. “I had really good teachers there,” James conveyed. Eddie’s support stemmed from his teachers as he reflected, “Of course, like I said, the teachers are, there’s a lot of positive role models also helped in my graduation process.” Brian recalled:

It [school] always kept me level-headed until what had to be done. Positive factors, you know, people around me that do believe in me, and that they always tell me, don’t listen to what people say. Don’t listen to the negative things people have to say. There’s always positive in everything.

In Frank’s narratives, he described his relationship with his fifth grade teacher: “She loved me like a son.” He recognized his fifth grade teacher was one of the “great teachers.” Even with Frank’s limited attention span, he mentioned several behavioral issues that he had with peers and a few adults. He shared that he did not have issues completing his work but would “play around and finish the classwork in five minutes and then go back to talking to my friends.”

In Coleman’s study on working with gifted students with learning disabilities, students admitted that they succeeded primarily because they felt the teacher liked them and believed in them. These were one-on-one relationships between an experienced and less experienced person for the purpose of learning and developing specific competencies (as cited in Zabloski, 2010). David described his elementary school experience as one that was isolated. He was unable to find his niche, always “getting in trouble.” He found it problematic to keep engaged in elementary school. As David transitioned to high school, he found his passion in science and this was instilled in him by his ninth grade chemistry teacher, Mr. Mack. “And I mean, and that’s sort of where a lot of my motivation came from.” After David described a year of “a lot of new teachers,” a new teacher connected with David in such a strong capacity. This motivated David

by exposing him to science lessons and activities, thus changing his trajectory. Finding the commonalities between himself and his teacher forged a strong relationship that led to his engagement in other activities. This led to his academic success as he is currently a senior in college majoring in molecular biology.

Eddie experienced some similar behavior issues in elementary, middle, and high school. He stated that he knew that in his ninth grade year he had to make a choice and “turn myself around,” but the turning point did not occur until his sophomore year when he worked closely with a teacher to help him “focus.” Kevin, Brian, and Eddie’s identity and transition issues occurred when they entered the ninth grade and they described teachers being supportive during this difficult, transitioning year. Conversely, Frank was the only participant that did not mention this specific challenge. Charles stated, “Yeah. It [high school] was a cooler experience. I was older, so it was just cool.” Charles depicted the teachers as being great and they were tough teachers. “You didn’t really want to test them in any way. They were kind of tough.”

Subtheme 2: family support. Every participant identified the significance of his mother’s role in encouraging him to graduate from high school. A mother’s advocacy can be particularly important in promoting Hispanic students’ educational success (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2012). James’ most important influence in his life was his mother. He reported, “But the most significant relationship of your life during your youth, that’s my mom.” He added, “I knew that if I did not graduate from high school and college, I was being nothing or being here doing nothing.” He continued, “I mean I really feel like my mom was just not going to let me or my brother fail, feels like it wasn’t even an option.”

Armed with only a high school diploma, Kevin’s mother did everything in her power to provide him with the best education and the best possible resources. She always attended parent-

teacher conferences, was active in the school community, and was essential in Kevin's academic development. Kevin reported that she was not knowledgeable of the college application process but ensured he had access to people that were.

Charles reported, "It probably had to me my mom- my mom and my aunt, my aunt's a teacher. She held me to a standard, was, she was tough . . . But you know, my mom helped me out a lot tremendously [*sic*] of course." Like Charles, Frank stated that one of most important factors that contributed to his success was his mom. Frank reported that his relationship with his mom was more significant than his best friend and favorite teacher because she always helped him deal with his anxiety issues in school. Lumina Foundation (2012) indicated that Hispanic parents may not be able to advocate effectively for their children to succeed in educational institutions but they have high expectations for their children. Adam mentioned that his mom and dad were his biggest role models and mentors. Without a high school diploma and being an immigrant to the U.S., Adam's father owns his own apartment building. He announced, "This is something that I want to try and do." Furthermore, he respects his mother's dedication and ability to work hard. When asked about his mother and father's support, he responded, "They tell me to stay away from those type of kids, but those are type of kids [friends from neighborhood] I hang out with in my area that don't usually finish high school, that don't usually finish college."

Relationships within one's networks can develop expectations and serve to provide necessary information and resources (Wlodowski, 2008). Like Adam and the other participants, David stated, "Another good point is that even through those, like, struggles of me not doing well in my classes, when it came down to it, my family always told me that I could do better." Ivan's parents also recognized the value and importance of education. Ivan indicated that he

learned so much from his parents' relationship and he deemed it as a mentor and reason for his success. Ivan's mom helped him write essays to be accepted into two mentoring programs to further advance his personal development. These programs assisted him in writing his resume, which he used to begin an internship during his sophomore year (see Figure 1).

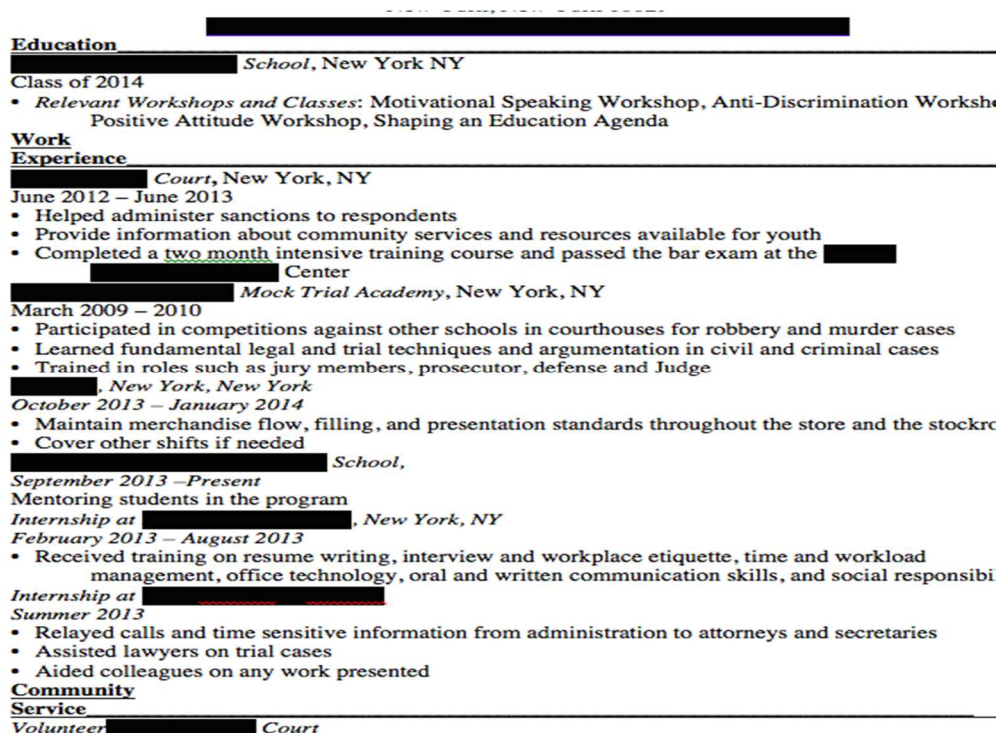


Figure 1: Resume created at [PEN Mentoring Program] that helped Ivan receive internship

Ivan's family provided encouragement to motivate him to perform better academically. When Eddie was asked to speak about his closest relationship, he answered, "Well, just their positive vibes like, you know, my mom of course knows me very well." Charles was influenced also by his family's value of education and stated that his mom influenced him because she went to college. His aunt went to college and both of his aunts are teachers. However, he stated, "My dad did not even attend high school but he educated himself like crazy. He's mad smart, totally

smart.” Charles also stated that he was aware of his parents’ high expectations so he had to make some choices and remove himself from a friendship during high school. He added, “I had to stop playing around and just put that relationship to the side for a minute and focus on what I really needed to do, just so my mom and my pops could be happy.”

Research by Harper and Associates (2014) indicated that parents of low performing young male students did not expect these low performing young men to go to college. Therefore, students without accountability were less motivated to strive for academic excellence (Harper & Associates, 2014). Like Brian, Charles, Eddie, and Frank, Adam described his parents as hard working, dedicated and extraordinarily valued education. He volunteered, “My parents are immigrants, so they came here with a vision, not only for themselves but for me; to go out, educate yourself. So, I think that’s big.” David’s family always pushed him and held high expectations for his academics and behavior. He described his behaviors in elementary school and stated, “which is why I didn’t do as well as my family says I could have.”

These relationships may also provide advice, companionship, emotional support, and socialization that at-risk youth cannot find at home (Harper & Associates, 2014). Kevin, like Charles and Adam, not only had his mother’s support but had another family member to encourage him: “who I was actually named after, my uncle,” he said proudly. Like Frank, Kevin never had a father figure in his life, but humbly stated, “This was the closest thing to it.” Like Charles, Hector also had a significant relationship with his aunt as he recalled hearing in high school, “Go back to your country.” His aunt consistently encouraged him as she often repeated, “Watch... just watch!” Hector was involved in ELL classes until funding stopped and he did not receive any language support during high school. He recalled being “depressed” and homesick for Puerto Rico but knew he had to stay in New York. He remembers feeling reassured and

more motivated after multiple conversations with his aunt.

She and his cousin played a tremendous role in helping him with the task of passing the Regents Exam. He vividly remembered failing the Regents Exam on the fourth attempt. “I failed again the algebra.” Regardless, his aunt would still say, “You’re gonna walk down that aisle, you are!” Exceedingly stressed, depressed and anxious, Hector studied the books, took test prep courses and paid to retake the exam again. After his fifth try on this algebra exam, he finally passed algebra. “I was like, ‘finally,’ so I was just ready for graduation . . . everyone helped me walk down that aisle and get that diploma” (see Figure 2).

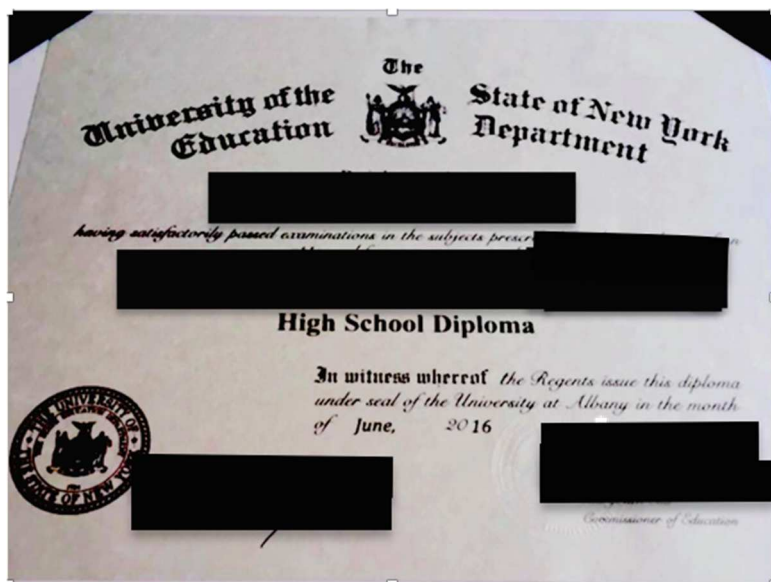


Figure 2. New York State High School Regents Diploma June, 2016

Subtheme 3: friendship. The relationships with others in one’s networks impose norms and expectations and serve as conduits of necessary resources and information (Coleman, 1988). Rather than seeking professional help, Hispanic students preferred sharing concerns with parents, friends, siblings, and significant others. Coping alone, or keeping problems to oneself was also preferred over seeking professional help (Lumina Foundation for Education (2012). When

interviewed about friendships, Frank's best friend, Michael, played an instrumental role his academic success. Frank stated that he was an important influence and a role model because he was a "genius." "He'd always check up on me in the sense, so he always asked me questions like, 'Oh. So, how's your school doing?'" Frank continued:

I try to pick the right crowd, not the wrong one . . . Because most of them around me were around my grade point average. They weren't slacking. They did their work . . . I hung around a group of people who actually was attentive and actually did their work rather than just like leaving the school. I'm going to skip the class. It wasn't like that.

Even as a young boy, Frank struggled with attention and impulsivity issues, but gained friends' support as a strategy to cope, especially during high school. He stated:

Handball, one, it helped me focus better because I would, not lash out but get all that energy out of me in handball and it would tire me out in the sense where, like it helped me, I guess pay attention in the long run.

Frank shared that he enjoyed helping his friends in his class. "It was an enjoyable four years, let me tell you that." He also commented, "In 9th grade, I like, helped people in my class with their tests. I'm passing all my test, they [teachers] told me to, like, look at and see what they did wrong and help them." David was the only participant that never mentioned having any specific friends. Due to their involvement in the after-school organization, Adam, Brian, and Charles forged a close friendship for several years. Charles described his closest relationship, "The most significant, powerful . . . would be my friend Alex." Ivan shared that he surrounded himself with people of the same mindset at school and in his after-school program. He continued:

One of my friends is Lionel, who, she was very smart. “Oh, you’re doing the suit?” So I kind of, I felt even I’m a barely passing student, it put me on a level with one of the smartest students there. So it’s like it kind of gave me, like, a little hope, like, ‘Okay, I can.’

Adam mentioned, “And honestly, my friends are my role models as well. I see them doing things that they dream of doing. They’re actually doing them now. That’s interesting for me, and to surround myself with role models as well.” This indicated how social capital and relationships provided necessary support and resources for these participants (Coleman, 1988).

Theme 2: Effective Support Structures

Studies show that racially and ethnically similar teachers significantly improved the high school graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students, increased the matriculation rate for Hispanic students, and reduced Hispanic students’ dropout rates. Additionally, it lowered the number of Hispanic students assigned to special education, boosted Hispanic students’ placement in classes for the gifted, decreased Hispanic students’ rates of suspension and expulsions, and increased African American students’ enrollment in advanced math classes (Coleman, 1988).

Effective support structures were identified 449 times throughout the narratives. The subthemes high school counselors, structured programs and extra-curricular activities were identified in 216, 168, and 65 codes, respectively. Through the participants’ responses in interviews and focus groups, the code “college” was recorded 149 times within their narratives. Support through structured programs was coded in 168 statements throughout their responses. Eight participants reported that structured programs provided academic support, sufficient activities, socialization, mentors, and support necessary for post-secondary success and high

school completion. All 10 participants reported a challenge that influenced their decision to persist and motivation was a significant factor that influenced their ability to graduate from high school.

Subtheme 1: High school counselors. Through relationships with institutional agents, individuals are able to gain access to resources, privileges, and support necessary to advance and maintain their economic position in society. The role of school counselors as institutional agents impact and provide post-secondary opportunities for students. Regarding college access, McDonough (1997) found that effective guidance counselors share valuable resources concerning college access, including providing early exposure to college, culture for the school, and indicating the appropriate courses that are required for college admissions. All 10 participants shared that they had either a high school counselor or program advisor that provided support to envision and identify career paths and goals for the future.

When Frank was asked about the most significant factor that influenced his ability to graduate, he responded, “Yes, be attentive, ask your questions, and know your guidance counselor very well because she will help you.” A significant source of guidance that supported and helped Ivan graduate from high school, was his counselor, Miss F. She helped him with writing his essays and she directed him to what major might be best for him. Additionally, he reported that Miss F arranged programs and internships to prepare him for college.

She helped him obtain two law internships and she also introduced Ivan to his college’s staff. “She gave me a great recommendation and I got accepted to the college mostly because of her showing them my recommendation.” Ivan continued:

So she played a major role and molded me. And from then on I’ve been highly respectful of her. I always help her. We’re in contact still today. She came to the

AIM conferences that we've had, conferences that we had in April. And right now I'm mentoring one of her students that has struggled with this.

Murray found that a one-on-one relationship between an experienced and less experienced person supported the development of specific skillsets (as cited in Smith, 2013). Kevin, like David, received help from a high school counselor that afforded him an opportunity to work on supplemental application materials and solidified his ability in regards to applying for the right schools. "I think that my high school, C.E. High School, was fortunate enough to have a college readiness program, and it really prepared students."

Mentoring relationships provide support of goal setting and life planning, academic knowledge support and role model support (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Frank attributed his college attendance to his high school guidance counselor. Frank volunteered, "I have to thank my guidance counselor because she was very . . . she gave me recommendation, she gave me everything I needed." His high school counselor also offered many forms of psychological and emotional support. "And then when she found like I was going to college, she was like, 'Oh, my god, I'm so proud of you.'" Hector depicted the transition from high school to college as being the most difficult, but it was his relationship with his guidance counselor that enabled him to persist. Charles commented, "I know the guys who are counselors, the coaches, it was, it was, they were like a stand-up comedy when they came to that like giving help one-act one ask for even like checking up on you, things to that nature."

Like David, Kevin, Frank, and Hector, Charles described his high school counselor, Al as the most significant relationship, "Because when I was in that school, while I was outside, I wasn't really at home too much . . . But I would say [Al] only because I had to spend more time

with him.” Hector depicted the transition from high school to college as being the most difficult; but it was his relationship with his guidance counselor that enabled him to persist.

Subtheme 2: Structured Programs

The participants’ reported experiences reinforce research by Fergus (2015), Noguera, Hurtado, and Fergus (2011) that report a pattern of restricted availability of health care, educational attainment, and limited employment in professional jobs for the specific subgroup of Hispanic males. Moreover, research by Christiansen and Christiansen (1997) aligned with the results of this study as they found that children who overcame adversity often reported having an interest, hobby, or skill that developed some form of positive recognition, which “seems to provide a means of developing and maintaining self-esteem and value and, in turn, increase resilience” (p. 3). One main commonality between the participants is that they all had a close relationship with either a school-based guidance counselor or an advisor provided through an after-school program.

Ivan discussed the two after-school programs which not only exposed him to college experiences but offered him internships at the age of 16 in a law firm. While interning with the mentoring program, PEN, he remembered, “I am a barely passing high school student working in this nice luxurious law firm building that I have to have a pass with me and have my ID. So, it gives you like a sense of pride like, ‘Alright, this is where I could be.’” He continued, “So that later on in my life has molded me to just be strong in who I am and what I want to do to be a stronger individual.”

David, Kevin, and Ivan utilized various mentoring agencies to expose them to post-secondary options. Prior to attending the programs, Kevin determined that he may not be able to go away to school. “And that's why going back to the influences from my mentors [my uncle

and Angel], they both told me, ‘You're going to be living a very, very different life in college.’ And that, to me, was all that I was looking for.” Kevin wanted to go away to school, have a new opportunity, new stage, a new chapter in his life that he was looking forward to. His mentors made sure to share the experiences of what it would be like and the “perks that come with it.”

During the interview, Brian repeated that his mentor “always cared.” When he was asked to explore any other challenges, he retorted, “Maybe my neighborhood. A lot of jealousy and a lot of envy. Certain people wanting to see me fail and they showed it. I would just be a target sometimes because I’m doing what I have to do.” He continued, “Not a lot of people around here want to see you be lifted, so that was a challenge also.” He added, “Yeah, it’d be very easy to just drop out. It’d be very easy to just not finish anything because of all the bad influences around.”

Eight participants discussed how formal mentoring relationships in structured after-school programs supported them during difficult times and transitions in their lives in (see Figure 4). The mentorship that Hector received was instrumental in building his self-confidence. He stated, “They contributed to me pushing myself forward by following through with the application process to college. This afterschool program at for the rest of my school year taught me every culinary stuff I needed.” Additionally, he indicated that his newly acquired culinary arts skills and enhanced writing skills that produced his resume were beneficial to his success. He reported, “I feel grateful for all of it.” Similarly, Eddie also mentioned that his mentor helped him, “I learned to write the same resume that got me my current job” (see Figure 3).

OBJECTIVE

Seeking a challenging opportunity where I will be able to utilize my strong organizational skills, Educational background, and exceptional people skills, which will allow me to grow personally and professionally.

EDUCATION

[REDACTED]

GPA: [REDACTED] A [REDACTED]

Current GPA: 3.2, [REDACTED]

EXPERIENCE

[REDACTED] Summer 2011
HR Assistant

- Answered 20-30 calls a day and sent the person to its proper recipient
- Filed confidential information and checked if each employee was eligible for company
- Arranged meetings for [REDACTED] and Staff in the proper facility
- Maintained database and error work that the customer was serviced for

[REDACTED] Summer 2009-2010
Umpire

- Ensured baseball games were secure and consistent throughout the day
- Regulated kids baseball games with rules they needed to follow and innings they participate in
- Demonstrated thorough knowledge of the game of baseball to the young ones

[REDACTED] Summer 2008
Coach

- Played baseball and fun activities with kids' ages 8 – 10.
- Collaborated with other coaches to make sure kids were engaged.

Figure 3. Resume created with academic support of program advisor.

Mentoring may include vast forms of support including assistance with professional and career development (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). In addition to a high school counselor, Kevin noted that he was lucky enough to have two mentors from his after-school programs, EHT and PEN. Moreover, his mentors helped him with language articulation, personal development, and writing his personal statement for his college application. Kevin recalled that this additional mentorship “sparked the change in me to polish myself up,” and work on his articulation, and the way “I carried myself.” Kevin expressed his appreciation for the assistance in looking at his post-secondary options and thinking about college, “I think that's really changed my whole trajectory.”

Brian, Adam, and Eddie participated in ABC Sports Program and played for 12, 6, and 4 years, respectively. Theories supporting intrinsic motivation are developed to appreciate the learners' values, languages, learning styles, and perspectives (Wlodkowski, 2008). In high

school, Brian reported that he met “a lot of people that was, in the same shoes as me.” When asked to clarify his meaning, he replied:

People that were similar to me growing up in Spanish communities. I met people that struggled in other areas, they struggled communicating but we all knew we had to live life and do what we had to do, what had to become just for the better in our family. And getting my high school diploma, seeing other young males around me get the same high school diploma I got, it showed that I got it done (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. June 2012 New York State Department of Education Diploma

This program supported Ivan’s personal and professional development so there was “a change of friends, a change of people.” Elaborating on his internship experiences, Ivan also reflected on his many blessed opportunities and valued each single one of them with a heartfelt enthusiasm:

The internships that I’ve had, like for instance [PEN] was personal development, they got me a resume. They helped me how to act in an interview, how to dress in an interview, how to behave in a professional workplace environment, how to talk to

others, just how to be an efficient citizen of society really. Those experiences helped me to graduate from high school and walk down that aisle and get my diploma (see Figure 5).

To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Congratulations [REDACTED] has decided to extend you an employment offer! You're hired! This is a wonderful opportunity and I'm confident in your ability to be successful here.

Please take some time to review the enclosed PENCIL Fellow Internship Agreement. In order to accept your position for the 2013 [REDACTED] Fellows Program, please sign and return the contract within **48 hours (2 days)** to officially accept your placement. You have NOT been officially hired until that contract is **returned to [REDACTED]**. You can scan and email a copy to [REDACTED] or fax it to us at [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] will reach out to you in late April/early May with details including your department and wage. She will email that information to you.

As you know, this is a highly selective program and we are excited that you have been chosen to participate. We are confident that this experience will provide you with important skills and knowledge that you will take with you and draw upon for years to come as you build your future path. Throughout the summer you will be supported through workplace visits, workshops and trainings. Some important dates are highlighted below. Please note that all [REDACTED] Fellows are required to attend ALL student events including orientation and both of the working breakfasts, as well as complete two internship reflections. Most of the dates are still being determined, but an approximate timeline is below.

June 27 – Orientation
Week of July 18th - Working Breakfast # 1
July 18th- Reflection #1 Due
Week of August 1 - Working Breakfast # 2
August 1 - Reflection #2 Due
August 8th- Newsletter Submission Due (optional)
August 15th - Culminating Event for Business Mentors and Fellows

You be receiving more information in the coming weeks directly from your Business Mentor regarding specifics about your work this summer. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Figure 5. Acceptance letter for internship offered through PEN Mentoring Organization

Being a part of a team was a positive influence in Adam, Brian, and Eddie's decision to graduate. All three participants reported that the ABC community organization motivated them to be healthy, attend school, and complete their school work. "There was always pressure on me to do my school work," stated Adam. Adam continued, "Mandatory Study Time . . . I knew I had to get it done." Brian stated, "I was part of that program for about 12 years and they [coaches] always influenced education upon us before sports, before baseball." Like Adam, Eddie and Brian both knew of the set expectations for them and they had to complete their

homework and pass their classes to play baseball. They described these relationships as influential. Due to this positive influence, all three participants graduated from high school and Adam and Brian played sports in college. Charles was not part of this organization but played basketball for his high school and, subsequently, college.

Subtheme 3: Extra-curricular activities. An important factor that participants described were the activities offered in schools, communities, and after-school programs. Field trips to the library, socialization, homework help and tutoring were just some of the activities that helped them. Charles attributed some of his motivation to his basketball teammates. “The kids on the team, us, we pushed each other to go further,” he reported. Ivan participated in karate and baseball in addition to his after-school mentoring programs. These responses were reflective of a need to connect with the learning environment, and more importantly with others from their culture and ethnic identity (Smith, 2013). “Having a place in the community to go to is important,” Eddie stated. Frank added, “And then for you to play handball was an outlet at the end of the day.” Brian loves baseball, so ABC provided him an outlet that he needed. Coach Rodriguez would “just push on and drag on why I should stay in school. He still does help me to contribute to being successful.”

Through [ETP], Kevin was exposed to various colleges and was able to identify other paths through his internship experience at the District Attorney’s office. It was at that time that he started to notice men who were going through the criminal justice system that “looked like him,” and were specifically coming from East Harlem. He admitted, “They looked very familiar, whether it was by face or family ties.” There were too many people from his area that were being “locked up” or were getting into trouble and that was shocking to him on many levels.

This internship experience opened his eyes to the reality that many people in Kevin's area, where he was born and raised, had many hardships to endure.

When the participants were asked to share their perspectives on engagement and participation, all responses were reflective of a need to connect with peers with similar culture and ethnic identity in the learning environment (Smith, 2013). Adam reflected on his biggest challenge in his adolescence:

I wanted to play basketball in college, so being cut in my first year was difficult, and it just made me work harder . . . The first time I got something, I wasn't successful at something, so it made me try a lot harder and work a lot harder.

Brian, Adam, and Eddie attended the same program, which focused on playing baseball. Through athletic development, the participants reported that all students had daily sessions for mandatory study time. These three graduates enthusiastically indicated that they stayed in the program for years. Students played baseball and had exposure to several different coaches of the same ethnicity, with whom they bonded. Brian and Eddie said that they were around "people like them." When asked to elaborate, both participants said their coaches were "dark skinned." Brian, Adam, and Eddie shared that they wished there were more programs and activities for "kids these days to keep busy."

The focus group participants shared struggles they experienced growing up in the neighborhood. They discussed the importance of community involvement to shift the perceptions of Hispanic men in the neighborhood. Additionally, the focus group session sought recommendations for community leaders in order to maintain and develop more after-school programs that support and promote the academic achievement of Hispanic males (see Table 5).

Table 5

Focus Group Participants' responses to potentially address risk factors

Negative Factors	Community Action	Focus Group Participants
Necessity of more after school and mentoring Programs	Provide more after-school programs. "I would say open up more partnership and free organization in the community."	Focus Group Participant 1
Neighborhood/Gentrification	Support homeless shelter. "Try to open up apartments. They don't have a place they don't have an apartment to sleep in."	Focus Group Participant 3
Necessity of free or low cost activities to keep children "off the street"	Open up more free programs, like, boys' clubs with sports and activities in East Harlem "so kids can stay off the streets in the neighborhood and attend playing sports and they'll all just be free."	Focus Group Participant 2
Lack of Informal Mentoring Relationships	Provide mentorship to have younger kids see older kids. Give them 20 minutes a week just to talk "Just have everyone want to mentor people. Not mentor, but just be there I think just huge."	Focus Group Participant 1
Lack of Positive Role Models	Have more Hispanics around doing positive things just so they could see a lot of African-American and Hispanic owned stuff. "Whether it's a boys' club or whatever, just so have it run by people they see as themselves."	Focus Group Participant 2
Necessity for More Post-Secondary Readiness/Workforce Programs	Provide better jobs for Hispanic males so that kids see other kids every day in a corner working in a company or something like that.	Focus Group Participant 3

	They'll be like, "I want to be him."	
Racial Profiling	Hire young cops that are Hispanic and African-Americans So we can relate. "I would try and delegate the kind of cops that are in our neighborhood."	Focus Group Participant 1
Lack of Accountability	We need to give them something To aspire to be. "Have role models that's like our kids."	Focus Group Participant 2
Police Brutality	Have a Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime in the neighborhood.	Focus Group Participant 1
Lack of Community Involvement	We need to have successful people to come and talk to kids at schools and people in the neighborhood.	Focus Group Participant 3
Negative Cultural Identity/Stereotyping	Develop a definition for success. "Remind students that success is not just being a baseball player because you are Hispanic."	Focus Group Participant 1

Theme 3: Social-Emotional Support

All 10 participants recognized strong social-emotional support as a significant influence as it emerged as the third theme in this study. When Frank was asked to describe the support of his high school counselor, he stated that she assisted him in the process of making the decision to attend his current college. He added, "I remember that process. She was like, 'All right, put schools you want, put schools down just in case you don't get to apply to the school that you want.'" He listed four schools, only one was the one he really wanted to attend, but they rejected him. She was there to console him when he recalled, "I wasn't, I guess, too good of a student."

Subtheme 1: Providing a sense of accountability. Mentoring relationships can create a bond that incorporates characteristics such as responsibility, integrity and the importance of following through (Smith, 2013). All participants attributed their maturity and development to the characteristics of these key relationships, in addition to acknowledging personal responsibility. Brian commented, “And my academic career, I did a lot of studying when that had to be done.” Kevin volunteered without being prompted,

I have a strong interest in education policy and politics, and I tried to stay involved and active in my community as much as possible for a number of years. I was a mentor through community-based organizations and I’m looking to continue that work and start a career in public policy after graduation.

Mentoring involves an individual with more experience and skill teaching another person lacking that knowledge (Smith, 2013). Eddie stated, “My teacher grew along to know me very well as well. So like he, like he would know when I’m not doing my best or when I’m slacking off.” He continued, “They would be on top of me like, ‘Oh, you have to do this, you’re doing this incorrectly.’ So, just more of like a personal relationship that helped me grow. Staying on top of me, and some people need that.”

Having significant relationships that provided accountability contributed to Adam’s ability to graduate from high school. His high school teachers and baseball coaches ensured that he attended school, completed homework, attended mandatory study time, and received tutoring. He described one specific baseball coach that was also his religion teacher as being influential and fundamental. He exclaimed that he “pushed” him and had high expectations for him. He also declared that this relationship made him “push” himself.

Brian further explained that his neighborhood provided accountability: “This community

also wants what's best for you." He further explained that his friends in the neighborhood area also helped contribute to his success. Brian observed his friends and community members around him doing "the same thing" and it helped him because he knew he had to be at school. "At a certain time, I knew what had to be done." Adam attested, "My neighborhood, the people that live in my building, who have seen me grow up, are people that want what's best for me as well. They pushed me. 'Oh, how's school going? You still in school?'"

Like Frank and James, Kevin was without a father figure, but his uncle came into his life during his freshman year of high school and was able to "shed some light between right and wrong," making sure Kevin stayed on the right path. In addition to a mentor, James acknowledged the supportive counselor at J. Madison High, which was different than what was offered to him at his old school. He added:

If I had to pick one more significant relationship than the others, I'd probably have to go with my counselor, Mrs. Suarez . . . Just because she was like, she treated me like a mom would. She helped with the college application process and would show me where to go if I needed tutoring.

Brian reported, "Many times, they wanted to kick me out of school but I stayed in because I played baseball" (see Figure 6).

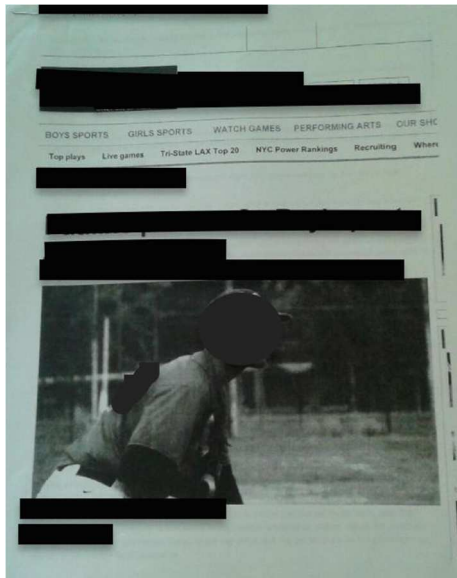


Figure 6. 2012 Newspaper article highlighting regional victory for season (Brian's last game)

Subtheme 2: Establishing a sense of belonging. Social capital connects people together and helps them make links beyond their immediate friends and neighbors into learning or employment opportunities. A wide variety of advantages develop from the collaboration, trust, reciprocity, and knowledge correlated with networks. Social capital creates value for the connections and refers to the supportive relationships as two types of “agents” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Institutional agents are those individuals who are in a position to gain institutional opportunities and resources. Resources can include information regarding academics as well as decision-making and college admissions. Institutional agents that were reported in this study were teachers, parents, family members, friends, counselors, and program advisors. Protective agents include familial and community based relationships like peers, community, and family members (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

All participants reported being exposed to a risk factor at some point in their childhood or adolescence. Relationships that were highlighted throughout the narratives taught coping skills

that transitioned negative experiences into positive ones (see Figure 7). These allowed the participants the ability to reconsider their experiences and be actively involved in their futures (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

A unique, unexpected code that appeared in three participants' responses was the neighborhood of East Harlem. James was the only participant that was self-identified as Hispanic and African American and also shared several experiences of racism as a young child and teenager. Despite the negative responses, East Harlem was discussed as a positive influence by Brian, Adam, and Eddie. They described their neighborhood as a mentor. Brian added, "It makes you tough." Brian acknowledged that everybody has a struggle in life, and everybody has a certain book into the chapter that they are writing. Brian added, "Everybody was so diverse." He commented:

Look at the area that I'm in. We're all trapped in a box, and we're like rats trapped in a box, and some of us are just trying to climb all the way to the top, and get out of the box and explore new things. You feel like that everybody has a struggle, your community helps you become, focused.

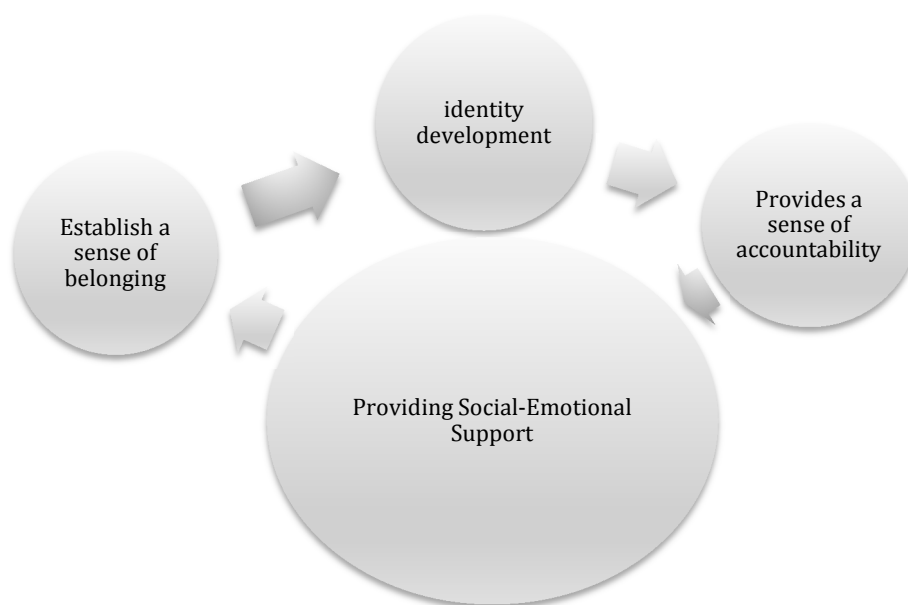


Figure 7. Characteristics of Social-Emotional Support

According to Baber (2012), “As students from traditionally marginalized groups enter institutions they confront a community that is not value neutral, but a place that maintains certain preferences and tendencies that exclude those dissimilar cultural experiences” (p. 68). Between his suspensions and detentions, Brian grew frustrated and often thought about dropping out. He depicted his struggles during his high school years as not being able to focus. He communicated that it was not the classes, but just the struggle to “focus on finishing high school and receiving a diploma.”

When he was discouraged, he thought of the baseball scholarship to college that he was planning on receiving and it provided him the determination he needed. His most memorable moments during high school was a baseball game where his team won the division with his winning pitch. “Determination was hard . . . hard to come . . . to get there every day. I did it for

baseball.” He was asked to describe the most significant factor that influenced him. He smiled and exclaimed, “I love playing baseball.” See Figure 8.

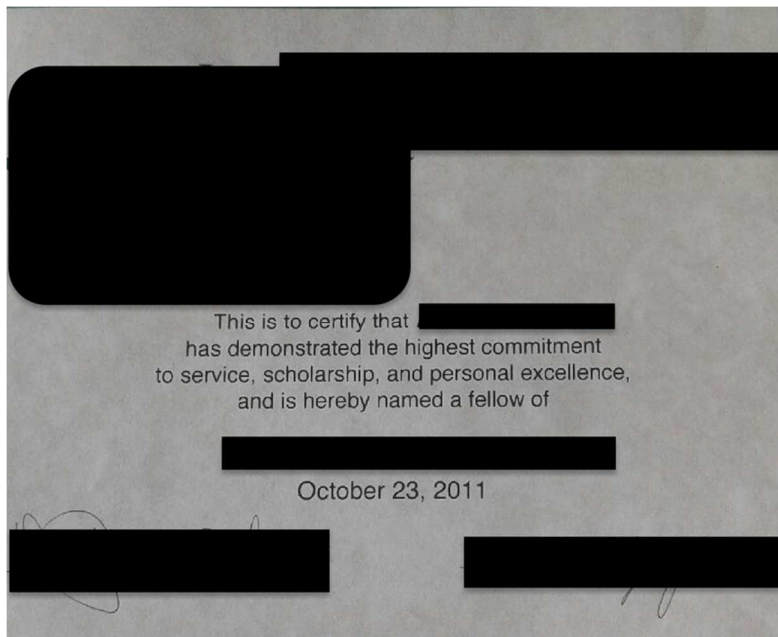


Figure 8. 2011 Scholarship letter donated from private foundation

Subtheme 3: Enhancing a sense of identity. Historically, desegregation has led to overall racial isolation in the U.S., particularly in educational institutions. It is essential to allow students, specifically adolescent, minority males to examine how students identified themselves racially (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). African American and Hispanic males must learn their history, develop affirmative racial identities and feel valuable and essential (Fergus, 2011). Craig Calhoun asserted that identity is developed through the significance of power and racial hierarchy (as cited in Fergus, 2016b). Ogbu stressed that specific aspects of cultural differences among racial/ethnic minority groups play a role in how they observe the opportunity structure and respond to organizational conditions (as cited in Fergus, 2016b).

The participants in this study shared how their racial/ethnic identities developed and how their mentoring relationships supported them through the challenging times. Attitudes about

their opportunities in the school environment based on racism was omitted throughout the study. The variation in Hispanic students' skin color may determine the manner in which they recognize opportunities in school and society (Fergus, 2016b). Baber reported that the mentor/mentee relationship, whether formal or informal, provided African Americans much needed support, enabling them to more effectively develop so as to make their way in mainstream society (Cole & Omari, 2003). Lin (2000) suggests that social relations within networks allow members to access other members' resources and expertise.

All participants except James described complications in middle school, either with the neighborhood, discipline, puberty, or negative relationships. All of the participants reported that they experienced new challenges as they transitioned from middle school to high school. The subtheme of identity development ran parallel to all of the interview responses.

Brian, Kevin, Adam, David, and Frank depicted the transition from middle school to high school as punitive, discouraging, damaging, and stressful, respectively. Frank shared that it was a very confusing time "changing from a boy to a man." In addition to transitioning from high school to college, Hector's experiences during his move from Puerto Rico in the 9th grade were extremely difficult and it was his significant relationships with his aunt and two cousins that supported him through this challenging transition.

African Americans have struggled to feel proud of their cultural identity due to systemic exclusion from Caucasian mainstream society (Baber, 2012). One can infer that Hispanics face similar identity issues. As a young man of 13, Hector experienced difficulty due to the contrasting school systems between Puerto Rico and the U.S. During this transition, he was forced to shift his mindset and not only handle the new stress and anxiety from a new high school, he also had to manipulate a predominantly Caucasian society where he has never spoken

English at all. Accordingly, he was excluded from mainstream Caucasian America. During these transitions, it was their perceptions of the mentoring relationships that promoted positive self-identity (see Figure 9).

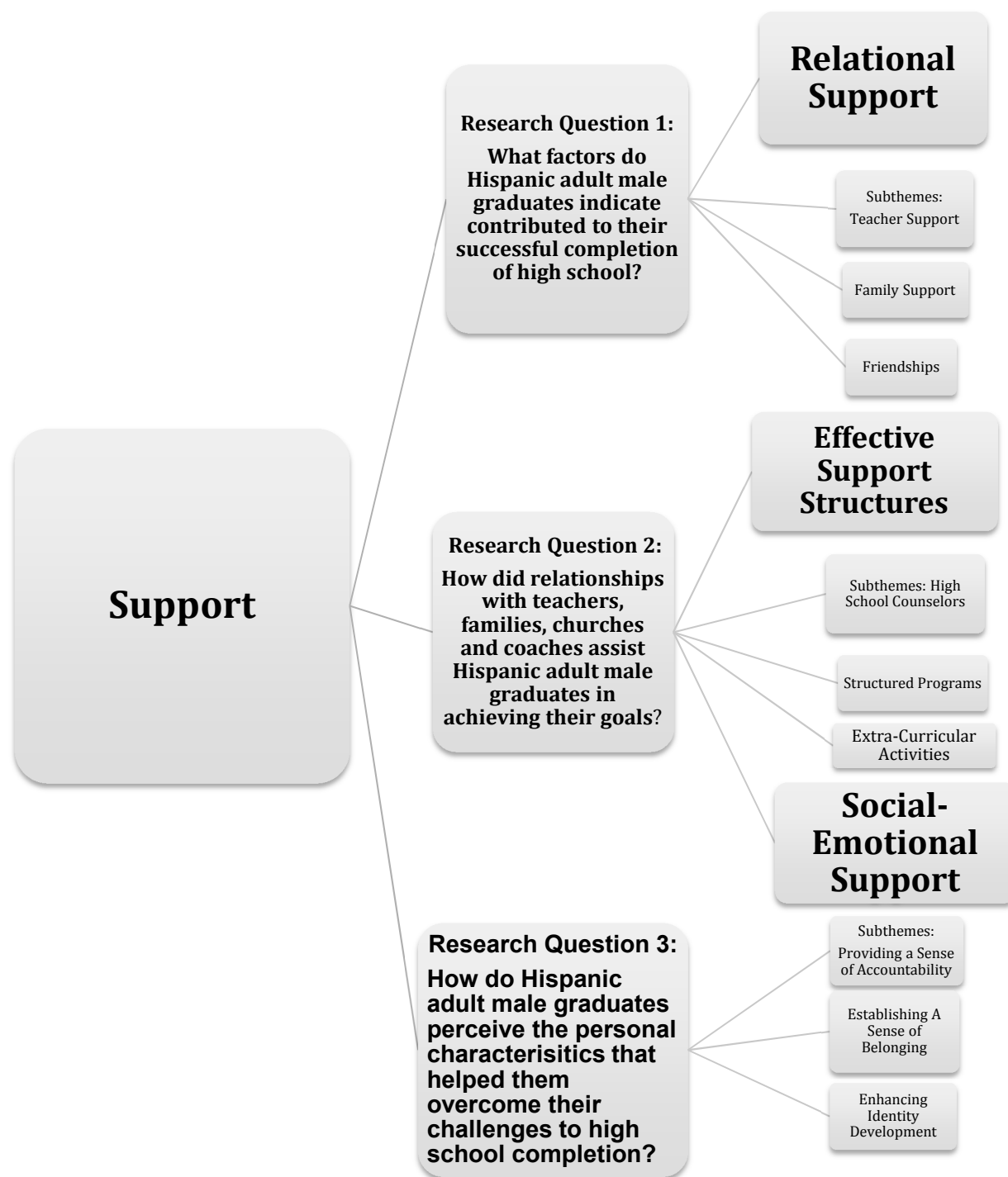


Figure 9. Relationship between themes/subthemes and research questions.

Research Questions

The themes and subthemes that were extrapolated from the interviews and focus group were identified and supported by literature. Support was revealed as the most significant influence on the retention of the participants. Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, the participants' responses were guided by the three research questions.

Research Question 1: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? Emotional support can come in the form of emotional, physical, informational, instrumental, and material aids (Coleman, 1988). The most significant theme illuminated was relational support formed by the participants (see Figure 9). The subthemes of (a) teacher support, (b) family support, and (c) friendship were revealed. All 10 participants indicated that a positive relationship with a teacher at some point in their academic career provided the social-emotional support and encouragement to help them persist. These relationships provided a value of mentoring which provided social capital and resilience to the graduates. Through the participants' voices, effective support structures influenced the participants' retention through high school counselors, structured programs, and extra-curricular activities. The third illuminated theme that emerged was social-emotional support. Subthemes included (a) providing a sense of accountability, (b) establishing a sense of belonging, and (c) enhancing identity development.

Each of the 10 participants described his mother as an influential and significant factor in his success. All participants reported that their mothers highly valued education and expected them to graduate from high school. The immigration status, income level, or education attainment of the parents was not a direct influence on the graduates' success. The high expectations of a high school diploma prevailed and dropping out of high school was not an

option. Five participants were raised by a single mother and the mothers' expectations and support played the most important role in their decision to graduate. These findings are consistent with Martinez, DeGarma, and Eddy (2004). Family involvement, strong kin networks, and family support were identified as being important resilience factors. Other individual resilience factors were social competence, intellect, and motivation (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010).

A recurring commonality shared by all of the participants was the support of a high school counselor or advisor that provided them a vision of college as being the next step towards postsecondary success. Receiving financial support in scholarships from donors and organizations to attend private, high quality high schools and colleges were influential factors shared by three participants. Additionally, eight participants were directly involved in structured after-school and mentoring organizations that provided accessibility to higher education such as guided college tours, stipends for college application fees, financial aid assistance, tutoring, and workshops that exposed them to college opportunities and provided necessary support to become a first generation college student. Like Brian, Charles, and Adam, Kevin wants to witness a demographic change and see more college graduates like themselves. He stated, "We need to see more black and brown students."

Research Question 2: How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion?

According to Baber (2012), in predominately Caucasian institutions, African American students experience themselves as "outsiders." According to the interviewees in a recent study on mentoring, mentoring has provided opportunities and experiences to be insiders. Adam, Brian, Kevin, Charles, and Ivan mentioned that their Hispanic culture's values supported them in their

academic career. Adam, like Brian and Charles stated that their neighborhood forced them to “be tough.” “We need to focus on getting out or being off the streets as well . . . So having someone to guide you,” explained Brian (focus group). When asked about the influence of Hispanic culture on their success, Kevin retorted, “It all boils down to knowing that you earn what you work for,” a lesson consistently instilled in him from a young age. “Working was always very important in the Hispanic culture.”

Despite many supportive mentoring relationships, all 10 participants experienced some type of negative experiences either in elementary, high school, or middle school. These risk factors required additional support in order for the participants to successfully navigate them. Frank and Kevin’s shared stories that indicated they experienced transitions and identity crises: race, ethnicity, cultural background that you had to face all at once. Charles stated, [EHP] “changed my trajectory. “Having mentors or having someone in the community, not only just being a mentor but having successful people speaking to the community and just showing support, so the kids will understand,” suggested Charles (focus group).

One commonality shared by the participants was involvement with organizations that provided resources to assist them during their transitional years of high school. These programs provided activities, sports, coaches, and mentors to support them and prepare them for transitions, particularly an emphasis on college readiness, college application process, and job internships. Adam, Brian, and Eddie discussed the benefits after-school programs provided, such as having a place to be around other young men that “looked like them.” Hector, David, James, Kevin, Frank, and Ivan further shared how significantly their advisors helped them during the transition from high school to college.

Adam, Brian, and Charles explicitly stated that staying away from danger and the streets was beneficial. “A vital part of your, success, is like, like the schools and the, and the recreational center, keeping busy.” Eddie summed it up by defining the biggest risk factor as “Staying off the streets is golden, of course.”

Research Question 3: How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals? No participants expressed any loss of significant relationships or any experiences of mental, physical, or emotional abuse from an authority figure. It was highlighted that five of the participants were raised by a single mother and the mothers’ expectations and support played the most important role in their decisions to graduate. Their expectations of a high school diploma prevailed over their educational level or immigration status. Five of the participants were raised by both parents and experienced a supportive, positive bond with their fathers. James’, Kevin’s, and Frank’s fathers were not involved in their lives and were not discussed during the interview. Hector’s and David’s fathers did not have a significant influence on their success as they played a more active role after they graduated from high school. Additionally, Kevin, Charles, Hector, Adam and David specified significant, direct support by another family member.

Additionally, all of the participants experienced new challenges as they transitioned from public elementary and middle schools to new high schools. All participants experienced at least one supportive relationship that provided accountability, established a sense of belonging, and enhanced a positive self-identity during those specified transitions. Having supportive teachers, parents, family members, mentors, friends, and counselors or program advisors that value education was key in reinforcing the desire to become contributive community members.

Due to the strong influences their mentor relationships ensued, both Kevin and Ivan now offer mentorship to “younger kids” because they wanted to “give back.” In Kevin’s case, his relationship with his uncle and his mentor shifted his trajectory. Adam commented, “I feel like the relationships that contributed to my success have been ones that are, that have, he would just care about you, your well-being and everything, just want the best for you and push you.”

Summary

Collectively, relationships were represented in 80 unique codes as all participants shared a positive experience/relationship with a teacher, mom, and friend. Teacher support was represented in 167 codes and every participant’s mother appeared in 133 codes. The theme of support became immediately evident during data collection and data analysis as data saturation occurred. Many themes initially surfaced through participants’ narratives such as support from teacher, mom, dad, family, friends, guidance counselors, advisors. However, through further recoding, sorting, and the repetition and salience of codes or quotes, nine common subthemes were exposed through their narratives.

Through interpretation and analysis of the roles of relational support, nine highlighted themes emerged. The subthemes of (a) teacher support, (b) family support, and (c) friendship were revealed. The theme of effective support structures was re-presented in 449 codes within the participants’ responses. Additionally, (a) high school counselors, (b) structured programs, and (c) extra-curricular activities were highlighted. The third illuminated theme that emerged was social-emotional support. Subthemes included (a) providing a sense of accountability, (b) establishing a sense of belonging, and (c) enhancing identity development.

The findings reported in this section are consistent with CRT, specifically LatCrit Theory. These theories necessitate that minority students require critically conscious educators,

mentors, counselors, after-school programs, and supplemental resources to provide appropriate support to prevail over institutionalized racism, which has historically reduced achievement. Additionally, frameworks by Tinto (1975, 1993) support the value of mentoring relationships to provide social capital and resilience to combat systemic issues of poverty and race. Additionally, the findings are aligned with the Culturally Responsive Teaching Model, which recognizes the positive connections between relationships, effective support structures, and social-emotional support and post-secondary success (Wlodkowski, 2008).

All participants emphasized positive, mentoring relationships as the most significant influence on their success. According to Burlew's (1991) definition, mentoring is anyone who provides guidance, knowledge, support, and opportunities to those less experienced. These mentoring relationships depicted throughout the participants' narratives provided the participants the emotional and academic support to overcome numerous barriers and become high school graduates and college students.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to investigate the phenomenon of the factors that influenced the retention of urban, Hispanic male high school graduates in East Harlem, New York (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990, 2014). This chapter consists of the following sections: (a) Summary of Findings, (b) Discussion of the Findings, (c) Implications (d) Delimitations and Limitations, and (e) Recommendations for Future Research. The themes and subthemes that were extrapolated from the data are identified in the Summary of Findings (Moustakas, 1994). In the Discussion section, themes and subthemes are thoroughly discussed and the three guiding research questions are explicitly answered and integrated within the three emergent themes. The theoretical framework that guided this research, critical race theory (CRT), specifically Latino critical theory (LatCrit), Tinto's persistence theory, and culturally responsive teaching are described and supported by the narratives of the participants. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the significant, overarching theme of support and identifies how the identified themes and subthemes support existing literature.

Summary of Findings

"Nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do" (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). The contributing factors that influenced Hispanic males' ability to overcome family and non-family risk factors were explored through the following guiding questions: Research Question 1: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? Research Question 2: How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion? Research

Question 3: How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals?

Through the participants' responses shared in the interviews and focus group session, three main themes and nine subthemes emerged that contributed to the phenomenon experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2013; Friese, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Documents were analyzed that supported the original, consistent theme of support. These positive experiences were synthesized into one overarching theme to better understand the participants' persistence factors that contributed to their completion. The emergent themes included: relational support, effective support structures, and social-emotional support.

Through detailed analysis and synthesis of the participants' reported experiences, mentoring relationships were identified as the most common, significant experiences among all of the participants. Collectively, the participants shared some personal, negative, adolescent experiences, but had an overall positive recollection of their academic career. The participants' relationships, effective support structures, and social-emotional support were the most influential factors that supported their ability to overcome family and non-family risk factors.

Discussion

The goal of my study was to examine factors that contributed to the ability of urban Hispanic males in East Harlem to complete high school. The three methods of data collection included 10 individual interviews, one focus group session, and document analysis. The documents that were analyzed in this study corroborated the participants' responses to determine the significant factors that contributed to their ability to complete high school. The participants' diplomas, newsletters from organizations, certificates, awards, scholarship letters, college acceptance letters, emails, newspaper articles, and memos were reviewed and analyzed to

determine the influential factors that influenced the graduates' ability to persist and graduate from high school. The participants' elementary, middle school, and high school experiences that influenced high school completion were explored and described. Additionally, the theoretical and empirical literature that supported the participants' responses are examined.

Theoretical Literature

Based on the pioneering work of critical race theory by Du Bois (1968), Bell (2010) and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 95). Developed by society, racism became a form of society and decides who controls the power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The findings reported in this section are consistent with the critical race theoretical framework and are also reinforced by Arce, Murguia, and Parker (1987), Candelario (2007), Fergus (2011, 2016a), and Flores-Gonzalez (1999).

Education must include resources, supports, and interventions to address needs of students underrepresented in power status (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2003, 2014; Noguera, 2008; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Orfield & Yun, 1999). The most significant commonality identified by this study was the relationships that supported the participants' ability to overcome family and non-family risk factors in an education system influenced by racism (Fergus, Martin, & Noguera, 2014; Saenz, Perez, & Cerna, 2009). All participants were identified as low-income by their ability to receive free and reduced lunch. The data in this study is also supported by the framework of Tinto (1975, 1993, 2012).

Relational support, effective support structures and social-emotional support emerged as themes throughout the data. The findings reported are also consistent with the literature, specifically with relationships being identified 88 times throughout the narratives. These

relationships provided resilience to combat systemic issues of poverty and race. For a better understanding of the participants' relationships, the positive characteristics of these relationships elucidated in the three subthemes: teacher support, family support, and friendships.

Data extrapolated from the participants' narratives ran parallel to Ladson-Billing's (1998) framework of culturally responsive teaching as structured and social-emotional supports are necessary to promote post-secondary success during their high school experiences. It was utilized as an additional model to examine the participants' acquisition of social capital and resilience as a contributing factor to persist and graduate from high school (Delpit, 1995; Tinto, 1993; Wlodkowski, 2008). This framework supported by Bourdieu (1986) and Baber (2012) examined the schools' influence on participants' development of social capital. Mentors can help enhance positive self-image in youth by laying a foundation consisting of resiliency, fostering empathy, a sense of belonging, nurturing, and stability.

Every participant indicated various significant relationships with either teachers, parents, extended family, friends, coaches, high school counselors or program advisors, which developed into either an informal or formal mentoring relationship (Tinto, 1975). Eight participants reported being a part of after-school programs and being actively engaged in either baseball, basketball, swimming, music lessons, choir, mentoring, and various activities during free time. This study also corroborates Tinto's integration model results and connects males' involvement in school activities to retention (Tinto, 1975). At every level of education, boys are less involved in school activities, which decreases their ability to integrate socially and becomes a detriment to their persistence (Clark, 2015).

Empirical Literature

The most significant attribute these mentoring relationships fostered in this

phenomenological study was an increased gain of social capital, which was developed through relationships, effective support structures, and social-emotional support. All 10 participants highlighted a supportive teacher, family member, or friend that significantly enhanced their motivation to complete high school. The longer a teacher develops a relationship, the more social capital they have with a student. Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson along with Hilty stated that several researchers used the term social capital and the importance of it when reporting on teacher-student relationships (as cited in Zabloski, 2010).

Consistent with a mentoring study of 4.5 million at-risk young adults, students who have mentoring relationships with teachers, coaches, extended family members, or neighbors demonstrated higher academic achievement than students without (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Blackwell defines mentoring as a process by which a person of superior rank, special achievements and prestige will instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés (as cited in Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Teacher support was identified in this study as the most significant influence as it was coded 167 times.

Each participant mentioned a positive relationship with a teacher. David's most positive influence was his ninth grade science teacher. Every day after school, the teacher would take two hours out of his day to tutor David in chemistry in the content he was not understanding in class. This reinforces how teachers can increase academic achievement, contribute to students' adjustment to school, support their social skills, and promote academic performance by fostering students' resiliency (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015). Collectively, the participants reflected on the positive factors that contributed to their ability to graduate from high school. Based on all of their descriptions, relational support was perceived as the most significant type of support

necessary for retention. Additionally, Brian, Adam, and Charles shared that their coach was an influential factor in their success.

The participants emphasized the importance of their mothers in 133 unique statements or phrases. Another commonality of all 10 participants was a recollection of their mothers' values of education. Research by Dika and Singh (2002) indicated three forms of capital for Hispanic children: family income, parental educational level, and familial and community relational networks. These create the "family background." Conversely, regardless of the participants' mothers' immigration status and educational attainment, all participants recalled their mother's heightened value of education as a factor that enabled them to graduate from high school. Subsequently, all participants have attended college or are currently enrolled in college.

Adam, for example, shared his vivid memories of parental support in elementary, middle, and high school. "They [parents] just always have been there for me, through good, through bad. I feel like they were definitely the most important." He recalled hearing his mom and dad constantly repeat, "Bring me your homework. Let me see your homework. Let me see your grades. Let me see your report card. All that stuff. So, they would always go to parent-teacher conferences, so I couldn't escape." Ivan reflected on his parents, "They [parents] laid out the facts like, 'Listen, you make your bed, you lay in it. You got to get your act together. You got to do this.'" Eddie elaborated on his Hispanic culture by stating, "I would say it is very competitive. My grandmother is big on education as well, the same way—the same way my mom is, she—my mom learned that from my grandmother."

In a study of 400 college bound African American and Hispanic students in 40 selected New York City public schools, Harper and Associates (2014) examined the benefits of Expanded Success Initiative's Mentoring Programs [ESI]. The majority of college undergraduates stated

that their best male friends from high school were currently enrolled in college (Harper & Associates, 2014). This corroborates with the participants' responses, as three participants described their friends' mentoring support throughout their challenges in childhood and adolescence. Additionally, friendships were highlighted, as these codes appeared 110 times throughout the data.

The second theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was effective support structures. The subthemes were identified as high school counselors, structured programs and extra-curricular activities. Levinson indicated mentoring can exist in a wide range of contexts, exhibits more variability on many of the relational dimensions, and "facilitates the realization of the dream" (as cited in Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007, p. 3). All 10 participants perceived that a staff member of their schools introduced them to the possibility of college attendance. Activities that supported college readiness appeared 168 times throughout the data and the code *college* was recorded 149 times. The narratives indicated that high school counselors offered accessibility to college by engaging the participants in early support for post-secondary goals. These participants reported the benefits of being advised on appropriate classes, support with the Regents Exams, and homework that have become necessary for graduation and college admission.

The participants stated their counselors or advisors were trusted and experienced guides (Johnson, as cited in Burlew, 1991). After several negative, unsafe experiences endured during his freshman and sophomore year, James and his brother decided it was time for a change and transferred to a new high school [ES]. Identifying some of the positive factors from this transition to their new school, James recalled, "It was such a great school. The counselors were so helpful."

Formal mentoring relationships in structured programs were identified as a prevalent factor throughout the graduates' stories as it appeared in 111 unique codes. During the interviews and focus group session, eight participants reported a positive relationship with a formal mentor at some point in their academic careers. Kevin said that he was "culturally conflicted" because he did not see any successful "brown or black men," but his mentor helped him "push through."

Smith's study (2013) extrapolates the relationships between mentoring and minority males who participated in formal mentoring programs. Additionally, Anderson's case study demonstrated that minority male students involved in mentorships perform better academically, including on standardized achievement tests (as cited in Smith, 2013). James reported that in some cases, minority males who were connected to mentoring programs demonstrated lower attrition rates (as cited in Smith, 2013). The most influential factor noticed in these studies was the students' participation in a mentoring program (Smith, 2013).

David said, "It did wonders . . . it connected me with other kids in my situation who were from relatively low income. And that also motivated me because it showed me there are other struggling students out there." Kevin mentioned that mentoring was beneficial because he was able to relate to him in "different ways," including the mentor's own college experiences. Furthermore, he recommended, "More males are needed to work as role models within mentorship programs in their community in order to send a successful example for the future young generations . . . Some kind of network with professional mentors, whether in business, politics or other topics."

Mentoring relationships are considered fluid, evolving through different stages (Smith, 2013). The participants' narratives substantiate studies by Klevan and Villavicencio (2016) that

find strategies that promote a college and career focus among Black and Hispanic male students promote success. The strategies reported by the participants include involvement in extra-curricular activities to promote students' interests, such as workshops, opportunities to acquire specific skills, and participation in internships and job experiences (Klevan & Villavencio, 2016). Brian recalled, "He [Coach Rodriguez] was like a bug in my ear, what had to be done. And he was always telling me, 'You live in Section 8. You live in the worst part of New York City. You need to become something. You need to get your family out of here.'"

The third theme that emerged was social-emotional support with three additional subthemes: (a) providing a sense of accountability, (b) establishing a sense of belonging, and (c) enhancing identity development. These subthemes were revealed in 205, 200, and 153 codes, respectively. Participants reported that they required social-emotional support in order to overcome challenges, specifically during transitions from middle school to high school. Kevin said, "I believe that the negative elements I was exposed to, that were designed to bring me down, actually contributed to my success."

At-risk students experience a high rate of absenteeism (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). Brian and Charles discussed the challenges they experienced with absences and difficulty to attend school. Four participants discussed friends that were not interested in school, which created an additional risk factor. Too much freedom and failing grades in school are often issues for Hispanic students. In addition to better school attendance and a better chance of going on to higher education, mentored youth maintain better attitudes toward school (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007).

Merriam (1987) identified a positive connection between formal or informal mentoring relationships and minority male student success (as cited in Smith, 2013). Throughout this

study, positive, informal mentoring relationships with teachers, family, friends, high school counselors, formal mentors from structured programs, and extra-curricular activities were highlighted as the most influential factors in participants' academic success to overcome family and non-family risk factors. These identified relationships and structured programs provided the participants accountability, a sense of belonging, and enhanced their sense of identity in order to graduate from high school. The findings of this study are consistent with Bruce & Bridgeland's (2014) recent study of formal mentoring's influence on improved academic, social, and economic development. The significance of mentoring has the potential to address national challenges and strengthen communities and the economy (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

Implications

With the highlighted themes of relational support, effective support structures, and social-emotional learning that emerged in this study, several theoretical, empirical, and practical implications exist. This study identified that mentoring relationships were the most significant influence on the participants' graduation from high school. Findings by Bruce & Bridgeland (2014) suggested a systemic change to leverage quality formal mentoring programs to introduce mentors to children who face a higher amount of risk factors as a vital strategy. It is important that society meticulously examines the disparities between Hispanic males and other subgroups while acknowledging and addressing the escalating diversity in our country, and battle ethnic/racial inequities (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Theoretical Implications

In this study, Hector was the only participant that expressed the difficulty of cultural assimilation into mainstream American culture, as he moved from Puerto Rico to New York in ninth grade. Having limited English proficiency, he reported that he was forced to become fully

immersed in the English language to become proficient because he was no longer able to receive language acquisition support. As a result, he struggled academically and his grades suffered in all of his core classes. He reported that he was fortunate to have academic and emotional support provided by his family and high school counselor, which motivated him to work diligently to gain English proficiency and pass the necessary exams to graduate. However, he recalled at least five students that did not receive the language support they needed and consequently dropped out of high school. Based on LatCrit theory, which was specifically designed to understand the association between language and culture on resilience in Hispanic males (Ladson-Billings, 1998), these findings imply the necessity of providing language supports to remove these barriers for students that migrate to the U.S. in order for them to have similar, equitable opportunities as their counterparts who do not experience these language barriers.

All 10 participants endured challenges, specifically transitioning from middle to high school, but were able to persist and graduate from high school. Additionally, eight students experienced formal mentorship. A theoretical model identified for academic mentoring consisted of presence of a role model, emotional support, academic subject knowledge support, and establishing post-secondary readiness and career goals (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Theoretical implications involve the significance of providing role models and mentoring for students, specifically during pivotal transitional times.

Ladson-Billings' (1998) research on culturally responsive teaching attempts to engage and focus on issues in the classrooms that are relevant to students' diverse lives. All participants experienced a positive, caring, inclusive environment, which helped them overcome adversity. Comparable subgroups may need to be provided inclusive educational settings to potentially transcend poverty and potentially support Hispanic males' retention.

Empirical Implications

All 10 participants highlighted the influence of significant, positive teacher relationships. In addition to the theoretical implications involving formal mentoring, this study demonstrated how informal mentoring and high quality teaching can intersect by providing caring adult relationships to high-risk youth and promoting post-secondary success. Additionally, this study shows the significance of each child having a caring adult in his or her life (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Most recently, Bristol (2016), Fergus (2016c), and Klevan and Villavicencio (2016) have examined teachers' racial biases, teacher relationships, mentoring, social-emotional learning support, and development of schools' cultures to enhance learning environments for African American and Hispanic males.

Studies showed that racially and ethnically similar teachers significantly improved the high school matriculation rates of African American and Hispanic students (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016). In New York City public schools, 59% percent of teachers are Caucasian while more than 85% of the students are non-Caucasians (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016). An essential implication of this study is the need to be mindful of potential underlying implicit biases educators may have about students of different backgrounds (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016). It is important to recognize that students need more teachers from diverse backgrounds to prepare them to be global citizens (Bristol, 2016).

All 10 participants in the study benefitted from structured programs that included high school counselors and program advisors/mentors. These staff members demonstrated to them how to access available resources and opportunities and exposed them to new opportunities. Fergus (2016b) reported numerous factors that contribute to the lack of academic success in Hispanic males. Structural conditions implicate how racial/ethnic minority students think about

their future and translate it to school engagement and performance. Additionally, Fergus examined the schools' structure and determined that school structure is a significant factor in minority students' ability to achieve success. Hispanic students who were on a college track reported the positive benefits of smaller learning environments, having access to teachers and other adults, and access to college information. Students with shared cultures and backgrounds achieve more success with structured school supports in place (Fergus, 2016b).

Practical Implications

Implications for K-12 administrators of the New York City Department of Education. Districts should ensure there is a sufficient number of high school counselors to further provide accessibility to higher education and early support for students' post-secondary readiness goals. Because the participants' parents were not capable of helping them complete the college applications, they reported requiring support in all aspects of the college application process including obtaining applications, completing applications, writing resumes and essays, and participating in college tours.

Organizations like Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), Young Men's Initiative, Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC), and the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools ensure schools address inequities and disproportionality in the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic males. New York University's Black and Latino Male School Intervention Study (BLMSIS) created specific structures to support mentorship and effective practices among the schools for enhancing teachers' pedagogy, but also for supporting their levels of confidence (Villavicencio & Grayman, 2012). Because of the reported positive influence teachers had on the participants, it is crucial for school districts to recognize the significance of mentoring and prioritize funding to increase

the implementation of mentoring programs for school leaders, teachers, and students in New York City.

Implications for New York City lawmakers and city council leaders. Based on four participants' description of the complexity of the New York State Regents Exam, it is noteworthy to mention that the structure of the testing and curriculum should be reevaluated. Additionally, Hector was not fluent in English and experienced challenges with language acquisition, especially after his ELL classes were removed due to funding. The potential consequences of this issue should be addressed to reduce risk factors and enhance learning opportunities for students with limited English proficiency in New York City public schools.

Implications for East Harlem community members and non-profit companies. Since all participants in this study were considered low SES, it is imperative that students of low SES are offered free or low-cost after-school programming and structured supports. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., The Kresge Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Sandler Foundation, The Starr Foundation, Boys and Girls' Club of America, Children's Aid Society, and Harlem RBI work to provide this funding.

Kevin mentioned that he would like to see an increase in supporting the growth for programs in school college-readiness programs, "either through private or public funding." The U.S. Census projected that 16 million young people between the ages of eight and 18 years old, including nine million at-risk young people, will reach adulthood without connecting with a mentor of any kind (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). This study found that funding is essential to offer access to free or low-cost after-school organizations and postsecondary readiness skills in

order to target the academic and social-emotional development for Hispanic youth in New York City.

Implications for national reform. Participants described challenges such as poverty, single parent families and housing issues. Having organizations in East Harlem that provided financial and academic support enhanced their ability to graduate from high school. Hispanic Federation created the federal Social Innovation Fund initiative, which provides funding for various cities to increase earnings for public housing residents. This impacts the local community of East Harlem. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a part of Federal Social Innovation Fund Initiative which provides funding in various cities to increase earnings for Public Housing residents. Additionally, MDRC has provided career academies with a mission to reorganize large high schools to include academic and career-oriented courses. Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanic Federation, Puerto Rican, Latino Justice Foundation were developed to provide research and financial and programmatic support for the Hispanic community. More national and federal initiatives could be adopted to potentially transform the social and economic plight of Hispanic families.

Delimitations and Limitations

Participation in a phenomenological study compares any commonalities among participants (Moustakas, 1994). The participants in this study were self-identified Hispanic male high school graduates, between 18-28 years of age and residents of East Harlem, New York. The participants were selected based on their successful completion of (graduation from) high school in East Harlem. Additionally, they were identified as low SES based on their eligibility to receive free/reduced lunch while in high school.

There were several limitations present in this study. All of the participants for the study were individuals who volunteered to participate. This study solely represented their experiences because there were not any other subgroups who volunteered for the study. Two students were familiar with the researcher prior to the study. Three participants have been acquaintances for several years and were a part of the same after-school program. Furthermore, due to the researcher's different gender, age, and ethnicity, the participants might not have revealed significant information that could have potentially altered the identified phenomenon.

Recommendations for Future Research

Frameworks of Tinto (1975) and Bean's (1983) attrition model focus on persistence in college students. More longitudinal quantitative studies may allow researchers an opportunity to examine more factors of persistence that can exclude the family and non-family risk factors that influences academic achievement of Hispanic males prior to attendance in post-secondary institutions. Replicating this qualitative, phenomenological study on other subgroups would be beneficial to highlight additional contributing factors of retention. Extensive quantitative research is also needed to evaluate initiatives like Young Men's Initiative which focuses on training, hiring, and retaining African American and Hispanic male teachers in New York City and on a national level.

While research on mentoring is expanding, limited programmatic evaluations of formal mentoring programs exist (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Additionally, Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model could be applied to other mentoring studies and programs as a design framework. Because eight of the 10 participants in this study experienced formal mentorship, research that investigated the experiences of participants not involved in mentorship programs would extend this study. Similar qualitative studies can contribute to literature by improving the

efficacy of teaching and structured programs within the instructional day and in structured after-school programs.

Since this qualitative, phenomenological study offered each participant's perspective of their experiences, future qualitative ethnographic case studies may examine the unique needs of this diverse population from multiple perspectives, such as from the perspectives of teachers, parents, coaches, and/or mentors. Because nine participants did not experience language acquisition as an obstacle to complete high school, more qualitative research that analyzes factors contributing to the retention of non-native English speakers would enhance curricular design and educational practices. Additionally, religion and spirituality was not an identified factor contributing to retention of these 10 participants. Further studies on the spiritual influences of those for whom the church did matter would contribute to the existing field of research. Furthermore, developing a grounded theory study based on these findings to explore supports which are more dominant can further extend the LatCrit theoretical framework.

Summary

Consistent with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit Theory, this study identified barriers that impeded the academic and financial success of Hispanic males while investigating factors that contributed to their successful completion of high school. As highlighted by the participants, the mentoring relationships that the participants had with their teachers, families or friends were the most significant factors that improved their trajectory. Even though the nature and the vigor of the relationships might have differed among the graduates, these relationships provided social-emotional support, a sense of accountability, a sense of belonging, and an enhanced sense of identity during pivotal transitions in their lives, specifically when entering high school. Additionally, effective support structures including high school counselors,

structured programs, and extra-curricular activities were significant influences on their persistence.

This study focused on the experiences and relationships of young Hispanic males in hopes to expedite national, state, and local researchers', policymakers', and educators' intentions to design and implement policies and programming in order to promote educational attainment and progress of this subgroup. More research and initiatives necessitate additional investigation of the unique challenges that Hispanic males face such as psychology, health, labor, sociology, literature, criminal justice, education, and economics (Noguera Hurtado, & Fergus, 2011). This study emphasized that additional exploration of the most rapid growing racial/ethnic minority population is necessary (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

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Appendix A

Liberty University's IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 2, 2016

Robin Elliott-Ghalleb

IRB Approval 2406.050216: Factors That Influence the Retention of Urban, Hispanic High School Male Graduates: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Robin,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B

Sample email to recruit potential participants

Dear colleague,

As a graduate student in the education department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. The purpose of my phenomenological study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the retention of urban, Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. Since Hispanics continue to have the lowest rates of high school completion, this study seeks to address the phenomenon of low retention rates of urban, Hispanic males by identifying influences on the participants' ability to overcome family and non-family risk factors.

For the purpose of this study, 10-15 participants will be Hispanic males between the ages of 18-28, who reside in East Harlem, were on free/reduced lunch during high school, and successfully completed high school in East Harlem. The following research questions will guide the research: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to completion? How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals?

I am writing this request to ask if you if you know of any potential volunteers that fit the criteria that would be interested. If you know of any potential candidates, please contact me or have them contact me at (omitted) or at [\(omitted\)](#). Thank you for considering my request and for your support in this study.

Sincerely,

Robin Elliott-Ghalleb

Principal Researcher

Appendix C

Sample phone call to potential participants

Hello _____,

My name is Robin Elliott-Ghalleb and I am a colleague of _____.

He/she explained to me that you might be interested in volunteering to participate in a study that I am conducting. I kindly ask that you could take a few minutes to hear about this study I am conducting.

I am a graduate student in the education department at Liberty University and I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. The purpose of my study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the retention of urban, Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. This study seeks to address the phenomenon of low retention rates of urban, Hispanic males by identifying influences on the participants' ability to overcome family and non-family risk factors.

You have been selected as a potential participant of this study because you have received a traditional high school diploma in East Harlem despite possible challenges that you may have endured. This information can potentially provide insight for other males in East Harlem and provide strategies to support their ability to complete high school. You will be asked to participate in an interview and focus group. Your responses will be compiled along with nine or more other peers to possibly improve public education in East Harlem. All data is anonymous.

For the purpose of this study, the 10-15 participants will be Hispanic males between the ages of 18-28 who reside in East Harlem, were on free/reduced lunch during high school, and successfully completed high school in East Harlem. The following research questions will guide the research: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their

successful completion of high school? How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to completion? How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals?

I am hoping that you would possibly consider participating in this study. If you are a Hispanic male between the ages of 18-28 who received free/reduced lunch in high school and are interested, please let me know. The study will last approximately six months and your participation would only take a few hours throughout that time period. Your participation would be very helpful to students within this community. Do you think that you may be interested? What time would be convenient for you to meet me? We can meet at the public library or community center that is located in close proximity to your apartment if that is okay with you. Please feel free to contact me at (omitted) or at (omitted) for additional information or to answer any questions. Thank you so much for your time and consideration of my request of your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Robin Elliott-Ghalleb

Principal Researcher

Appendix D

Sample email to potential participants

Hello _____,

My name is Robin Elliott-Ghaleb and I am a colleague of _____.

He/she explained to me that you might be interested in volunteering to participate in a study that I am conducting. I am a graduate student in the education department at Liberty University and I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. The purpose of my study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the retention of urban, Hispanic high school male graduates in East Harlem, New York. This study seeks to address the phenomenon of low retention rates of urban, Hispanic males by identifying influences on the participants' ability to overcome family and non-family risk factors.

You have been selected as a potential participant of this study because you have received a traditional high school diploma in East Harlem despite possible challenges that you may have endured in an urban environment. This information can potentially provide insight for other males in East Harlem and provide strategies to support their ability to complete high school. Your interview will be compiled along with nine or more other peers to possibly improve public education in East Harlem.

For the purpose of this study, the 10-15 participants will be Hispanic males between the ages of 18-28 who reside in East Harlem, were on free/reduced lunch during high school, and successfully completed high school in East Harlem. The following research questions will guide the research: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to completion? How did

relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals?

I am writing this request to ask if you would possibly be interested in volunteering in this study. If you are a Hispanic male between the ages of 18-28 who received free/reduced lunch in high school and might be interested, please feel free to contact me at (omitted) or at (omitted). I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Thank you for considering my request of your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Robin Elliott-Ghalleb

Principal Researcher

Appendix E

Sample Letter Requesting Experts in the Field to Provide Feedback Concerning the Readability of the Interview Questions

Dear committee member,

As a graduate student in the education department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. The title of my research project is Factors That Influence the Retention of Urban, Hispanic High School Male Graduates: A Phenomenological Study. Research questions are as follows: Research Question 1: What factors do Hispanic adult male graduates indicate contributed to their successful completion of high school? Research Question 2: How do Hispanic adult male graduates perceive the personal characteristics that helped them overcome their challenges to high school completion? Research Question 3: How did relationships with teachers, families, churches and coaches assist Hispanic adult male graduates in achieving their goals?

I am writing this request to ask if you would be willing to review the interview and focus group questions which will be used in my study. I will secure IRB approval from Liberty University, and I would be glad to share the IRB approvals with you. Attached are the interview and focus group questions for review. I would sincerely appreciate it if you could return feedback within five business days, if possible. Thank you for providing feedback and considering my request to ensure the questions and prompts I use are clearly understood by my participants.

Sincerely,

Robin Elliott-Ghaleb

Principal Researcher

Appendix F

Consent Form

Factors That Influence the Retention of Urban, Hispanic High School Male Graduates Participant Consent Form School of Education

Dear Participant,

You are invited to be in a research study of factors that contributed to the completion of high school Hispanic male graduates in East Harlem, New York. You have been selected as a potential participant of this study because you have received a traditional high school diploma in East Harlem, despite possible challenges that you may have endured. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Robin Elliott-Ghaleb, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that supported your ability to complete high school. This information can potentially provide insight for other Hispanic males in East Harlem and provide strategies to support their ability to complete high school.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- 1.) Sign a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Release form authorizing me to access your high school transcripts.
- 2.) Participate in a one-hour, audio-recorded individual interview session with the researcher answering specific questions.
- 3.) Participate in a one-hour, audio-recorded focus group providing responses to questions.
- 4.) Review and/or edit the transcripts of the interview and focus groups for accuracy or missing information.

I will attempt to schedule these sessions at a time that is convenient for you. Additionally, I will review your school transcripts to identify potential factors that supported your ability to complete high school. Additionally, I will review your school transcripts to identify potential factors that supported your ability to complete high school. Throughout this study, your identity will be protected at all times. The results will be presented in the dissertation.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved in this study are minimal. There are no more risks associated with this study than you would encounter in everyday life. There are no potential disadvantages to participants except for the time commitment to participate in the interview and focus group sessions.

Throughout the study, I am always available to discuss or clarify information with you at any time via email or phone. Additionally, I will be available if you feel distressed or uncomfortable in any way.

Should you feel distressed or uncomfortable, you may decide to withdraw from the study. It would be appreciated if you do so two weeks from the date the study begins (approximate date is April 1, 2016). If the researcher identifies significant psychological risks to participation, the researcher will terminate the study.

The benefits to participation will potentially improve public education in East Harlem.

Compensation:

You will receive no financial compensation or incentives for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. We may share the data we collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if we share the data that we collect about you, we will remove any information that could identify you before we share it.

To ensure confidentiality, participants will be given pseudonyms in data collection and analysis. In addition, participants' focus group and interview recordings and transcripts with images and captions will be kept in a secure, confidential location and only the researcher and dissertation chairperson will have access to it. Data will be kept for three years and disposed of upon completion of study. During focus group interviews, all members of the focus groups will be asked to omit names throughout responses. All members will be asked to maintain confidentiality and privacy of information discussed, but I cannot assure absolute confidentiality.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher immediately at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: Dr. Jim Zabloski (omitted)

The researcher conducting this study is Robin Elliott-Ghaleb. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact the researcher at (omitted) or (omitted). If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to

someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G

Researcher's reflexive journal

Date: 6.28.16 11:00 a.m.

I just met with my first participant and conducted my first interview. I first practiced with a colleague but it was difficult to have an interview with an unfamiliar participant. His friend recommended him to participate in the interview and he acted nervous. It was hard not to comment on his responses and engage in a conversation with him as I would normally do as a teacher and experience as a basketball coach. I also felt uncomfortable being from a different demographic and was worried that he thought I was judging him or labeling him or his subgroup. He seemed less nervous after the third question and laughed more. I felt the need to comment positively after he discussed his successes but avoided it. I knew that this was not my role and it could skew the participants' responses and the data, so I avoided doing so as much as possible. I have two other interviews today so I will be mindful of that throughout the interviews. I am regretting that I scheduled two interviews today because I am curious to hear this recording.

Date: 6.28.16 4:00 p.m.

2nd interview: The first question allowed the participant to tell me about himself. This is the second interview. He has had to reschedule several times so we have emailed a few times and he have become more familiar with me. He answered the first question very openly and provided detailed information without being prompted. He appeared very comfortable and relaxed. It could have been a combination of his personality and the ease he felt with me. I was more mindful of my gestures, head nods and desire to comment on his achievements. At this time, I observed that due to my personality and energy, I need to remove bias, so I need to be entirely non-reactive after their responses.

Interview questions

1. What would you like to tell me about yourself?
2. How would you describe your experiences as a high school student?
3. Describe relationships that have contributed to your success.
4. Describe the most significant relationships experienced during youth/adolescence.
5. Describe how your closest relationship supported you during your youth/adolescence.
6. Please describe your challenges during elementary, middle and high school years.
7. Describe some of the positive factors that supported you in your academic career.
8. How do you believe these experiences have affected your ability to graduate from high school?
9. Are there specific things that schools could do to improve educational experiences?
10. How has your Hispanic culture influenced you in terms of your education?
11. Please describe both your mother and father's views toward education and their role in your education.
12. What role models did you have in your life?
13. Please describe any mentoring relationships with family, church or community members which may have influenced your decision to graduate.
14. Is there any more information that you would like to add on this topic?
15. Are you willing to answer additional, clarifying questions if necessary in person, by email or by phone?

Focus Group questions

1. What is your definition of success?
2. What did you like best about your high school experience?
3. Think back over all the years in school and tell us your fondest memory.
4. Suppose that you are in charge, what would you do to make the community better?
5. Are these categories and themes indicative of your school experiences?
6. In what ways, if any, do these categories influence each other?
7. Are some categories more important than others?
8. Is this summary accurate?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?