2012

# Career academy scholars program

Gustavo Adolfo Chamorro

# CAREER ACADEMY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

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by

Gustavo Adolfo Chamorro

June 2012

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June 2012

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ABSTRACT

Low-income Latina/o students face many challenges to complete their secondary education, and to pursue a higher education degree. The purpose of the study was to gather the experiences of students as they participated in college level classes, while they were still in high school. While scholars have done extensive work on intervention programs such as Puente and AVID, research has been scarce on the benefits of college bound programs that provide students with dual credit/dual enrollment opportunities, particularly programs targeting Latina/o students. This qualitative case study included 20 low-income Latina/o high school students participating in a dual-enrollment program at a community college campus in Southern California. The case study approach was chosen due to its evaluative nature that allows for an analysis of "how" and "why" questions in research. Through the voices of students and narrative stories that emerged, the researcher obtained deep insight into the students' lived experiences, and in the process learned more about their college and career aspirations. One of the most important findings in the study was some of the forms of Community Cultural Wealth; resistant capital, linguistic capital and aspirational capital were important motivational forces in students' drive to succeed academically. Culturally rich programs that also focus on academics are recommended, as well as additional studies that evaluate their effect on college enrollment and persistence rates among Latina/o high school students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About three years ago, I started the educational journey to obtain a doctorate degree. Before making the decision to begin the journey, I debated on whether I was ready or prepared for what was to come ahead. It was not until I had a conversation with the love of my life, my wife Maria Eugenia, that the final decision was made. Through her love and continuous support, I was able to get through the time and energy requirements to finish the program. There were times in which I questioned my willingness to continue, but my wife was there, always encouraging me to finish what I had started. Gracias Mi Vida por tu apoyo e infinito amor.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the woman who gave me life, my mother Gloria Parajón. She was the one who took care of my two children at the time, Danny and Justin, while I was working my way through community college and four-year university classes. I definitely would not be here today if it had not been for her support and love. Gracias Mama por toda su ayuda y por ser una madre y abuela tan especial.

I would like to acknowledge my children, Justin, Axell, Danny, Tiana, and Nahomy for being part of my life, and part of my inspiration to succeed and achieve more in life. To my boys: If I could do it, you could do it too. As you move forward with your own journeys, just know that you will always have my support and love. To my girls (mis dos gorditas): I cannot describe how much joy you have brought into my life. You literally grew while I was in this program, as

you are now 3 years old and 8 months old. I hope that you too will begin your own journeys someday.

I would like to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Louie Rodriguez (Chair), Dr. Bonnie Piller and Dr. Donna Schnorr, for their support and guidance through the dissertation process, and for sharing their knowledge and wisdom during the classes I was fortunate to have with them. Finally, I would like to acknowledge someone who years ago took the time to care for me as a human being, and showed me the roadmap to higher education, my community college counselor Laura Gomez.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Maria Eugenia Elias de Chamorro, and my children, Justin, Axell, Danny, Tiana, and Nahomy; you are my motivation to want to accomplish more in life, and to become a better person, husband, and father. Family is a strong component of the Latino culture, something that fuels our drive to defeat the odds and exceed expectations, and a key to our aspirations for a better future. It is my hope that our education system will take advantage of this important asset to inspire more Latino students to pursue a higher education degree, and in the process make their families proud.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

Latinos constitute the highest growing ethnic group in the United States, accounting for more than 50% of the growth of the U.S. population between 2000 and 2010 (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). This growth has also transferred to our school system where the number of Latino students is also on the rise -- in fact, Latinos are now the largest subgroup of students in California at 50.38% (California Department of Education, 2010), and the largest minority group in the U.S. K-12 public education system with 12.4 million students (Campoverdi, 2011). While the population of Latinos still concentrates in nine states--Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York and Texas, there has been a widespread movement of Latinos to other states, which has in turn led to dramatic changes in demographics in those states (Passel et al., 2011). Please see Figure 1 for a list of states and growth percentages.

## Problem Statement

The current and projected population growth of Latinos should instill a sense of urgency in our nation as Latinos continue to underperform academically and have less educational attainment than other ethnic groups; furthermore, only about 50% of Latino students finish high school on-time, and when compared with their peers they are half as likely to have the academic requirements needed

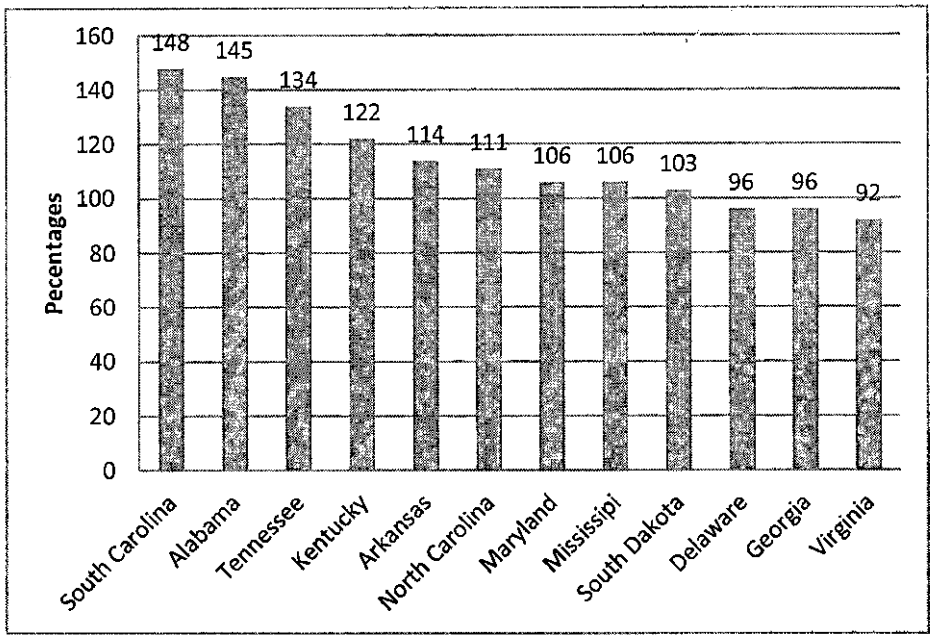


*Figure 1.* States with largest Latino population growth (2000–2010).

Passel, J., Cohn, D., & Lopez, M. H. (2011, March 24). Hispanics account for more than half of nation's growth in past decade. *Pew Hispanic Center.* Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/03/24/hispanics-account-for-more-than-half-of-nations-growth-in-past-decade/

to attend college (Campoverdi, 2011). This has some important social and economic implications, as the majority of jobs in the U.S. will require a minimum of some college education by the year 2016 (Gurley-Alloway, 2009). Without a higher education degree, many Latino students will be relegated to the few manual and technical jobs that will remain, and thus will continue to remain at the bottom of the socio-economical and educational ladder, forming a sizable underclass that can be detrimental to the economic growth of the U.S. As a result, the current presidential administration has made it a priority to raise the

academic achievement and college-goifng rates of Latinos, especially since one out of every five students in the nation is of Latino descent (Campoverdi, 2011). It is important then to look not only at the factors that hinder the education progress of Latino students, but also at the factors or programs that can make a difference in improving their academic achievement and college going rates.

## College Preparation Programs

The causes for the low-academic achievement of Latino students have been the topic of various research studies. Some studies as well as some educators have blamed Latino parents for their children's low academic achievement, especially for not caring about their children's education (Valencia and Black, 2002). Other studies have pointed at the low socio-economical status possessed by Latino students and their families (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Gandara & Contreras, 2010). While the causes for low academic achievement are many, there are some students who make it through the educational funnel and pursue as well as complete a higher education degree. Gandara (1995), for example, conducted a study that included Latinos of low socio-economic status (SES) who finished college and became professionals in various fields; likewise, Ceballo (2004) studied low-income Latino students who graduated from Yale. Many low-income Latino students have accomplished their educational and career goals through the help of college-bound preparation programs, which provide the academic skills, and social and academic support needed to succeed at a higher education level (Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2011). Gandara (2004) cites

the Puente college preparation program as a solution that can bridge the educational gap for Latino students. Puente and other college preparation programs will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, including how they have provided Latino students with the social and cultural capital needed to enroll and successfully complete a post-secondary degree.

## Purpose of the Study

A qualitative case study research approach was used for this study. The study included 20 mostly low-income Latino high school students participating in a dual-enrollment program giving students the opportunity to take a college class at a community college campus. Through this opportunity, students were enabled to experience the "college culture", which includes important items such as understanding the college enrollment process, financial aid, and the requirements needed to transfer to a four-year university (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004).

College preparation programs are important for low-income students because they provide them with opportunities that they might otherwise not have, especially since Latino students attend the schools with the fewest resources necessary for college enrollment (Perna & Titus, 2005). The school district where these students attended is one of the largest school districts in California and the largest in the local county -- 94.6% of students are Latino, approximately 60% are English learners, and approximately 87% participate in the free or reduced lunch program (district's website). College preparation programs can

also provide students with encouragement and financial assistance (Fenske, Geranios, Keller, & Moore, 1997). Through funding provided through a state grant, students participating in the program were spared from paying for college tuition fees and books. They also had access to a dedicated program counselor who could provide advice and encouragement on college matters, including the requirements needed to continue attending college after they finished high school. As Latinos typically attend low-performing schools with high student to counselor ratios (Kimura-Walsh., et al, 2005), this program provided a unique opportunity for students to connect with a counselor who could dedicate her time and energy to offer academic advice and moral support solely for students in the program. The purpose of this study was to gather the experiences of the twenty students participating in the program, while they were still in high school. Through the voice of students and narrative stories that developed, the researcher obtained a better insight about the students' lived experiences, and in the process learned more about their aspirations for higher education or a technical career. The study included three main research questions.

## Research Questions

1. How do low-income Latino high school students in a college bound intervention program define, describe, and explain their experiences in the program?
2. How, if at all, do students in a combined career pathways and college promotion program change their perceptions of their pursuit to college?

3. What interaction does the program have on the aspirations of students?

The above questions guided this qualitative study on the proper analysis of data collected, and to develop a conceptual framework applicable to Latino student populations.

## Theoretical Base

As has been highlighted, the low academic achievement and college-going rates of Latino students is an issue of great concern in the U.S., perhaps exacerbated by the latest census data of 2010 showing the growth of the Latino population and its dispersion to other states, besides the nine where most of the population still resides. To gain a better understanding about some of the causes leading Latino students on a poor academic path, we must look at their social class standing through a social reproduction lense. Some scholars like Bowles and Gintis (1976) have argued that the U.S. educational system is a reproductive machine geared to keep individuals from the lower classes in blue-collar jobs, and middle and upper-class individuals in managerial or white-collar positions. Other researchers such as Oakes (1995) have indicated that school tracking processes are detrimental to Latino and African-American students, and lead them on a downward cycle of poor academic results and low college transfer rates. Using social reproduction theory as a lense (one of three lenses in the study), this study sought to gain a better understanding about some of the roadblocks that could prevent participating students from advancing towards their

academic and personal goals; those roadblocks included some of the structural barriers existent within the educational structure of schools. Equally as important was to look at the tools or strategies that students might use to overcome those obstacles.

Prior research indicates that college preparation programs can increase the levels of social and cultural capital needed for Latino students to enroll and persist in higher education (Cabrera et al., 2006). From institutional agents who can provide guidance and advice on college matters (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995) to the ingrained habitus cited by Bourdieu (1986), social and cultural capital can provide advantages that can be used for social and educational mobility. Through the use of a social and cultural capital theory lense, this research sought to gain a better understanding about how low-income Latino high school students can enhance their existing social and cultural capital by participating in dual-enrollment programs, and in the process get a better perspective about their pursuit of a college degree.

Lastly, it was important to analyze how the program contributed to students' aspirations to attend college. Bandura's self-efficacy theory model (2006) states that individuals' personal beliefs about their capacity can positively or negatively affect their aspirations. Students in the program were exposed to the culture of college, had financial support and access to institutional agents. In addition, Latino students can draw from the aspirational capital inherited from their parents' stories of life's struggles and personal sacrifice (Yosso, 2005).

Through the use of a self-efficacy theory lense, this research sought to gain a better understanding about whether the opportunity to participate in a dual-enrollment program, coupled with students' own aspirational capital, could lead them to believe in their capacity to pursue a college education. Figure 2 summarizes the three theoretical bases of the study.

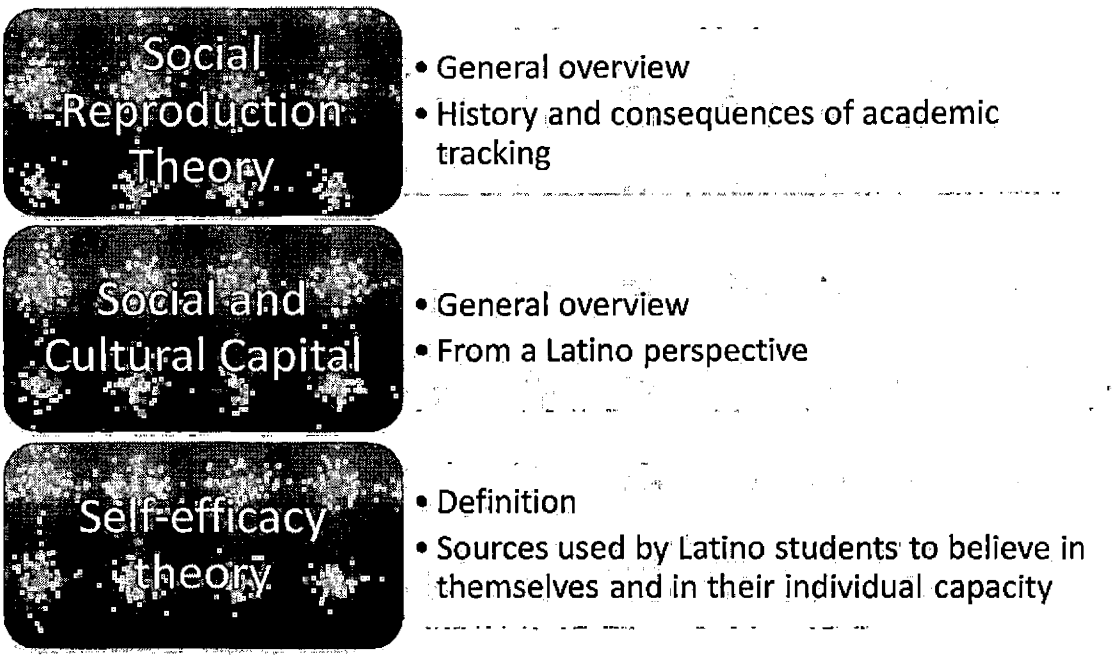


*Figure 2.* Three theoretical bases of the study

## Significance of the Study

The research conducted on college preparation programs such as Puente, AVID, and GEAR UP indicates that Latino students can benefit from targeted programs that provide academic and social support; the benefits are still not very clear for dual enrollment programs as there is very little research that has been

conducted on them, even though interest on dual enrollment programs has been on the rise for the last decade (Hughes, 2010), and they have been touted as a possible solution to the low college attainment among minority groups (Edwards & Hughes, 2011). The research conducted thus far on dual enrollment programs does indicate some preliminary benefits, but it has concentrated on a general population of students rather than solely focusing on a particular ethnic group, such as the sample of low-income Latino students in this study. Edwards and Hughes (2011) state that dual enrollment programs can be beneficial to disadvantaged students as they introduce them to an early college experience, and in the process enhance their aspirations and self-efficacy.

This study sought to add to the body of literature on dual enrollment programs from a Latino student perspective, including how the program interacted with students' aspirations, and how their perceptions of higher education could possibly change through their experiences in the program. Hughes (2010) points out that how a dual enrollment program is structured can have a positive or negative impact on a students' first college experience. For example, some dual enrollment programs may simply involve high school students having the opportunity to register on their own for regular classes at a community college, while others may involve dedicated classes for students, with additional academic and social support to ensure students are successful. The program in which students in this study participated had the latter type of structure via a dedicated class for high school students at a college campus, and

financial and academic support. Lastly, this study also sought to add to the literature on community culture wealth, and how programs that are culturally and academically driven can create a two-way approach that recognizes the cultural values and economical challenges of both Latino students and parents, and how they can be used to provide Latino students with culturally sensitive programs that provide academic and social support. In the next chapter, I address the literature on dual enrollment programs, college intervention programs, and the three theoretical bases of the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

College attendance and completion rates among Latinos increased considerably in the late 1960s and continued into the 1970s due in large part to the civil rights movement and resulting affirmative action initiatives as well as government financial aid programs (Gandara, 2001). The picture has changed drastically as affirmative action programs have been dismantled under the alleged umbrella and protection of the U.S. legal system (Swail & Roth, 2000; Gandara, 2009). The low academic achievement and college graduation rates persistent among Latinos has provided scholars with a rich mining field that has produced a plethora of research articles addressing the causes, effects, and solutions to these academic factors. Research has looked at college enrollment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Saunders & Cerna, 2004), academic success (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Ceballo, 2004; Ryabov & VanHook, 2007), and financial aid (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Harrell & Forney, 2003; Luna De la Rosa, 2006), as some of the issues affecting Latino students. One area, however, which has not been researched in-depth, involves the impact of dual enrollment programs on post-secondary education (Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007).

This review provides a general overview of dual enrollment programs as well as college intervention programs, and analyzes frameworks that can assist in gaining understanding about some of the factors hindering the academic

progress of low-income Latino students, and the practices that may reverse this trend. This study includes a review of the literature on dual enrollment and intervention programs, followed by a review of the literature on three relevant theories, social reproduction, social and cultural capital, and self-efficacy, and culminates with a conceptual lens framing the issues of dual enrollment programs for low-income Latino students.

## Dual Enrollment Programs

Karp and Hughes (2008) define dual enrollment as "collaborative efforts between high schools and colleges, in which high school students (usually juniors and seniors) are permitted to take college courses" (p. 14). Hughes (2010) reports that participation in dual enrollment programs can help high school students achieve high school graduation, promote college enrollment, and enhance students' aspirations for higher education. Prior focus of dual enrollment programs concentrated on more academically able students, but the focus has now expanded to include average to low achieving students, including career technical education (CTE) students (Karp, et al., 2007).

Karp, et al. (2007) conducted a study that highlighted the benefits of dual enrollment programs for CTE students in New York and Florida. While the study in New York included 2,303 students, the Florida study included all high school students in the state, 299,685 students. Presently, Florida has legislation which states that students with a 3.0 Grade point average (GPA) who pass a college proficiency exam, must be given the opportunity to take dual enrollment classes

(Karp, et al., 2007). The results of the study revealed positive short-term and long-term benefits for dual enrollment students when compared to non-dual enrollment students. Some of the long-term benefits included higher college GPAs, measured three years after high school graduation, and a higher probability of college persistence; short-term benefits included higher college enrollment and higher high school graduation rates. A possible shortcoming in this study was the methodology used to identify CTE students in Florida. Since the state did not group data on students by CTE or non-CTE focus, labor market definitions of occupations were used; however, students in some CTE labeled classes such as engineering and computer networking may have already been predisposed to earning higher grades and enrolling in college. As a result, the authors advocate for further studies that can determine those groups of students that could benefit from participating in dual enrollment programs.

Karp and Hughes (2008) report that dual enrollment programs can benefit students with low academic achievement and low college enrollment rates -- two of the factors affecting Latino students' educational progress. As a group, nearly 70% of Latino high school students enroll in classes that do not prepare them for college (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Solorzano, et al., 2003). Karp and Hughes (2008) concluded that dual enrollment programs can help to break the pattern of CTE programs solely preparing students for immediate employment after high school by exposing students to more academically challenging classes, and the college experience. This experience is strengthened when classes are held at higher education institutions where students can experience the college culture,

and develop a sense of responsibility and belonging (Lerner & Brand, 2006). Lewis (2007) identifies dual enrollment programs as part of the new vocationalism in U.S educational institutions that blends vocational education with more rigorous academic components. Dual enrollment programs can become an intervention mechanism to promote higher education among Latino students, but despite the successes, not enough is known about the benefits of dual enrollment. As stated previously, the studies on the benefits of dual enrollment are limited; however, research on other college intervention programs is more extensive.

## College Intervention Programs

College intervention programs or early intervention programs can help students improve academically and obtain information about post-secondary education requirements (Swail & Roth, 2000). According to Cunningham, Redmond and Merisotis (2003), "early intervention programs encourage educationally and economically disadvantaged students to gain the information necessary to enter the post-secondary education pipeline" (p. 8). This information may include learning how to navigate the "culture of college", referring to the admission process, financial aid, and college selection which is often taken for granted by students from middle class families, but foreign for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). By getting an early taste of college life, students are able to receive a realistic preview of the college experience, including the college culture and academic

requirements needed for admission. This early experience is something that can help students feel more comfortable and confident once they begin their post-secondary journey (Fenske, Geranios, Keller, & Moore, 1997). In addition, it is an excellent way to eliminate the "college is not for me" attitude, and to reduce the fear of not having the skills to perform successfully in college-level classes. This is particularly important for at-risk students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

A study conducted by Schnorr and Ware (2001) found that participation in what resembled a college preparation program influenced the career maturity of academically at-risk students; "Career maturity included such tasks as occupational cognizance, thoughtful planning, desire to explore careers, and knowledge about the world of work" (p. 1). What was unique about this program was that, while the participants were failing in their traditional school environment prior to entering this program, they were thriving in this integrated career and academic curricular environment. Further, length of time in the program significantly correlated with their career maturity, and their career maturity mean scores were as high as a comparative group of students who were in college preparatory courses but not considered academically at-risk. Middle and high school student participants learned their academic content by engaging in relevant activities associated with someone in that career. The program emphasized a spectrum of courses that included careers requiring further college education, regardless of the students' academic performance prior to entering the program. This program suggests that an integrated academic and career

curriculum with an emphasis on college education planning was a successful approach for these academically at-risk students.

Planning for post-secondary education is not usually one of the goals for Latino students, especially since most of the classes they take in high school do not prepare them for college (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Solorzano, et al., 2003), but changing this situation is imperative for Latino students. One college intervention program that seems to be making a difference in encouraging Latino students to attend college is the Puente program.

Puente or bridge is a program that helps Latino high school students prepare for post-secondary education. Originally started at the community college level to address the low transfer rate of Latino students from community colleges to four-year universities, the program is also available at the high school level to prepare students for direct transfer to four-year universities (Gandara & Moreno, 2002). Puente targets three different areas. These three areas are an emphasis in developing strong writing and literature skills, mentoring, and lastly, counseling (Gandara, 2004). Gandara (2002) conducted a four-year study of the Puente program, which included 1,000 Puente students and 1,000 non-Puente students. In addition, the study included 75 matched pairs of each group to determine the impact of Puente on students' GPA, college attitudes, aspirations, and college attendance. The findings of the study were as follows:

- Puente students had a stable level of college aspirations when compared to their non-Puente counterparts whose college aspirations declined in the 12$^{th}$ grade. Even more striking was the finding that the

college aspirations of Puente students were similar to the college aspiration levels of White and Asian students.

- Puente students were better informed about the college admission process, and attended four-year universities at higher rates than non-Puente students.

Moreno (2002) conducted an additional study using the same population of students. His qualitative study approach included interviews with 31 pairs of Puente and non-Puente students to analyze the long-term outcomes of Puente, measured two years after students had enrolled in college. The results of the study revealed that 75% of Puente students were still in college two years later, compared to 55% of non-Puente students. In addition, fewer Puente students were working full-time while in college when compared to non-Puente students. Overall, the results of Puente indicate the program had a significant impact on the aspirations, college attendance, and persistence of Latino students. Let us turn now to similar results obtained in studies looking at the impact of the Advance via Individual Determination Program (AVID).

AVID is a program serving low-achieving minority group and low-income students who have at least a C average. The program uses a writing, inquiry, and collaboration strategy (WIC) to encourage students to do well in high school and attend college (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). This strategy is achieved through an elective class that provides students with academic and social support via college tutors and trained teachers (Mendiola, Watt, & Huerta, 2010). Mehan, et al. (1996) conducted a study of eight ethnically diverse high

schools in San Diego to examine the impact of AVID on college enrollment. The study included 353 students in grades 9 – 12 who had completed at least three years of AVID, and 288 students who had started in the AVID program at the same time, but who were only in the program one semester or a year. The results of the study demonstrated that 48% of the AVID students who were in the program for three years enrolled in a four-year university, compared to a 34% enrollment for students who were in the program a year or less. The four-year college enrollment rate was also higher than the local school district rate of 37%, and the national average at the time of 39%. There was no difference between the percentages of students who enrolled at a community college as both groups (three years and one year or less) had enrollment rates of 40%; however, this rate was higher than the local district's rate of 34%. Further examination of this study revealed that 43% of Latino students who had been in the AVID program for three years enrolled in four-year universities, compared to the 20% of Latino students who had only participated in the program for a year or less; the percentage was also higher than the national rate for Latino students at the time of the study of 29%.

A more recent qualitative study conducted by Mendiola et al. (2010), which focused explicitly on Latino students, went beyond college enrollment by analyzing the academic progress of Latino students at a Texas university. The study included 42 students who had been enrolled in AVID for at least three years. Using group interviews and a survey approach, the study found that 79% of students were on a path to graduate within six years, compared to the 25% to

30% graduation rates for the overall student population at the university. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that the AVID program, through its rigorous academic focus and teacher and tutor support, can lead Latino students to persevere on their education journey at four-year universities.

An additional study by Watt et al. (2011) supports the effectiveness of AVID on college retention. Using a mixed-method approach, Watt et al. (2011) found that 92% of the students involved in the study returned for their second consecutive university semester; furthermore, 80% of students had a GPA of 2.0 or greater at the end of their second semester. The students in this particular study had participated in AVID for at least two years while in high school, with most students participating for four years (48%) and three years (37%); most of the students were Latino (96%) and low-income (94%). Similar to results obtained in the study by Mendiola et al. (2010), students attributed their college progress to academic skills they acquired while in AVID, and to the family atmosphere, including the social and academic support prevalent in the program. These results are encouraging since prior studies indicate that Latino students have a greater likelihood of obtaining a college degree if they transfer to a four-year university directly after high school (Ceballo, 2004; Oliva & Nora, 2004; Gandara, 2010). In addition to AVID, another program that seems to be making a difference in increasing college enrollment among Latinos is the GEAR UP program.

GEAR UP is a federal program established in 1998 to provide support to low-income students in the areas of financial assistance, college awareness, and

academic preparation to go to college (Lozano, Watt, & Huerta, 2009). Unlike AVID, GEAR UP targets complete student cohorts rather than students in the "middle" or C average students (Lozano et al., 2009). Two important components of GEAR UP are partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions, and parental support (Ward, 2006). Partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions are important to ensure a streamlined curriculum that meets college requirements, and which places students on a college pathway; equally important is the role of parents, who are given information on financial aid, college selection, and general guidance on classes and other requirements needed to attend college (Ward, 2006). This level of integrated efforts has led to the labeling of GEAR UP as a comprehensive intervention program (CIP) that uses research to implement effective intervention strategies, and that provides low-income students and parents with needed cultural and social capital to enter and succeed at a postsecondary level (Cabrera et al., 2006).

GEAR UP is considered an "untracking" program since it steers students towards an academic and college pathway, rather than school tracking processes that lead students to take non-college driven courses (Ward, 2006; Lozano et al., 2009). Ward (2006) cites the state of Connecticut's GEAR UP as an example of an untracking program that has led to the elimination of established tracking policies in some districts, as well as the elimination of math courses that do not help students get into college. Due to being a relatively new program, the research on GEAR UP is not as extensive as the research available

on AVID (Watt, Huerta, & Lozano, 2007); however, some recent studies indicate some positive results.

In their report to the U.S. Department of Education, Standing, Judkins, Keller and Shimshak (2008) studied 18 GEAR UP and 18 non-GEAR UP middle-schools, and found that the program increased the knowledge students and parents had on financial aid and requirements to attend college. This finding is significant because prior research has shown that Latino students lack information about college preparation (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Gandara, O'Hara & Gutierrez, 2004; Walpole et al., 2005; Martin, Karabel, & Jacques, 2005; Contreras, 2005) and financial aid (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Harrel & Forney, 2003; Luna De la Rosa, 2006). Lack of information about the college process and financial aid are the two biggest obstacles that African-American and Latino students need to overcome to attend college (Kao & Tienda, 1998), thus increased knowledge of these two concepts can be beneficial for Latino students to plan a post-secondary education. Participation in GEAR UP can also lead students to go to college directly from high school (Pavelchek & Pitman, 2008).

In their study of 348 GEAR UP students in the state of Washington, Pavelchek and Pitman (2008) found that 72% of GEAR UP students transferred to college directly from high school, compared to 45% of non-GEAR UP students; differences between the two groups were larger among Latino students and shorter among Asian students. Attendance to four-year universities was also higher, particularly for male Latinos and Whites. These findings are significant because Latinos have the lowest college enrollment rates among major ethnic

groups (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). Pavelchek and Pitman (2008) also found that 81% of students in the study continued onto a second year of college, and that GEAR UP students were more likely to get a college degree within five years than non-GEAR UP students. Similar to the study by Mendiola et al. (2010) on AVID, these findings are significant because they demonstrate that students in the program were more persistent on continuing and finishing their post-secondary education.

As has been presented, research suggests that college intervention programs such as Puente, AVID, and GEAR UP, as well as dual enrollment programs have a positive impact on the college enrollment of Latino students; however, their impact is limited to the number of students who participate in the respective programs. What happens to the greater number of students who are not able to participate in an intervention program? What are the forces keeping these students in a cycle of academic underachievement and low college-going rates? Furthermore, how can students overcome the obstacles and impediments that prevent them from obtaining a college education? Answering these questions requires an analysis of three major frameworks: social reproduction, social and cultural capital, and self-efficacy/aspirations. Using these frameworks as a lens guided this study to better understand the forces at play affecting low-income Latino high school students, and the practices that may help them achieve success in their post-secondary education journey.

## Social Reproduction

In their book "Schooling in Capitalist America", Bowles and Gintis (1976) cite the role of schools in maintaining a system of social reproduction that prepares the working class for blue-collar jobs, and the upper classes for the managerial positions; they also posit that the system is designed to correspond to the hierarchical levels in business (i.e. Principals, teachers, and students vs. Administrators, mid-managers, and employees). A structure that functions in this manner expects obedience and compliance from the lower ranks, and enactment of rules and regulations as well as enforcement from the upper ranks. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that this structure legitimizes a division in school curriculum based on individual merit; therefore, working class students, who typically have lower levels of academic achievement, will be placed in different classes than students with higher grades, who typically come from higher socio-economic backgrounds. The curriculum offered to low-income students in these classes tends to be more diluted and mechanical in nature, but contain more critical thinking and reasoning pedagogy for higher income students (Anyon, 1980; Oakes, 1986).

In her study of five elementary schools, two of them working-class schools, Anyon (1980) found different pedagogy and teaching approaches at each of the schools. Besides the repetitive and mechanical approaches used in the working-class schools, students were subjected to more disciplinary action, and their feedback was often disregarded by teachers who used autocratic teaching techniques. Curriculum and teaching approaches or techniques were

significantly different at the other three schools, which varied from middle-class to upper class. In line with Bowles and Gintis's argument, students at these schools were provided with skills that would basically prepare them for different types of positions in the workplace, thus relegating working class students to blue-collars jobs, and middle to upper class students for white-collar jobs. Although working-class students, as highlighted in Bowles and Gintis's study, can be the recipients of a lower level of education, they are not the passive recipients that Bowles and Gintis suggest, as they often resort to resistance practices to express their discontent (Anyon, 1980; Giroux, 1981; Apple, 1981).

Giroux (1981) and Apple (1981) cite the work of Paul Willis (1977) as an example that working-class students are not conformists who are molded by a reproductive school system, but rebels who ultimately contribute to their own social reproduction. In Willis's (1977) "Learning to Labour", the Lads rejected the system of schooling by skipping classes, using drugs, and displaying other sets of behaviors which contributed to their low academic achievement. The Lads did not see any purpose in adjusting their ways to schools' expectations, especially since they saw themselves working in blue-collar jobs that did not require an education. While Willis's study took place in England, Smyth and Hatham (2004) conducted their study with working-class youth in Australia. Similar to Willis's findings, students resorted to rebellious behaviors and did not see schooling as a vehicle that would lead them to a better future or make a difference in their lives. These two studies provide evidence that low SES students can develop negative assessments about schooling, and react in ways that contribute rather than

improve their low academic achievement and economic standing in society. The oppositional attitudes that students can develop are not unique to the two countries where these studies were conducted.

In his ethnographic study of low SES students in the U.S., MacLeod (1995) provides a rich picture of how U.S. youth in poor neighborhoods can develop negative attitudes towards education. The Hallway Hangers, a group composed of mostly White youth, saw education as meaningless in their lives, and did not envision a future where education might help them improve their occupational outlook. Instead of developing careers and higher education plans, the Hallway Hangers drifted from job to job, used drugs and kept getting in trouble either at school or with the law. Not all students in MacLeod's study took an oppositional or uncaring stance towards schooling. Contrary to the Hallway Hangers, the Brothers, who were mostly Black, had high aspirations for their future, and envisioned having good jobs that would be facilitated through their education, and through their own perseverance and hard work. The oppositional stance taken by the Hallway Hangers was self-defeating as they were relegated to either blue-collar jobs or no jobs at all, as many of them were unemployed a few years after they finished high school. The outcome was also similar for the Brothers, who despite their high level of aspirations did not reach their educational and occupational goals.

Living in a meritocratic society can lead us to believe that all students, without regard to race or SES, can achieve their own defined level of success through education, and that those who do not achieve it, like the Hallway

Hangers and the Brothers, must be at fault due to their own poor choices. The Brothers, however, did not take an oppositional stance towards schooling, and believed that education was the key that would open the doors to a better future; furthermore, they did not get in trouble in or out of school, were obedient, and followed procedures (MacLeod, 1995). For many low-income Latino students, the belief of a better future through education is more a dream than a reality as they often attend schools with fewer resources (National Women's Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2009), and have to face an established practice in schools that divides students: Tracking.

## Tracking

Tracking or grouping students in the classroom based on ability levels can have a disastrous impact on student academic achievement, and plans to go to college. Oakes (1986) conducted a study of 13 high schools and 12 junior high schools or middle schools, and found that tracking had a negative effect on students' self-esteem (for students in lower-level or remedial classes), promoted student misbehavior, benefitted students in the higher level classes, but more importantly, it separated students according to socio-economical status, thus favoring Whites over Latino and African-American students, who predominantly filled the lower-level classes. Most studies conducted on tracking have reached similar conclusions (Oakes, 1986; Slavin, 1995), yet the system is still prevalent in the U.S. educational system. How is it that a system that creates racial and social inequality is still part of our educational system today? To answer this

question, we must analyze some historical data, and existing assumptions about tracking.

## History

The late 1800's was a period of extensive economic growth and industrialization in the United States, which gradually changed the U.S. population from an agrarian to an urban society. Not only were native-born residents moving to the cities, but also millions of immigrants were making their way to the land of opportunity. The existing school system at the time, the one-room school, was not well equipped to accommodate the growing number of potential students, especially since it was deemed a non-efficient model (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Instead, education reformists advocated for a system that would mirror the efficiency seen in factories, particularly efficiency through division of labor and a hierarchical structure (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). A report published by the National Education Association in 1910 included the following two statements by educators:

> Industry as a controlling factor in social progress, has for education a fundamental and permanent significance, and the differences among children as to aptitudes, interests, economic resources, and prospective careers furnish the basis for rational as opposed to merely formal distinction between elementary, secondary, and higher education. (Oakes, 1986, p. 30)

Similar to factories dividing labor based on workers' knowledge and experience (to guarantee maximum productivity), schools could create and design curriculum that would align with students' different attitudes and interests; therefore, those who were more academically driven could go on to higher education, and those better fit for the world of work could receive technical training that would prepare them for work in the factories. This process mirrors the capitalist model of social reproduction described by Bowles and Gintis (1976). The dominant discourse of educational efficiency was also advocated in 1917 by the authors of the *Cardinal Principles of Education*, whose main concern was to offer options for non-academic or disinterested students to get employment training (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This marked the beginning of tracking, as schools became the institutions in charge of sorting students between academic and non-academic areas. In order to group students in their respective ability or interest groups, schools needed to provide a more expansive curriculum that could only be accommodated by a larger institution, the high school.

Initial student enrollments in high schools were relatively low in 1900, with only one in ten students attending; however, those numbers increased to 7 out of 10 in 1940, and 9 out of 10 in 1980 (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The large growth in enrollment between 1900 and 1940 can perhaps be partly attributed to high schools becoming the primary sorting mechanism in reformists' agenda for educational efficiency; other factors included immigration, compulsory attendance and child labor laws. Dividing students into separate tracks required

not only more expansive curriculum, but also more classroom space and teachers. Different levels of tracks offered included "college, commercial, vocational, and general" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 48). To make courses appealing to the non-academically inclined, content was typically "watered down" or simplified, which in essence divided typical academic courses such as math and science into basic or general, and traditional or advanced. Over time, tracking became an accepted practice, and part of the educational system in the United States; as such, the practice is seldom questioned and is subject to several incorrect assumptions.

## Assumptions

Oakes (1986) cites four different assumptions made by those who believe tracking is the right tool for student academic achievement. The first assumption is that students learn better in homogeneous groups, thus those more advanced should be placed with peers of similar ability, and those in need of remedial help should be grouped with similar students. An additional argument used under this assumption is that more advanced students would be held back if placed in heterogeneous classes or groups, and that the needs of less advanced or slower students would be better met if they are grouped together. A second assumption is that placing slower students with like peers helps them improve their self-esteem, since they do not have to compete with more academically able students. The third assumption is based on the meritocratic principle that students deserve to be placed in different class levels based on previous

academic achievement or natural ability. The fourth and final assumption is that it is easier to teach students in homogenous groups.

There is ample research that proves that heterogeneous grouping does not hold back more advanced students, and homogeneous grouping rather than helping slower students increase their self-esteem, it leads to lower levels of aspirations as students are labeled as dumb or in need of remedial help (Oakes, 1986). Additionally, students in lower-level track classes exhibit more problematic behavior, and are more likely to become dropouts. The belief that students deserve to be placed on appropriate track levels based on academic achievement or natural ability is simply not true, especially since decisions on academic placement are made mainly through three different avenues: standardized testing, teacher and counselor recommendation, and student/parent choice (Oakes, 1986).

Standardized testing has been the norm in our school system for quite some time, and it is here to stay due to its attachment to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and institutional nature (this will be discussed more later on). One of the issues with standardized testing lies in its purpose to intentionally sort students by separating them based on test scores, which cannot be achieved by questions that most students answer right or wrong; in other words, a test would not meet its purpose if it was deemed too easy or too difficult as scores would not be spread out. As a result, test construction involves taking out the most commonly known and unknown questions, which leaves only the test questions that could effectively rank students into groups or scores (Koretz, 2008). The remaining

questions may not necessarily measure the content that students are expected to know, yet the tests are promoted as objective tools that measure student learning and achievement in the classroom. Research conducted on standardized tests has also found that the way tests are constructed tend to be biased against minority students, as some of the language and terms used are foreign to this student population, and benefit students with higher cultural capital, particularly White students (Oakes, 1986, Koretz, 2008). It is not surprising then that Black and Latino students do not perform as well as White and Asian students on standardized tests, and that they tend to be overrepresented in lower level or remedial classes.

Another avenue used in academic placement is to have teachers or counselors recommend students; however, this practice lends itself to the use of subjective criteria that can be detrimental to students. For example, studies have found that student to counselor ratios in public high schools are very high, leaving little room for counselors to dedicate more one-on-one attention for student academic advising (Lewis, 2007; Kimura-Walsch, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2009). As a result, it is not uncommon to have counselors place students in the wrong classes, or for students to feel treated like a number if they get to see a counselor at all. Furthermore, counselors rely on test scores as indicators of academic achievement, and thus base their recommendations partly on students' grades.

The final argument used to defend student placement in tracked courses is that parents and students are given the choice to select their area of interest;

therefore, they can select the classes that can either lead to a transfer to a four-year university, a CTE focus, or a general education or high school diploma (Oakes, 1986). However, students and parents typically make their decisions based on the advice provided by counselors and teachers who rely on subjective criteria, and what is deemed to be objective criteria (standardized tests) to make recommendations. The end result is that many parents and students are never given a choice in regards to the pathways they should undertake, and are instead given prescribed options that they follow without questioning since they trust the judgment of school personnel.

The last assumption that it is easier to teach students in homogeneous groups is the hardest to disprove out of the four assumptions, especially since high-achieving students exhibit less problematic behaviors and attend classes on a more regular basis than low-achieving students. As a result, teaching to one group may be easier than the other, but teaching homogeneous groups of low-achieving students can lead educators and schools to develop "the hidden curriculum". Tracking exposes minority students to diluted teaching content or pedagogy that purportedly prepares them for blue-collar work, rather than the white-collar professional jobs offered to students of higher socio-economical status. This "hidden curriculum" (Anyon, 1980) continues to be part of our educational system today, and keeps students in remedial level classes instead of the higher academic level classes that may help them prepare for a post-secondary education.

Some of the historical information and common assumptions made on tracking have been examined, as well as reasons why those assumptions are either incorrect or hinder the progress of minority or lower socio-economic status (SES) students. Next, factors that have legitimized tracking as part of our educational system will be discussed.

### *Institutionalization of Educational Practices*

There was a time in our history where educational concepts or models such as the kindergarten and high school were not part of the educational system, yet today we could not see ourselves without a system where five-year olds could start their educational journey or where adolescents could get the preparation to go to college or prepare for a job. The two concepts became institutionalized due to various important factors, including proper timing of implementation and political support. The concept for the kindergarten was initially pushed by the wealthy to become part of public education when it became apparent that the private system that was in place could not accommodate the growing number of children and families needing services; the high school was pushed by business interests and reformists who advocated for a more efficient system to provide opportunities for all (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Both concepts received the support of politicians and became legitimized through the educational structure.

Public educational institutions can be the ideal vehicles for policy implementation or reforms since they command the respect of community

stakeholders, and are generally believed to work for the common good of citizens. These beliefs are the result of commonly held myths among members of society who believe in the schools' noble mission to educate and provide opportunities. Meyer and Rowan (1977) state that incorporating these myths into the formal structure of an organization can create a positive image that the organization is acting responsibly, and doing its best to fulfill the needs of stakeholders. The kindergarten and the high school became images of schools' efforts to acculturate immigrants and improve society, and were able to spread within the educational structure through memetic practices fueled by isomorphism and government legislation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991), and thus over time came to be viewed as components of the "real school" structure.

The "real school" structure has become part of the legitimization process of schools, and provides a shield of protection against negative consequences. For example, in the early 1900s the grade school received criticism for its inefficiency in retaining immigrants and the poor in lower grades (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Instead of facing consequences for its inefficiency, the grade school received some small modifications such as age promotion, and educational tracking that would keep slower students moving through the system, rather than being held back. In the public's perception, the grade school was a fair system that provided equal opportunity to those willing to work hard to get good grades; therefore, the problem did not lie with the system, but with students not willing to do the work. The public's perception continues to be the same at the present, as

grades and standardized testing are considered part of the "real school", and students, not the schools, are to be blamed for performance failures; those who do well deserve to be in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and those who do poorly deserve to be in remedial classes or a CTE pathway. Unfortunately, for many students attending lower-level classes means remaining stuck in a cycle of low expectations and diluted curriculum that hinders educational progress, thus promoting unequal rather than equal access and opportunity.

Horace Mann is credited with the phrase "education is the greatest equalizer"; the phrase is actually a myth that people believe in, and that further extends the meritocratic principles present in our society. The placement of students in different track levels was initially touted as being part of a democratic society, where all individuals got an opportunity to improve their lives (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The separation of students into tracks was not exactly what Charles Elliot and the *Committee of Ten* had in mind when they proposed their recommendations for secondary schools; Elliott and the Committee in fact opposed measures that separated academic and non-academic students (Oakes, 1986). However, the calls for efficiency were much stronger, especially to design classes that would be of interest to those not destined for higher education. Tracking then became a myth incorporated into the educational structure, and was welcomed by society as part of the "real school".

Similar to the grade school, tracking has been criticized due to the large number of minorities who occupy remedial or lower-level classes. Despite numerous attempts and lawsuits to end tracking, the practice still remains strong

in schools (Oakes, 1986). According to Powell and Dimaggio (1991), "In institutional environments, organizations are rewarded for establishing correct structures and processes, not for the quality and quantity of their outputs" (p. 167). Tracking has been labeled as a system of choice, a structure that provides students with equal opportunities to advance based on their ability. The fact that minorities are overrepresented in remedial classes is irrelevant since the structure is viewed as fair. This provides an additional incentive for schools not to do anything to change their current tracking procedures.

To some degree, tracking has become part of the grammar of schooling, and has come to be accepted as the norm in schools, and also part of the organizational structure. As such, it shields not only the schools from consequences, but also administrators and teachers who use decoupling techniques to deny responsibility for their actions. In interviews conducted by Oakes and Guiton (1995), teachers associated the high concentration of Latino students in lower-level classes and vocational education to predetermined conditions for which educators had no control over. Among the conditions cited were lack of parental involvement, poor academic skills, and a natural disposition of not caring about school. Consequently, Latino students were often recommended for CTE oriented tracks, particularly in fields such as cosmetology where students could become employed upon graduation from high school.

Schools may not be the intentional capitalist structure of social reproduction that Bowles and Gintis (1976) described, but their mechanisms and procedures clearly predetermine whether students will proceed to college or go

to work based largely on social class status. Stanton-Salazar (1997) argues that these mechanisms are hidden under the umbrella of meritocracy since schools are viewed as fair entities providing equal opportunities for all, especially those who work hard and take advantage of the opportunities that they are provided. These opportunities are masked in the dualism present in educational institutions, which separate students into college-bound and non-college bound tracks (Lewis, 2007), and which purportedly give students an equal and fair choice. Even in instances where schools try to provide a college-going culture, social class may be a factor in the types of higher education institutions students will attend.

In her study of four high schools in the Bay area, McDonough (1997) found that two of the schools, which were located in working-class areas (one private and one public) sent students primarily to local universities and community colleges, whereas the other two schools located in more affluent areas sent students primarily to Ivy League universities or the University of California (UC) system. The higher SES students at these two affluent schools displayed the habitus described by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) as they engaged in natural conversations about which Ivy League or prestigious university they were going to attend. College counseling was typically an important academic component that was started early, and was supplemented at times by parents paying for private counseling sessions; the economic solvency of the high SES students was also evident in their lack of concern about the cost to attend college since they knew they could count on their parents for economic support. For

students at the working-class schools, cost was a significant factor that encouraged students to attend local California State Universities (CSUs) and community colleges. At one of the schools, college counseling was not provided to students until they were in the 12th grade, and the general school culture was not one that encouraged students to pursue higher education. Tracking procedures and social class can be powerful factors in the social reproduction of low-income Latino students in our society.

Low SES among Latino students can be a significant barrier in their pursuit towards a higher education degree. Compared to non-Latinos, Latinos are twice as likely to live in poverty (Chapa & De la Rosa, 2004). Cabrera and LaNasa (2001) conducted a study using the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988, and compared the lowest SES students and highest SES students in the study among three variables or tasks: taking the classes or curriculum that would deem the student college qualified, graduating from high school, and actually applying to a four-year university or college. The NELS provided a rich and extensive dataset, since it included data for student cohorts starting at the 8th grade level (1988), and ending two years after high school graduation (1994), which meant that outcomes such as high school graduation and college enrollment could be measured. At each of the three tasks (curriculum for college qualification, high school graduation, and applying for college), the highest SES students outperformed the lowest SES students by a wide margin; even more disheartening was the finding that by 1994 only one out of ten of the lowest SES students was attending a four-year university, and that

they were 55 percent less likely than the highest SES students to apply to four-year institutions; these findings mirror the 10 percent overall college enrollment for Latinos cited by Chapa and De La Rosa (2004).

Whether they are being tracked and kept in remedial classes by an institutionalized system of secondary education, attend working-class schools that do not promote higher education and have fewer resources, or exhibit rebellious or conformist behaviors, low-income Latino students seem to be predestined for the blue-collars jobs in our society, low levels of education, and a permanent place at the bottom of the economical ladder. College intervention programs have produced some quantifiable benefits that may disrupt these patterns such as increases in college enrollment and completion; the initial research on dual enrollments points to similar benefits; however, there are some elements that need additional understanding, particularly those elements that have proven beneficial for certain groups of our society, specifically low-income Latino students in their educational journey.

## Social and Cultural Capital

Social capital includes a series of networks that can be activated to achieve desired means (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995). Stanton-Salazar (2001) makes a comparison of social capital networks to "social freeways" that when activated can lead individuals to obtain desired information or outcomes; some of these social freeways can be represented by teachers, counselors, mentors, peers, and even family members,

who are familiar with the education process, and can help students navigate through the education system when needed—Stanton-Salazar and Dornbush (1995) refer to these individuals as "institutional agents".

Coleman (1988) highlights the importance of social capital in his assessment of a market in Egypt where a seller can provide the customer with anything he needs through his network of friends in the market, thus if the customer requires a pair of shoes that the merchant does not have, he can turn to any of his colleagues to obtain them and complete the sale. This type of transaction requires the establishment of a knowledge base or personal connections that the merchant can access when needed. Higher SES parents use their knowledge base to select the better schools for their children (Apple, 2004), to question teachers' classroom techniques and student evaluations in order to benefit their children (Weininger & Lareau, 2003), and to help their children navigate through the "culture of college" (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). In addition, they have a better understanding of academic requirements and can provide personal and financial support for college preparation to their children (McDonough, 1997). Latino and African-American students do not share the same fortune as they have lower levels of the types of capital needed for college enrollment, and attend schools where fewer resources that could potentially lead to college enrollment are available (Perna & Titus, 2005).

The information channels that individuals can use are a form of social capital since those relationships can lead to the achievement of set outcomes or goals (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2004; Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). For

working-class Latino students, institutional agents can become the information channels that can help them not only to pursue academic goals, but also keep them out of trouble (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Without institutional agents that can inspire and guide students, the road towards higher education can become a maze, where confusion becomes the norm that ultimately leads students to drop out or not pursue a higher education degree.

Through their interaction with institutional agents, students can get access to "important forms of social support such as academic assistance, career decision-making, emotional support, and crisis intervention" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 3). Higher SES students can obtain this type of support through their parents as well as their social networks, whereas Latino low-income students typically cannot get help from their parents on academic matters, and belong to smaller social networks, which are closed and distanced from the mainstream networks that could provide them with guidance and academic support (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004). By segregating themselves with other students of Latino descent, Latino students forego the opportunity to network with other peers who might provide useful information for college preparation and attendance. Instead, many Latino students congregate with peers who do not want to be known as good students, and whose conversations may not necessarily be about the colleges they plan to attend (Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004). Social capital can be useful when students can tap into information networks that can help them form and achieve their academic goals, otherwise their networks can become "social prisons" that can keep students in

cycles of low academic achievement and hopelessness (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). One way in which social capital can be acquired is through participation in college intervention and dual enrollment programs.

When students participate in college intervention/preparation programs, they have the opportunity to work with dedicated teachers, counselors, and mentors who can become the bridges that students can use to access higher education information. High school students in dual enrollment programs at community colleges or universities have the opportunity to interact with college professors and counselors who can provide guidance and advice on what is needed to be successful in college. Programs like Puente provide teachers, counselors, and mentors (institutional agents) who can help students obtain access to college information and academic support. Bourdieu (1986) compared access to these institutional agents or informational networks to credits that can be redeemed by the holder when needed; he also emphasized that the importance of these connections depended on the size of the network, and the knowledge possessed by those individuals in the network. For example, a network composed of teachers, counselors, and professional mentors can be considered a large network with the appropriate knowledge base for a student to obtain help or guidance on academic matters and career goals. College intervention programs like Puente and AVID provide students with the opportunity to build these large, knowledge-based networks, which can lead students to have more productive relationships with school agents (Valenzuela, 1999).

In their study involving ten first-generation Latino students participating in a college intervention program (The Futures Project), Saunders and Cerna (2004) found that students used the social capital they acquired to form new networks and to maintain old networks, which were later used for college information. Perna and Titus (2005) further validated the importance of social capital for college enrollment in their analysis of NELS information from 1988 through 1994. Using a two-year cohort model, beginning with 8$^{th}$ grade students (1988) and ending with students two years into college (1994), they found that regardless of socio-economical status and type of capital possessed (i.e. human capital, cultural capital), enrollment in a 2-year or 4-year institution depended on the resources or connections students could access through the social networks at their respective schools. Building social capital is of extreme importance for low-income Latino students and students with limited social capital, as it can be the key that opens the door to new opportunities by becoming part of one's cultural capital. Dual enrollment programs and college intervention programs can be fertile grounds where students can build or enhance their social capital, as well as their cultural capital.

## Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) divides cultural capital into three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. In the embodied state, the individual possesses cultural capital that is unique or is embodied in that individual. For example, when a person acquires a skill such as playing the violin, that person is said to

have acquired cultural capital that is unique to that person. Objectified culture capital takes an objective form such as a painting or an opera play, which needs an embodied analysis. As a result, a painting has cultural capital since it can be analyzed or admired by someone with a background or knowledge of the arts. Finally, cultural capital can be institutionalized when it is given value by society. For example, obtaining a higher education degree is considered a form of institutionalized cultural capital since it is something that society values and keeps in high regard.

Some scholars argue that since Bourdieu's work took place in France, where culture and social class is emphasized greater than in other countries, his analyses do not necessarily apply to the United States (Weininger & Lareau, 2003); however, it is clear that social class must be analyzed within the U.S. educational context, especially when educational practices such as tracking, which lead to social reproduction, can keep certain minority groups and low-income students in cycles of poverty and limited education. Cultural capital is also valued in the school system of the United States, and can bring benefit to those groups possessing the type of cultural capital appreciated and legitimated by society. Unfortunately, low-income students and their families do not possess this type of cultural capital, and consequently their culture capital is invisible or ignored by teachers, administrators, and the school system (Yosso, 2005).

## Cultural Capital Valued by Society

The belief that Latino parents do not care about their children's education is a common held belief in schools (Valencia & Black, 2002; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006); it is also a belief that is strongly tied to social class since the behaviors and attitudes of low SES parents can also be construed as uncaring (Lareau, 1987; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). The expectation or dominant ideology within education is that parents should be active participants in their children's education. Active participation can be demonstrated by parents attending parent/teacher conferences, school activities, helping students with their homework, etc; such a list of expectations was created through a Eurocentric, middle-class influenced approach, that only takes into consideration the funds of knowledge possessed by the dominant group (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The participation of low-income parents is low in these areas since they have to encounter numerous challenges such as transportation to get their children to school and less job flexibility (Apple, 2004), as well as lower levels of education that can impede them from helping their children with homework (Ceballo, 2004; Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Middle class parents on the other hand have higher participation in these school activities due to various factors, including employment flexibility, and thus mirror the image of a "caring parent" constructed by schools and the dominant society (Lareau, 1987).

In addition to having higher school involvement, middle class parents are able to afford special classes for their children in music, ballet, etc, and take their kids to museums and art events (Apple, 2004), thus providing the embodied and

objectified cultural capital described by Bourdieu (1986) which is highly regarded by educational institutions and society (institutionalized cultural capital). Cultural capital is also manifested in the knowledge possessed by middle class students and their parents, and in the vocabulary they use (Bourdieu, 1986; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Bourdieu (1986) states that cultural capital becomes ingrained in those who possess it, and as a result becomes a natural process or habitus; therefore, conversations about which college a student is going to attend occur naturally in school and family settings.

Cultural capital can provide certain advantages for middle class parents such as obtaining information from teachers that can benefit their children, and being able to demand or obtain answers in regards to students' performance (Weininger & Lareau, 2003). For students, it provides the knowledge necessary to interact with school agents, and to satisfy the requirements needed for high school graduation and college attendance. The cultural capital held by middle class parents and students is held in high regard in schools since parents fit the criteria of caring, educated individuals who are interested in their children's education, and students fit the criteria of engaged individuals who have the knowledge and behaviors that schools value. While Bourdieu's analysis provides a good framework that helps us understand how the cultural capital of a dominant class can be valued within education, including how it benefits higher SES individuals, it neglected to include that cultural capital is also possessed by other ethnic groups, particularly Latinos and African-Americans (Yosso, 2005). The Latino culture is rich in cultural traditions and cultural capital (funds of

knowledge), but unfortunately its cultural capital is not the type valued by educational institutions (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

## Latino Cultural Capital

Using critical race theory (CRT), Yosso (2005) lists six different types of capital possessed by Latinos and other minority groups: Aspirational capital, Linguistic Capital, Familial Capital, Social Capital, Navigational Capital, and Resistant Capital. Parents are important contributors to the aspirational capital of students through the retelling of their life stories (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Ceballo, 2004), as well as linguistic capital through the use of dichos (sayings) (Espinoza-Herold, 2007) and consejos (advice) (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994).

Yosso (2005) defines linguistic capital as "the intellectual skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language" (p. 10). Latino children are at times the official translator for their parents at the grocery store, school, or at the doctor's office; therefore, from a very young age, Latino children engage in conversations with adults that can help them enhance their vocabulary skills, and also learn communication skills that are important to move around in society, and which can be used to connect with key institutional agents (Tse, 1995; Buriel, et al., 1998; Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). Familial capital, social capital, and navigational capital are linked together since Latinos have extensive family and non-family networks where they can obtain information to achieve desired outcomes (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Dumais & Ward, 2009). Resistant

capital can be seen in Latino mothers' exhortation for their daughters to become someone in life despite the challenges that might lie ahead (Yosso, 2005, Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

The Latino culture is enriched with social and cultural capital that can be used to increase college attendance, especially through the use of knowledge acquired on the dominant culture, which can help students take advantage of resources that can be beneficial towards their college education (Dumais & Ward, 2010). While Latinos have high levels of social and cultural capital, the effect of their capital is limited since it is not the type of capital appreciated or legitimized by schools and society. Schools are the ideal places where capital for low-income students can be built because teachers and administrators have access to more resources, and can share their own forms of capital, and thus become the vertical ties or institutional agents that can help students gain access to higher education. In contrast, Latino familial and community groups, while culturally rich, form horizontal ties which are stronger than in non-Latino groups, but are less beneficial since they are self-contained within the Latino community, and are not considered valuable by schools or U.S. society (Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene, 2005). For example, the World Cup of soccer may be an interesting topic of conversation within Latino immigrant communities, but not as valuable to U.S. society as American football.

Education is also an important topic of conversation in Latino immigrant communities, but it is defined differently and more broadly than the U.S. based definition (Hill & Torres, 2010) as it involves respect for elders and to be "bien

educado" or have manners (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). Latino parents feel that it is their moral responsibility to instill the values that will make their children be respectful to others, including school personnel, and become productive members of society, whereas the responsibility for formal schooling falls on schools and teachers (Hill & Torres, 2010).

Education is valued within the Latino community, but schools have different expectations for students and their parents that result in those qualities that students bring to the classroom being overlooked; therefore, the efforts put forth by parents to educate their children are either not taken into account or ignored. A CRT approach would suggest that these are deliberate attempts to further marginalize Latino students, and disguise their failure under the argument of meritocracy and a culture deficit approach (Solorzano, Villapando, & Oceguera, 2005). Whether deliberate or not, it is clear that we live in a merit-based society where inequality is reproduced by the very same entity in charge of ameliorating the achievement gap -- the school system. From the lower grades to the 4-year universities, these inequalities take the form of tracking and other institutionalized structures that prevent the upward mobility of Latino and African-American students (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano, et al., 2005), and neglect their social and cultural capital (Yosso, 2005).

It would certainly be difficult, if not impossible, for the school system to admit its role in the social and economic stratification of certain minority groups, but something must be done to change the current educational frameworks denying Latino students the opportunity to obtain a quality education, and a

chance to aspire to more in life. Bartolome (1994) posits that educational frameworks targeting minority students can be improved through teachers who possess "political clarity", and thus can see how established methods of instruction disregard the cultural capital of minority students. Instead of alienating students through methods that are not culturally sensitive, teachers can engage students through practices and pedagogy that value the cultural background, knowledge and skills that students bring to the classroom. Dual enrollment and college intervention programs can create environments of political clarity where Latino students can thrive by believing in themselves, and in their ability to accomplish personal goals and objectives.

## Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1977) as the belief in one's capacity to perform an action or outcome. People who believe in their individual capacity can affect their aspirations or motivations in positive or negative ways (Bandura, 2006), hence individuals who believe they can achieve personal goals will have a positive perception of their abilities and move forward with their actions, whereas the opposite can happen when individuals do not believe that their actions or capacities will lead them to a desired outcome. In the case of Latino students, this can be translated into low and high aspirations that can be shaped by different factors.

Studies have found that Latino students have the lowest aspirations among major ethnic groups (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Swail, Cabrera & Lee, 2004),

and can feel pessimistic about their academic future (Conchas, 2001), yet more recent studies indicate that Latino students have high aspirations and are aware of the importance of post-secondary education (National Women's Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2009; Lopez, 2009). In a survey conducted by Lopez (2009), 89% of Latino respondents between the ages of 16 and 25 stated that education was important for personal success; however, only 48% of respondents stated that they planned to go to college; the main reason cited by respondents for not attending college was the need to start working to support their family.

Despite the challenges they may face, there are some good examples of Latino students who have believed in their academic capacity, and succeeded at either enrolling in a higher education institution or completing a four-year degree. One of those examples involved a study conducted by Gandara (1995) of 50 successful Latino students who became doctors, lawyers, and other high-level professionals. The students in this study were all low-income, but cited perseverance and hard work as the factors that drove them towards academic success; another important factor that emerged was the support that students received from their parents, despite their parents' low level of education and inability to help them with their school work; this finding contradicts other studies that have labeled Latino parents as not caring for their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Valencia & Black, 2002).

The positive effect of Latino parents on students' aspirations was also evident in Ceballo's (2004) study involving ten low-income Latino students who

went to Yale. The qualitative interviews that were conducted with the students revealed themes that highlighted the importance of parental involvement, including non-verbal forms of encouragement, such as parents foregoing moving to another job, which would have required the family to move, to ensure their children's academic progress would not suffer. Verbal forms of encouragement from Latino parents take the form of consejos (advice), and present an opportunity for parents, particularly immigrant parents, to highlight the many sacrifices they made to come to the United States, and why their children should pursue education as their vehicle to reach the social and economic mobility they never had (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). The inspiring and motivational force of parents on Latino students is such that it can create themes that enhance the self-efficacy of students and their aspirations. In "A House for My Mother", Abi-Nader (1990) explored a successful college preparation program, where the overarching theme was for students to buy a house for their mother. Despite the challenges and sometimes harsh realities that students would face, the constant thought of this theme coupled with the support they received from their teacher and each other, became the vision that inspired them towards achieving a better educational future. In addition to parents, another inspiring force for Latino students can take the form of institutional programs; however, the effect they can have on motivation is not always positive.

As previously discussed, schools can have a detrimental effect on low-income students through tracking policies, but sometimes this cycle can be broken through creative institutional programs that promote teamwork and

cooperation. In his qualitative study of twenty-six low-income Latino students, Conchas (2001) explored the dynamics of three different academy approaches implemented at a high school. Two of the academies, an Advanced Placement (AP) program and a graphics program, involved a stringent curriculum and high academic expectations, which created an environment of competition that was unhealthy for the Latino students involved, as they were competing against Asian and White students for better grades. It is important to emphasize that a challenging curriculum and high academic expectations are actually desirable for the academic success of any student, including Latino students (Gandara, 1995), but in this study it created an environment of isolation where students stripped themselves of their ethnic identity in favor of conforming to established academic standards. The effect was the opposite for the third academy, which concentrated in the medical field. Through a team-oriented, multi-cultural approach that integrated students, teachers and mentors, this academy provided Latino students with inspirational support that made them look at their future through a lens of hope and optimism, despite the real and visible barriers in front of them.

For Latino students to improve their academic achievement and college-going rates, they need to believe in themselves and in their capacity to overcome the barriers they have to face. Parents are a vital force in driving that motivation despite their low-levels of education; schools through institutional programs that have the appropriate cultural frameworks can also give students hope and a boost in their aspirations. For Latino students to be successful, they must

become the "border crossers" that alternate between two cultures (Murillo, 1999), taking advantage of the social and cultural capital valued by the dominant class while maintaining pride in their ethnicity and culture. The students in this study had the opportunity to build their social and cultural capital and continue on a pathway to higher education; this may be the best form of resistance to the obstacles placed by school and society.

After reviewing the literature, this dissertation sought to highlight a conceptual framework that can potentially maximize the benefits of dual enrollment programs.

## Conceptual Framework

Yosso (2005) points out that schools should work on designing frameworks that recognize the types of capital possessed by minority groups. One of those frameworks can be a blended approach that encourages teachers to recognize the value of other people's culture, and work with students and parents to build the types of capital valued and recognized by the school system (Bartolome, 1994; Monkman, Ronald, & Theramine, 2005). To increase academic success, a blended approach should have the components shown in Figure 3.

### Academic and Culturally Rich Programs

Successful programs such as Puente instill a sense of cultural pride through literature written by Latino scholars, while helping students develop the writing and literature skills necessary for college enrollment and completion

(Gandara, 2004). Villalpando and Solorzano (2005) state that for college preparation programs to be most effective they must include not only an

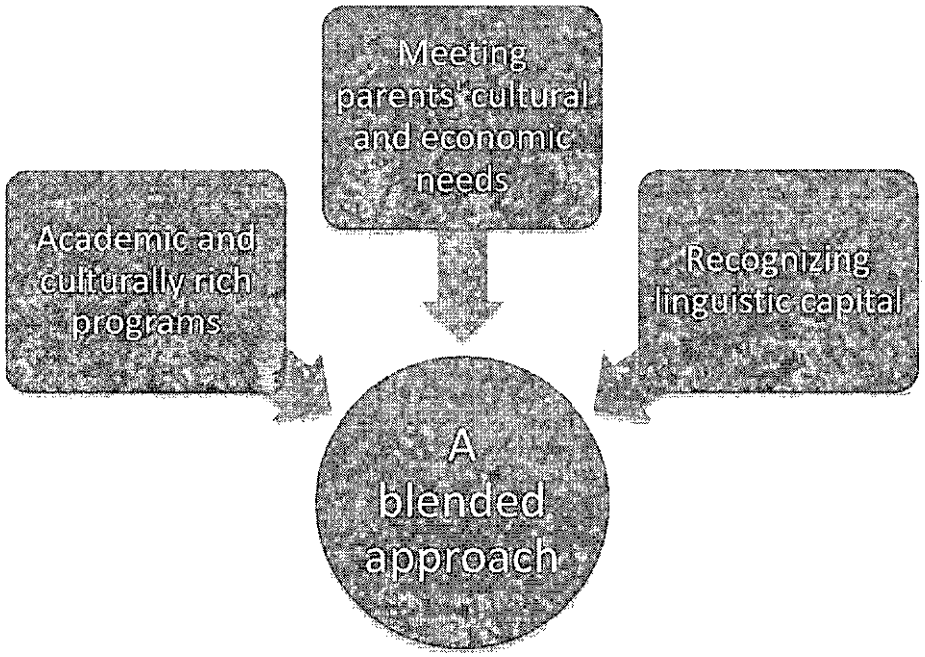


*Figure 3.* A blended approach for academic success.

academic oriented focus, but also a culturally rich approach that is inclusive of the culture possessed by students.

Meeting Parents' Cultural and Economic Needs

Parents are a strong motivating factor in the resiliency of low-income Latino students (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Ceballo, 2004; Espinoza – Herold, 2007); therefore, it is important to get them involved in school activities. In their study of four schools districts with migrant student populations in Texas and Illinois, Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) describe

successful school approaches that led Latino parents to become more involved in school activities. Rather than taking the typical approach to get parents involved, the schools in this study researched the cultural and economic needs of parents, and made sure those needs were met to facilitate a better interaction with school personnel. While the students in this study did not belong to migrant households, their parents could still come to face-to-face with the deficit thinking approaches that neglect their cultural and economic needs.

Recognizing Linguistic Capital

School frameworks that recognize the linguistic capital of Latino students or language brokering skills (Tse, 1995) can foster environments of cultural pride, and eliminate the standing of middle-class vocabulary as the only accepted norm that all students should follow. As found by Buriel, et al. (1998), language brokering can enhance students' self-efficacy and maturity level, as they often find themselves dealing with adults in a variety of settings from a very young age. Programs that also take into consideration the rich narratives or stories that Latino students possess can potentially open new windows of inspiration and hope that can help students see beyond the obstacles they face (Abi-Nader, 1990).

For the social reproduction cycle to end, schools must become the vertical ties that provide low-income Latino students with the social and cultural capital needed to move up the educational ladder. Dual enrollment programs can expose low-income Latino students to the social capital needed to navigate the college process, and to connect to institutional agents who can provide additional

guidance and direction; they can also expose students to the cultural capital needed to navigate through society. While the literature advocates for an educational system that is more inclusive and understanding of minority groups and their forms of capital, we may be some time away from having a system with political clarity. In the meantime, dual enrollment programs through a blended approach that is academically and culturally rich, inclusive of parents' economic and cultural needs, and which recognizes linguistic capital, may provide Latino students with the knowledge and skills needed to begin and finish the higher education journey, while still maintaining personal pride in their culture.

Dual enrollment programs can expose low-income Latino students to the culture of college, including how to navigate the college system and the academic rigor of college-level work. While research shows that college intervention programs can help low-income Latino students gain the social and cultural capital needed to obtain a college-degree, we need to gain a better understanding whether dual enrollment programs can provide similar benefits. Through a case study analysis involving the experiences of participant students, this study hoped to address some of the potential benefits of dual enrollment programs, and whether they can ultimately lead low-income Latino students on a college career path.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the research process and methodology used in this study. Topics covered include Research Questions, Research Design, Participants, School Selection/Description, Data Selection Techniques, Data Analysis Approach, Validity, Researcher Positionality, and Study Limitations.

## Research Questions

The Career Academy Scholars Program (CASP) was a dual enrollment program where a limited number of students from the nine high schools of a southern California Unified School District could enroll in a class at a local community college. Students in the program could select from four different classes in the fields of Automotive, Digital Media Arts, Welding, and International Business. This was the first time that students had attended classes on a college campus, and for most of them the first time that they were exposed to college level courses. As a result, the research questions below sought to gather data on the students' experiences through their participation in the program.

1. How do low-income Latino high school students in a college bound intervention program define, describe, and explain their experiences in the program?

2. How, if at all, do students in a combined career pathways and college promotion program change their perceptions of their pursuit to college?
3. What interaction does the program have on the aspirations of students?

## Research Design

A qualitative case study methodology was selected for this study. Unlike a quantitative approach, a qualitative-based study is inductive in nature and focuses on words rather than numbers (Maxwell, 1996). Maxwell (1996) states that qualitative methods are ideal when the purpose of the study is to "understand the meaning for participants in the study" (p. 17). The meaning for participants includes not only what is happening within the study, but also what participants make of their individual experiences. Consequently, an intrinsic case study approach was taken to get a better understanding about each student's individual experiences, and whether those experiences led to higher aspirations or perceptions about higher education. As a researcher, I wanted to understand what going to a community college meant for each student, and how the experience could possibly shape students' expectations to go to college in the future. Stake (1995) describes an intrinsic case study as research where one wants to get a better understanding about a particular issue or case. Yin (2011) further describes a case study as "an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon or case set within its real world context" (p. 4). As such, a case study method is most appropriate in circumstances where the researcher wants

to examine "what" or "how" questions, or what Yin (2011) describes as descriptive and explanatory questions.

## Participants

Twenty, mostly low-income, Latino junior high school students were selected for this study; the school district where students attended was predominantly Latino. Figure 4 shows the ethnic composition of students in the district.

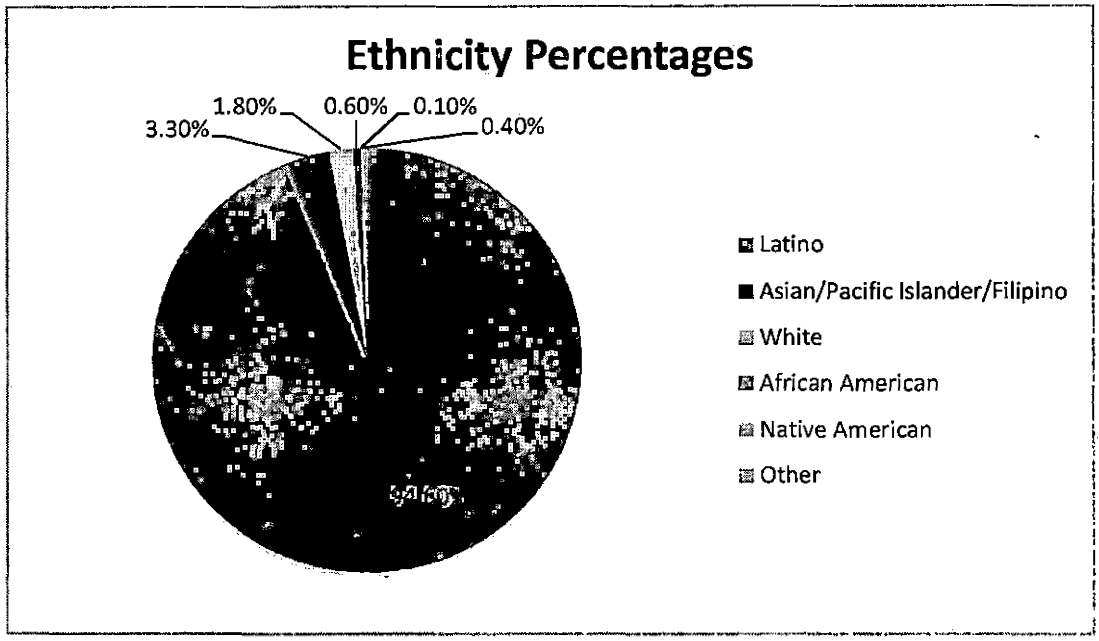


*Figure 4*. Ethnic composition of students in the district.

Juniors were selected since the program was originally designed as a four-semester program, thus students who started as high school juniors could

have potentially graduated with a college certificate in their area of study, while concurrently getting their high school diploma. To allow for a better representative sample, students were selected based on GPA, gender, and school attended; particular attention was given to GPA in order to have students ranging from low academic achievement to high academic achievement. Table 1 shows the gender breakdown of students per class.

Table 1

*Student Gender by Class*

| Class | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Digital media | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Auto | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Business | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Welding | 2 | 3 | 5 |

Due to the focus on having a student sample that included students from low to high academic achievement, it was difficult to get an even number of female and male students. Additionally, one of the classes (Auto) had only male students. One male student who was originally selected for the Business class had to be replaced with another student due to being dropped from the program after not showing up for the first two classes. Parent consent forms and student assent forms were obtained during a program orientation conducted at the college prior to the beginning of classes. Forms were handed out after a formal presentation detailing the purpose of the study. The 20 students chosen came

from five of the nine high schools in the district. Table 2 shows the breakdown of students by school.

Table 2

*Number of Students per School*

| School # | Digital media | Auto | Business | Welding | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 20 |

## School Selection and Description

The school where the study was conducted is one of two community colleges in a community college district in southern California. I selected this site due to my employment with this district, and my direct involvement with the Career Academy Scholars Program since I oversee the state grant that funds the program; I also had been collaborating extensively with the program's leadership team when the program launched a year prior to the beginning of this study, and had a good work and personal relationship with members of the team. My in-depth involvement with the program and the relationship with members of the team facilitated access to all levels of student and program information, including access to high school grade records and teachers and other staff involved.

## Data Selection Techniques

The study included a pre-assessment survey, personal interviews, an analysis of school records, and follow-up conversations with college staff. The pre-assessment survey was used to collect specific information on students, including education, future plans, family, and the initial expectations students had for the program. With the help of the instructors, the surveys were given to all students in the four classes.

Personal interviews were used to obtain student responses to open ended questions; a total of two audio-recorded interviews were conducted with students; the first interview was conducted at the beginning of the first semester to assess students' expectations about the program and being a college student, and the second interview was conducted at the end of the second semester to obtain information on the students' experience in the program. Most interviews were conducted before class time or during student breaks to take advantage of the limited time that students were on the college campus. On other occasions, I was able to make arrangements with instructors to take students out of class; this was necessary for the two classes that started early in the afternoon (Business and Digital Media), since students did not have sufficient time to spare by the time they arrived to their class from their high schools. To put students at ease, I dressed casual for the interviews and would use humor at times to make them laugh or to make a particular situation funny; I would also use empathy to let students know that I was once in their shoes, and thus understood their challenges or what they were going through.

School records were used to select students based on gender, GPA, and school attended; the specific record used was an excel spreadsheet provided by the program counselor, which contained all related student information. Additional information was collected from program staff, specifically from the program's counselor who had direct access to participating students. The counselor was an extremely reliable source and was also consulted on the accuracy of information.

## Data Analysis Approach

Following Maxwell's (1996) analytic approach, data was analyzed through the use of memos, categorizing and contextualizing strategies. When I conducted interviews, I had a notebook where I wrote some of the comments made by students during interviews. Upon finishing the audio-recorded interviews, I would transfer my notes as quickly as possible to a Word document (a memo) and added other information which I thought was important, including where the interview was conducted and verbal expressions of the student being interviewed; I made an effort to type the information as soon as possible to take advantage that the information was still fresh on my mind. As a result, I was able to include some reflective thoughts on the memos, which helped me make better sense of the data. For example, I had a moving, unexpected experience when a student started crying when I asked him who his biggest motivator in life was. Through my notes, I was able to verify that the student was crying because he was trying to tell me about his parents, and why they were his motivators in

life; as a researcher, I could clearly see the powerful motivating force of parents on Latino students' lives. Maxwell (1996) states that the value of memos lies in the self-reflection practiced by the researcher in place of just plainly recording notes, and in the organization of thoughts in a retrievable format that can be later used for further analysis (i.e. 3 x 5 cards). Memos were indeed valuable, but something that was also beneficial in my research was the ability to transcribe the interview data.

Interview data was transcribed through the use of NVivo 9 software, a qualitative data analysis tool, which allowed for the import of data and the instant identification of themes as each interview was being analyzed. I initially decided to transcribe one or two interviews to get familiar with the transcribing process, and had planned to outsource the rest of the interviews, but the process got addicting and I continued to transcribe until I completed all 27 recorded interviews. It was not an easy process since it took me longer than I expected, but it helped me catch important themes that I missed before transcription as I started the process of categorizing data. Data was categorized through the use of coding techniques for comparison and further analysis purposes. Contrary to coding in quantitative research where the goal is to count the number of frequencies, the use of coding in qualitative research allows for the arrangement of data into categories, which can be compared and used to develop conceptual theories (Maxwell, 1996). Interviews yielded a total of 42 categories or themes, which were analyzed in detail for relevance to the literature and to the study. Themes that were similar in content were grouped together, a process that

Maxwell refers to as fracturing, and themes that were not relevant to the literature and conceptual frameworks were eliminated. For example, the theme of bullying emerged in a couple of interviews, but it had little or no relation to the conceptual frameworks. The end result was a reduction of themes or categories to a more manageable size that could be analyzed further though a contextualizing process.

Contextualizing strategies provided a deeper understanding of the data through a focus on the relationship existent among categories. While categorizing data was useful to identify themes, those themes needed to be analyzed within a larger context that could yield a better understanding of the data. To better explain the contextualizing process, I would like to refer to the Venn diagram in Figure 5.

Each of the themes identified were part of the larger context of the college experience; by themselves, the themes functioned as silos that were not connected to a main idea; therefore, the analysis of interview data required a closer look at the connectivity among themes or across interviews. For example, the adult environment prevalent in a college campus typically involves priorities, and the different academic and personal expectations that are part of the college culture; part of that culture also involves the opportunity to explore a career. By analyzing interviews within this larger context, I was able to get a better understanding of how students described and defined their experiences in the program.

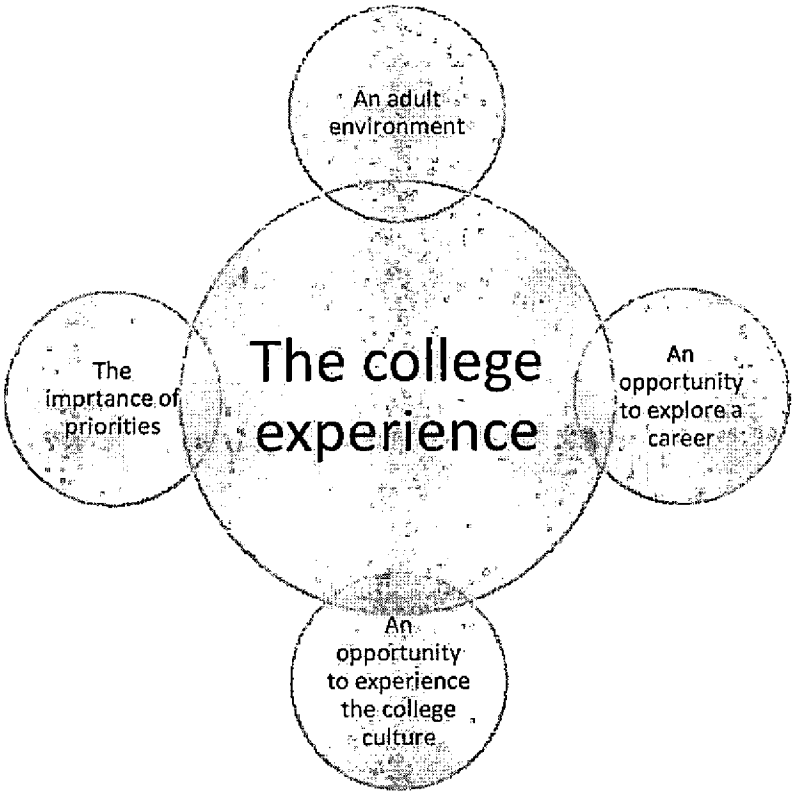


*Figure 5.* Contextualizing process used to identify relationships.

## Validity

Maxwell (1996) lists three possible threats to validity: description, interpretation, and theory. Description can be a threat when the researcher fails to describe what he saw or experienced accurately. To avoid this threat, interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure they included everything shared by participants from their own perspective. Additionally, a preliminary program survey was administered to gather more data on how students described their expectations. Throughout the study, I described what I saw based on the data that I collected.

Interpretation can be a threat when the researcher interprets the meaning of the study from his own perspective rather than the perspective of the participants. Rather than asking close-ended questions that can be leading in nature, this study included semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions that students answered based on their own meaning and experiences. Interviews were transcribed through the use of specialized qualitative software, and themes that emerged were analyzed in detail by following established qualitative methods (Maxwell, 1996, 2011), and taking into consideration the research questions and frameworks driving this study. As a result, data was interpreted from the perspective of students and adhered to proper protocols. As an additional method of data triangulation, I consulted with the program's counselor on the interpretation of data and findings. For example, during interviews, students made reference to not using the counseling services available through the program, thus exhibiting a low level of help-seeking behavior; the counselor confirmed that students indeed had not used her services, and at times would only seek help when the semester was almost over.

Finally, theory can be a threat when the researcher fails to acknowledge other possible theories that could further explain or disprove findings. Since part of my research approach made use of grounded theory, I was able to compare my findings to the forms of community cultural wealth espoused by Yosso (2005). Indeed, the findings corroborated Yosso's description of community cultural wealth as a rich form of cultural capital that should be implemented in our

education system to create school environments of hope and optimism, and which can lead minority students to embark on a higher education journey.

## Researcher Positionality

As a child growing up in Nicaragua, I lived what could be constituted as a comfortable middle-class life. My father was a rancher and landowner who had amassed his fortune through hard work and perseverance. My mother owned her own merchandise store, which was never short of customers; neither one of my parents made it past elementary school, yet they always instilled the value of a formal education on my brothers and I. One of my favorites places in our house was one of the living rooms where my parents kept a bookshelf full of encyclopedias (Encyclopedia Britannica was one of them). Over the course of my childhood, I spent a lot of time sitting on the sofa next to bookshelf, glowing every time I opened an encyclopedia chapter to learn something new. As I worked on my dissertation, I often wondered about the following question: How did two people with almost no formal education come to own a bookshelf full of encyclopedias? It could be that my parents hoped that their kids would achieve what they could not; this is a thought that is prevalent in many low-income Latino households in the U.S. (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Ceballo, 2004).

Despite my middle-class upbringing, I came the U.S. at fourteen years old via the undocumented route, and without a single dollar in my pocket due to being robbed by a Federal agent in Mexico. It was not easy for those of us

fleeing the civil war in Nicaragua, as we had to cross more than one dangerous border to get here. Upon arriving to the U.S., I experienced for the first time how it felt to be economically poor. My parents, who had to stay in Nicaragua, could not help me financially due to the sanctions imposed by the Nicaraguan communist regime, and my older brother who had been in the U.S. for a couple of years prior to my arrival was an alcoholic who drifted from job to job. We lived in a converted garage without heating or cooling and without furniture. There were occasions in which we were hungry, and had to scrounge under the bed hoping to find some coins to have enough for a meal. I started working full-time since when I was in the tenth grade, having to lie about my age to avoid the restricted hours of a student work permit, and walking home after my midnight shifts at fast-food restaurants ended since I did not have a car. Latinos are twice as likely as non-Latinos to live in poverty (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004), and at times bypass college in order to get a job to help support their families (Lopez, 2009).

I was unsure about what I wanted to do once I graduated from high school. I never met with a counselor while in high school, and did not receive any academic advice; however, I knew higher education was important because of the consejos (advice) that my parents shared with me. After taking some time off, I enrolled at a local community college, still not knowing about a career choice and without a clue about the culture of college; neither one of them became clear as I met with a counselor who was either too busy or simply did not care about providing proper career guidance. As a result, I took classes that

were not related to a specific major and ultimately dropped out. Some years later I was fortunate enough to find an institutional agent at the same institution, a counselor who showed me the roadmap to higher education, and who gave me personal encouragement to persist and complete a college degree. For many Latino students, institutional agents can make a difference in their pursuit of a college education (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

The experiences that I have just described are part of what many Latino students go through in their lives. Indecisiveness, confusion, the need to work to help their parents or to support themselves, are some of the issues that Latino students face. The 20 Latino students chosen for this study were predominantly low-income, and many of them the sons and daughters of immigrant parents who had to cross the border without documents in search of a better life for themselves and their kids. At least two of them are now facing the reality that their undocumented status will affect their pursuit of a higher education graduate degree. Times may be different from the time I was in high school, but the low graduation rates and academic achievement of Latinos continues to be a problem. My interest and agenda as a researcher were to find out about programs that are making a difference in college enrollment and completion among Latino students; my positionality is shaped by my life experiences and willingness to become an institutional agent for those students lacking guidance and career focus.

## Limitations

The results of this study cannot be applied to a general population as its focus concentrated on recording the individual experiences of students participating in a specific/unique dual enrollment program; however, the findings may add to the limited body of literature on dual enrollment programs, and provide information on components of dual enrollment programs that may yield higher college enrollment and persistence rates among participating students.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS

This chapter includes findings that resulted from the analysis of three different data sources: a pre-assessment survey, semi-structured interviews, and an analysis of school records; additionally follow-up conversations were conducted with staff to verify the accuracy of information. The findings are presented as themes that take the research questions into account by highlighting individual students' experiences in the program. The questions driving the study were as follows:

## Research Questions

1. How do low-income Latino high school students in a college bound intervention program define, describe, and explain their experiences in the program?
2. How, if at all, do students in a combined career pathways and college promotion program change their perceptions of their pursuit to college?
3. What interaction does the program have on the aspirations of students?

Figure 6 shows the themes and subthemes that emerged from the student interviews; participants' anonymity is protected by using pseudonyms.

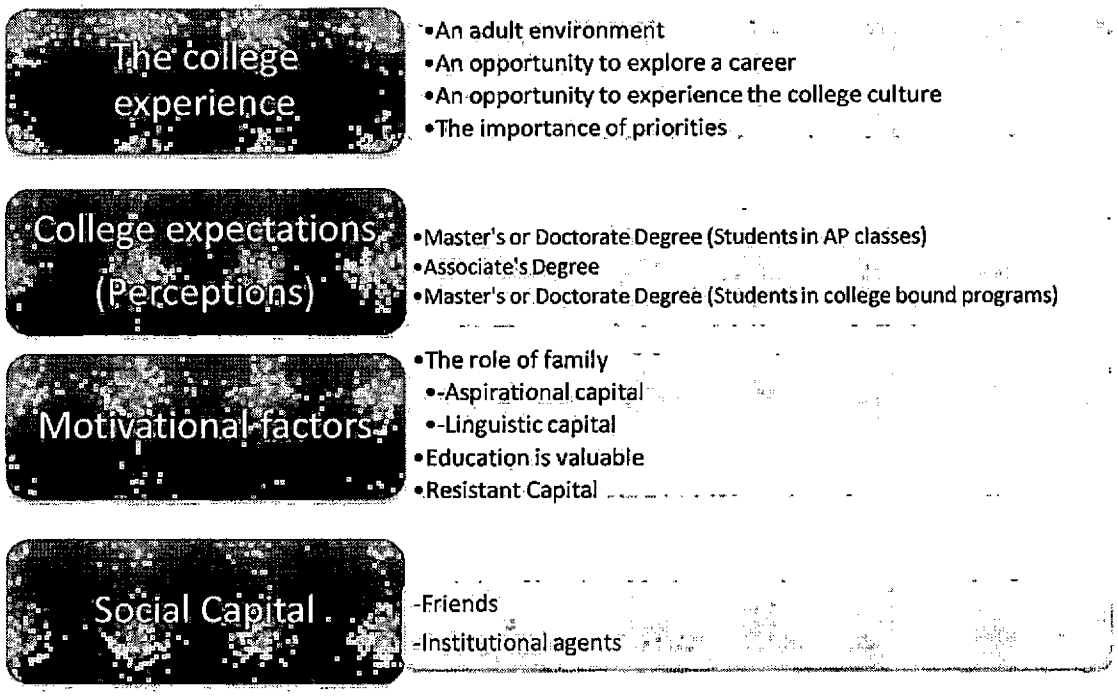


*Figure 6.* Themes and subthemes from student interviews.

## An Adult Environment

Students expressed general satisfaction with a college environment that treated them like adults instead of children. "They treat you different than in high school, they treat you like an adult, and like if you don't do your work they don't care, like you need to stay focused" (Remigio, personal communication, May 19, 2011). "Well, it's better than high school, right here to get to choose your classes, the ones you wanna do, over there they have the classes you need" (Enrique, personal communication, May 19, 2011).

The comments made by students highlighted the difference that in their opinion existed between a high school environment and a college environment.

On the high school end, students like Enrique did not have a choice on choosing the class that they wanted, but on the college end it was up to them to decide. Students like Remigio understood that unlike their high schools, where homework guidelines were dictated and could carry a punishment, in college they could establish their own guidelines by deciding whether they would turn in their homework or not. The adult environment was noted by students even on simple tasks like having to leave the classroom to go to the restroom.

> Ump, well in high school you still have to ask the teacher, oh may I go to the restroom or like can I go out for something or you have to raise your hand if you wanna stand up for anything, and here you just do what you have to do, like you don't have to tell the teacher, and here you have to like ump, like here nobody cares what you do, it's just you, if you wanna let the teacher know they leave it up to you, but here even if you go to the restroom you just walk out, you don't have to let him know, I mean we do because we're still high schoolers, but if you are an adult you just do what you have to do, you don't have to like let him know if you do. (Josefina, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

The adult environment seemed to provide some students with a level of confidence about being in a more mature setting.

> More confident, like it's knowing that here he doesn't really treat us like high schoolers, he makes us feel more like adults, ump, in high school, sometimes I even forget that I'm in high school, I just want to get up, ump,

it's different I mean, it's just different. (Josefina, on her teacher's approach towards her class; personal communication, May 11, 2011)

The feeling of confidence and independence that Josefina acquired transferred to Josefina's home as she shared that she started taking care of responsibilities, which were previously taken care of by her mother. Students realized that being an adult carried responsibilities, including accountability for one's own actions. In a college environment, it was up to the student to turn in his assignments or show up for class; the requirement to do so was not imposed or forced on the student like it was in high school, but was understood by the student as part of his or her responsibility.

The perceived freedom of a college environment or the ability for students to have a choice was welcomed by some students. "Well, that you see everybody walking to class all happy, like they wanna be here, not like, they are not forced to be here" (Enrique, personal communication, May 19, 2011). As stated by the students, the college culture involved a more mature environment that was not forced upon them like their high school environment; it was an environment of choice where they could be treated like adults, but that also required students to develop certain strategies.

Well, make friends with the counselors so they help you out, pay attention, get your work done, like don't procrastinate at all, and choose a major you're gonna like. (Lazaro, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

In auto class, Osiel said, "Come early, ump, being on time, work as hard as you can, ump, never complain or make excuses" (personal communication, May 12,

2011). Remigio, also from auto class, mentioned, "Like grow up or like act more mature because everything here is going to be different" (personal communication, May 19, 2011). Omar, from the welding class, mentioned, "Ah, that you shouldn't miss, do the work that counts, and I don't know, ah just pretty much I don't know, stay in it because if you miss too much you could drop out or be dropped" (personal communication, May 11, 2011).

It was clear to students that college was different than high school, carrying higher expectations and a higher level of responsibility. For Lazaro, being in college required a focus on doing the college work required in a timely manner, while Omar understood the importance of attending classes to remain engaged in college. For students like Osiel, being in college meant having the self-discipline to not only show up on time, but doing the work required without complaining; Remigio, on the other hand, understood that a college environment required a higher level of maturity. Overall, the voices of students made reference to a college environment that treated them like adults, and through which they learned the expectations and responsibilities that adulthood carries. Similar findings surfaced in Edwards, Hughes, and Weisberg's study (2011) of dual enrollment programs, where high school students cited the adult environment as a prevailing theme in describing their experiences in college-level classes. Another prevailing theme in this study was the career exploration component of the program.

### An Opportunity to Explore a Career

Participating in the program gave students the opportunity to explore a career of personal interest. This is an opportunity that can be elusive to Latino students from low-income backgrounds, as they typically attend the schools with the fewest resources that can promote college enrollment (Perna & Titus, 2005). Some of the students in this study, particularly the low-achieving students, never envisioned attending college or taking a college-level class, but the program offered them the unique opportunity of becoming college students. Through the opportunity they were given, students selected a college-level class in area that they were interested in or wanted to explore. For some students who were undecided about a career, the program gave them an opportunity to explore a career to determine if it was an area of further interest in their future. "I don't know, I don't know, that's why I am actually taking this class, cause maybe I would like this, maybe I won't" (Anibal, personal communication, September 21, 2010).

Some students simply wanted to explore a class or field that seemed interesting. "My dad used to do welding when I was a little kid, so I kind of wanted to know how it was for him" (Lazaro, personal communication, May 11, 2011). "Auto class, I just wanted to see what it was like" (Enrique, personal communication, May 19, 2011).

The exploration of a career led some students to the conclusion that they would rather go into a different field. "I don't know if I'm gonna take welding again. I'm just interested in something else; I think I told you about nursing,

yeah" (Francis, personal communication, May 11, 2011). The exploration of a career can help students in their decision making process (Brown, Darden, Shelton, & Dippoto, 1999). The Career Academy Scholars Program gave students the opportunity to participate in a college-level class, where they could explore a career of interest. Anibal hoped the class would help him to decide whether automotive was a field of interest; whereas Francis decided (after two class semesters) that welding was not a field that she would like to pursue in the future. Lazaro and Enrique just simply wanted to take advantage of the opportunity the program offered to try a class in a field that seemed interesting to them. Through their participation in the program, students were able to get a realistic preview of a future career, which increased or diminished their interest, and which exposed them to an opportunity they would otherwise not have had due to their socio-economical status. Besides getting a realist preview of a future career, students also got to experience the college culture.

### An Opportunity to Experience the College Culture

By taking classes on a college campus, students got to experience the college atmosphere and set foot in a place that many of them had not envisioned before. "Ump, it's alright, it's big, a lot of stuff, just big, I hadn't been to a college before" (Osiel, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Edwards, Hughes, and Weisberg (2011) describe dual enrollment classes conducted on a college campus as the "authentic college experience" as students learn about college expectations and the college culture. The realistic preview of the college culture

offered by the program proved useful for students like Omar, when he was asked if college was what he expected. "Yeah, kind of, it was like I would think it would be like, I don't know, you have to do it on your own because you're not like one of the certain amount of students because there is more" (Omar, personal communication, May 11, 2011). Omar understood that at the college level students were expected to take responsibility for their actions and their learning, and that he was not going to receive the same individualized attention that he received in high school. The feeling of responsibility and the need to be self-organized was also shared by Josefina.

> Ump, I think they should at least maybe for a month get away from their family so that they could realize that without their family they're gonna struggle a lot, ump, they have to become like independent, and ump, they have to be like more responsible and organized in order to like be prepared for college. (Josefina, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

Getting a realistic preview of the college culture is important for students, particularly Latino students who may not have the levels of culture capital needed to have a clear understanding about the expectations and requirements of higher education. Students who are not clear on these expectations can experience a rude awakening when they get to college and are unable to cope with the more demanding academic environment. Both Omar and Josefina felt that the program gave them some level of preparation on what to expect from a college environment, which can be very rigorous and require a commitment that not all students are able to keep. Experiencing the college culture and its expectations

was beneficial for students, but their participation in the program was not always easy to balance due to competing priorities.

## The Importance of Priorities

For some students, participating in the program meant they had to choose between a sport or risking their grades in high school classes. In the case of Julia, who was taking four AP classes and deeply involved in high school clubs, she was confronted with this decision early on in the program. During our first interview conducted at the beginning of the first semester class, Julia (Business class) expressed disappointment about a close friend whose grades dropped.

> She is still going to school, she's still, I mean she doesn't get Fs, but I know she could do better, she is just doing her work to, okay just to do this, before she would go beyond, now she doesn't. (personal communication, September 2, 2010)

Julia stressed the need for students to always try their best to achieve academic success; however, a few weeks after our interview she dropped out of the class. Initially, I questioned the contradiction on her belief of not giving up and her decision to drop the class, but when I talked to the program counselor I realized that her decision was based on priorities. Julia's four AP classes proved to be too much of a heavy load to handle in addition to the college class; therefore, when in came time to make a decision, she decided on concentrating on her high school studies to ensure her grades would not suffer.

Students like Maria and Lorenzo who completed the first semester Digital Media class had to decide between sports or continuing on to the second semester class; they both opted to remain in sports and did not return for the second semester. For Lorenzo, the need to get back to water polo was evident during the initial interview I conducted with him at the beginning of the first semester.

> I'm JV right now, ump, I barely got back this year because in my freshman year I did good but my grades were slipping, so I got off for the next year and tried to keep it up, you know my grades, and I'm joining back but my stamina is really low so I'm training to get back, you know. (personal communication, September 9, 2010).

While I was unable to talk to Lorenzo, I was able to verify with the program's counselor that he had not returned the second semester due to his involvement in sport activities, which conflicted with the class's schedule. It is important to note that the choice between participating in sports and dual enrollment classes is a dilemma that has been faced in other programs, and it is an issue that should be considered by organizations planning on starting new dual enrollment programs (Edwards, Hughes, & Weisberg, 2011).

Students participating in the Career Academy Scholars Program defined their experiences through their perception of an adult-driven college environment that gave them independence, and a level of freedom they did not experience in their respective high schools. Students welcomed the more relaxed atmosphere, but also understood that they needed to develop certain strategies to function

effectively in college. Students described how they were able to explore careers of interest and learn the college culture, including the scenarios that they could expect once they got to college. Finally, students learned that a college environment required a certain level of commitment, which forced students to choose between competing priorities. The college experience proved to be very valuable for students, but let's now turn our attention to students' initial educational expectations and whether they changed through their participation in the program.

## Expectations

The students in this study were asked to complete an Entrance Survey as they began their first college class; the survey included some multiple choice and open-ended questions and was completed by 19 out of 20 students. When asked about the highest level of education they expected to achieve, most of the students taking AP classes expected to achieve a post graduate degree, or choose a career that required an advanced degree (Master's or Doctorate). This information was corroborated through some of the careers students mentioned during the first set of interviews.

> My plans after high school is to be at a four-year university, and I'm still not sure of what I want to become, but I'm sure I wanna do something involved in science, maybe medicine, ump, I just know that science and math are my strongest subjects, so I wanna do something. (Julia, personal communication, September 2, 2010)

Ivan, from the Digital Media class, said, "Ump, well I thought of material science engineer or a neuroscientist, surgery, and or if I can't really focus on that career I would choose engineering, architect" (personal communication, September 7, 2010).

The careers chosen by Julia and Ivan were careers that required an advanced degree. Both students were taking AP classes, with Julia also being heavily involved in student club activities. The expectation to go to college, particularly a four-year university, was evident during the first interview in all five students who were taking AP classes.

> I wanna go to the university, I'm thinking about, I'm not completely sure what I wanna become, but I've been thinking I wanna be an architect, so I've looking into universities that are, that have a good reputation in that (Omar, personal communication, August 23, 2010).

In the Digital Media class, Ivan mentioned, "After high school, I plan to apply to a university, ump, mostly because that's what I pretty much wanted since my freshman year" (personal communication, September 7, 2010).

While many of their peers were probably planning to just finish high school or attend the local community college, these students had their sights set on four-year universities. A closer look at Omar's statement reveals that not only was he planning to attend a four-year university, but he was already researching universities that had a good reputation or a good program in his major. Omar was in essence displaying the levels of cultural capital prevalent in middle-class households, even though his parents had low levels of education and blue-collar

employment. Omar had also being awarded a substantial scholarship to pay for his higher education in the 10th grade. As expressed by Omar during the Welding class, "I got a scholarship my sophomore year; it's called Simon Scholars, they give you seventeen thousand dollars and a laptop, and they help you get ready for college and the experience, and they go to many trips together so" (personal communication, August 23, 2010). Like Omar, Ivan aspired to go to a four-year university from an early age (freshman year). When I asked him if he had any universities in mind, Ivan mentioned Princeton and Pennsylvania University, and locally UC Irvine and UC San Diego. Unlike other lower performing students who could not even name a single university or state a career of their choice, Ivan seemed well set on his future educational plans.

The expectation for an Associate's Degree was evident in the survey responses of students like Remigio and Osiel (Auto class), as well as their responses during their first interview. By the end of their second semester class, their college expectations had not changed. "I go there because I want to be a technician" (Osiel, personal communication, May 12, 2011; explaining what he would tell his friends when they asked him why he was in college).
Remigio had expressed interest in a culinary related career, which he attributed to his mother complimenting him on his cooking skills at home. From the beginning of the program to the last interview conducted, Remigio maintained his expectation to concentrate on a career offered at the community college level. Enrique (Auto class) maintained similar expectations as he planned to go into the military or take community college classes. Expectations were different for

students like Josefina (Welding class) and Lorenzo (Digital Media class) who had participated in college bound programs at their respective high schools; both students expected to achieve a post graduate education, according to the responses on their entrance survey. Lorenzo had participated in the Puente High School program since the 9th grade, and Josefina had been in the Upward Bound program since her sophomore year.

> Ump, I am planning hopefully, I'm planning to go to San Diego, the college over there or university, I can remember which because we took a tour over there during Puente and we went over there, and I really liked the campus. We also went to UCLA, and right now I'm thinking if I can't get into UC San Diego, I'm thinking of getting in here, you know, do the two years, and then transfer into another, like a UC or something like that, and what I hope for a career or a doctorate in, ump, medical. (Lorenzo, personal communication, September 9, 2010)
>
> I'm in the Upward Bound program at Cal State Fullerton; I've been in it since my ending of freshman year. Yes, there is Upward Bound at Cal State Fullerton and they help high schoolers, they go to our high school, and they recruit students, like freshmen and sophomores to join the program, and then during the summer we get the chance to stay at the dorms. (Josefina, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

By the end of the second interview, Josefina was planning to spend six weeks of her summer break at Cal State Fullerton, and still planned to attend a four-year university, preferably Fullerton due to her familiarity with the university

and her participation in the Upward Bound Program. Lorenzo on the other hand faced an uncertain future in his educational plans due to his immigration status.

> One of the big obstacles sometimes that I get a little frustrated about, for example I am not a citizen or a resident here, so once it turned out that I join for a scholarship, but I wasn't able to because it was strictly for citizens or residents; that's one of the biggest obstacles that I feel I face know. (Lorenzo, personal communication, September 9, 2010)

Similar to Lorenzo, Francis also faced an uncertain future, despite her aspirations to go to a four-year university: "I wanna keep on going, well my goal right now is to go to Cal State, but I don't know how I'm gonna get there" (Francis, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Francis came to the United States at the age of four, and like Lorenzo lacked immigration documents. Students like Lorenzo and Francis faced some personal challenges that threatened their expectations to go to college. The frustration experienced by these students was evident in their voices, and while their educational plans were uncertain, they still held on to the hope that their situation would improve. There were a variety of factors that contributed to the motivation and aspirations of students in this study; those factors are discussed in our next section.

## The Role of Family

Throughout the interviews in the study, the importance of family as a motivating factor was often highlighted, including the verbal forms of

encouragement (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004) or linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) that students in Latino households typically listen to. "My dad, he always told me how he wasn't able to finish his school because he had to go to work and his mom died, and he has always inspirated me you know to go higher faster" (Lorenzo, personal communication, September 9, 2010).

> Because, I can kind of relate to him (father), because a little bit, because when he was small he would never do the stuff I would be able to do, and he would always tell me "do something that I would never never do, when I was small. (Armando, personal communication, September 16, 2010)

The use of consejos (advice) coupled with storytelling is a form of linguistic capital that Latino parents use to remind their children of the sacrifices they made, and to motivate them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by higher education. Lorenzo's father used a story that involved tragedy (his mother's death) and the need to go to work, which prevented him from finishing school; the story was a form of inspiration for Lorenzo that reminded him of how much better off he was than his father, and gave him the motivation to want to achieve more. Armando's father used similar storytelling to convey to Armando the importance of taking advantage of opportunities. The stories that Lorenzo and Armando grew up listening to were stored in their minds and were used when they needed encouragement. Besides this form of linguistic capital, the interviews also revealed another form of capital.

Parents contributed to the aspirational capital of students by providing verbal support and encouragement. Yosso (2005) defines aspirational capital as

"the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality" (p. 9). Aspirational capital is important because it allows students to set aside the visible roadblocks ahead of them, such as the inability of Lorenzo and Francis to transfer directly to a four-year university due to their immigration status. For Julia, the support of her father inspired her to dismiss the comments made by people who would put down her dream to get an education.

> I think, the most important motivator is my dad because he knows that's difficult to, to be a successful student because you have to put time, effort, and everything, and he supports me and tells me that if anything "I'll help you", and even money wise he is like okay, you know, if it comes to money, I don't know I'll just work or look for money, I don't care you are gonna get an education, you are gonna go to whatever college you want, ump, it doesn't matter what people say, it doesn't matter where you come from because you are here, you are gonna do it, and so it's just that kind of motivation, that feedback I guess from him that makes me wannà be successful, makes me wanna grow, makes me wanna show my dad and make my dad proud. (Julia, personal communication, September 2, 2010)

Julia knew that there was an expectation for her not to succeed, but her father's support motivated her to prove the skeptics wrong by excelling academically and going to college. For Latino students, who already face many roadblocks on the road to higher education, including structural systems such as tracking, aspirational capital offers a source of inspiration that can make students

look at their future with more optimism, despite the visible challenges that could potentially derail their dreams. Julia's father was willing to do anything that was necessary to ensure she earned an education; Julia appreciated her father's commitment and support, and felt she had her own commitment to get an education to make her father proud. The same commitment was evident in the voice of Josefina.

> I wanted to show my parents that ump, even if they couldn't make it, like their support and the way they help me, I want to show them like that, that I'm able to do it, but because they didn't go to school like after, that doesn't mean that I'm gonna stop, I wanna show them that I can. (Josefina, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

The efforts undertaken by their parents did not go unnoticed for Julia and Josefina. Similar to "A House for my Mother" (Abi-Nader, 1990), where the overarching theme or motivational factor was for students to buy a house for their mother, other interviews highlighted students' recognition of their parents' sacrifices as a motivating force in their pursuit of an education.

> I guess after I got the experience from getting expelled, it's just so subconsciously bad because my mom felt disappointed because she saw better in me and like, I felt bad because my mom is my hero because she suffered a lot to make me and my sister graduate, and she's trying to make, to give me a better future, so I pretty much felt bad because I got expelled from a good school. (Ivan, personal communication, September

7, 2010; sharing his experience when he got expelled from school in the sixth grade)

Like Julia and Josefina, Ivan felt committed to give back to his parents by doing well in school; the opposite meant disappointing the people who had worked hard to give him a better life and a better future. In addition to parents, siblings were also a motivating force for some students.

> Because ump, he had a lot of struggles, when we were smaller he went through a lot of things and ump, he wasn't able to get the opportunities that I have, like going to college, but ump he knows that he messed up, like a lot, and he motivates me. (Josefina, on her brother being a motivator for her; personal communication, August 23, 2010)

Josefina's brother had made some mistakes in his life, including facing child support demands from a girlfriend who found out he had gotten another woman pregnant. At the time of this study, Josefina's brother was only 19 and doing landscaping work with her father. It was tough for him to find a job since he was facing the same problem present in Lorenzo's and Francis' life: Not being born in this country, and thus lacking legal residency status. Josefina makes mention in her comment above that her brother did not have the same opportunities that she had (Josefina was born in the U.S.). Seeing her brother's struggles and lack of opportunity was a force of inspiration for Josefina to take advantage of what her brother did not have; a chance to go to college. The willingness to make another sibling proud or having a sibling as a source of motivation was also evident in other interviews.

> Yeah, I also wanna like, because my older brother he's like married, aah I could say that, I don't know, an idol I guess, and like I wanna kind of, not really follow in his footsteps, but like show, kind of make him feel proud also. (Omar, personal communication, August 23, 2010)
>
> My sister because my sister and I have always been tight ever since we were kids, and basically she is the only one who has looked after me besides my mom, she is only one I look up to because she is going to college as well, she is actually attending here right now. (Anibal, personal communication, September 21, 2010)

Josefina, from the welding class, also wanted to make a sibling proud: "Ump, my education, I'm gonna be able, ump, to show my friends that I could make it to college or university, and ump graduate and show my brothers that like nothing can stop me" (personal communication, August 23, 2010).

It was evident in this study that students were motivated and inspired by their parents and siblings. The linguistic capital in the form of consejos (advice) or storytelling was visible when students talked about the advice they received from their parents, who often told stories of personal sacrifice and how they did not have the same opportunities as their children. Aspirational capital was visible in students' willingness to keep moving forward with their education despite the clear roadblocks along their journey. Rather than giving up, students resisted and fought back through their drive to excel academically; this was in essence a form of capital called resistant capital.

Yosso (2005) defines resistant capital as "those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 12). The resistant capital possessed by some students was a motivational force for their drive to succeed academically.

> I just ignore the fact that they say it because I'm willing to show them that I will be able to succeed, and I'm not gonna tell them, ump, bad comments because I'm not a person like that, but like my parents have showed me just show them that you are gonna be able to succeed, and then you'll shut their mouth because they are gonna look up to you because you were able to succeed from down here to up there, and I just ignore the fact that they do that. (Julia, on people who tell her she won't succeed; personal communication, September 2, 2010)

As found by Solorzano and Bernal (2001), resistance can also take the form of students taking an oppositional stance to what they perceive to be conformist behavior. Julia could have given in to the pressure and conform to the negative expectations, but she resisted by being different and focusing on her studies, and her desire to transfer directly to a four-year university, unlike many of her peers planning on attending a community college or getting a job. In reality, Latinos have the highest number of students among ethnic groups attending community colleges, and have a higher probability of dropping out if they transfer to a community college vs. a four-year university (Fry, 2002). Students expressed comments that seemed to highlight differences between attending a community college and a four-year university, particularly around academic performance.

> I wanna go to college, but I am not sure if I can't because I messed up a little bit in my sophomore and freshman year...I am not sure is going to be that easy for me to get in, I am trying really hard right now as a junior and then senior, but if I don't get accepted in to the school of my choice, I am just gonna end up having to attend a community college here, and then transfer out. (Anibal, personal communication, September 21, 2010)

In welding class, Lazaro commented, "You got into community college because you didn't do good in school, like you didn't pay attention so now you're stuck, anybody can go in there, you just put an application in" (Lazaro, on some of the comments his high school friends made when they find out he was attending a community college; personal communication, May 11, 2011).

There was a perceived level of inferiority that students felt existed between community colleges and universities, especially along the levels of academic performance expected by each entity. Anibal understood that in order to get into a four-year university he needed to improve on his grades, and that in the event he did not get accepted into the school of his choice, he had no other choice but to attend a local community college. Lazaro's friends implied that those attending a community college were not part on an exclusive club, but students who did not perform well academically and had nowhere to go. Students fought in their own ways against structural forces that could potentially derail their expectations to go to college, where they felt they could obtain something valuable.

## Education Is Valuable

There was a general consensus among students that an education beyond high school was necessary; in fact the majority of students felt it was very important. Some students associated a higher education with a good job or a more comfortable economic lifestyle.

> Well, seeing how the economy goes and apparently how everyone is being out of a job, I see that people that went higher to school, and have their Bachelor's or something, they still have a job and a good life, so that's nice, I wanna be that person that has a job no matter what. (Lazaro, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

Lazaro understood that a higher level of education was important to maintain a standard of living and a job, especially under an economic environment where jobs were scarce. Similar to Lazaro, Omar also understood the economic value of obtaining a higher education degree.

> Well, I want to have a good future, I don't, let's say when I finish university and I want to have a good career like I want to be able to start right from there, like right out of college and not have to worry about like oh I have to, I don't know how to say it, like, like some, like after college I'd be done, and then I'd be able to ump, so straight into a career, something I want to do, not something I have to do to be able to pay bills and stuff, and it would be something fun and I'd also be making good money on it, yeah. (Omar, Welding, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

In addition to associating a higher education degree with a good job and a comfortable lifestyle for themselves, students also felt that education would be a vehicle to give back to their families.

> Ah, just giving, ok growing to become very, very successful, and showing that even though sometimes school is like my only life, it's gonna pay off when I'm older, and I can give back to my family what they gave to me, and give my kids everything else that I didn't have but wanted. (Sarah, personal communication, September 16, 2010)

The theme that education was valuable to have a better lifestyle and a better future was evident in the comments shared by students; education was viewed as an investment that would yield rewards to those who achieved it, including the ability to have choices in the types of jobs selected, and the ability to help family and future generations. Another theme that surfaced was social capital, specifically the role played by institutional agents as outlets of critical information for college and personal support.

## Social Capital

During the first interview, students often cited how being with their high school friends was one of the things they enjoyed about school. By the end of the second interview, students did not make any references to friends becoming an integral part of their college experience. While Latino students typically belong to smaller social networks where conversations may not involve pathways to college (Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004), friends can still form supportive

networks that can be used for academic and personal matters (Saunders & Cerna, 2004), thus becoming institutional agents.

## Institutional Agents

Institutional agents can become important connectors or bridges for students to get information about college or to handle personal issues (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995). A majority of students in this study referred to the significance of institutional agents, especially high school teachers with whom the students identified and whom they felt understood their respective situations.

> His parents grew up in the depression, and so, he knows what we're going through, and like he said, there shouldn't be any obstacles for you guys, the only obstacle is gonna be like, you only have two ways, and he explains that, you either take this way or this way, but that way you will know what circumstances or obstacles or you are gonna face depends on what choices you make, he just inspires all of us, it's not just about taking a chemistry class, but he also tells us about his life, and it inspires you to be like, oh wait he did it, I could do it too, yeah. (Julia, personal communication, September 2, 2010)

For Julia, her chemistry teacher had become a role model and a source of inspiration. I had the opportunity to witness how a teacher could connect with his students by sharing his own personal journey during my first set of interviews in the automotive class. I had actually already finished my interviews for the day, but decided to sit in the class for some time to observe and learn about the

structure of the class. On this particular session, the instructor decided to give students information about the career opportunities in the automotive field, including the opportunity to become a teacher like him. To give students a more realistic example, the instructor, who was of Latino descent, talked about his own journey and how becoming a teacher had afforded him the opportunity of a more comfortable lifestyle. Connections to institutional agents, such as Julia's teacher or the program's automotive instructor, are important to motivate students and can also be a source of personal support. In the case of Francis, a Welding class student, her instructor helped her deal with the problems she was having with her mom by facilitating a meeting where mother and daughter could mediate their problem. Francis also took advantage of the relationship she developed with the program's counselor.

> I talked to her, because I was telling her I'm not sure if I'm gonna take welding no more. Yeah, she wrote, she wrote a paper and she was writing the classes I could take, and like for the fall, this summer. (personal communication, May 11, 2011)

Francis had actually established a good personal connection with the program's counselor that included not only talking about academic matters, but also about the birth of the counselor's son. From Francis's facial expressions, I could see that she referred to her as a friend rather than a distanced adult she hardly knew. Unlike other students in the study, Francis seemed to have developed a trusting relationship with the program's counselor, which facilitated two-way conversations where she could express her issues or opinions, and the

counselor could provide feedback and motivational support. The connections that students make with institutional agents are important since those connections or bridges can be accessed whenever needed; counselors can be one of those important bridges that can facilitate access to important information, but that bridge or connection must be built before it can be used.

The goal of the Career Academy Scholars Program was to provide students with a bridge that could lead to a technical career or a pathway towards higher education. For the participating disadvantaged students, the program offered a unique opportunity to take a class on a college campus while still in high school. The driving question in this study focused on how students would define and describe this new experience. There were four prevalent themes that emerged from the study, but the theme that encapsulated how students answered this question revolved around the theme of the college experience. Figure 7 contains the subthemes within the students' college experience.

Students spoke favorably of the adult environment prevalent on a college campus, where students could have the independence they did not have at their high schools. At the same time, students understood that they were now responsible for their own actions; therefore, taking this newfound freedom to the extremes could have negative consequences. Overall, the more mature environment at the college level instilled a sense of positivity in how students described the college system. Participating in the program provided students with the opportunity to explore a career, but more importantly the college culture

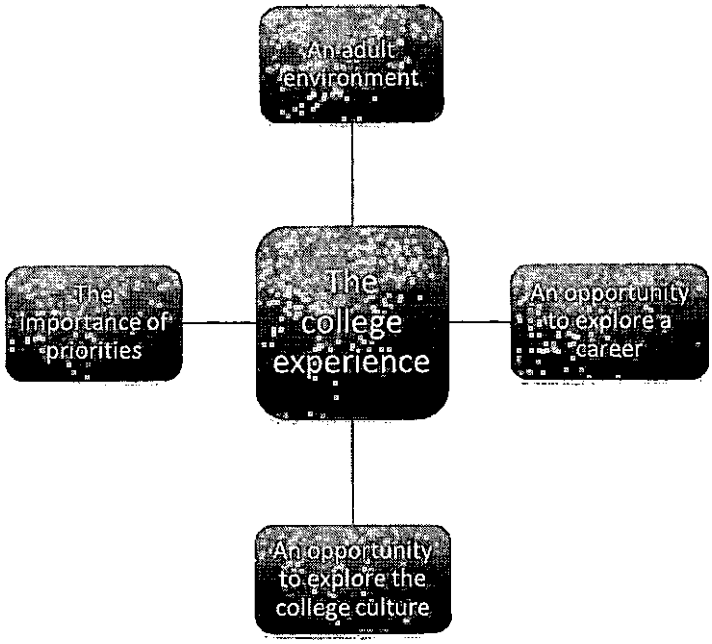


*Figure 7.* Subthemes within the students' college experience.

and what was expected of college students, including a level of commitment where students would clearly have to choose between competing priorities.

Armed with this new level of knowledge about the college culture and expressing positive comments about a more mature college environment, should have led these students to change their perceptions about college, but further analysis of the data revealed otherwise.

In order to answer the second question in this study, which dealt about whether the program had changed the college perceptions of participating students, the Entrance Survey administered to all students at the beginning of the program was analyzed to gather students' higher education expectations. An

interesting picture emerged where students taking AP classes expected to get graduate degrees, and lower performing students expected to get Associate's Degrees. This finding was corroborated by student interviews where AP students wanted to focus on careers requiring advanced degrees, and lower performing students wanted to focus on technical careers. The two students in the study who had participated in college bound programs had similar expectations as the AP students, even though they had not taken any AP level classes. At the end of the study, the college expectations for both AP and low performing students remained the same; AP students were mostly on their way to four-year universities, and lower performing students were on their way to a community college or had intentions to get a job. Immigration status issues clouded the plans of one of the two students who had participated in a college bound program, as well as another student who had intentions to transfer to a four-year university. Despite these setbacks, these students kept pushing forward and were still motivated to attend a four-year university, but their aspirations did not come about as a result of their participation in the program.

The third and final question of the study dealt with the interaction of the program on student aspirations. The students' voices definitely conveyed a message of hope and perseverance driven by parents' influence of both, linguistic and resistant capital, as well as aspirational capital. Siblings also played a role in inspiring students, but by in large, parents were the most powerful force feeding the willingness of students to keep moving forward despite the odds against them. Some of the forms of Community Cultural Wealth

espoused by Yosso (2005), but not recognized by current society could be seen in the stories of struggle and hardship that students shared, the consejos (advice) they received, and the motivation to make their parents proud.

## Summary

In summary, it was not the program interacting with student aspirations, but the forms of community cultural wealth that students already possessed, and which they inherited from their parents. The program could have possibly interacted with student aspirations through a culturally sensitive framework that recognizes the assets students are bringing with them, and through the connection to trusted institutional agents that can provide needed information and moral support. In the next chapter, I discuss some of these recommendations in more detail, as well as implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

## Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to gather the experiences of low-income Latino high school students participating in dual-enrollment program at a community college. Through the voices of students and narrative stories that developed, the researcher obtained a better insight about the students' lived experiences, and in the process learned more about their aspirations for higher education or a technical career.

## Study Process

The study was conducted at a community college in Southern California, and included 20, mostly low-income, Latino high school students from five high schools in the local unified school district. To allow for a better representative sample, students were selected based on GPA, gender, and school attended. The study included a pre-assessment survey, personal interviews, an analysis of school records, and follow-up conversations with college staff. The pre-assessment survey was given to students at the beginning of the program to obtain information on their educational expectations, including their expectations of the program. Semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with students at the beginning of their first semester and towards the end of their second semester to obtain information about their expectations and experiences

in a college environment. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim though the use of N-vivo analysis software. School records were used to obtain information on student's GPA, and for information on their progress in the program (i.e. whether student dropped a class or continued). Follow-up conversations with college staff, particularly the students' college counselor were conducted to verify the accuracy of information.

## Overview of Findings

### Research Question 1

How do low-income Latino high school students in a college bound intervention program define, describe, and explain their experiences in the program?

The College Experience. One of the most important outcomes of the program was the experience that students obtained in a college environment. By attending courses on a college campus, students learned that there were some significant differences between their high school environment and a college environment. In a high school environment, students had to comply with established rules and regulations that dictated the time that they needed to be in class, how their homework needed to be turned in, and the procedures to follow even when going to the bathroom (raising the hand and asking for permission). In a college environment, they were free to do as they wished, as they were now adults and were expected to behave accordingly. Rather than run freely with this newfound freedom, students seemed to cherish this new phase in their lives, and

understood that there were responsibilities that they now had to fulfill. For example, Josefina (Welding class) knew that it was her responsibility, not that of her teacher, to clean up her welding area. Students welcomed the adult environment of the college system, and the opportunity to get a glimpse of a future career and get a sense of the college culture.

The opportunity to explore a career helped one student decide against pursuing more classes in that field. This very likely helped this particular student to avoid the problems that many college students go through when they select the wrong field of study, including the probability of dropping out due to losing interest in the career pathway that they chose. For another student, taking a college class while in high school was a good way to get exposed to a field that she was interested in, and to get an early preview of the college culture. This early experience can make students feel more comfortable and confident once they transfer to a community college or four-year university (Fenske, et al., 1997). Another part of the college culture involves knowledge of financial aid and the college admission process (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). Most of the students who possessed this knowledge were the students in AP classes and college intervention programs; however, they seem to have acquired this knowledge at their high school rather than as a result of their participation in the program. The opportunity to explore a career and to experience the college culture were two of the sub-themes that emerged in this study, but taking college and high school classes concurrently presented students with challenges that involved another sub-theme, priorities.

The importance of priorities was evident in students having to choose between staying in the program or continue to be involved in sports at their respective high schools. Similar decision choices were present in Gandara's study (2001) of the Puente program, but students for the most part had an inclination to concentrate on their education rather than sports; the one exception where the balance tilted the other way was in choosing friends over education. Students are confronted by moments in their lives in which they have to make decisions that might impact their future; therefore, it is important for them to start learning the value of priorities. For Julia (Business class), it came down to choosing between remaining in the program or having her academic performance, which included AP classes, suffer. By Julia choosing the latter, she affirmed her belief to continue excelling academically while knowing her limits. For other students such as Maria and Lorenzo (Digital Media class) and Anibal (Auto class), sports prevailed over remaining in the program. It is important to point out that Anibal dropped out from the program early on in the first semester, and Maria and Lorenzo only completed one semester; therefore, they did not get to experience the program for very long. Perhaps, a longer stay in the program might have yielded a different outcome in their decisions.

Research Question 2

How, if at all, do students in a combined career pathways and college promotion program change their perceptions of their pursuit to college?

Expectations. The expectation of students who were taking AP classes at their high schools was to go to a four-year university. Based on their interviews,

these students were mostly on their way to universities from USC to UCs to CSUs. Exceptions occurred due to unfortunate circumstances, such as the case of one of the students involved in a college bound program, who realized he would not be able to transfer directly to a university due to his immigration status. Lorenzo, who had participated in the Puente program at his high school since his freshman year, had set his sights on transferring to a four-year university, but his immigration status was a major roadblock on his pathway to college. Lorenzo first realized the magnitude of his situation when he had the opportunity to apply for a scholarship, but was unable to submit an application due to a requirement of U.S. legal residency or citizenship. High educational expectations were prevalent in students taking AP classes and participating in college bound programs, but not for other students.

The expectations from students who had initially stated that they wanted to attend a community college or had an inclination to go did not change at the end of the program. One student planned to attend the local community college to continue his interest to become an auto technician, but like his two older brothers, ran the risk of having to go to work to help support his family. Another student expressed similar beliefs about going to work in order to save for college. A survey conducted by Lopez (2009) revealed that most students cited going to work to support their families as the main reason they would not go to college. While neither of these two students stated that they wanted to get a job to support their families, there is an implied danger that once students start working full-time they may not be as persistent in their college education. Moreno (2002),

for example, conducted a study between Puente and non-Puente students and found that Puente students had full-time jobs at a lower scale than non-Puente students; in addition Puente students were more persistent by remaining in college. The students in Moreno's study who were in Puente had the advantage of being in a college intervention program that provided three important components: a focus on academics through an English class, dedicated teachers, and a dedicated counselor. While CASP provided students with the latter two components, there was no special training provided for teachers, and students did not take advantage for the most part of the counseling services offered. Needless to say, the program did not seem to change student perceptions about attending a community college or a four-year university.

Students displayed their linguistic capital through the many consejos (advice) they received from their parents, which concentrated on them taking advantage of the opportunities their parents did not have. The drive for students like Julia (Business class) was partly driven by her desire to prove those betting against her academic success wrong; Julia resisted by using her resistant capital, which was also partly driven by her parents. Likewise, Lorenzo (Digital Media class) used the resistant capital that came from his main motivator, his father, to change existing stereotypes. The resistant capital possessed by Lorenzo and Julia fueled their drive towards wanting to succeed academically, to aspire to more in life. Yosso (2005) states that aspirational capital overlaps with the other forms of capital within community cultural wealth; therefore, resistant capital and linguistic capital are connected to the aspirations of students.

Whether they were getting consejos (advice) from parents or siblings, the positive and motivating influence from family was evident throughout the study. The influence was so strong for one male student that he broke out crying when he tried to describe how his parents were the motivators in his life. Family can be a strong form of support and motivation for Latino students; students can also get support from individuals who possess the social and cultural capital appreciated by society.

Social Capital and Institutional Agents. The importance of social capital, which concentrates on the bridges or connections that individuals can make to achieve desired outcomes have been described extensively in the literature (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Those connections can come in the form of institutional agents or individuals who possess the cultural capital used by society for economic and educational mobility (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995), and who in many instances can also help with personal problems. For one student, the connection she made with her welding instructor was useful to solve a family problem. However, for the most part students failed to make connections to institutional agents at the college, who could have potentially helped them on their educational pursuits, particularly the college counselor who was assigned to work explicitly with students in the program. This finding was reaffirmed by the counselor during follow-up conversations, where she shared that many students would not seek help until the semester was almost over, or would not seek help at all.

Stanton-Salazar, Chavez, and Tai (2001) conducted a study on help-seeking behaviors among Latino students using three orientations: "confidence in support process, interpersonal openness and desired for academic support" (p. 15). The students who exhibited positive help-seeking behaviors (asked for help) were students who were doing better academically or high achievers; the opposite was true for low achieving students. High achieving students like Julia (Business class) were not hesitant to ask for help, and had either the knowledge about the college access process, or the willingness to access institutional agents at their high schools who could provide the needed information. As a result, the guidance they would have received from their college counselor would have probably been minimal. However, students at the lower academic levels could have benefited from some of the social connections available through the program. Enrique, for example, who planned on getting a job or joining the Marines after high school, did not seem to have much knowledge about the benefits of financial aid after spending two semesters in the auto class.

Research Question 3

What interaction does the program have on the aspirations of students? As has been discussed, the program did not seem to interact with the aspirations of students. Students made use of some of the forms of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) such as aspirational capital, linguistic, and resistant capital ingrained in their culture to view their education as a vehicle of professional and economic mobility, and also as something that would make their families, particularly their parents, proud. One item that necessitates discussion is the

structure of the program, as many students did not experience the college culture for long, which may have affected the interaction that the program could have had on student aspirations.

The Career Academy Scholars Program can possibly be considered a relatively new program since it started in the fall of 2009. As many new programs in their initial phases, the program went through a learning curve and structural changes were made along the way. Under the initial four-semester plan, students were supposed to become more independent once they got to their third and fourth semester; in other words they would be expected at this point to enroll on their own and be more knowledgeable about the admission process.

Under the two-semester system in place at the time of this study, students were given extensive staff support to ensure all paperwork was completed, which unintentionally prevented them from learning to navigate the process by themselves, since all paperwork was completed by staff. The staff support was necessary to ensure the process was streamlined for students and parents, especially since students had never attended a community college. Originally, the program was supposed to last four semesters, in which students would continue on a chosen pathway until obtaining a certificate. A preferable target group in recruitment would be high school juniors, as they could potentially graduate with their high school diploma and a college certificate, which would facilitate employment after graduation. For the first two semesters, students would receive extensive staff support on the registration and enrollment process

and would participate in sheltered classes, classes dedicated solely to high school students. As students moved to the last two semesters, there would be less staff support and students would begin to integrate in classes with other college students. The intended goal was to offer students extensive support at the beginning of their college experience, and gradually reduce it as students became more acclimated to the college atmosphere, and could navigate their way through the college process (i.e. registration, using services on campus). The length of the program however had to be reduced.

The program changed from a four-semester commitment to a two-semester commitment due to challenges that surfaced in the recruitment of students, caused mainly by students unwilling to commit to a four-semester program. As a result, the program changed to a two-semester commitment, which became more attractive to interested students, but meant they would get fewer of the benefits that come with a longer stay in college intervention programs.

The literature on programs like Puente and AVID indicate that there are greater academic benefits when high school students stay in a program for a longer period of time; similar results were obtained by Schnorr and Ware (2001) in their study involving middle and high school students. While students in the program reported obtaining some benefits from their participation in the program, the possibility exists that they could have obtained greater benefits by remaining in the program longer. Even with the program moving from a four-semester to a two-semester program, there were many students who either dropped during the

first semester or did not return after the completion of the first semester. In the case of this study, there were initially 20 students who were interviewed at the beginning of the first semester, but only 10 students continued to the second semester. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the four classes in the program.

Table 3

*Students in Each Class, by Semester*

| Class | Students in 1st semester class | Students in 2nd semester class |
|---|---|---|
| Digital media | 5 | 0 |
| Business | 5 | 2 |
| Automotive | 5 | 3 |
| Welding | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 20 | 10 |

Of the ten students who did not continue, two students were dropped for too many missed classes, one student dropped the class without explanation, and one student dropped the class due to the academic load of AP classes she was taking at her high school. I tried contacting the two students who were dropped, but the female student, Esther from the Digital Media class, was not very cooperative during a phone follow-up. Initially, Esther picked up the phone when I called, but when she realized it was me she put me hold and then hung up. I tried contacting the male student, Anibal from the Auto class, but the calls went directly into a voicemail that had not been set up. I suspect that in Anibal's case sports might have been a probable cause for him missing classes, as he

was involved in the wrestling team at his high school, and there were also other students involved in sports who reported having scheduling conflicts between their sport activities and the college class; at least two other students cited this as a reason why they did not return for a second semester. The four remaining students who did not return for a second semester could not be reached. Table 4 summarizes the information.

Table 4

*Students Who Did Not Return for a Second Semester*

| Student | Class | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Ivan | Digital media | Did not return second semester due to unknown reasons. |
| Esther | Digital media | Dropped by instructor during first semester due to missed classes. |
| Maria | Digital media | Did not return for second semester due to sports. |
| Jacqueline | Digital media | Did not return second semester due to unknown reasons. |
| Lorenzo | Digital media | Did not return second semester due to sports. |
| Anibal | Auto | Dropped by instructor during first semester due to missed classes. |
| Armando | Auto | Did not return second semester due to unknown reasons. |
| Rafael | Business | Did not return second semester due to unknown reasons. |
| Julia | Business | Did not return second semester to focus on high school studies. |
| Braulio | Business | Did not return second semester due to unknown reasons. |

Even when students stayed for the two semesters, they did not seem to use college facilities very much or have made significant friendships with other students. This might have been due to the program's structure where students would come to class in late afternoons or early evenings, after they had ended their regular high school day, thus leaving a short span of time to use college services (bookstore, library, financial aid office); the use of these services could help students become more familiar with the college structure, and could help students in their academic pursuits. Friendships were often mentioned by students during initial interviews, as one of the things they thought about when they heard the word school; however, after two semesters in the program students did not seem to form solid friendships with other students that went beyond the classroom.

Friends can be one of the important forms of social capital that students can use for academic and moral support. As stated by Stanton-Salazar (2001), friends or peers can become one of the "social freeways" that can lead students to obtain desired information or outcomes. This information might involve obtaining help to complete school assignments or help in deciding which college to attend or what classes to take. Saunders and Cerna (2004) found that students accessed new and old networks composed of peers and other institutional agents when they needed college information. Since classes in the program included students from all academic backgrounds (low grades to AP students), it would have been ideal for students to form friendship networks where they could share their personal goals, including academic plans for the

future, and in the process have the types of discussions that can potentially strengthen aspirations. In order for those conversations to take place, students must have an environment that can lead to more student interaction; students in the Puente program for example tend to interact socially among themselves while in school (Gandara, 2002). It is important to point out, however, that the Puente study was conducted on the high school Puente program, which takes place at a high school campus, thus students were in a familiar environment rather than a foreign environment (-i.e. a college campus-). In addition, students had the opportunity to spend years in the program, beginning their freshman year, rather than a semester or two, which may have strengthened their relationships with their friends.

## Implications

As has been discussed, the existing literature shows that college intervention programs in which students have a longer length of participation lead to greater college enrollment and retention rates (Mehan et al., 1986; Gandara, 2002; Mendiola et al., 2010). The Career Academy Scholars Program started as a four-semester or two-year program, but was reduced to two semesters due to student recruitment issues. While the reduction may have helped student recruitment efforts, the retention rate for students in this study was only 50%, since only 10 students out of 20 completed the two semesters in the program. Overall, the program did not change the perceptions of participating students to go to college.

The argument can be made that longer participation in the program could have yielded more students on a pathway to college due to their early introduction to the college experience; these results have been evident in programs like high school Puente and AVID. However, one important difference that must be considered is that the latter two programs contained classes within students' high school campuses versus CASP students who had to travel to the college campus after their regular scheduled high school classes at their respective schools. This created logistical problems, such as students finding transportation to the college campus, students arriving late to classes (-sometimes due to sports-), and rushing to class without a meal or a snack. Students in the program also belonged to five different high schools in the local district, thus, with the exception of students who were from the same school, students were together only for the length of time of their college class, whereas students in high school Puente and AVID had time to extend/continue their friendships after their classes.

Friendships can be an important source of social capital, since students can provide each other with moral and academic support; Puente students or Puentistas are known to form tight-knit groups, where students offer each other support, in addition to developing a strong sense of ethnic pride (Moreno, 2002). Students in both Puente and AVID have the opportunity to work with dedicated teachers and counselors; the CASP program had the same two components, but teachers did not receive any type of special training to work with the students, in particular cultural training that might helped teachers identify the community

cultural wealth of students, or developed the political clarity described by Bartolome (1994) to appreciate Latino students' capital. When teachers possess political clarity, they can use themes that relate to students' linguistic capital to create a class environment of hope and high aspiration, such as the theme used in "A House for My Mother", where students in a college preparation program based their motivation to go to college on buying a house for their mother (Abi-Nader, 1990).

Parents were the strongest motivator for students in this study, and a source of aspirational, linguistic and resistance capital through the sharing of consejos (advices), and personal stories of hardship and perseverance. Designing strategies within the curriculum that include the motivational force of parents and students' own forms of community cultural wealth can lead students to develop a sense of belonging, and willingness to continue participating in the program and setting their sights towards a higher education pathway. The students in this study had access to a dedicated counselor; however, they rarely sought the valuable service (college career planning, enrollment, career advice, etc.) that this institutional agent could offer. Through their interaction with institutional agents, students can get access to "important forms of social support such as academic assistance, career decision-making, emotional support, and crisis intervention" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 3).

Bowles and Gintis (1977) suggest that schools are contributors to the social reproduction of minority groups through their established operating structures. The expectation within the Career Academy Scholars Program was

that students would use the dedicated counselor, especially since they would have faster direct access to her, something that perhaps they did not have at their high schools due to the large number of students each high school counselor is typically assigned (Kimura-Walsch et al., 2009). Missing within the structure, however, was accounting for the help-seeking behaviors of Latino students, especially students who are not high achievers and are prone not to look for help (Stanton-Salazar, Chavez, & Tai, 2001). Stanton-Salazar, Chavez, and Tai (2001) posit that relationships between working-class students and institutional agents must be based on trust. The development of trust requires the establishment of a process for trust to be built; the Career Academy Scholars Program did not have a structure in place for students to build trust with their counselor, who held the key to valuable knowledge and connections that could have benefited students, particularly low-achieving students. Having access to institutional agents is a critical piece for low-income Latino students on their road to college, but the appropriate frameworks that address the challenges they face must be in place for significant relationships to be built.

In summary, students in the program were introduced to a part of the college culture, which includes a different environment (an adult environment) and expectations, but they missed some of the other important components such as learning to navigate the college system on their own or though the help of institutional agents, who could also have provided guidance on other issues.

## Recommendations

The creation of a cultural environment of pride and perseverance has been found to be beneficial in college bound programs for Latino students. For example, through a team-oriented, multi-cultural approach that integrated students, teachers and mentors, the medical academy program in Conchas' study (2001) provided Latino students with inspirational support that made them look at their future through a lens of hope and optimism, despite the real and visible barriers in front of them. Similar results were found in Abi-Nader's study (1990) where a culture of student support and teacher encouragement fueled students' aspirations for a better future.

Teachers can be a powerful force that can positively affect the motivation and aspirations of Latino students, but it requires an in-depth understanding of the cultural aspects of Latino culture that can be implemented in the classroom to engage students on a more familiar ground, rather than currently set classroom criteria that neglects the community cultural wealth of Latino students. In Abi-Nader's study (1990), the teacher had the political clarity necessary to understand the many obstacles that his students faced, and how their cultural assets could be used to build an environment of hope and perseverance. Teachers in CASP could benefit from receiving training that can help them better understand their students, including their cultural assets and how they can be used to foster environments where students can thrive and persevere. Caldwell and Siwatu (2003) posit that for intervention programs geared for minority students to be effective they must have a cultural component that addresses

factors such as "social alienation, racial identity, academic self-concept and help-seeking" (p. 34); part of this cultural component includes providing staff development opportunities for personnel to get the political clarity needed to work more effectively with minority students.

Students should also have a better opportunity to connect with institutional agents within the program who can become bridges for students to obtain information, including appropriate guidance on how to navigate the college culture. For those connections to develop, an environment of trust must be developed. One possible way in which trust can be developed is through the implementation of a summer counseling class where students can learn about the expectations in college, including college admission requirements, as well as the different resources available for students such as financial aid, scholarships, and on-campus support programs. The class would be conducted in the summer prior to students beginning their first semester in the program. Through activities designed by the program's counselors, students could learn about the college culture while forming closer bonds with their peers, and developing a level of trust with their counselor that might permit them to ask for help without hesitation. One helpful activity is the daily affirmation activity in the Education Navigation Skills Seminar (TENSS) advocated by Caldwell and Siwatu (2003) where students can express pride in their culture and celebrate their heritage, verbally and in writing. Culturally rich programs that also contain a focus on academics are part of the model that I propose for dual-enrollment programs to be more

effective in meeting the needs of low-income Latino students. Figure 8 shows the blended approach to the classroom.

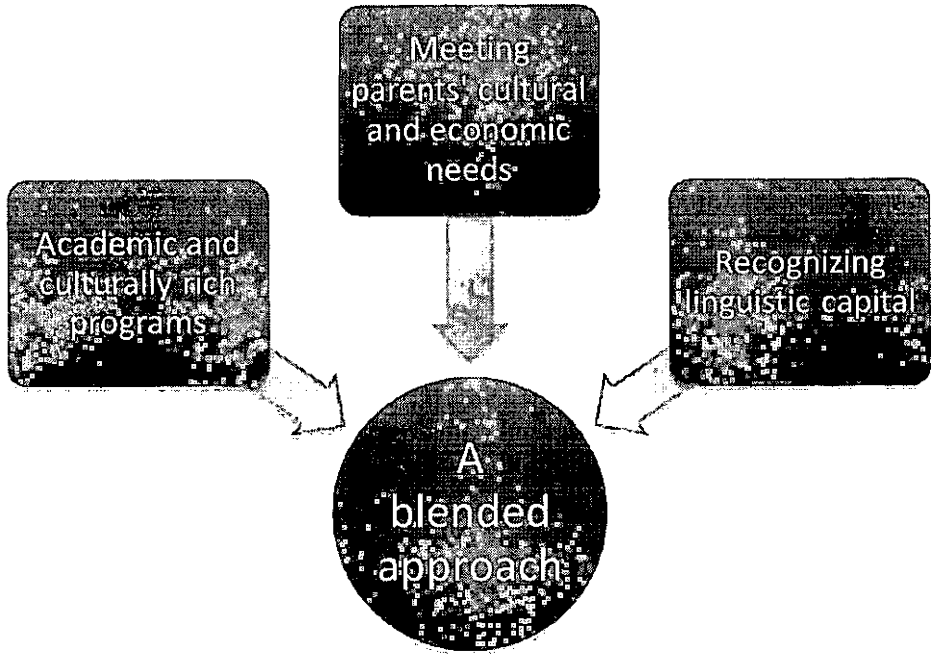


*Figure 8.* The blended approach to the classroom.

A culturally rich program should recognize the community cultural wealth of Latino students and their parents, especially how students' linguistic capital can be used to increase aspirations and college enrollment rates. Parent involvement is also an important component to have in any college preparation program, as parents are an important source of motivation and aspiration for Latino students (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Valencia & Black, 2002; Ceballo, 2004). Parents' economic needs were met since the program paid for students' tuition, books, and equipment. On the cultural aspect, parents were invited to the

program's opening ceremony, but it is unknown what other outreach efforts were conducted to keep parents involved. For outreach efforts to be effective, they should take into consideration how Latino parents' value education, which may not necessarily be attending a school meeting or returning a phone call.

## Unanticipated Findings

The undocumented status of some students (AB 540) was an unexpected finding in this study. Perhaps, I should have expected to find students with immigration issues due to the city's large immigrant community. The frustration of the two AB 540 students was evident in their voices. Lorenzo (Digital Media class) and Francis (Welding class) wanted to apply for scholarships, but realized that this educational benefit was not meant for students like them. Both students expressed a desire to go to a four-year university, but were very much aware of their limitations. Another unexpected finding was the adult environment theme that students frequently mentioned during interviews. I expected students to elaborate on how college was different more at the programmatic level, but not so much at the personal level. The fact that students welcomed this new world where they were now responsible for their own actions can potentially open a window of opportunity in the design of future dual-enrollment or college preparation programs. Lastly, I was surprised by the perceived inferiority that some students expressed about community colleges. One student expressed that he wanted to go to a four-year university over a community college because he wanted to experience the real college experience. One student's friends

provided an interesting assessment on community colleges when they told him that anyone who submitted an application got admitted, and that he was probably attending community college due to his low academic performance in high school.

## Limitations

The results of this study cannot be applied to a general population as its focus concentrated on recording the individual experiences of 20 students participating in a unique dual enrollment program, thus the sample was too small for generalizability purposes. There were also limitations in the number of interviews conducted as half of the students in the study either dropped voluntary or involuntarily, or did not continue after the first semester of the program.

## Study Strengths

The focus of this study was to gather the experiences of low-income Latino students participating in a dual-enrollment program; those experiences were contained in students' interviews, which were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As a result, the results within this study came from students' voices rather than the researcher's own opinions. A specialized qualitative analysis software, Nvivo, was used to ensure all themes that emerged were recorded and coded appropriately.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The research on the benefits of dual enrollment programs is still limited and even more so on programs targeting Latino students. One of the prevalent issues in many college preparation programs is the focus of preparing students to perform better academically, while neglecting an important non-academic component; that is, the serious consideration of needs specific to culture (Caldwell & Siwatu, 2003). More studies would be recommended to evaluate the effect of culturally rich programs on college enrollment and persistence rates. Parents are an influential force in the aspirations and motivation of Latino students, yet the literature abounds with articles addressing the uncaring or caring attitudes of Latino parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Valencia & Black, 2002; Hill & Torres, 2010), but not many studies have looked into unconventional programs that take parents cultural and economic needs into consideration (Lopez, Scribner & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth model (2005) describes the many forms of capital that Latino students and parents possess, unfortunately these forms of capital are still not appreciated in our society, and it may be some time before we see any progress in their recognition due to the reproductive forces hidden in our educational structures. More studies are recommended to investigate school models that recognize community cultural wealth, and the effects of political clarity on teaching faculty and counseling staff.

## Commentary

Latinos constitute the highest growing ethnic group in the United States, accounting for more than 50% of the growth of the U.S. population between 2000 and 2010 (Passel et al., 2011), yet they lag behind all major ethnic groups in academic achievement. Efforts to counter this trend should be implemented to avoid the social and economic problems that our nation will face, unless we develop better educational programs to serve Latino youth. Programs like Puente, AVID and GEAR UP have made a positive impact in changing college enrollment and persistence patterns; however, their effect is only limited to the schools where the programs are implemented. With the continuing budget cuts to education in California, it is difficult to sustain current state-funded programs or to begin new dual-enrollment or college preparation programs for Latino students. New programs should include academic and cultural components that account for the community cultural wealth of Latino students and parents to correct societal failures that have kept Latinos in a cycle of educational and economic neglect.

The aspirational, linguistic, and resistant forms of capital ingrained in the Latino culture should be included in the curriculum, meaning educational leaders need to foment change recognizing that cultural pride and academic persistence are valued elements of the Latino culture. Teachers, however, would have to gain "political clarity" as they will be the ones in charge of delivering the curriculum, thus they must believe in the necessity and urgency to teach Latino students from a different perspective that values rather than disregards their

community cultural wealth. This different perspective or paradigm also needs to take into account the help-seeking behaviors of Latino students; therefore, administrators must work on developing frameworks that provide students with the opportunity to connect with institutional agents, and develop the levels of trust needed for students to seek the information and support that they need. This could be easier said than done as many educational institutions still operate under established social reproduction structures that mask the negative effects created for minority students; however, we can no longer defend an educational system that privileges some and neglects others.

# APPENDIX A

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FROM

# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY,

# SAN BERNARDINO

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

Academic Affairs
*Office of Academic Research • Institutional Review Board*

June 04, 2010

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**
Full Board Review
IRB# 09120
Status
**APPROVED**

Mr. Gustavo Chamorro
c/o: Prof. Louie Rodriguez
Department of Education
California State University
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mr. Chamorro:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Career Academy for Scholars" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. **Your application is approved for one year from June 04, 2010 through June 03, 2011. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. The protocol renewal form is on the IRB website. See additional requirements of your approval below.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following requirements. You are required to notify the IRB of the following: 1) **submit a protocol change form if any substantive changes (no matter how minor) are made in your research prospectus/protocol, 2) if any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and 3) when your project has ended by emailing the IRB Coordinator.** Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, IRB Compliance Coordinator. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application identification number (above) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Sharon A Ward, Ph.D

Sharon Ward, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

SW/mg

cc: Prof. Louie Rodriguez, Department of Education

**Application to Use Human Participants in Research**



1. **PROJECT REVIEW**
   X Complete CITI Course in Human Subject's Online Training before submitting IRB application (see IRB website for policy at http://irb.csusb.edu/).
   X New Project (ID# will be assigned by the IRB) 09120
   ☐ Revised Project (Enter IRB ID#) _____
   ☐ Renewal (Enter IRB ID#) _____
   Approximate date of most recent **previous** review of this project _____

2. **DATA COLLECTION DATES: From 08/02/10 To 12/09/12**
   *This is required information, must be future dates - after you have received final IRB approval to conduct your research.*

3. **INVESTIGATOR(S) NAME(S) Gustavo Chamorro**

   Department: Student in Educational Leadership Program – College of Education.

   Phone **909-844-7446**

   Student(s)/Researcher(s) E-mail Address(s): **chamorrg@csusb.edu**
   If you are a **student,** please provide the following information:
   This research is for ☐ Graduate Thesis & Projects ☐ Honors Project
   ☐ Independent Study ☐ Course _____
   X Other **Dissertation**

4. **PROJECT TITLE Career Academy Scholars Program**

   _____

5. **DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS** (Enter approx. no. of participants and categories that apply)
   Number **110** Gender: X Female X Male
   ☐ CSUSB Students X Children (17 or younger) ☐ Child Development Center
   ☐ Prisoners ☐ Patients in institutions ☐☐ Pregnant Women
   ☐ Other _____

6. **IS FUNDING BEING SOUGHT FOR THIS RESEARCH?**
   ☐ Yes X No
   If yes, you must submit one complete copy of that proposal as soon as it is available and respond to the following questions:

   Does the funding agency require notification of Institutional Review Board approval? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   (If yes, please provide the IRB Secretary with one copy of all relevant forms, instructions, etc., with your original copy of this application.)

   Project period from _____ to _____

7. **INDICATE THE REVIEW CATEGORY FOR WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING.**

☐ I am applying for **administrative review (formerly exempt review)**, based on the following category (ies):
(Check all that apply. Submit an original and one copy of all application materials to the IRB.) *Note: Research involving children must be reviewed FULL BOARD.*

- ☐ Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings and involving normal educational practices
- ☐ Research involving the use of educational tests, if information from these sources is recorded in such a manner that participants cannot be identified in any way
- ☐ Research involving survey or interview procedures where participants cannot be identified
- ☐ Research involving the observation of public behavior where participants cannot be identified
- ☐ Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, where these sources are publicly available or where participants cannot be identified

☐ I am applying for **expedited review**, based on the following category(ies):
(Check all that apply. Submit an original and 1 copy of all application materials to the IRB.)

- ☐ Collection of hair, nail clippings, teeth in a non-disfiguring manner.
- ☐ Collection of excretal and/or external secretions.
- ☐ Recording of data from adults using noninvasive procedures.
- ☐ Collection of moderate levels of blood samples from adults in good health.
- ☐ Collection of supra- and sub-gingival dental plaque and calculus.
- ☐ Voice recordings made for research purposes.
- ☐ Moderate exercise by healthy volunteers.
- ☐ Study of existing data, documents, records, or pathological or diagnostic specimens.
- ☐ Non-manipulative, non-stressful research on group or individual behavior.

X I am applying for **full board review**.
(Submit an original and 1 copy of all application materials to the IRB.)

8. **ATTACHMENTS.** I have included copies of all relevant project materials and documents, including (check all that apply):

- X Surveys, questionnaires, and/or interview instruments.
- X Informed consent forms or statements.
- X Letters of approval from cooperative agencies, schools, or education boards.
- ☐ Debriefing statements or explanation sheet.
- ☐ Participant recruitment materials, including flyers and advertisements.

**9. AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE:**

I agree to follow the procedures outlined in the summary description and any attachments to ensure that the rights and welfare of human participants in my project are properly protected. I understand that the study will not commence until I have received approval of these procedures from the IRB or where appropriate a department Human Participants Review Board; I have complied with any required modifications in connection with that approval. I understand that additions to or changes in the procedures involving human participants, or any problems with the rights or welfare of the human participants must be promptly reported to the IRB. I further understand that if the project continues for more than one year from the approval date, it must be re-submitted as a renewal application.

*NOTE: You (the investigator/researcher) are required to notify the IRB if any substantive changes are made in your research prospectus/protocol, if any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and when your project has ended. Important: If your project lasts longer than one year, you (the investigator/researcher) are required to notify the IRB by email (mgillesp@csusb.edu) or correspondence of *Notice of Project Ending* or *Request for Continuation* at the end of each year. See the IRB website for the proper 1 page form at http://irb.cusb.edu/. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action under the CSUSB campus student and faculty misconduct policy. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

*(Required for all investigators):
I affirm the accuracy of this application, and I accept responsibility for the conduct of this research, the supervision of human participants, and maintenance of informed consent documentation as required by the IRB.

| Signature of Investigator | chamarrq@csusb.edu<br>Your e-mail address | 5-19-10<br>Date |
|---|---|---|
| Signature of Co-Investigator(s) | Your e-mail address | Date |

APPROVAL OF FACULTY ADVISOR/SPONSOR

*(Required for all faculty advisors) By signing - you as faculty advisor affirm the accuracy of your students application and accept responsibility for the conduct of this research, the supervision of the researcher (student) in ethical conduct of research, and maintenance of informed consent documentation as required by the IRB.

| Printed Name of Faculty Advisor/Sponsor | 7-5673<br>Campus Phone | lrodrig@csusb.edu<br>E-mail of Faculty Advisor |
|---|---|---|
| Signature of Faculty Advisor/Sponsor | 5/24/10<br>Date | |

APPROVAL OF A LICENSED PHYSICIAN (Required only if the project involves medical procedures and neither the investigator nor the faculty/advisor is a licensed physician)

| Printed Name of Licensed Physician | Contact Phone |
|---|---|
| Signature of Licensed Physician | Da |

**10. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT.**

The participants will be part of a new cohort of 110 high school students who will be participating in a college bound intervention program in the fall of 2010. The researcher has full access to students and staff, both teachers and administrators, as he is part of the administrative team coordinating the state grant which is mostly funding the program for the next two years. The researcher will be working closely with school administrators to obtain parental consent, and with the four teachers in the program to inform students of the opportunity to participate in the research on a volunteer basis; participation is completely voluntary and students can opt out at anytime without penalty. Students in the Career Academy Scholars Program are not required to participate in the research.

Program participants will be low-income Latino students between 16 and 17 years of age. Since two of the four classes in the program are in fields typically occupied by males (Welding and Automotive), there might be a higher percentage of males than females in the study

**11. PROJECT DESCRIPTION.**

The Career Academy Scholars Program (CASP) is a program that started last fall at Santa Ana College. The goal of the program is to provide low-income high school students ($11^{th}$ graders) from the Santa Ana Unified School District with the opportunity to take college-level Career Technical Education (CTE) classes at the college. Unlike Middle College High Schools, the target group for CASP are C average students. There will be four classes available in the fall: Automotive, Welding, Digital Media Arts, and International Business. While the emphasis on classes is CTE based, the intent of the program is to provide an experience that can inspire/motivate students to go to a four-year university.

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

What is the experience of low-income high school students in a college bound intervention program?

Are the experiences that students have in a program that combines career pathways and college expectations changing their perceptions of the value of a college education?

As previously stated, the new cohort that will be starting in the fall will be composed of $11^{th}$ grade high school students who will be taking one college course for each of the next four semesters (2 years). The projected goal is that by the time students graduate from high school they will have four college courses completed as well as a college certificate, but more importantly they will know how to navigate the community college system and hopefully continue the journey towards higher education. The researcher's objective is to record the experiences of the program's participants before they start the program, as they progress, and as they exit. As a result, information will be collected using a qualitative survey (open-ended questions). Pre and post surveys will be administered to all the students in the cohort; based on the information/responses collected a small group of students will be selected to conduct personal interviews as they progress through the program. Interviews and surveys will be conducted at the college site.

12. **CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA.**
Information on participants will be coded to ensure confidentially is maintained; additionally, coded information will be kept locked at community college's facility, where researcher is the only person with authorized access. All data, including surveys, interviews, and audio recordings will be destroyed after 10 years of the completion of the study.

13. **RISKS AND BENEFITS.**
Since the research does not include an experimental treatment, there are no foreseeable risks to participants; however, the researcher anticipates some benefits to society and the research community as the compilation of student experiences might shed some light about the impact the program can have on low-income students' perceptions of higher education.

14. **INFORMED CONSENT.**
The students participating in this study will be under the age of 18; therefore, parental consent and student assent will be acquired. Parent Consent form (Appendix A) and Student Assent form (Appendix C) will be used. Prior to the study, consent forms will also be given to teachers who will work with student participants. As a result, informed consent forms will be acquired from teachers.

The PI will inform all prospective participants of the nature of the study, expectations and time commitments, objectives and goals, and the types of permissions required to conduct the study. No participant will be allowed to engage in the study unless both parent consent and student assent is secured. All signed forms will be kept in locked file cabinet in the PI's office at the Digital Media Center in Santa Ana. Only the PI will have access to these research documents, including the data collected.

15. **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT.**
Since deception is not used in the study, a debriefing is not necessary, but the PI will be available for discussion with partisans as required.

# APPENDIX B

## PARENTS CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

College of Education
*Department of Educational Leadership and Curriculum*

Title: Career Academy Scholars Program

We would like your teenager to participate in a research study. The investigator of this study is Gustavo Chamorro, Director of the Digital Media Center (www.dmc-works.com) which is part of the Rancho Santiago Community College District, and a doctorate student in Educational Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino. The study will be part of your son/daughter's normal participation in the Career Academy Scholars Program (CASP) at Santa Ana College, and will be conducted at the college site. The study will look at the students' experiences and participation in the program, and will help in the development and implementation of future college bound programs for high school students.

If you permit your son/daughter to be part of the study, he/she will be asked to: 1) Complete an Entrance Survey before he/she starts the program, 2) complete three 1-2 hours audio interviews over the course of two years about his/her experience in the program, and 3) complete an Exit Survey once he/she completes the program. Audio interviews will be conducted at Santa Ana College at the beginning of the program, after one year, and at the end of the program in year 2. In addition, your son/daughter's teacher will be asked to provide information about his/her experience in working with students in the program. There are no known risks to the students in the research.

There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at the Digital Media Center. Your son/daughter's name will not be connected to individual data collected from him/her. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, he/she no longer wants to be involved in the study, he/she can withdraw with no penalty.

The project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to obtain more information about this research, you can contact Mr. Chamorro at 714-241-5810 or Dr. Louie Rodriguez at 909-537-5643. If you feel that your son/daughter has been mistreated or you have questions about participation in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB chair at 909-537-7304.

If you have had all of your questions answered and you permit your son/daughter, _____ to be in the study, please sign below.

_____ _____
Signature of Parent Date

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD COMMITTEE
APPROVED 06/24/10 VOID AFTER 06/23/11
IRB# 09022 CHAIR Sharon Ward, Ph.D.

909.537.7404 • fax: 909.537.7510
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

# APPENDIX C

# CONSENTIMIENTO DE PADRES PARA LA PARTICIPACIÓN DEL ESTUDIANTE EN UN ESTUDIO

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

College of Education
*Department of Educational Leadership and Curriculum*

Titulo: Career Academy Scholars Program

Nos gustaria que su hijo/hija adolescente participara en un studio. El investigador de este estudio es Gustavo Chamorro, Director del Digital Media Center (www-dmc-works.com) que es parte de Rancho Santiago Community College District. El señor Chamorro tambien es un estudiante en el programa de Doctorado en Liderasgo Educativo en la Universidad Estatal de California en San Bernardino. El estudio sera parte de la participación normal de su hijo/hija en el programa Career Academy Scholars Program en el Santa Ana College y sera conducido en el mismo colegio. El estudio se enfocará en la experiencia y participación de los estudiantes en el programa, y ayudara en el desarollo e implementación de futuros programas universitarios para estudiantes de secundaria o high school.

Si permite que su hjo/hija sea parte del estudio, el o ella tendra que hacer lo siguiente: 1) Llenar una encuesta antes de entrar al programa, 2) Participar en tres entrevistas (grabadas con audio) sobre el termino de dos años para compartir su experiencia en el programa, y 3) Llenar una encuesta al terminar el programa. Las entrevistas de audio se llevaran a cabo en el Santa Ana College al principio del programa, despues de un año, y al final del programa en el año dos. Adicionalmente, el maestro o maestra de su hijo/hija proporcionara información acerca de su experiencia en trabajar con estudiantes del programa. No hay riesgos conocidos para los estudiantes.

No hay ningun costo para estar en el estudio. Toda la información sera mantenida de manera confidencial y bajo llave en el Digital Media Center. Su hijo/hija no sera relacionado a la información obtenida de el o ella. Los resultados del estudio seran presentados como resultados de grupo (en vez de resultados individuales) en todas la publicaciones y presentaciones publicas. Si en cualquier momento el or ella no desea participar en el estudio, puede salirse sin ninguna penalidad.

El estudio ha sido aprovado por la Institutional Review Board (IRB) en la Universidad Estatal de California en San Bernardino. Si le gustaria obtener mas información acerca de este estudio, usted puede contactar al señor Chamorro al 714-241-5810 o al Dr. Louie Rodriguez al 909-537-5643. Si en un algun momento piensa que su hijo/hija no ha sido tratado bien o si tiene preguntas acerca de la participación en el estudio, usted puede contactar a la Dra. Sharon Ward, profesora y encargada del programa IRB al 909-537-7304.

Si se le han contestado todas sus preguntas y permite que su hijo/hija, _____ participe en el programa, por favor firme abajo.

_____ _____
Firma del Padre/Madre Fecha

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD COMMITTEE
APPROVED 06/04/12 VOID AFTER 06/03/13
IRB# 09120 CHAIR Sharon Ward, Ph.D

909.537.7404 • fax: 909.537.7510
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

APPENDIX D

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Project Title: Career Academy Scholars Program

We would like you to participate in a research study. The investigator of this study is Gustavo Chamorro, Director of the Digital Media Center (www.dmc-works.com), and a doctorate student in Educational Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino. A research study is a special way to find out about something. We want to find out about students' experiences in the Career Academy Scholars Program.

You can be in this study if you want to. If you want to be in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Complete an Entrance Survey before the start of the program..
2. Complete three 1-2 hours audio interviews over a course of two years.
3. Complete an Exit Survey once you complete the program.

Your participation would be during the normal time that you are enrolled in the program. Audio interviews will be conducted at Santa Ana College at the beginning of the program, after one year, and at the end of the program in year 2. There are no known risks to the surveys or interviews in the study, and there is no cost to be in the study. All information collected will be kept confidential and locked in an office at the Digital Media Center. When we are done with the study, we will write a report about what we found out. We won't use your name in the report. We feel that the study will help in the development and implementation of similar programs like the Career Academy Scholars Program in other areas.

The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to obtain more information about this research, you can contact Mr. Chamorro at 714-241-5810. If you feel that you have been mistreated or you have questions about participation in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB chair at 909-537-7304.

You don't have to be in this study. You can say "no" and nothing bad will happen. If you say "yes" now, but you want to stop later, that's okay too. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop.

If you want to be in this study, please sign your name below.

_____ _____

Sign your name here (Date)

APPENDIX E

TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title: Career Academy Scholars Program

We would like you to participate in a research study. The investigator of this study is Gustavo Chamorro, Director of the Digital Media Center (www.dmc-works.com) which is part of the Rancho Santiago Community College District, and a doctorate student in Educational Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino. The study will be part of your normal participation in the Career Academy Scholars Program (CASP) at Santa Ana College, and will be conducted at the college site. The study will look at students' experiences and participation in the program, and will help in the development and implementation of future college bound programs for high school students.

If you agree to be part of the study, you will be asked to complete a 1-2 hour audio interview about your experience in working with students enrolled in the program. There are no known risks to the surveys or interviews in the research.

There is no cost to be in the study. All data will be kept confidential and locked in an office at the Digital Media Center. Your name will not be connected to individual data collected for the study. The results will be presented as a group in all publications and public presentations. If at any time, you no longer want to be involved in the study, you can withdraw with no penalty.

The project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to obtain more information about this research, you can contact Mr. Chamorro at 714-241-5810. If you feel that you have been mistreated or you have questions about participation in the study, you may contact Dr. Sharon Ward, professor and IRB chair at 909-537-7304.

If you have had all of your questions answered and you agree to participate in the study, please sign below.

_____ _____

Signature of Teacher Date

APPENDIX F

CAREER ACADEMY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

ENTRANCE SURVEY

Last Name: _____First Name: _____M.I._____

High School:_____ Grade: _____

Gender: _____MALE _____FEMALE Ethnicity: _____

Phone Number:_____ Email: _____

EDUCATION

1. What type of student do you consider yourself?
   - o Excellent
   - o Good
   - o Fair
   - o Poor
2. About how many hours do you spend on homework?
   - o None
   - o 1-3 hours
   - o 4-6 hours
   - o 7-9 hours
   - o 10 hours or more
3. What is your current grade point average:
   - o Below 2.0
   - o 2.0 – 2.5
   - o 3.0 – 3.5
   - o 3.5 and above

FUTURE PLANS

4. What is the highest level of education that you expect to achieve?
   - o High school degree
   - o Some college, but not 2 or 4 year degree
   - o Trade school
   - o 2 year college degree (Associates Degree)
   - o 4 year college degree (Bachelors Degree)
   - o Post graduate (Masters, Doctorate etc.)
5. How important to your future is getting an education beyond high school?
   - o Very Important
   - o Important
   - o Somewhat Important
   - o Not Important
6. What is the main reason you chose to participate in the Career Academy Scholars Program? (choose one):
   - o Complete high school credits
   - o Begin college courses to complete a certificate
   - o Begin college courses to complete an Associates Degree
   - o Career Exploration
   - o Some other reason: _____
7. What is the main reason you would not continue your education after high school? (mark only one):

- o It costs too much or I cannot afford it
- o I need or want to work
- o My grades are not good enough
- o I'm just not interested
- o I want to join the military
- o I want to start a family or I need to take care of my family
- o I do not understand the educational requirements beyond high school
- o Some other reason: _____

FAMILY

8. How many family members are in your family, including yourself:
   - o 1-2
   - o 3-4
   - o 5-6
   - o 7 or more

9. What is your father's highest level of education?
   - o Some High School
   - o High School Diploma
   - o Some College, but not a 2 or 4 year degree
   - o 2 year college degree (Associates Degree)
   - o 4 year college degree (Bachelors Degree)
   - o Post graduate college degree (Masters, Doctorate, etc.)

10. What is your mother's highest level of education completed?
   - o Some High School
   - o High School Diploma
   - o Some college, but not a 2 or 4 year degree
   - o 2 year college degree (Associates Degree)
   - o 4 year college degree (Bachelors Degree)
   - o Post graduate college degree (Masters, Doctorate, etc.

***Complete the sentences below with your thoughts***

11. I expect the Career Academy Scholars Program to help me to:

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. My career goals are to:

_____

_____

_____

_____

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APPENDIX G

CAREER ACADEMY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview #1 (Pre)

Background

1. So when you hear the word "school," what comes to mind? In other words, how do you feel about school?

2. What do you like the most about school?

3. What is your least favorite thing about school?

High School Experiences

4. Explain your success/failure in high school and what would you have done differently? Did you put forth your best effort? Why or why not?

5. Explain any obstacles you have had in high school, personally or otherwise, that may have contributed to your success/failure?

6. How do you think your teachers would describe you as a student?

7. What kind of student do you think you are?

8. Describe a teacher that you had or have that you really like. Why did you like them? What kind of person were they? What was their teaching like? How did they treat students?

9. Describe a teacher that you had or have that you didn't like. Why didn't you like them? What kind of person were they? What was their teaching like? How did they treat students?

10. What has been your most memorable moment in school? Why?
What has been your happiest/most proud moment in school?

11. What moment would you most like to forget about? Why?

12. What would you say is the most important motivator in your life?

Plans After High School

13. What are your plans after high school?

14. What are your career goals? Do you know someone in that profession?

**Interview #2: The Program (Mid)**

15. How's it going in the program?

16. What kinds of things have you learned?

17. How do you feel about college at this point in time?

18. How did you find out about the Career Academy Scholars Program?

19. What motivated you to participate in the program?

20. Are you the first one in your family to attend a community college?

21. How do your parents feel about your participation?

22. What do your parents and/or other adults in your household do for work?

23. What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?

24. How would you describe yourself as a person?

25. How do you think others (teachers, friends, peers, parents) would describe you as a person?

26. Do you think a student should continue his/her education after high school?

27. What do you think are some of the important things a student should know to prepare for college?

Program experiences

28. Prior to participating in the program, did you see yourself attending a community college or four-year university?

29. What do you hope to get out the program?

30. How does it feel to be a community college student? Is it what you expected?

31. Tell me what a typical day is like for you in this program

32. What is your most memorable moment in the program so far?

33. What moment would you most like to forget?

34. What do you like the most and the least about your current class?

35. What is the reaction or comments you receive from friends at your high school who are not participating in the program, but who know of your participation?

36. How would you describe yourself as a student?

37. What is your perception of higher education?

**Interview #3 (Post)**

How do you feel now that you have completed the program?

Take a minute and think about the most memorable moment in the program?

What was your favorite thing to do in the program? Least favorite?

Describe the nature of your connections and relationships with teachers? Other students in the program? How is that the same, different, or unsure from your relationships with people in your regular high school experience?

Tell me a bit about what you learned and how you suppose this will affect you in the future?

Think back to when you started this program. How are you the same? Different? Are your goals the same as before? Explain.

What aspects of the program would you change? What would you keep the same?

Do you think the program should continue? Why or why not?

If a funder asked you to describe why this program should be continued or disbanded, what would you say?

If you were a parent, would you want your own children to participate in such a program?

Is there anything else I have not asked that you would like to add about your experience in the Career Academy Scholars Program?

What are your plans?

Do you have any questions for me?

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APPENDIX H

CAREER ACADEMY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

EXIT SURVEY

Last Name: _____First Name: _____M.I._____

High School:_____ Grade:

Gender: _____MALE _____FEMALE Ethnicity: _____

Phone Number:_____ Email: _____

Club or community organizations you belong to:_____

---

1. What is the highest level of education that you expect to achieve?
   - o Some college, but not 2 or 4 year degree
   - o Trade school
   - o 2 year college degree (Associates Degree)
   - o 4 year college degree (Bachelors Degree)
   - o Post graduate (Masters, Doctorate etc.)

2. How important to your future is getting an education beyond high school?
   - o Very Important
   - o Important
   - o Somewhat Important
   - o Not Important

3. Do you plan to attend a community college or 4-year university?
   - o Yes
   - o No
   - o Unsure

4. What is the main reason you would not continue your education after high school? (Mark only one)
   - o It costs too much or I cannot afford it
   - o I need or want to work
   - o My grades are not good enough
   - o I'm just not interested
   - o I want to join the military
   - o I want to start a family or I need to take care of my family
   - o I do not understand the educational requirements beyond high school
   - o Some other reason: _____

5. Do you feel the Career Academy Scholars Program prepared you to attend a community college or 4-year university?
   - o Yes
   - o No

***Complete the sentences below with your thoughts***

6. What I found most valuable in the Career Academy Scholars Program was:

7. What I found least valuable in the program was:

8. My career goals are to:

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# APPENDIX I

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

Background

- How long have you been teaching?
- Where did you go to college/university?
- What kinds of schools did you attend as a student—public, private, etc.?
- Tell me about your prior teaching experiences (if any). Where and what have you taught?
- What do you enjoy about teaching in general? Is there anything you dislike about it?
- How long have you been teaching at this college and why did you choose to teach here?
- What challenges, if any do you face, teaching here? Do you feel supported in your work by the college and administrators? In what ways? Are there additional supports you feel you need? If so what are they and why do you feel they're important?

Class-Specific Questions

- Tell me about this particular class that Student X is in. What is the class? What are the goals and objectives of the class?
- What are the three most important things that you want students to learn in this class? How do you think students are progressing in terms of these goals?
- How does this class compare to other classes? Are there any special challenges you face with this group? If so, what are they and how do you address those challenges.

Student-Specific Questions

- How long have you known Student X? Have you ever had Student X in other classes? If so, which classes? Have you ever had interactions with Student X outside of school? If so, what were they?
- Have you ever talked to with Student X's parents and/or guardians about their child? If so, what where those discussions about?
- How would you characterize your experiences with Student X? Have they been positive, challenging, both? In what ways?
- How would you describe Student X as a student?
- How would you characterize Student X's participation and disposition in your class? How is/he doing academically and socially? Is s/he engaged in the work? Resistant? Disruptive? Helpful to others? In what ways?
- What do you see as Student X's strengths as a student?
- What do you see as Student X's challenges, if any, in your classroom?

Wrap-Up

Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to add about your past or

present teaching experiences or your experiences with Student X?

Do you have any questions for me?

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# APPENDIX J

# APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH STUDY

# FROM TARGET COLLEGE

[redacted]

May 19, 2010

Dear Institutional Review Board Committee,

It is my understanding that Mr. Gustavo Chamorro will be conducting a study of our Career Academy Scholars Program as his dissertation project for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino. He has been doing preliminary research over the past year and some of his early insights have helped to inform course corrections that will be implemented as part of the 2010-2011 program.

As part of the leadership team that coordinates the program, Mr. Chamorro and I have worked together to formulate the strategies and secure the funding necessary for the implementation of the program in our region. I am aware of Mr. Chamorro's research design and fully support him in this project. Furthermore, the study will help us measure the impact of our program on students' perceptions about higher education as well as their determination to pursue a college degree.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, I can be reached at [redacted]. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Vice President, Student Services

[redacted]

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