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Concrete Roses:
Examining the Resilience of Academically Successful Latino Students

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Abstract

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This study focuses on the academic resilience exhibited by urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students, as they navigated numerous risk factors and persisted from early education to law school. In order to uncover the protective factors that allowed resilient Latino students to overcome adversity within the K-20 educational pipeline, this study used academic resilience as a theoretical framework. Methodologically, a two-phase, qualitative longitudinal study (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Merriam, 2009) was used to capture the intricate experiences of nine academically resilient Latino students. Phase I examined the experiences of Latino students through the educational pipeline into law school and identified several protective factors that allowed the participants to persist. Phase II examined the process in which the factors identified in Phase I fostered resilience to and through law school. A phenomenological approach and elements of portraiture were utilized in Phase I and II in order to focus on the shared lived experience of a phenomenon and “unearth goodness” within this experience. Findings from the

first phase identified familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors, which contributed to the persistence of the participants in the K-20 pipeline. Familial protective factors encompass two distinct components, parents and siblings. Each contains different characteristics that allow for resilience within the K-20 pipeline. The examples of perseverance, involvement, and high expectations exhibited by parents were found to be particularly effective in mitigating risk factors. The sibling components of the familial protective factor were found to consist of their older siblings showing them how to navigate their education, a sense of responsibility by the participant to do well in school so that they can set an example, and siblings telling them what not to do. Environmental protective factors emerged from the study in the context of community. These protective factors were discovered to occur in two precise ways. The first was in the form of the community acting in a protective fashion, which shielded the participants from several community risk factors. The second was seen within the participants' eventual transformation to the role of community protectors. Institutional protective factors were found to influence academic resilience. Specifically, teachers, college outreach programs, and sports proved to be the most relevant institutional protective factors in the P-12 trajectory. Service, experiential learning opportunities, early academic law outreach programs, and law school retention programs were found to be the most pertinent institutional factors in the postsecondary and law school experiences of the participants. The second phase of this study examined how these factors worked, evolved, and nurtured the participants' academic resilience. Findings also revealed that the participants' academic resilience was based on interactions between all of the protective factors identified in Phase I. The conceptual model proposed in this study suggested that the result of these interactions was a protective process that materialized into four individual protective factors: a positive disposition towards education, optimism, hard work, and giving

back. These four individual protective factors were thus critical to the academic resilience of the nine Latino participants.

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DEDICATION

Para mis padres, Salvador y Maria Alfaro.

Ustedes vinieron a este país con un sueño de tener una vida mejor para su familia. Pero lo más valioso que nos dieron a mí y a mis hermanos, fue su ejemplo de perseverancia que nos enseñó que un sueño no se tiene que anhelar, sino trabajar.

Ustedes han sido mis mejores maestros de cómo lograr este sueño.

CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Results from the 2010 United States Census Bureau revealed that the Latino population experienced a 43 percent growth rate over the last ten years, making it one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). This consistent increase in presence is sure to be felt politically, socially, and economically, as our country continues to grow and develop. Therefore, the Latino community is on its way to becoming one of the most influential minority groups in the nation. It is therefore quite concerning that this level of rapid growth within the Latino community has not been met with an equal ratio of academic success. Currently, Latinos have low educational attainment rates when compared to other racial or ethnic groups in the United States. Regrettably, one of our fastest growing populations is also one of our most academically underserved.

Much attention in the educational literature has focused on the underachievement of Latinos (see Cerna, Perez, & Saenz, 2009; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Santos & Santos, 2006; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999; Villalpando, 2010; Yosso, 2006); less studied are the factors that influence Latino student success. Although underrepresented in the population, some Latinos are experiencing academic success. Few researchers have examined these Latino students who have reached the highest levels of educational attainment, which not only lends credence to the idea that academic success is atypical or abnormal for Latinos but also misses an opportunity to learn how successful students have overcome many barriers to becoming academically successful (Gandara, 1982, 1995).

The following two-phase qualitative longitudinal study uses academic resilience theory to explore the factors that have allowed Latino students to achieve success, despite encountering

aspects that typically limit educational achievement. In particular, this study examines how the construct of resilience shapes academic success from early schooling through law school for low income, first-generation college, urban, Latino students. This study is rooted in the idea that we can learn a great deal about promoting overall Latino educational achievement (thereby shaping educational reform efforts) by examining the factors that influence persistence and success in the K-20 (kindergarten through graduate or professional school) pipeline. Ultimately I argue that research focused on Latino student achievement (using law students as a special case) has the potential to point us to long-term educational reform solutions that can promote success for Latino students.

To begin the inquiry into the factors that shape Latino academic resilience, this chapter discusses the growth of the Latino population and the implications such growth has on K-20 educational institutions and the academic success of Latino students. The experiences of Latino students in the K-20 pipeline are then explored, followed by selected factors that have led to a crisis in the education of Latino students. This chapter concludes by offering an institutional view of Latinos within a professional degree program, namely law school, and presents a case for studying the experiences of Latino law students at greater depth. This examination has the potential to ensure that we prepare a Latino constituency that is poised to respond to the growing political, social and educational needs of the Latino community and society as a whole.

Statement of the Problem

Current population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, lists the Latino population as accounting for over half the growth of the total U.S. population in the last ten years and nearly 39 percent of growth within the school-age population (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011; Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Given these statistics and the high probability of a continuing trend in

population growth, the academic and social success of Latino students is undeniably tied to the future social and economic welfare of our society. Research on the academic outcomes of Latino students has identified numerous political, social, and educational inequities that result in the low educational attainment and achievement of Latinos. This section will provide an overview of selected factors that have resulted in what scholars have identified as the “Latino educational crisis” (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). To situate this crisis I begin by describing the Latino population in the United States.

The Latino Population

In 2010, the general U.S. population totaled 308.7 million; an increase of 27.3 million people between 2000 and 2010 (Humes et al., 2011). The U.S. Census Bureau suggests that the Latino population is leading this growth in demographics. In 2000, the Latino population made up 35.5 million of the total U.S. population, while in 2010 they accounted for 50.5 million (Humes et al., 2011; Valencia, 2002). Today, the Latino population makes up 17 percent of the total U.S. population, while Whites make up 63 percent, African Americans are 12 percent, and Asians comprise five percent; thus making Latinos the nation’s largest minority group. Additionally, the Latino population is the youngest major racial or ethnic group with a median age of 27; while the median age for Whites, Asians, and African Americans is 42, 36, and 33, respectively (Motel & Patten, 2013).

Contrary to popular belief, the 48 percent increase in eleven years by the Latino population is due to the rise of Latinos who are U.S. born and not those who have immigrated. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, out of the 51.9 million Latinos in 2011, 64 percent were native born, while 36 percent were foreign born (Motel & Patten, 2013). In 2011, it was estimated that out of the 40.4 million immigrants in the United States, 11.1 million were

undocumented. 58 percent of all unauthorized immigrants were from Mexico. In context, this population made up 3.7 percent of the U.S. Population, 5.2 percent of the labor force and accounted for 8 percent of newborns to undocumented parents (Passel & Cohn, 2011). It is projected that in 2010, there were 1 million undocumented immigrants under the age of 18, as well as, 4.5 million U.S. born children to parents who are undocumented (Oates, 2013). Furthermore, in 2011 a quarter of all births in the United States were to Latino women (23 percent); while 54 percent were to White women, 14 percent were to African American women and six percent were to Asian women (Motel & Patten, 2013). This demographic shift has begun, and will continue to impact the public education system of the United States.

Latinos are the largest minority group in the public school system. Currently, 1 in 5 of all P-12 students in public schools are Latino (U.S. Department of Education & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2011). It is projected that the enrollment of Latino students in public schools will continue; where the most dramatic increases are expected to occur in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions. Projections for the year 2021 made by the United States Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics suggests that there will be a 24 percent increase for Latino students in public elementary and secondary schools, while there will be a 42 percent increase of enrollment for Latino students in higher education. This increase in higher education enrollment is compared to a 24 percent increase for Black students, 20 percent increase for Asian/Pacific Islander students, four percent increase for students who are White, and a one percent increase for American Indian/Alaska Native student (Hussar & Bailey, 2013).

The current and projected growth of the Latino population has begun a conversation on the changing face of youth in the United States. The implications of this growth will surely

impact our economic and social well-being (Hayes-Bautista, Schink, & Chapa, 1988). Although the federal government has taken steps to acknowledge the contributions of Latinos and undocumented immigrants to the fabric of this nation, and has implemented numerous accountability reform efforts, the Latino community continues to face educational inequities that will limit their potential to contribute to the prosperity of the United States (Hayes-Bautista et al., 1988). State led reform efforts have not fared much better, as past policy efforts to improve educational achievement among Latino students have seen little success. Unfortunately, the nation-wide and political reception to the growth of the Latino community has consisted of cultivating a culture of fear that has influenced the educational outcomes of this population.

Fear of the Latino Population Growth and its Implications

In the last two decades, coinciding with the rapid growth of the Latino population, states throughout the country have introduced and enacted a number of initiatives that have “generally or specifically” targeted Latinos (Fraga, Garcia, Hero, Jones-Correa, Martinez-Ebers, & Segura, 2010). In states like California, the 1990s brought a number of statewide initiatives, such as Proposition 227 (an anti-bilingual initiative); Proposition 187 (an anti-immigrant policy); and Proposition 209 (which ended affirmative action in the state of California). Recently, numerous states including: Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah have followed the lead of Arizona’s controversial anti-immigration laws Senate Bill 1070, “The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act.” This bill aims to identify, prosecute and deport immigrants. Although these initiatives claim that no one group is being targeted, the Latino community has been at the forefront of all discussions related to these initiatives. Concerns regarding racial and ethnic profiling, stereotyping and bigotry have persisted since its implementation in July of 2010. Examining the role that anti-Latino rhetoric plays in the

experiences and outcomes of Latino students can be a great contribution to our understanding of what challenges students bring to the classroom.

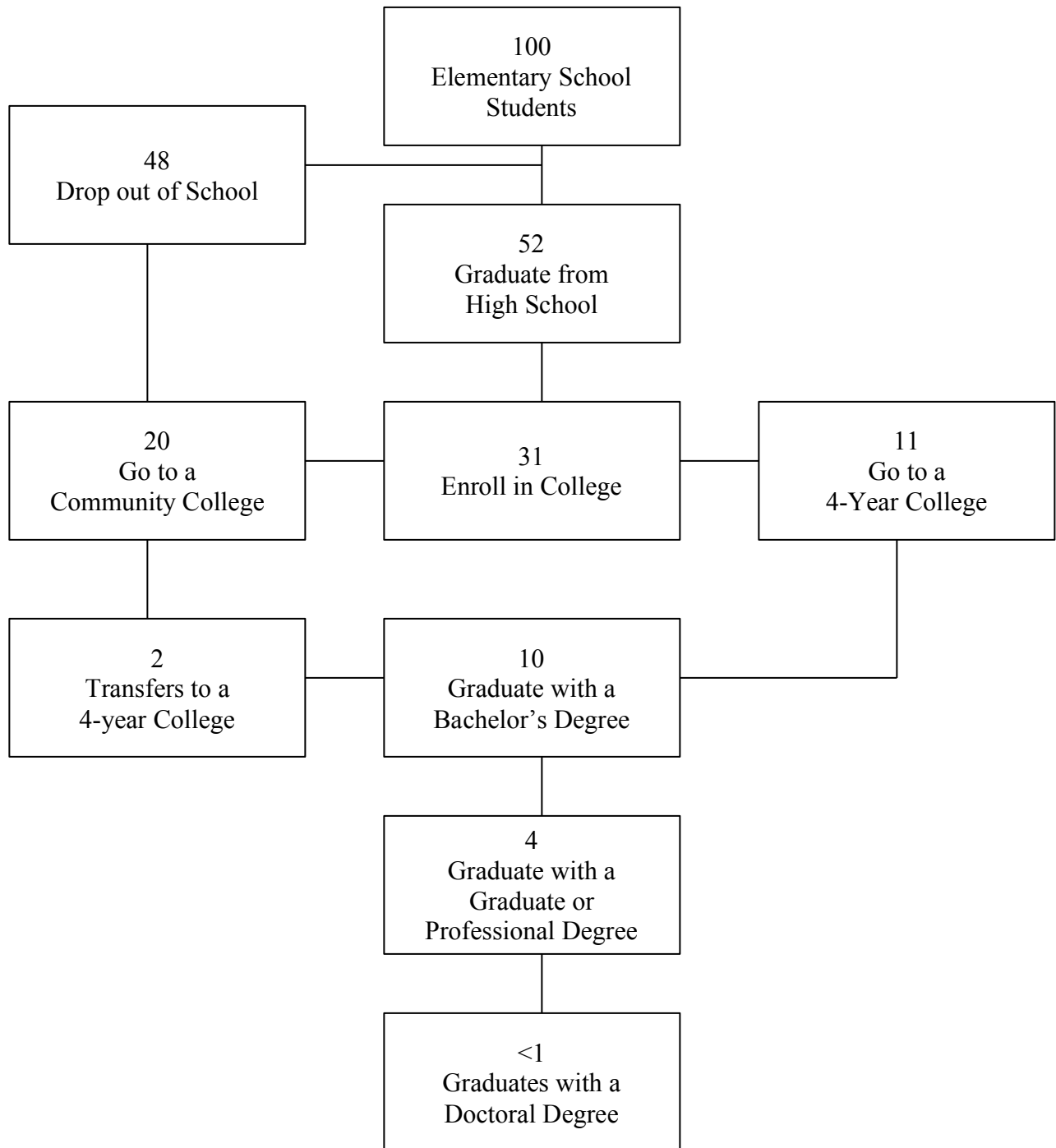
Massey and Sanchez (2010) suggest that “the increase in income inequality and the deterioration of economic circumstances for most American households over the past several decades” has propelled the emergence of these initiatives, while Latino (particularly Mexican immigrants) are viewed as the “threat” to America’s culture, society, and economy (p. 68). A number of scholars have begun to demonstrate that this anti-immigrant and anti-Latino rhetoric has greatly impacted the lives of many school-age Latino students (Contreras, 2009; Massey & Sanchez, 2010; Suarez-; Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). For instance, this political climate greatly influences the dynamics of the Latino family and as a result, most school-age Latinos are in households where fear of deportation, or for their families’ safety, is always imminent.

Latinos and the Educational Pipeline

The growth of the Latino population in K-20 schools has been met with a number of factors that have contributed to the low academic achievement of Latino students. Latino students graduate from high school at much lower rates than do other populations. U.S. Census statistics reveal the dismal outcomes of Latinos in the educational pipeline (see Figure 1). Out of every 100 Latino students who begin early schooling in the U.S., 48 will drop out somewhere along the K-12 pipeline and only 52 will graduate from high school (Villalpando, 2010). In comparison, 84 out of 100 White students, 78 out of 100 Asian American students, 72 out of 100 African American students, and 72 out of 100 Native American students graduate from high school (Burciaga, Huber, & Solórzano, 2010; Huber, Huidor, Malagon, Sanchez, & Solórzano, 2006; Hurtado, Cervantez, & Eccleston, 2010; Villalpando, 2010). When looking specifically at

the high school years, Latinos have a 21 percent dropout rate compared to 7 percent for Whites and 12 percent for African Americans (Excelencia in Education, 2012).

FIGURE 1. *The Latino Educational Pipeline.*



Source: Villalpando, 2010

The educational progress of Latinos in the K-20 educational is further complicated when we take into account the diversity of the Latino population with respect to national origin. Salvadorans have been noted to have the lowest attainment rates at each level of the pipeline; while Chicanos/as have the second lowest high school and college graduation rates (Hurtado, Cervantez, & Eccleston, 2010). Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, in that order, have greater graduation rates throughout the educational pipeline. According to Hurtado et al., (2010) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001), this can be attributed to the group's socio-historical context, particular experiences of immigration, and incorporation by the United States. For instance, one could argue that the reason for Cubans success is partly due to the support and assistance for adaptation received by the U.S. Government that did not exist for other immigrant communities; this provides refugees an opportunity for upward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Still, overall, Latinos continue to have disproportionately lower high school graduation rates than other racial/ethnic groups.

The low high school graduation rates of Latino students influences the number of Latino students entering higher education. Of the 52 high school graduates, only 31 will enroll in some type of postsecondary education. When we further examine the trajectories of these 31 students, 11 will begin at a four-year university and 20 will continue their education at a community college. Of the 20 students in community college, only two will transfer to a four-year university. In 2001, Latino students represented between 13.6 and 14.2 percent of the total enrollment (5,948,000) in community colleges (Santos Jr. & Santos, 2006). As community colleges increasingly serve as the entry point to higher education for Latino and first college generation students, Gandara and Contreras (2009) note that Latino student's likelihood of obtaining a bachelor's degree is much lower than if they had begun at a four-year college or university. Of

the 11 students that began their post-secondary education at a four-year and the two that transferred, only 10 will graduate with a baccalaureate degree. According to the U.S. Census, in 2009, of all Bachelor degrees earned, Latinos comprised 8.1 percent while White students earned 71.5 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Given the low attainment rates at the university level, it is no surprise that few Latino students continue in the educational pipeline to graduate or professional school. Latino students continue to be underrepresented at the graduate level (Huber, et al., 2006). Of the 100 students who began early schooling, four will obtain a graduate or professional degree and only 0.2 will earn a doctorate (Villalpando, 2012).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data, Latino students were the largest minority group in postsecondary institutions. In 2010, Latino students surpassed African American student enrollment when they represented 16.5 percent of all college enrollments in both two-year and four-year institutions combined (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Regrettably, the high enrollment rates of Latino students are met with high attrition rates given a number of barriers that influence their success in postsecondary institutions. To better understand the low educational attainment rates of Latinos, the following paragraphs provide an overview of the factors that characterize the poor educational experiences and outcomes of Latino student in the K-20 educational pipeline. A vast number of studies have traditionally examined factors within a specific segment. This overview will provide the understanding of the current state of the Latino educational crisis, as to provide the foundation needed to create reform efforts that will improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Latino students in the K-20 pipeline. These efforts need to be implemented to ensure that this constituency is poised to meet their foreseeable impact on the framework of this country.

The Latino Educational Crisis

In addition to the culture of fear many Latino students are growing-up in, researchers have found numerous factors contributing to the low educational attainment rates of the Latino population. As Latino students start their educational trajectories, they begin early schooling with five risk factors that limit educational opportunity: low socioeconomic status, single-parent household, low parental education, English-language learners, and a mother unmarried at the time of the child's birth (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Halle, Forry, Hair, Perper, Wadner, Wessel, and Vick, 2009). The following sections will explore indicators of these five risk factors within the K-20 educational system. They will be addressed either directly, or within the context of broader factors, which influence student outcomes. These sections include: low parental education, low socioeconomic status, segregation, tracking and low expectations, school-based risk factors, societal risk factors, and an overview of barriers to college attainment.

Low parental education. In 2008, Latino students made up 66 percent of the 11.3 percent of K-12 English Learners (EL) student population (Contreras, 2011). Contreras (2011) suggests that EL students are the most underserved population. Further complicating their experiences, it has been firmly established that low socioeconomic status and low parental education strongly affect children's outcomes, as these students are more likely to live in communities comprised of other low-SES households and have parents with low human, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Coleman & Joffer, 1987; Lareau, 1987). Due to the widening of the achievement gap between white students and students of color much attention has been placed upon parents of color, specifically Latinas/os and African American and the extent of their involvement in the education of their children (Moreno & Valencia, 2002).

Of the researchers who subscribe to a culture-of-poverty thesis, Latino parents are seen as unsupportive of their children's education (Lareau, 1987). Others argue that given a parent's limited understanding of the educational system; having a culturally different understanding of parental roles and expectations of the schooling process, language, and unwelcoming schooling environments, may influence the limited involvement of Latino parents in school-sanctioned ways (Lareau, 1987; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Valdes, 1996). For instance, Lucas (2001) suggests that track placement and mobility is greatly influenced by a student's social class, as they are more likely to make such decisions with less counselor input; "school personnel are pressured by parents in-the-know and, in response, place White students ahead of Black students in the queue for advantageous curricular positions" (Lucas & Good, 2001). In addition, neighborhood safety may be also be an influential factor that influences parent involvement; "as there are some communities that are more likely to experience high level of crimes and limited public transportation...[this] may influence their involvement in school activities and events which are usually scheduled in the evenings" (Moreno & Valencia, 2002).

Low socioeconomic status. In addition to low parental education, poverty has greatly affected the educational experiences and outcomes of Latino students in the P-12 system. Nationally, 21 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in poverty; while children living in a single-parent female household was 44 percent (Ross, Kena, Rathbun, KewalRamani, Zhang, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012). According to the 2011 American Community Survey, the poverty rate for Latino students younger than eighteen is 34.1 percent, more than double of that of White children, where 13.6 percent live in poverty (Motel & Patten, 2013). When differentiating between native born and foreign born, 42.9 percent of foreign-born Latino

children live in poverty. Recent research on the study of poverty has begun to link poverty to the high percentage of Latino students in single parent households. In 2011, 47 percent of Latino births were to unmarried women (Motel & Patten, 2013). Noguera (2003) suggests that when poverty is concentrated, the health and welfare of children will suffer.

De facto segregation. Regrettably, research has also shown that Latino children have a high likelihood of finding themselves in racially and economically segregated communities. Orfield and Lee (2004) state that due to residential segregation and White-flight many minority students, specifically Latino students are being left in dense hyper-segregated communities and schools. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that of the 49 million students in public P-12 schools, 56 percent of Latino students attended a school where at least 50 percent of the students were Latino and 38 percent of Latinos were enrolled in high-poverty schools (Ross et al., 2012). The consequences of isolation and segregation has been noted to contribute to few employment opportunities, lower incomes, depressed marriages, education failure, high pregnancy rates among young women, and crime (Massey & Denton, 1993). Additionally, Valencia (2011) suggests that the historical prevalence of segregation of the Latino population has determined their low academic achievement. Today, at the national level, two out of five Latino students are attending intensively segregated schools (Valencia, 2011). In minority-dense states like California, out of 823 comprehensive public high schools, 209 schools have a student population that is predominantly Latino (Teranishi, Allen, & Solórzano, 2004).

Hyper-segregated schools have been reported to have higher teacher/student ratios, larger class sizes, and the teachers tend to be less experienced and teaching with minimal resources (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gandara & Contreras, 2009). These schools have also been noted as having an impact on test scores, graduation rates, availability of college preparation courses and

college entrance rates (Valencia, 2011).

Tracking and low expectations. Tracking is another factor that has been noted to influence the low educational outcomes of Latinos in the K-20 pipeline. There is a large body of literature on tracking that demonstrates that poor and minority students are disproportionately overrepresented in the lower-track classes, while upper-class and White students are placed in the college-prep tracks (Fruchter, 2007; Oakes, 2005).

Ideally, tracking is supposed to facilitate instruction, amplify learning and provide personalized instruction to the student's ability (Hallinan, 1994); realistically speaking however, tracking has had "unintended" outcomes which seem to correlate the disservice schools have had upon students of color. More specifically, tracking has been used as a mechanism to perpetuate one's social role in society by denying specific curriculum such as a "college-prep" track or "vocational" track to the student. Race, class, and social background have been noted factors that determine the student's track outcome (Frucher, 2007; Lucas, 2001; Oakes, 2005). School administrators, most commonly counselors and teachers play the role of assigning students towards their respective track upon these characteristics. Although tracking can occur as early as elementary school, the majority of the research on tracking is focused on the high school level. This can be attributed to the influence that being tracked will have on the type of opportunities available to the student upon completing high school. For Latino students, being tracked into a college-prep, vocational or general track results in predictable trajectories after high school.

Gandara's (1995) retrospective study on Latino professionals, similarly found that 30 percent of her participants at one point or another were tracked in the vocational or general academic tracks. Although the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the courses and demanded to be placed in a college-prep track, teachers or counselors often denied mobility

between tracks. One participant recounted:

“There was a counselor...And I took my eighth-grade diploma which was straight A’s, and I was valedictorian of my eighth grade...And I told him I would like to go to college and could he fit me into college prep classes? And he looked at my grades and everything, and said, well, he wasn’t sure I could handle it. My dad didn’t understand. He was there with me. And this counselor put me in non-college prep classes, I remember going home and feeling just horrible” (Gandara, 1995, p. 62).

Another factor that influences postsecondary outcomes can be attributed to the low expectations of teachers and counselors. Such expectations based on the students track location, often influences the type of knowledge and information that is disseminated. Teachers in the lower tracks tend to have lower expectations of their students, are less concerned with student learning, and tend to focus more on disciplinary actions. Valenzuela (1999) gives an example of a teacher that when deciding on the class curriculum, suggests that students will find it too difficult to read Shakespeare’s Hamlet and, instead, they should just watch the movie. Through the teacher’s perception of the students’ capabilities based on track location, the students’ ability to read a book is instead devalued to a film.

School-based risk factors. Other factors identified that contribute to these high dropout rates include: limited English proficiency, inadequate funding, poor teacher quality, and unchallenging coursework (Fuentes, 2006). Given these factors, researchers have questioned whether Latino students dropped-out or are being pushed-out given the combination of these factors and their cumulative effect (Fuentes, 2006). In 2007, one-fifth of Latinos were high school dropouts and U.S. born Latinos were twice as likely to drop out than White youth (Fry, 2009). In 2010, Latinos had the highest dropout rates of 16 through 24-year olds. Specifically,

the dropout rates were 15.1 percent for Latinos, 12.4 for American Indian/Alaska Native, 8.0 percent for African Americans, 5.1 percent for Whites, and 4.2 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander (NCES, 2009). Estimates also suggest that non-U.S. born children and children of foreign-born parents, who are low income, tend to have higher dropout rates (Aud & Fox, 2010).

The high dropout rates of Latinos in combination with the disproportional representation of Latinos in the lower tracks, has resulted in few completing the P-12 pipeline and continuing on to higher education. For instance, in California, a quarter of students in LAUSD's class of 2011 had dropped out and only 16 percent of students had passed and completed the 15 required courses needed to attend a California public university (Fullerton, Bloom-Weltman, & Bacher-Hicks, 2013). In this same district, results from a survey of students South LA high school campuses revealed that 40 percent of students were in classes they had already taken or passed, over 50 percent of the students lacked textbooks and materials, and 80 percent of students had never talked to a college counselor (Gottlieb, Vallianatos, Freer, & Dreier, 2005). Nationwide, this is a similar scenario. The American School Counselor Association (2013) reports that although the recommended ratio for students to school counselors is 250-to-1, the national average ratio for the 2010-2011 academic year was 471 to 1; with states like Arizona (835:1) and California (825:1) having the highest rates. The limited availability of school counselors has therefore contributed to a gap in resources and college information that has influenced the low number of students entering higher education.

Societal risk factors. In addition to these school-based factors, a large-scale sociological study reported by Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) notes that “no matter what their personal traits or characteristics, people who grow-up to live in environments of concentrated poverty and racial isolation are more likely to become teenage mothers, dropout of school,

achieve low levels of education and earn lower adult incomes” (p. 131). Pregnancy estimates by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) further supports the authors’ claim by suggesting that substantial disparities in teen birth rates continue to persist, particularly for socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. Of all teen births, Latino and African American youth accounted for 57 percent, therefore experiencing the highest rates of teen pregnancy in 2011 (CDC Division of Reproductive Health, 2012). More concretely, 52 percent of Latina teenagers become pregnant before the age of 20; in comparison, 50 percent of African Americans and 20 percent of White teenagers will become pregnant before the age of 20 (The National Campaign, 2011). The rate of Latina teenagers getting pregnant before the age of 20 is more than double the average national rate of 16 percent. Contreras (2011) suggests that pregnancy is the most influential factor contributing to the high dropout rates of Latina students.

Alarming as the high rates of pregnancy among Latina females in the United States are, their male counterparts garner similar attention regarding their high rates of incarceration. Although their rates are lower than that of African American young men, Latino males are four times more likely than White males to be imprisoned (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008). In 2008, of the estimated 475,000 18- to 24-year-old men and women incarcerated, 42.2 were African American males, 23.1 percent were Latino males, 29.7 percent were White males, 4 percent were Asian American males, and 0.9 percent were Native American (Lee & Ransom, 2011). These statistics suggest that there are more White males incarcerated than Latinos. However, it is important to note that Latino males make up only 8 percent of the U.S. Population. Therefore, they (like African American males) are overrepresented in the prison system. The disproportionate incarceration of Latino males and the high teenage pregnancy rates of Latina females have greatly contributed to the low educational outcomes of Latino students in the K-20 pipeline.

When only 11 percent of the Latino population has earned a bachelor degree (Villalpando, 2010), one could argue that it is more likely for a Latina female to become pregnant and a Latino male to be incarcerated than go to college.

Multiple barriers to college attainment. The reviewed factors in the above paragraphs are just a brief example of the barriers that have historically existed for students of color, particularly Latino students. Despite the detrimental effects of these risk factors, programs like Affirmative Action (which promise to redress the injustices of the past and provide access and opportunity) have continuously been resisted and repealed (Horn & Flores, 2003). In response, race-neutral measures like X Percent Plans have been instituted to address the effects anti-affirmative action policies have had upon minority students and their declining enrollment in higher education. Despite X Percent plans, the number of Latino students in higher education remains low. It is estimated that 21.7 percent of Latinos nationally continue to postsecondary education (Santos Jr. & Santos, 2006).

Researchers have identified numerous risk factors that influence Latino students' low likelihood of transferring to a four-year college and university. These include being low income or first generation college students, having a weak academic preparation, enrolling part-time, working full-time, and community college's focus on vocational education (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004; Santos Jr. & Santos, 2006). Ornelas and Solórzano's (2004) case study of a California community college similarly found that poor academic preparation for coursework, lack of institutional support in facilitating the transfer process, and the student's responsibilities outside of their academic environment were significant barriers to their ability to transfer. Counselors in this same study suggested that student characteristics and family background influenced low transfer rates, given that they did not value education; meanwhile,

students identified their families as integral to their passion and motivation to meet their educational goals of transferring (2004). Although aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution are high, transfer rates remain low. For instance, in 2002-03 only 7 of every 75 students at a California Community College transferred to a four-year institution (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solórzano, 2007).

Those who begin at a four-year university, however, are also likely to experience a number of factors that produce the low retention and completion rates of Latino students in four-year universities. Despite Latino students having high educational aspirations to continue their education, Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2006) summarize five factors that have negatively influenced bachelor degree attainment; these include family responsibilities, working off-campus, long distance communities, perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on campus, and academic performance. Other scholars suggest that poor preparation in the students' respective K-12 education, lack of financial aid, unwelcoming campus climates, cultural and social isolation, and lack of faculty diversity has also played a role (Cerna, Perez, & Saenz, 2009; Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2008). In today's rising tuition and fees, the link between affordability, financial aid and persistence will greatly influence Latino postsecondary success. According to Contreras (2011), Latino students were more likely to rely on loans to finance their education, as they received on average \$11,360 of financial aid in the 2007-2008 academic year. Latino students, according to Contreras (2011), received lower levels of financial support than their White (\$12,860), African American (\$13,530), and Asian American (\$12,570) counterparts, despite Latino students coming from low-income backgrounds. As a result of these selected factors, only 11 percent of Latinos over the age of 25 earn a bachelor's degree, compared to 30 percent of Whites (Villalpando, 2010). When looking at the gender breakdown of bachelor

degree attainment, we see that in 2007 only 8 percent of Latinas received a bachelor's degree, compared to 70.8 percent White women, presenting a dilemma as Latinas are the fastest growing group in the U.S. workforce (Maes, 2010).

Despite the discrepancy in graduate rates between White females and Latinas, recent research on the experience of Latinos has revealed a recurring trend: Latina females are surpassing Latino men in levels of postsecondary degree attainment (Page, 2013). The educational outcomes suggest that of Latinos in the P-16 pipeline, females are surpassing men in terms of high school and college degree attainment. In 2008, 61 percent of bachelor degrees awarded within the Latino community were given to Latina females compared to 39 percent being awarded to Latino males (Page, 2013). However, many scholars warn of the tendency to accept this at face value, without questioning the quality of their educational experience and outcome. Although this statement is based on research not specifically on the Latino population, it suggests caution and acknowledgement that females' experiences and outcomes are often layered with a multitude of gender inequalities. For instance, although more females are entering college, they are still underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Buchmann, 2009; Page, 2013).

In addition, for Latina females, literature has noted that academic achievement is greatly impacted by a "tug of war" between different role obligations (Morales, 2008). These social expectations have been noted to greatly impact their experiences in college. Morales' (2008) study of resilient female students of color, found that they faced more resistance than males as they pursued postsecondary education. In particular, conflicts between traditional "female roles" were reflected in the participant's familial resistance. Specifically, resistance was greater as it related to their fathers and boyfriends or husbands.

Chavez (2011), similarly found that traditional gender roles in Latino families were often an obstacle for Latina females (compared to a White comparison group); “cultural expectations such as commitment to marrying, raising children, and caring for family members often came before individual professional goals and aspirations” (p. 85). In graduate and professional education, Buchmann (2009) suggests that between 1975-76 and 2005-06, women’s increase in doctoral degrees was attributed to their tendency to pursue sex-segregated fields, such as education, health sciences, and psychology; while men were pursuing doctoral degrees in the STEM fields. In terms of professional degree attainment, in 2005-06 women earned about 49.8 percent of first-professional degrees in the United States. However, women tended to be in programs such as veterinary medicine and pharmacy, while men were concentrated at greater proportions in law, dentistry, theology and chiropractic medicine (Burge, 2011). Lastly, in terms of economic returns of postsecondary education, women still earn only 75.2 cents for every dollar earned by men (Buchmann, 2009).

Overall, of Latino students who persist in the pipeline toward advanced levels of higher education, only two percent will receive a graduate degree and less than one percent will earn a doctoral degree (Contreras & Gandara, 2006). A growing body of literature on graduate education attributes these rates to the notion that Latino students tend to find themselves in non-supportive educational environments. Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vazquez (2011) suggest that the socialization process of doctoral education leave students of color, and particularly Latino students, often doubting their academic worth and abilities. Of the twenty-two participants, Latino students were more likely to question whether they belonged in their doctoral program. The authors contend that this is due to a dehumanizing culture that prevails in doctoral education (2011). Similarly, Cuadraz’s (1993) study on working-class Chicanas found that they

experienced racism, sexism and classism during their doctoral studies. In a study of 100 Chicanas with doctoral degrees, 43 percent reported to have experienced negative treatment or attitudes by faculty members and 27 percent said they had encountered a negative experience with their advisers (Achor & Morales, 1990). All of the participants highlighted the unavailability of faculty of color to act as mentors and role models as detrimental to their experiences in graduate programs. Literature on graduate education has also demonstrated that financial assistance greatly influenced access, recruitment and retention of students in graduate education (Johnson, Kuykendall III, & Wagner, 2009).

Latinos Persisting to Law School

Admission to law school is an extremely competitive process that takes into consideration the applicant's undergraduate grade-point average (UGPA), undergraduate institution attended, and the LSAT scores; the latter being one of most integral parts of the law school admissions process. According to LSAC (2010), in 2009 a total of 151,389 LSAT's were administered. White students comprised the majority of test takers, followed by African American and Asian/Pacific Islander applicants (LSAC 2009). In the fall of 2009, 89,600 potential candidates applied to law school; where White students comprised the majority of the applicant pool with 55,110 applicants, followed by 9,880 African American applicants, 7,940 Latino applicants, 7,530 Asian/Pacific Islander applicants and 660 American Indian/Alaskan Native applicants (see Table 1). The age distribution of ABA law school applicants from 2005 to 2009 ranged between 22 and 40; where the majority of the applicants fell between the ages of 22 and 24 and the majority were male (30,970 admitted) (LSAC, 2010).

TABLE 1. Applicants to ABA-approved Law Schools, Rounded to Nearest Ten, by Race/Ethnicity: 2005-09

	Fall 2005	Fall 2006*	Fall 2007*	Fall 2008*	Fall 2009
All	95,800	88,700	84,000	83,400	86,600
American Indian / Alaskan Native	760	730	730	730	660
Asian/Pacific Islander	7,940	7,220	7,000	7,140	7,530
African American	10,010	9,340	9,090	9,430	9,880
Caucasian/White	62,560	58,070	54,180	52,960	55,110
Latino**	7,880	7,400	7,510	7,780	7,940
Hispanic	4,710	4,510	4,690	4,860	5,150
Chicano/Mexican America	1,410	1,260	1,130	1,230	1,190
Puerto Rican	1,760	1,630	1,690	1,690	1,600
Other	4,640	4,420	4,270	4,220	4,390
No Ethnic ID	1,990	1,490	1,250	1,120	1,080

Note: * = Year participants of this study applied. ** = Beginning with the 2009-2010 testing year, LSAC revised its method of race/ethnicity data collection. Prior to fall of 2009, LSAC had Chicano/Mexican American, Hispanic/Latino, and Puerto Rican. For the purpose of this study, all of these categories were aggregated to one category of Latino. The subcategories are the numbers they provided for each sub ethnic group.

Source: The Law School Admission Council (LSAC), DATA Volume Summary Archive - Applicants by Ethnic and Gender Group: 2000-2009

Although there has been a steady decline in the number of applicants each year due to the declining job market (i.e., in 2005, there were 95,800 applicants), law school admission remains competitive, as there are more candidates than there are seats available. For instance, of the applicants in the Fall of 2009, they submitted a total of 564,000 applications and vied for less than 60,000 seats (LSAC, 2009) at 202 law schools approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) (ABA, 2013). There are a number of other factors that are taken into account such as, the applicant's personal statement, recommendations, work experience and involvement. However, this comprehensive review is conducted if the applicant did not earn admission through the UGPA and LSAT score band, which is computed using a logistic regression model informed by the application and admission data from the previous year's application pool (LSAC, 2013). In the fall of 2009, 58,400 of the applicants were admitted (LSAC, 2009). White applicants received 74 percent of the seats available or 40,890 spots (see Table 2). Although there were more African American students that applied, Asian/Pacific Islander had a 64 percent acceptance rate, Latino applicants were at 58 percent, while African Americans were admitted at a rate of 42 percent.

TABLE 2. Admitted Applicants to ABA-approved Law Schools, Rounded to Nearest Ten, by Race/Ethnicity: 2005-09

	Fall 2005	Fall 2006*	Fall 2007*	Fall 2008*	Fall 2009
All	56,100	56,000	55,500	55,500	58,400
American Indian / Alaskan Native	410	400	450	440	400
Asian/Pacific Islander	4,720	4,560	4,640	4,780	4,890
Black/African American	3,660	3,920	3,890	3,980	4,180
Caucasian/White	40,020	39,850	39,050	38,820	40,890
Latino**	3,980	4,020	4,210	4,400	4,620
Hispanic	2,400	2,480	2,670	2,760	3,010
Chicano/Mexican American	720	720	670	780	740
Puerto Rican	860	820	870	860	870
Other	2,600	2,690	2,710	2,660	2,820
No Ethnic ID	740	610	600	460	570

Note: * = Year participants of this study applied. ** = Beginning with the 2009-2010 testing year, LSAC revised its method of race/ethnicity data collection. Prior to fall of 2009, LSAC had Chicano/Mexican American, Hispanic/Latino, and Puerto Rican. For the purpose of this study, all of these categories were aggregated to one category of Latino. The subcategories are the numbers they provided for each sub ethnic group.

Source: The Law School Admission Council (LSAC), DATA Volume Summary Archive - Applicants by Ethnic and Gender Group: 2000-2009

As was the case in other segments in the pipeline, despite the high number of students of color applying to law school, the rates of admission have traditionally been much lower than their White and Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts (Wilder, 2003). Research has shown that the low acceptance rates of these students can be attributed to the increasing gap in the score band, which takes into consideration UGPA and LSAT scores (Haddon & Post, 2006; Wilder, 2003). In particular, law school admissions' heavy reliance on the applicant's LSAT performance has been noted as an influential factor in the decline of admitted class diversity. Out of an LSAT score between 120 and 180, Wilder (2003) found that more African American and Latino applicants are in the low end of the LSAT and UGPA score distributions (see Table 3). The LSAT is widely used, as it is seen as one of the most effective methods of predicting first year law school grades. And yet, LSAT scores do not predict performance throughout law school, nor success in the profession. Shultz and Zedeck (2008) suggest that tools that predict professional effectiveness should be developed and considered in law school admissions to ensure that a more diverse population enters the profession. However, to devise such tools, more research on the experiences of the journey to law school is needed. Meanwhile, as the reliance on the LSAT is further sustained by the fact that this is one of the only tools available to predict and measure the outcomes and potential among applicants, it will continue to have a negative effect on the admission and enrollment of students of color.

TABLE 3. Mean UGPA's and LSAT Scores, by race-ethnicity, testing years 2000-2001

	2000-2001	
	UGPA	LSAT
American Indian / Alaskan Native	3.05	148.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.19	152.7
Black/African American	2.87	142.8
Caucasian/White	3.23	153.6
Latino		
Hispanic	3.04	147.4
Chicano/Mexican America	3.03	148.3
Puerto Rican	3.09	138.7
Other	3.16	151.4

Source: Wilder, 2003

Recently, more attention has been placed on the rates of matriculation for this same population (ABA, 2006). In 2009, of the 48,900 admitted students who matriculated in ABA-approved law schools, White students represented 70.5 percent of the student body; while Asian/Pacific Islander represented 8.1 percent, African Americans represented 7.2 percent, and Latino students represented 8.1 percent of matriculated applicants. The alarming rates of matriculation for students of color are disproportionately low; especially when we consider these rates in relation to the general population (see Table 4). Between the years 2005 and 2009 for instance, enrollment of Latino students increased from 3,370 to 3,980; for a total of 15 percentage points (610 students) in a four-year period (LSAC, 2009). Meanwhile, during this same time period, the Latino population accounted for over half of the growth in the U.S. population and 39 percent of growth within the school-age population.

TABLE 4. Matriculated Applicants to ABA-approved Law Schools, Rounded to Nearest Ten, by Race/Ethnicity: 2005-09

	Fall 2005	Fall 2006*	Fall 2007*	Fall 2008*	Fall 2009
All	45,800	46,100	46,700	46,500	48,900
American Indian / Alaskan Native	340	330	370	360	330
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,760	3,680	3,840	3,870	3,980
Black/African American	2,980	3,300	3,300	3,390	3,520
Caucasian/White	37,720	32,780	32,840	32,510	34,460
Latino**	3,370	3,430	3,670	3,830	3,980
Hispanic	1,990	2,090	2,290	2,370	2,580
Chicano/Mexican America	620	620	600	670	630
Puerto Rican	760	720	780	790	770
Other	2,090	2,140	2,260	2,190	2,300
No Ethnic ID	570	470	480	350	390

Note: * = Year participants of this study applied. ** = Beginning with the 2009-2010 testing year, LSAC revised its method of race/ethnicity data collection. Prior to fall of 2009, LSAC had Chicano/Mexican American, Hispanic/Latino, and Puerto Rican. For the purpose of this study, all of these categories were aggregated to one category of Latino. The subcategories are the numbers they provided for each sub ethnic group.

Source: The Law School Admission Council (LSAC), DATA Volume Summary Archive - Applicants by Ethnic and Gender Group: 2000-2009

The number of Latinos enrolling in law school is further alarming when one disaggregates these rates by national origin. Enrollment and attainment is not widespread within the Latino community, or evenly distributed amongst its ethnic sub-groups. The Columbia Law School Report (2010) entitled, “Disturbing Trend in Law School Diversity,” provides insight into the variations found within the Latino students, in terms of access to law school. Their findings suggest that despite the higher percentage of African American and Latino students excelling in the pre-law requirements (i.e., undergraduate grade point averages and LSAT scores), African Americans and certain ethnic groups within the Latino community continue to experience declining enrollment (Columbia Report, 2010). Specifically, Mexican Americans only accounted for 1.4 percent of the 45,500 students that matriculated into law schools in the fall of 2008. Furthermore, the report notes that from 1993 to 2008, law schools experienced an 11.7 percent decrease in the number of Mexican-American students matriculating into their programs. Essentially, this report suggests that during a fifteen-year period that saw an increase in law school class size and an increase of ABA approved law schools, African Americans and Mexican Americans obtained none of the 3,000 additional seats. In fact, from 1993 to 2008, the report suggests that the proportional representation of African Americans has decreased by -7.5 percent and Mexican Americans have experienced a decrease of -11.7 percent since 1993 (Columbia Report, 2010).

Lastly, retention and completion rates of African American and Latino students are dismally low when compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Estimating attrition rates from enrollment rates through the use of ABA data, suggests that students of color have higher dropout rates than White students or other groups. Only 86.8 percent of minorities continue to their 2nd year and only 84.7 continue to their third year of law school, while 93.6 and 91.2

percent of White students persist in their 2nd and 3rd year respectively (ABA Presidential Advisory Council, 2005). The inferred attrition rate of Latinos is 87.3 percent in their 2nd year and only 84.7 percent will continue in their third year (2005). Therefore, attrition rates for Latino students can be estimated to be about 14 percent while White and Asian students are about 9 percent (Wilder, 2003). According to ABA data, law students of color in 2001 were more likely to say that they were leaving law school due to academic reasons (Wilder, 2003). Of those students who persist, the US Census Bureau (2012) reports that in 2009, 44,045 of first professional degrees were earned in law (LL.B. or J.D.). Of these degrees, 45.8 percent were earned by women (2012).

Why Focus on Latino Law Students

A degree in law is considered one of the most prestigious and coveted degrees. In particular, research has shown that among first professional degrees, students of color (particularly Latino students) are proportionally more likely to consider attending law school (NCES, 2009, 2010, 2012). This high interest in the legal profession emerged in the findings of Gallagher and Handwerk's (2012) study, which examined the background factors that led 160,000 students to apply to law school. When the authors matched 2.8 million freshman respondents from the UCLA Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) The Freshman Survey (TFS), conducted between 1999 through 2005, with the data derived from Law School Admission Council (LSAC) information on 171,000 law school applicants who applied between 2006 through 2009; they found that underrepresented minority applicants were more focused on their desire to apply to law school as freshman than any all other racial and ethnic groups in the sample. Specifically, 61.5 percent of African American students and 58.5 percent of the Latino student sample indicated that there was "very little or no chance of career change"

in interest in law as freshmen, ended up applying to law school. In contrast, 48 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students and 45 percent of White students who were interested as freshman applied (2012).

In a study examining the decision making of 79 students who chose to attend law or business school, Schleef (2000) found that their motivations to pursue professional degrees were influenced by professional status, intellectual interest, flexibility and maintaining or acquiring an upper-middle-class lifestyle; with a small number of students having altruistic aspirations. Schleef (2000) also found that the decisions of law students were highly influenced by their social class and family background. The majority of the law students had parents who were highly educated and over half of the students had at least one parent who was a professional or manager. Specifically, 17 percent of the sample had fathers who had a graduate or professional degree while the majority of the mothers (15 percent) were college graduates.

Gallagher and Handwerk (2012) considered social class and family background as well; however they found that parents of White and Asian applicants had higher levels of education than parents of African American and Latino applicants. Less than sixty percent of African American and Latino parents had a bachelor's degree or higher. In addition, cumulative percentages for estimates of parental income were much higher for White students (median close to \$100,000) than African American applicants (median close to \$50,000) (2012). The findings of these two studies are consistent with the literature that has linked family socioeconomic status to student's educational aspirations (Blau & Duncan, 1967).

If a family's socioeconomic status is highly influential in a students' educational aspirations, then the question remains: how will the Latino population, one of the groups with the lowest educational attainment rates, influence the educational aspiration of Latino students?

Although there are many studies that have focused on the influence of these factors on the college choice process of Latino students (i.e., Ceja, 2006; Gandara, 1995); few have considered the graduate or professional choice of students of color. However, data from Law School Admission Test (LSAT) takers showed that while students of color only received 22 percent of bachelor's degrees in 2000, they represented 32 percent of test takers for the a standardized test used in assessing law school admission (Wilder, 2003). In contrast, White students received 81 percent of bachelor degrees, but represented only 70 percent of LSAT-takers (2003).

Latino law students, in general, are an important segment to study because more than half of all Latinos pursuing professional degrees do so in the field of law (NCES, 2009, 2010, 2012). Table 5 shows that out all degrees conferred by degree-granting institutions in selected professional fields, law degrees had the highest number of degrees conferred to Latinos followed by Medicine (M.D.), and Pharmacy (Pharm. D.). In the 2010-2011 period, 56 percent of all professional degrees conferred to Latinos were Juris Doctorates (J.D.). The high number of Latinos pursuing this degree has been increasing; the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2007, 2,821 J.D. degrees were conferred to Latinos and in 2011, 3,271 degrees were conferred. This trend is expected to continue as research has shown that students of color and particularly Latinos are more likely to aspire to attend law school.

TABLE 5. Degrees Conferred by Degree-Granting Institutions in Selected Professional Fields, by Latinos and field of study: 2007-11

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010*	2010-2011*
All fields, total All Race/Ethnicity	91,309	92,004	94,103	95,749
All fields, total Latinos	4,840	5,089	5,430	5,800
Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.)	261	280	296	323
Medicine (M.D.)	747	778	852	967
Optometry (O.D.)	40	62	41	49
Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)	125	151	133	159
Pharmacy (Pharm.D.)	443	449	521	540
Podiatry (Pod.D. or D.P.) or Podiatric Medicine (D.P.M)	30	25	26	21
Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.)	78	101	95	117
Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.)	120	140	107	129
Law (LL.B. or J.D.)	2,821	2,958	3,182	3,271
Theology (M. Div., M.H.L./Rav., B.D., or Ord.)	172	144	177	224

Note. * = Year that participants of this study graduated.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-2011 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Despite the large interest in law by students of color and Latinos in particular, there are a limited number of studies that have examined the K-20 journey to law school, the law school experience and the legal profession (Parker & Redfield, 2006). Thus, the experiences of Latinos who have persisted through the pipeline and into professional programs remain under-researched. With the exception of a number of articles in professional journals, such as *Law Reviews*, one could argue that studies that explore the experiences of Latinos in law school are nonexistent. This study addresses this knowledge gap by focusing on Latino law students. Latino law students, in general, are an important segment to study, because the academic demands required to prepare for entry into, and success within, the most prestigious law schools assure that these Latino law students are representative examples of high academic success within the Latino community.

Purpose of the Study

Research on the devastating effects of negative factors described in the Latino educational pipeline is plentiful. Thirty years ago, Gandara (1982) suggested that this research “has yielded a litany of reasons for educational failure, but has produced few insights into the process of educational success” (p. 168). I propose that we approach this educational crisis through a lens that also examines factors that allow students to successfully persist in the K-20 pipeline. Despite all of the negative factors affecting them, Latino students have high educational aspirations, a high interest in law, and have managed to reach higher levels of education. Furthermore, Latinos have a small, but significant, representation within law programs. However, few empirical studies exist that examine the experiences of Latinos in graduate and professional programs.

Some Latino students have found a way to cope and transcend these obstacles and it is

this ability that has motivated me to add to the growing, yet under-researched, body of literature that focuses on protective factors. This study proposes to not only explore their experience in law school but to understand how Latino students, from backgrounds that have been shown to limit opportunity, overcame adversity. A study on Latinos in law school can both contribute to the current knowledge gap of Latinos in professional schools and perhaps most importantly, represent an opportunity to understand the factors that nurture their success throughout the educational pipeline.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how educational success can be achieved for Latinos, a constituency that is poised to contribute to the growing political, social, and educational needs of this society. To support this goal, the following three objectives guided this study. First, this study shifts the lens of research from one that has focused on failure, to one that highlights academic success in the Latino population. Second, student experiences are examined throughout the K-20 pipeline to better understand how each level influenced the other. Examining trajectories of success can only happen when looking at the educational pipeline as a continuum, rather than looking at segments; as most research on education does. Factors have a continuous, synergic relationship not captured when only examining one segment of the pipeline. Lastly, subscribing to the promises of translational research, this study identifies the factors and examines the process of Latino student resilience in the K-20 pipeline to better inform educational reform efforts that target this population. This two-phase, qualitative longitudinal study is guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students as they navigate the educational pipeline into law school?

2. What are the protective factors that facilitate academic resilience in Latino students who persist from early schooling through law school?
3. What is the process of academic resilience for Latinos in the K-20 pipeline?

Through these research questions, this study will investigate how educational success can be achieved for Latinos. Resilience theory is best suited to explore this experience, due to its particular focus in identifying protective factors that allow for success, despite the presence of adversity or risk. The subsequent chapter will provide an understanding of academic resilience theory and review the existing literature of this field that has begun to uncover the protective factors that have allowed Latino students to persist in the K-20 educational pipeline.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the last chapter we explored some of the risk factors Latino students endure during the K-20 pipeline, which severely hinder their ability to persist and continue into higher education. In this chapter I review the predictors of success and protective factors that allow Latino students to be academically resilient. Specifically, these Latino law students achieved success over the course of their entire academic careers, despite encountering various risk factors – personal vulnerabilities, environmental conditions, or stressful events that typically limit educational achievement. In order to uncover the protective factors that have allowed resilient Latino students to overcome adversity within the K-20 educational pipeline, this study used academic resilience as a theoretical framework.

Academic resilience theory emerged from a broader notion of resilience research conducted in the field of psychology. Emerging in an era when research in the field of developmental psychopathology was heavily grounded in deficit models, research on resilience in the 1970s proved groundbreaking. Inspired by individual cases that demonstrated resilience, despite being exposed to a number of risks, early scholars of resilience shifted the focus of research from one that documented pathology, to one that examined the factors that allowed for these individual cases to overcome adversity (Masten, 2011). The reasoning behind examining resilience by these researchers suggested the belief that by studying individuals who had recovered from trauma; the factors and processes within the individual; and the external behavior that allowed for successful adaptation, could be used to inform intervention efforts for other individuals who experience similar extreme adversity (Masten, 1994).

Since its emergence, three waves of research on resilience have defined, examined its

process, and tested its potential for replication. In the first wave, much of the focus was on defining and describing the dimensions of resilience. Early studies defined resilience as “doing well despite adversity or risk” (Masten, 2011, p. 494). In this wave, the identification of two dimensions required to capture the phenomenon of resilience emerged: first, the individual had to be labeled as high-risk status or they had to be exposed to adversity; and secondly, positive adaptation by the individual had to be present (Masten, 1998). The description of the factors that allowed for positive adaptation also emerged and highlighted the attributes within an individual that allowed for them to overcome adversity.

In the second wave of research however, a more dynamic and process-oriented focus emerged. In this wave, the processes that allowed individuals to adapt were examined. Resilience became defined as the “capacity of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threaten its stability, viability, or development” (Masten, 2011, p. 494). The shift from a descriptive, to a more process-oriented focus, was propelled by the dire need of interventions that addressed and alleviated the extreme adversities children faced, both within the United States, as well as, globally. This led to the third wave of research, which focused on experiments that replicated the processes that were the source of resilience. However, Masten (2011) suggests that although scientists were in the early stages of an intervention research agenda, the preliminary results were used to inform policy and practice. She notes that these efforts capture the translational agenda upon which resilience was founded, which essentially seeks to alleviate the challenges of adversity by making the results of resilience research and experiments more applicable (Masten, 2011).

As a result of these three waves of research, comprehension of the components that promote or impede resilience emerged; these include risk factors and protective factors. Risk

factors are defined as characteristics of a group of people that have influenced undesired outcomes (Masten, 1998). Protective factors on the other hand, are thought to militate against the negative effects of risks, while facilitating resilience. These protective factors that develop resilience can be found within the individual, the environment, or an interaction between both. For instance, Benard (1993) suggests that four individual attributes are present in resilient children; these include: social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future. She also suggests that research on resilience should consider the environmental protective factors that foster resiliency. In research that focuses on environmental factors: the school, home, and community have been found to be influential in the successful adaptation of individuals (Wang, Haertel, & Welberg, 1997).

In the last thirty years, resilience theory has furthered our understanding of how individuals withstand or recover from adversity. Masten (1994, 2011) reviewed the use of resilience theory in psychological literature and identified three types of research. These include: 1) research on individuals from high-risk groups who beat the odds, where anecdotes and predictors of success are highlighted; 2) studies that examine the stressors upon the individual and the factors that augment or lessen the effects of the adversity; and 3) research that examines individual differences in recovery from trauma. As a result of the findings from these studies in the field of psychology, resilience research has exposed many of the risk factors and protective factors that influence an individual's psychological outcomes. Resilience research as a framework has also proven effective when examining resilience in other fields. For example, in the field of education, a focus on academic resilience has allowed for the study of individuals who, although exposed to high risks, achieved academic success. The following section will review the use of resilience in educational research and delineate how this theoretical framework

will be used to examine the experiences of Latino law students who have achieved K-20 success, despite encountering numerous risk factors.

Academic Resilience Theory

Similar to the emergence of resilience theory in the field of psychology, academic resilience emerged as a response to the persistent focus on the factors that influence the low educational outcomes of minority and low-income students. Researchers in the field of education used resilience theory as a way to understand the factors that allow students to achieve academic success. Therefore, academic resilience has been developed and defined as the process by which students achieve academic success, despite encountering risk factors that limit educational opportunity (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortez, 2009; Wang, Haertel, & Welberg, 1997). Incorporating the translational agenda of resilience theory, academic resilience theory also intends to examine the factors and processes that allow an individual to overcome adversity so that it can better inform intervention efforts that serve other individuals who experience similar extreme adversity (Masten, 1994).

Grounding studies in examples of individuals who have achieved extraordinary outcomes; academic resilience scholars have highlighted both the risk factors and protective factors that influence academic success. Academic risk factors, defined as those that have potential to limit academic success, have been extensively identified. Many of these factors were discussed in chapter one and include: poverty, being a minority student, attending an inner-city school, coming from a home where English is not the primary language, or experiencing a sense of rejection related to undocumented status (Cerna, Perez, & Saenz, 2009; Perez et al., 2009). Unfortunately, these are factors that have been noted to disproportionately affect the Latino community. In a national study Latino students were found to be more likely than White or

Asian children to enter kindergarten with these risk factors that have been attributed to school failure (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). Several studies have also identified pre-college risks, which include: inferior schooling conditions, an inadequate high school curriculum, tracking, and institutional neglect (Zarate, Saenz, & Oseguera, 2011). Campus racial climates, lack of faculty diversity, and racism in colleges and universities have also been identified as influential risk factors for academic success in higher education (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Villalpando, 2010).

Research on academic resilience acknowledges the risk factors (i.e., the negative factors that impede educational attainment and achievement). However, the major contribution of this research is perhaps its focus on the positive or protective factors that nurture academic resilience. Similar to resilience research in psychology, protective factors are also differentiated by individual and environmental factors. McMillan and Reed's (1994) review of factors that contribute to the academic success of at-risk students, suggest that these factors can be organized into four categories: individual factors, use of time, family, and school factors. For instance, Wang et al., (1997) suggests that individual factors, such as good intellectual skills, self-efficacy, and talents valued by society are also influential protective factors in predicting academic resilience in students.

Another example of an individual protective factor is the practice of adaptive distancing, which has been widely reported in academic resilience research. Adaptive distancing refers to the students' ability to detach emotionally from family, school, or community dysfunction, by upholding the notion that one's own future will be different (Benard, 2004). Adaptive distancing emerged in Cordeiro and Carspecken (1993) study on Latino high school students. They found that Hispanic students from low socio-economic backgrounds had to construct an identity that

separated from both the Latino and school culture and essentially had to “play the achiever’s game” in order to achieve academically (as cited in Herbert, 1996, p. 83).

Peng, Lee, Wang, and Walberg’s (1992) study of low-income tenth graders found that academically successful students had more internal locus of control and higher educational aspirations when compared to non-resilient students (as cited in McMillan & Reed, 1994). McMillan and Reed (1994) also suggest that resilient students tend to be optimist and confident about their ability to achieve their goals. Furthermore, the authors suggest, “resilient students do not believe that the school, neighborhood, or family is critical in either their success or failures” (p. 138). Despite many resilient students’ self-perception that their academic achievement is not influenced by external factors, Wang et al., (1997) found that out of 22 contextual influences on learning; family, school, and community were the most influential. Parental support or home environment has been shown to be a positive protective factor as they provide nurturing and educative roles that foster children’s motivations (Wang et al., 1997). At the school level, school wide policies, school climate, caring and supportive teachers, high expectations, and effective instructional methods and curriculum were protective factors that prevented school failure (Benard, 1991, 1993; Wang et al., 1997). And lastly, the twelfth most influential contextual factor in the Wang et al., (1997) study was community; which provided resilient students with caring adults that supported students’ educational aspirations. In addition, communities often provide students with opportunities to develop new skills. Benard’s (1991, 1993) suggests that engaging youth in meaningful involvement opportunities and roles, allows students to become fully engaged within the community and school.

There are a number of studies that have used academic resilience as a framework to understand the resilience of at-risk Latino youth. At the forefront of this work are Alva and

Padilla (1995) who call for a greater shift towards empirical research on invulnerable children, as it relates to academic failure. The authors present a conceptual framework of academic invulnerability that attempts to answer the question: “Why do some Mexican American students do well while others fail, despite sharing similar economic and cultural backgrounds?” (p. 28). Particular to this model, is the authors’ acknowledgement that academic performance must stray away from a traditional unidirectional focus and instead calls for a multivariate assessment of achievement (1995). Taking into account the probable stressors Mexican American children experience, given their sociocultural background, the authors contend that resilience of those students who overcome adversity is related to personal protective factors that reflect attitudes, skills, and knowledge that help the student navigate adversity; and the environmental protective factors available to support these students through adverse conditions, as well as, the subjective appraisal of teachers, students, and school climates that give students the affirmation that they are cared for and not underestimated (Alva & Padilla, 1995).

After conducting a review of the literature on academic resilience and Latinos, the classifications of what constitutes research on academic resilience was not clear. There are a few, but significant, number of studies that have used resilience theory as a framework when examining the experiences of academically successful students (i.e., Alva, 1991; Arrellano & Padilla, 1996; Cavazos, Johnson, Fielding, Cavazos, Castro, & Vela, 2010; Herbert, 1996; Morales, 2008; Perez et al., 2009). Interestingly however, these studies pointed to Conchas’ (2006) study on academically successful low-income urban high school students and Gandara’s (1995) seminal study on low-income Chicanas/os who earned a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D., as examples of research on academic resilience among Latinos. However, after careful review, I have found that neither Conchas nor Gandara employed academic resilience as a framework.

Nonetheless, they did uncover factors that allowed their participants to succeed academically. Given the limited research available on academically successful Latino students, these studies were instrumental in informing the design of this study, despite not using academic resilience. Therefore, the following section will first review the research that has identified predictors of success for the Latino student population. Thereafter, a review of the research that has deliberately used academic resilience to uncover the protective factors that foster resilience in Latino students in the K-20 pipeline will be discussed.

Predictors of Success for Latino Students

Despite all of the risk factors affecting the Latino population, some Latino students have managed to reach higher levels of education. There has been a small, but steady, shift in research on Latino education from one of failure, to that which documents this success. This research has identified numerous factors that have allowed Latino students to achieve success despite encountering factors that typically limit educational achievement.

At the forefront of this shift in research on Latinos, has been the role of Latino parents in helping their children overcome educational adversity. For many Latino immigrant parents, education is the vehicle towards *el Sueño Americano* [the American dream]. They see education as the vehicle towards social mobility and essentially, a better life for their children. Fraga, Garcia, Hero, Jones-Correa, Martinez-Ebers, and Segura (2010) revealed “participants in all of our groups referred to the importance of education, especially ‘having good schools for their children,’ and ‘more education’ for Latinos in general” (p. 35). Research has repeatedly shown that Latino parents pass on this value for an education to their children. In Achor and Morales’ (1990) study of 100 Chicana doctoral students, the participants noted that their parents instilled high levels of motivation for their education, which they credit for their success. Similarly,

Chavez's (2011) mixed method study on Latino attorneys found that the participants often credited their families and their Latino culture as "critical for survival and success, and is the foundation and motivation for all that they do" (p. 34).

Research on the trajectories of academically successful Latino students in the K-20 pipeline have also highlighted the important role that Latino parents play in the success of their children. For instance, Gandara's (1995) seminal piece on the educational mobility of 50 low-income Chicanos who earned a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. degree, showed that by instilling high aspirations and standards and an overall hard work ethic, families were the most contributing factors to their children's success. Her findings suggest that their home environments were significant factors in their academic success, because values expressed by parents nurtured the participants' inner drives and fostered persistence. Gandara's (1982) study on a subset of her participants, examined the common factors that allowed 17 Mexican American women to attain a J.D., M.D., or Ph.D. degree. Thirteen of these women shared that their mothers were highly influential in their educational aspirations and often stressed how education would allow them to be economically independent. Specifically, the Chicanas of her study compared to the Chicanos, tended to receive less support from outside individuals (i.e., teachers, counselors, etc.) and instead, turned to their families for support. Interestingly, research on female students in general, suggests "especially close relationships with family members can be maladaptive for women students because they impede those students' self-assessed emotional adjustment in the first year of college" (Sax, 2008, p. 7). For Gandara's female participants however, the opposite is true. She found that the Chicana's family played a vital role in their educational successes.

This notion of *familismo* may present Latinas with a challenge as they enter higher education. As Latinas uphold familial importance and responsibilities, they are taking part of an

academic culture that does not legitimize these responsibilities and instead, upholds more individualistic ideals (Espinoza, 2010). However, it is their close relationships with their family that has been noted to be influential in their academic success in higher education. Therefore, how do Latinas reconcile both conflicting demands? Espinoza's (2010) study sheds light into this answer by suggesting that the fifteen Latina doctoral students in her study achieved academic success by responding in two ways: either shared and communicated with family members about their school demands and requested their support (*integrators*) and those who strategically separated family and school by completing the responsibilities of both worlds, while not their educational responsibilities and challenges with their family (*separators*). In both studies however, the role of family has been reported to be influential in the academic success of Latinas. Interestingly however, Gandara's (1982) study reported that although Latino males also acknowledged they were supported by their family members, they were more likely to attribute their success to hard work and ability (Alva & Padilla, 1995).

Research on predictors of success for Latino students have also examined the institutional factors that allow for these students to persist. One of the pivotal works at the forefront of this focus is Conchas (2006), whose work examined the institutional and cultural factors within an urban high school that allowed low-income, high-achieving, Black, Latino, and Vietnamese students. He identified predictors that allowed these students to become engaged in their education and attain academic success. Linking cultural-ecological explanations of minority failure with institutional explanations of success, Conchas shows how school structures and practices contribute to immigrant and native minority students' optimism. His findings suggest that healthy race-ethnic and peer group relations, along with small learning communities, greatly contributed to the success of the participants of his study.

In an earlier paper, Conchas (2001) focused solely on the experiences of Latinos at this same urban high school. In this work, he suggests that Latino student academic successes were greatly influenced by the culture of each learning community – Latino students who were in special academic programs as the Medical Academy, Graphics Academy, and AP program, were provided opportunities to develop “academically oriented forms of agency” compared to those students who were in the general program, who were exposed to low expectations and a lack of support from peers and teachers (p. 501). The findings of the latter study demonstrate the institutional factors at play that influence the academic success of Latino students. This finding is similar to Gandara’s (1995) and Achor and Morales’ (1990) study, which found that the success of their participants was also due to their opportunity to attend predominantly White schools, as these schools tended to provide rigorous college preparation programs.

Studies on resilient Latinos in higher education have also noted other pre-college factors that are influential in degree completion. Arbona and Nora (2007) used the Student/Institution Engagement model as a theoretical framework to examine how pre-college characteristics (i.e., parent and student educational expectations, academic track, and peers), college experiences (i.e., time between college entry, type of first college attended, and continuous enrollment), and environmental variables (i.e., pull factors, such as, work schedules and family responsibilities), predict bachelor degree attainment for the Hispanic sample in the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Study. Their findings indicated that students who enrolled in four-year colleges were more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree, compared to those who had begun at a community college. Additionally, “time-off” between high school and community college, seemed to highly determine the students’ likelihood of transferring to a four-year institution. Furthermore, college preparedness, having college educated parents, peers, along with experiences in the collegiate

environment, were the strongest predictors of bachelor degree attainment for those who started at four-year institutions.

Given these findings, a Latino students' college environment is of particular importance to their overall success. Regrettably, research on college environments has revealed that many Latino students find themselves in institutions whose campus climates are hostile. This research however, has pointed to other protective factors that offset these environments. Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) for instance, suggest that academic support programs provide students with supportive environments that allow them to withstand unwelcoming campus climates. The authors also found that Latino students who engage in efforts that attempt to change their institutions, protest against injustices, or engage in efforts that attempt to change the status of their group or community, are more likely to graduate. Cerna, Perez, and Saenz (2009) further expand on this finding by noting that Latino ethnic groups at public and private 4-year institutions tend to report higher levels of civic and social mindedness when compared to their ethnically White peers. They conclude by stating that Latino student participation "in student protests, community service-related work, and/or religious activities during college provide these entering undergraduates with the impetus they need to persist towards degree attainment" (p. 144).

The notion of helping, giving back, or improving the social status of communities, has been a protective factor that has consistently emerged in research on the K-20 pipeline. Specifically, research on the experiences of graduate and professional students has shown that motivations tied to the student's ethnic group or community impact persistence, graduation, and career decisions. For instance, Urrieta (2010) found that all of his participants shared a sense of urgency to "give back" to their communities. In this study, Urrieta explores the schooling

experiences, identity formation, and roles that 24 Chicana/o educators have had in impacting change within Whitestream schools. Through eight case studies, the author demonstrates the participants' dedication and commitment to the educational rights of their communities. For example, Therese, a graduate student participant shared that her role as a Chicana activist evolved into the desire to change the system enough to impact people. She notes, "I want to make a larger-scale impact, to make sure models that don't exist, exist..." (p. 134). This level of commitment was also expressed through the author's autobiographical sketch. Urrieta begins his book by expressing his own commitment to his community, to "give back" and help others like himself along the way.

Factors revealed by Shultz and Zedeck (2008) are all represented within the predictors of success that Latino students have exhibited throughout the K-20 educational pipeline. More specifically, Shultz and Zedeck (2008) interviewed hundreds of lawyers (both individually and within groups), law faculty, students, judges, and clients; as well as, surveyed alumni to inquire about what they viewed as the qualities needed for success in the field. Eight categories and a total of 26 factors emerged from the interviews and surveys, they include: Intellectual and Cognitive skills (i.e., analysis and reasoning, problem solving, etc.); Research and Information Gathering (i.e., fact finding, questioning and interviewing, etc.); Communications (i.e., influencing and advocating, writing, etc.); Planning and Organizing (i.e., strategic planning, organizing and managing skills, etc.); Conflict Resolution (i.e., negotiation skills, able to see the world through the eyes of others); Client and Business Relations (i.e., networking and business development, providing advice, etc.); Working with Others (i.e., developing relationships within the legal profession, etc.); and Character (i.e., passion and engagement, community involvement and service, etc.). This study finds itself among the few that have focused on the factors that

allow for law school completion and effectiveness as a lawyer. Shultz and Zedeck contend that their findings can redirect the current law school admissions trend of an overemphasis on the LSAT, to one that instead looks for factors that ensure “legal education’s goal of producing diverse, talented, and balanced generations of law graduates who will serve the many mandates and constituencies of the legal profession” (Shultz & Zedeck, 2008, p. 6).

Protective Factors of Resilience for Latino Students

Research on academic resilient students is scant. However, those scholars that began to study academic resilience frequently acknowledged the work of Gandara’s (1982, 1995) iconic study on academically successful Mexican Americans. Gandara (1982, 1995) work, reviewed in the previous section, was at the forefront of researchers who attempted to explain academic achievement of Latino students. Therefore, in the 1990s when research on academically resilient Latino students (specifically Mexican American students) began to emerge, many grounded their work in Gandara’s studies. For instance, Alva (1991) grounded her study on Gandara’s (1982) study and her own work with Padilla on the psychosocial stress of Mexican immigrant adolescents (as cited in Alva, 1987). Using these two studies, she argued that empirical research on academically successful or invulnerable Mexican American students was limited. The author’s quantitative study builds on the available research in psychology that had identified personal protective factors (i.e., personal characteristics and attitudes that mediate against stressors), environmental protective factors (i.e., external sources of support available to overcome adversity), and subjective appraisals (i.e., how the student interprets and reacts to stressful events) that mediate against sociocultural risk factors. Findings from a survey administered to 384 Mexican American tenth graders in a senior high school in Los Angeles, showed that a positive college preparatory climate greatly impacted the students’ desire to

succeed in high school. In addition, students who had a positive view of their intellectual ability, strong sense of responsibility for their future academic success, and had a strong supportive network were more likely to experience academic invulnerability.

Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) further expanded on this work by examining the academic resilience of 2,169 Mexican American high school students surveyed in three California high schools. The authors using a resilience framework sought to examine how protective factors such as, supportive academic environment, sense of belonging to school, and cultural loyalty differentiated between the reported grade point averages (GPA) of high (i.e., resilient students) and low (i.e., non-resilient students) achievers. Through a stepwise regression analysis, the authors found that a supportive academic environment and a sense of belonging were predictors of academic resilience. In addition, the authors found that family and peer support were significant in the students' resilience, which was a finding consistent with Alva (1991). Although cultural loyalty was not a significant predictor, the authors contend that it did contribute to resilient outcomes (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). The findings of this study therefore suggest that resilience is highly influenced by environmental support, leading us to acknowledge that resilience can be developed and manufactured, and not a trait (1997).

Herbert (1996) took a similar approach as Conchas' (2001, 2006) study, which focused on the small learning communities' effect on Latino high school students. Herbert (1996) designed a qualitative study that examined the phenomenon of resilience in the experience of three urban, young Latino men in high school gifted programs. Using resilience as a framework to examine these students' experiences as they overcame multiple barriers present in the inner city, this study revealed that each student found the source of their resilience from different individuals or entities. For example, Lucio's resilience originated from his strong belief in

himself, while Orlando's resilience was attributed to his religious beliefs. Similar to previously cited work (Alva, 1991; Gandara, 1982, 1995; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997, etc.), Herbert (1996) also found that the students' family, specifically their parents, exemplified a sense of resilience that greatly influenced the students' own development. Extra-familial support within the students' school (i.e., a swim coach and guidance counselor); extracurricular programs, both within high school and college enrichment programs; and aspirations, were also influential in allowing these three young Latino men to overcome adversity and achieve academic success.

Research on academic resilience has also begun to look at the experiences of undocumented students. Perez et al., (2009) conducted quantitative research with undocumented Latino students in high school, community college, and universities. They used academic resilience theory to understand how undocumented youth not only overcome the similar educational challenges that documented Latino youth face, but also achieve academic resilience while encountering institutional and social exclusion that are particular to their undocumented status. This study examined protective factors such as: being identified as gifted during their early education and coping with distress. In addition, environmental protective factors such as: parents and peers valuing of school, and participating in extracurricular activities were studied. Perez et al. (2009) examined potentially positive influences on academic success through a high GPA, number of academic awards, and number of AP courses. The results of the study suggest that the students' academic success came from both personal and environmental factors, despite experiencing high risks. In particular, extracurricular participation and valuing of schooling was positively associated with a high GPA.

A research focus on the numerous challenges presented in the college environment has resulted in a number of scholars also shifting their research lens to explore how Latino students

have persisted and remained resilient in higher education. Arrellano and Padilla's (1996) retrospective and qualitative study interviewed 30 undergraduate Latino students in a highly selective university to better understand their academic invulnerability. The students were divided into three groups based on the educational attainment of their parents, to examine the influence they have on their academic experience. The authors found that parental support was one of the most influential factors for students' motivation to succeed in college. Students who had parents with low levels of educational attainment often reported feeling encouraged to persist, given their parents' sacrifices so that they could have academic opportunities that were not available to their parents. One student shared: "...Whenever I get discouraged, I think about their dreams for me, all that they've done for me. And I know I have to keep going. I can't let my people down. They're my strength" (Arrellano & Padilla, 1996, p. 493). Meanwhile, students with highly educated parents often reported that they were inspired by their parents as they modeled academic and professional success to them. Having an optimistic outlook was also attributed to success, however students attributed this to their experience in gifted and talented programs. One of the major findings of this study was that the majority of the students (73 percent) were enrolled in gifted programs since elementary school. Their experiences through these programs provided them with a strong self-concept of their intelligence and in some ways separated them from the influences of non-achieving groups. According to the authors, the students' drive to succeed, their ethnicity, role models and mentors, along with parental support and an optimistic outcome were factors identified as being integral to the students' ability to be resilient against social and institutional barriers (Arrellano & Padilla, 1996).

Cavazos, Johnson, and Sparrow (2010) also explored Latino college students and the coping mechanisms they used to overcome institutional barriers. This study interviewed eleven

Latino college students from a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), whom successfully navigated a pathway to higher education. They found that successful Latino students coped with challenges presented in college by practicing positive reframing, accepting that challenges are part of the process, engaging in positive self-talk, focusing on their final goals, using low expectations as motivation to succeed, self-reflecting on their life experiences, being proactive in educating themselves, and seeking support when faced with difficulties. By using these coping factors individually or in combination, students overcome the challenges presented in higher education. Cavazos, Johnson, Fielding, Cavazos, Castro, and Vela (2010) built on these findings to examine how these students at this HSI developed a sense of resilience. Their findings gave insight into how the strong beliefs, held by the students' family in education and high expectations; motivations to gain economic stability and help their community; and values of hard work, perseverance, and self-belief allowed for these eleven students to develop five factors that have been shown to promote academic resilience. The factors include; high educational goals, support and encouragement from parents, intrinsic motivation, internal locus of control, and high self-efficacy.

Morales' (2008) qualitative study on resilient undergraduate Dominican American students, also found similar protective factors to be influential in the educational trajectories of his participants. In his initial study of five Dominican American undergraduate students at a selective university, a major theme that resonated with all the participants was the idea that success came about by the students' individual efforts. The protective factors that these participants employed include: a high internal locus of control, high intelligence, self-confidence, a strong work ethic, and a desire to leave their neighborhood; all were said to have allowed them to academically succeed. Morales (2008) concluded in his initial study that his participants

reached success due to their ability to separate themselves from their culture, family, and community. As was previously discussed, research on resilience has termed this factor as adaptive distancing.

In a follow-up study that took place ten years later, and with four of the five students, Morales (2008) showed that the participants' perception of individual success evolved into a process that was communal and empathetic. To give an example of this progression, Andrea states, "I think back then [in college] I was much more into thinking everything had to do with the individual. And that you could accomplish whatever, without really needing others...Now I am much more into collaboration" (p. 234). Morales' (2008) work showed how protective factors evolved through time in terms of context and empathy. The protective factors that these participants now acknowledged as influential in nurturing their trajectories from college to graduate school were inclusive of their family and community. Subsequently, many of the students in his study went on to graduate programs; or are in careers that are service oriented, with the intention of giving back and offering an alternative to the widely held negative stereotypes of their communities.

In summary, the review of literature on academic resilience and Latinos uncovered several factors. Individual protective factors such as: having a high self-efficacy, an ability to practice positive reframing, embodying values of hard work, and aspiring to give back, were noted as significant in predicting the academic success of Latinos in the K-20 pipeline. Similarly, environmental protective factors such as: having strong parental support, extra-familial support, and being part of learning communities (i.e., gifted programs) cultivated successful educational journeys. The individual and environmental protective factors presented here, are considered to be essential in the literature on academic resilience of Latinos in the K-20 pipeline.

Gaps in Academic Resilience Research

Research on academic resilience has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the factors that allow Latino students to be academically successful. This research moved away from the tendency of examining the factors that impede success, and as a result, the review of the literature revealed an array of protective and environmental factors that have influence achievement for Latino students. Still, this limited body of scholarship only begins to uncover the factors that influence success, and is almost non-existent when looking at higher levels of postsecondary education. Gandara (1995) notes that very few such studies have ever been conducted, in-part due to a widely held assumption that this group has a low likelihood of meeting the desired outcome criterion – completion of a professional or graduate-level degree.

Additionally, most of the research that has focused on academic resilient Latino students tends to neglect certain characteristics that are correlated to academic success. For instance, Achor and Morales' (1990) study on Chicanas who have received a Ph.D. and Gandara (1982; 1995) study which focused on 50 low-income Chicano students who have achieved great academic success, had a majority of participants that were educated in private schools or attended schools that were predominantly comprised of a White student population. Seldom examined are the outcomes of students who have reached higher levels of education, but who come from dense hyper-segregated, low-income communities and schools. In addition, most of these studies that focused on graduate and professional Latino students were conducted prior to the passage of key legislation that has been noted to affect the opportunities available to students of color, namely Latino students. Therefore, designing a contemporary study on Latino students would allow for a deeper understanding of the experiences and outcomes of the first wave of students to enter college after the enactment of anti-bilingual policies (ex. Proposition 227 in

California); anti-immigration policies (ex. Proposition 187 in California and SB 1070 in Arizona); and anti-affirmative action policies (ex. Proposition 209 in California). Students who have entered educational institutions after these policies were enacted could very well have different educational experiences and outcomes than participants in earlier studies.

To address these gaps and contribute to the growing research on academic resilience, this study will utilize academic resilience theory to develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors that nurtured the experiences of academically successful Latino students in professional school and throughout the K-20 educational pipeline. The reviewed research on the protective factors that alleviate the effects of risk factors that have typically limited the educational achievement of Latino students, have provided the foundation needed to embark on this inquiry. However, after a careful examination of the research on the factors that allow for academic success and resilience, it became evident that some of the factors revealed in the research were too generalizable. Most often, these protective factors reflect values of individualism, meritocracy, and exceptionalism.

For instance, the argument can be made that factors such as self-efficacy, hard work, and goal setting are found in students from different racial and ethnic groups. Due to the fact that adversities particular to the Latino experience influence outcomes, and in some instances this population is exposed to cumulative adversities, finding factors that are culturally distinctive to the Latino student will further our understanding of how Latinos overcome adversity. Searching for culturally distinctive factors however, would require that the context upon which resilience occurs is examined. The fact is however, that research on resilience tends to neglect the context in which protective factors emerge, or are formed within. Perhaps this is due to the fact that a focus on context may result in a focus on the risk factors, an inclination that resilience research

purposely intends to distance itself from. Nonetheless, Masten (1994) suggests that research on resilience should take into account the context of the individual as a way to begin understanding the process in which resilience occurs and develops.

Examining the context can also alleviate the tendency of resilience research to explore factors using one-dimensional lenses. More specifically, most studies tend to look at institutional protective factors, but do not consider cultural protective factors and vice versa. For example, many studies have uncovered that institutional opportunities that provide support (i.e., participation in a learning community or academic support programs; engaging in protests and community service, etc.) are influential in degree attainment. However, what drives a Latino student to become engaged in these activities that have been noted to influence achievement? I hypothesize that another protective factor is simultaneously at play and influencing the students' decision to access this institutional protective factor. Perhaps, it is the students' parents who exemplified resourcefulness when faced with adversities that influence a student's decision to participate in a program, or the students' commitment to "give back" that influence their decision to participate in a protest. Knowing the context upon which academic resilience occurs becomes critical. Examining the context can lead us to recognize that Latino students' resilience is much more nuanced than what we believe, and can allow us to see that protective factors tend to have a more dynamic or synergistic relationship.

Moving away from a one-dimensional lens can also lead research on resilience towards a closer examination of the processes involved, which will provide a better understanding of how resilience occurs. Currently, research on academic resilience and Latinos does not describe the processes of "how" individual factors are formed and how environmental factors not only become readily available to the student, but also how a student decides to access them while

facing adversity. Masten (1994) suggests that including personal reflections of the resilient participants in the study can deepen our assessment of the process of resilience. Masten's suggestion could prove effective; however, there are already a number of personal narratives available by both identified and self-identified resilient Latinos, which detail and celebrate their adaptation to challenging conditions (i.e., Rodriguez, 1982). Solely including narratives in academic resilience research is not sufficient. Of the research that has incorporated these narratives, there is seldom description of the processes involved, and in some instances tend to overemphasize individual factors that reflect values of individualism (i.e., self-efficacy, hard work, desire for social and economic mobility). Rigsby (1994) suggests that this is a common occurrence in resilience research, as there is a tendency to uphold individualistic values due the fields' roots in the "U.S. hero myth;" memorialized in stories by Horatio Alger where success is explained "in terms that magnify the agency of the striving spirit of the individual" (p. 85).

According to Cuadraz (2001), the practice of celebrating the individual is especially a common occurrence when examining the experiences of academically successful Latino students. She argues that the issue of educational achievement by minority groups is subject to a "politics of exceptionality" that tends to celebrate individuality as a way to uphold the notion that achievement is the exception, and not the norm for this group. More specifically, this practice in research of academically successful Latino students reinforces the notion that achievement remains the responsibility of the individual, while detracting responsibility from the institutional processes that tend to limit or provide opportunity. She further notes, "by individualizing the achievement and focusing on the characteristics of the individuals, the onus of the responsibility remains within that group and not a consideration in formulating social policy" (p. 87). This particularly makes sense when analyzing the literature that has placed the sole responsibility of

academic success on the role families and specifically parents play. For example, parents as an environmental protective factor have been revealed in numerous studies as highly predictive of academic success. Therefore, the identification of parents as a sole protective factor can lead one to assume that all their children will have similar outcomes, as they were all raised with the same family values. Unfortunately, educational outcomes of siblings tend to vary in each family. For instance, a large number of the law students in this study had older and younger siblings who did not finish high school. Most research on resilience however does not consider these variations within the family, and instead solely focuses on the successful student; thus reaffirming the role of parents in nurturing academic success. Nonetheless, Cuadraz (2001) suggests that “narratives must be understood in the context of the contemporary social and political relations into which they are being crafted and read” and perhaps then, these narratives can bring a different understanding to the one-dimensional portrayals of academically resilient Latinos (p. 105).

Essentially, I hypothesize that by acknowledging the context (i.e., acknowledging the cultural influence, as well as, the processes upon which resilience occurs), and by focusing on behaviors, rather than characteristics; the tendency of resilience research to uphold individualistic values can be avoided. Therefore, a conceptual framework that unpacks this narrative of success as an individualistic effort is needed. The following section will describe how the aforementioned observations are used to develop a more apt resilience framework that examines Latino student success.

Towards a Resilience Conceptual Framework

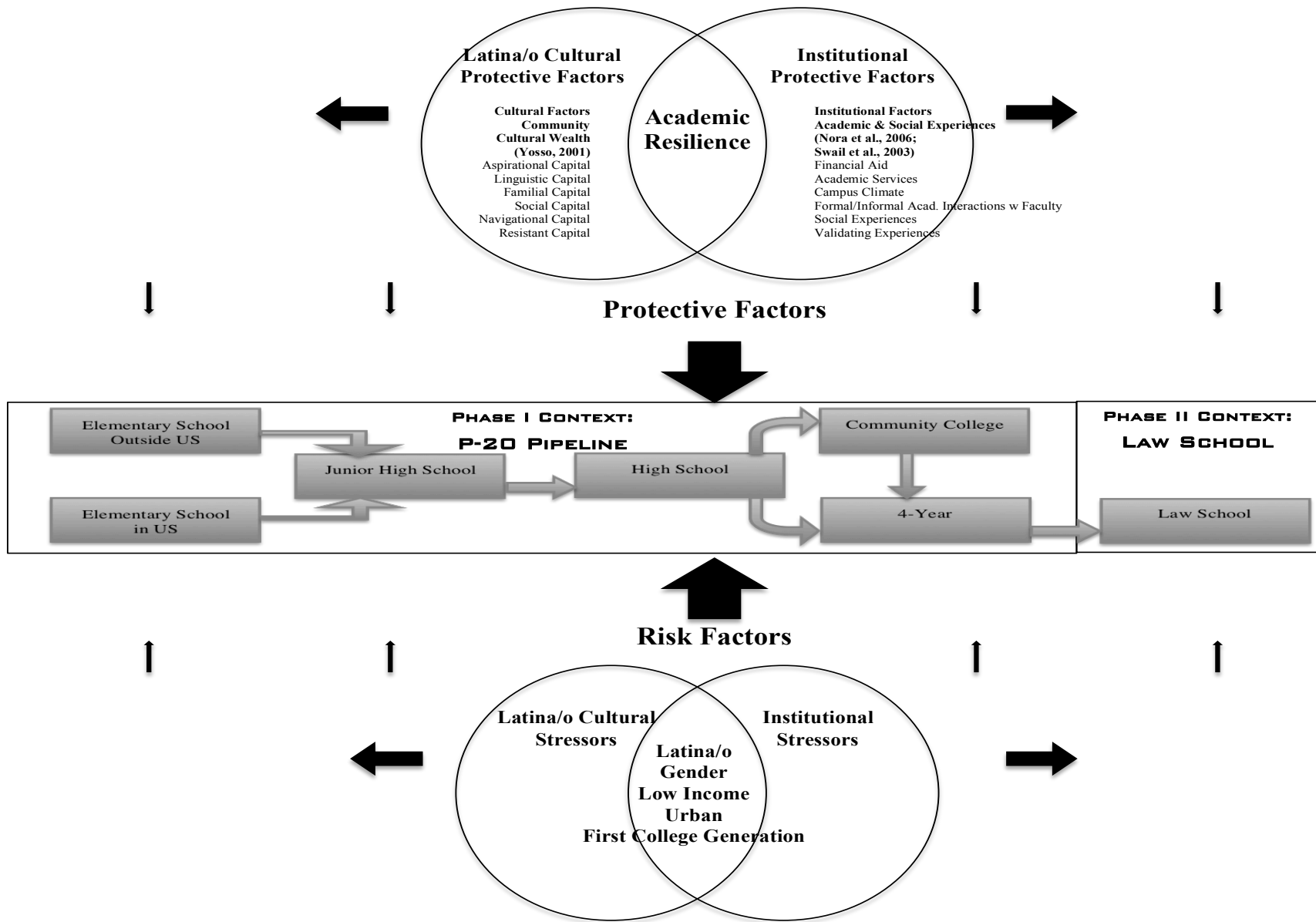
This study proposes to not only explore the experiences of Latino students in law school; but to also understand how they have overcome the hardships that are often related to their unique ethnic, economic, geographical, and social backgrounds. Academic resilience theory is

best suited to explore these experiences due to its particular focus on identifying protective factors that allow for success, despite the presence of adversity or risk. However, since resilience theory does not address certain culturally relevant factors particular to the Latino culture, and most importantly, has fallen short in explaining the process of resilience that takes into account institutional factors, a culturally relevant model of resilience is proposed. This conceptual framework will consider the sociocultural factors that enable academic resilience. Developing this framework will allow for an inquiry that considers how academic resilience can be achieved for Latinos, a constituency that is poised to contribute greatly to the framework of this society.

In order to move towards a culturally relevant theory of resilience, the following conceptual model has been developed. It is important to note that this model builds on the premise that culturally centered research will refrain from the universality and objectivity that has influenced resilience theory, and instead build on elements that are particular to the values, worldviews and K-20 experiences of Latinos (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Padilla, 2004). In addition, it considers the synergistic relationship between multiple factors and examines the cumulative processes involved throughout the K-20 pipeline. As a result, the proposed conceptual model (see Figure 2) offers a culturally inclusive approach to explore the K-20 experiences of academically resilient Latino students. The model applies traditional elements of resilient research such as: the risk factors or stressors, and protective factors that influence the experiences of Latino students. To ensure that the factors identified are culturally relevant to the Latino community, selected elements of a number of already established frameworks that take into account the values, practices, and wealth of the Latino community and institutional culture were adapted. In particular, Yosso's (2005) framework of Community Cultural Wealth and elements from Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2006), as well as, frameworks of institutional culture,

proposed by Swail with Redd and Perna (2003) are incorporated to offer a more culturally inclusive approach to resilience theory. The context upon which resilience occurs is incorporated into the model to ensure that discussions of cumulative adversities, as well as, the cumulative and synergic relationships between the factors are considered. The reasoning behind selecting these frameworks is due to their relevancy to the factors that emerged from the first phase of this study. Lastly, this model presumes that Latino student resilience occurs when all of these elements are present and interact with one another. The following provides a description of each element of this model.

FIGURE 2. Towards a culturally relevant theory of resilience.



Context. Given that examining the context upon which resilience occurs is the next step in resilience research, this model considers the context of the K-20 pipeline. The two phases of this study focused on the K-20 pipeline experiences of the research participants by exploring their family, peers, school, and neighborhood environments. Focusing on the K-20 pipeline instead of examining only one segment provided the study a better understanding of how factors evolved or influenced other factors. For instance, if this study had focused solely on the early schooling experiences of the participants, it would not have uncovered the fact that significant events, which took place when the students were in elementary school, did not materialize into aspirations to pursue the field of law until the participants were in college. In the second phase of this study particular focus will be placed on the experiences of the participants in law school; particularly due to the lack of available research on law school education.

Risk Factors. The characteristics chosen (e.g., Latino, low-income, urban, first generation college student) comprise the risk factors that are considered in this study. In addition, cultural and institutional stressors are included in this section. Although the protective factors that derive from the Latino and institutional culture will be discussed, this section includes its stressors (e.g., not qualifying for financial aid). These were chosen due to their documented influence in the experiences and outcomes of Latino students in the K-20 pipeline. Moreover, the risk factors and stressors in the model are positioned under the context to illustrate how risk factors are not stagnant in one segment of the pipeline, but in fact are ever-present and influencing the experiences of Latinos throughout the pipeline.

Latino and Institutional Culture. Given the need to understand the processes involved when resilience occurs, this study suggests that both the Latino and institutional culture must be examined. First, each component is explored on its own to reveal the protective factors. Then,

instances where these factors complement, conflict, or merge are also examined.

Yosso's (2005) notion of community cultural wealth is used as it provides the study of resilience, a more culturally inclusive model that incorporates the values and practices of the Latino community. Community cultural wealth is a theoretical framework developed by Tara J. Yosso that seeks to redefine the normative definition of cultural capital. Current examples of cultural capital use a White middle class standard as a control for measuring one's level of resources attained from their community. In doing so, important catalysts for student success within communities of color are often missed or devalued. Community cultural wealth seeks to identify the various ways in which communities of color support their members, despite sometimes lacking many of the physical resources found within White middle class communities. Yosso (2005) suggests that through conceptualizing cultural capital as a product of the community and incorporating values and practices from various ethnic backgrounds, a more inclusive model of community wealth can be achieved. Under this understanding, she developed six forms of capital that include: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2006). Aspirational capital is the ability of an individual to hold onto a sense of hope and optimism for the future, despite the existence of social structures that may hinder their capacity to achieve their goals. Linguistic capital is the notion that students of color come to school with the ability to communicate in a number of ways. Familial capital is the continued support that students receive from their family and extended community. Social capital refers to the student's ability to use their contacts gained in familial capital to transverse various social barriers. Navigational capital represents a student's ability to navigate through racially tense situations and through social structures that were not created to serve students of color. Lastly, resistant capital refers to a student's ability to resist social inequity and racial

stereotypes.

Studies by Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2006) and Swail with Redd and Perna (2003) identified numerous factors that influence the persistence of students of color in higher education. Aspects of the “Institution Engagement Model Theoretical Framework” (Nora et al., 2006) and the “Geometric Model of Student Persistence and Achievement” (Swail et al., 2003) were gathered to conceptualize the culturally relevant model of resilience. Specifically, institutional factors from the Swail et al., (2003) model include financial aid and academic services; while Nora’s et al., (2006) framework provided campus climate, formal/informal academic interactions with faculty, social experiences, and validating experiences. Essentially these cultural and institutional factors are assumed to provide the foundation needed for resilience to occur.

Aspects of Yosso’s (2006) and Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2006) and Swail with Redd and Perna (2003) frameworks served as the basis for which my study was founded on. Implicit within my research questions is the assumption that components that lead towards academic success not only exist, but are endemic within the Latino community. These components are irrespective of “good” or “bad” categorization, as protective factors can be gleaned from an event that is considered to be an academic risk factor. As such, I needed to consider an effective counter to the deficit model commonly employed within research on predictors of academic achievement among Latino students; and establish that it is possible for “goodness” to already be occurring in even the direst of circumstances.

Resilience. The extent to which the risks, stressors, and protective factors converge in the K-20 pipeline will demonstrate the process upon which resilience occurs.

This culturally relevant model of resilience enhances the theory of resilience by providing the elements needed to understand the process upon which resilience occurs. Specifically, it has the promise of identifying culturally relevant factors and exploring their intersection with institutional factors that are particular to the Latino student experience. Therefore, this model of resilience will be used to design a study that examines the resilience of academically successful Latino students. The following chapter details the methodology of a qualitative longitudinal study that follows Latino students into law school and through the completion of their educational K-20 journey.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

On October 19, 2010, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13555, a White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. At the event, he called attention to the necessity and importance of improving the educational outcomes for Latinos. A major point that received national attention was the link he made between the ability of the United States to compete in a global economy and the educational attainment of the Latino community. President Obama is quoted as follows:

At more than 52 million strong, including 4 million in Puerto Rico, Hispanics constitute the country's largest and fastest growing minority group. They have had a profound and positive impact on our country through, among other things, their community's strong commitment to family, faith, hard work, and service...Our country was built on and continues to thrive on its diversity, and there is no doubt that the future of the United States is inextricably linked to the future of the Hispanic community. (U.S. Department of Education & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2011)

The Latino community is thus indubitably vital to the framework of this country; yet regrettably, as the previous chapter disclosed, Latino students continue to face obstacles that have resulted in low educational attainment rates and their classification as one of the most educationally disadvantaged populations in the country. Therefore, there is an urgency to effectively address this educational crisis.

Much of the contemporary literature that examines Latino student achievement primarily focuses on the pervasive lack of academic excellence among urban, low-income Latino students. Although informative, this approach connotes an image of hopelessness and failure that leads to the idea that success is not within reach of Latino students. But this is farther from the truth, as some urban low-income Latinos do in fact succeed academically, despite the numerous obstacles. They have found a way to succeed in spite of the system that has failed so many other

Latino students. Although, their success is by no means a way to neglect the institutional responsibility to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Latino students, these educationally resilient students present an opportunity to identify the contributing factors that allow for successful Latino students to experience educational resilience. This knowledge can be used to inform programming and reform efforts that target the Latino community.

To obtain an understanding of the contributing factors that allow for educational success, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the lived experience of urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students as they navigate the educational pipeline into law school?
2. What are the protective factors that facilitate academic resilience in Latino students who persist from early schooling through law school?
3. What is the process of academic resilience for Latinos in the K-20 pipeline?

The following sections provide a thorough explanation of how the methodology of this study was designed to answer these questions. Specifically, this chapter consists of five sections: 1) Research Method and Design, 2) Sample Selection and Characteristics, 3) Data Collection and Procedures, 4) Data Analysis, 5) Validity and Reliability, and 6) Limitations and Delimitations.

Research Method and Design

In order to understand how the construct of resilience influenced the academic success of Latino students from early schooling through law school, this study details a two-phase, qualitative longitudinal study (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Merriam, 2009). A qualitative methodology provided the opportunity to capture the intricate experiences of Latino students and understand how these students interpreted those lived experiences; something that would be difficult to obtain through other conventional research methods (Gonzalez, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Nettles,

1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). More specifically, this method lent itself to understanding the shared meanings a group of highly academically accomplished Latino students made as they traversed the educational pipeline into law school (Merriam, 2009); the identification of the protective factors that influenced the thought process, emotions and behaviors of resilience; and the processes involved by which resilience occurred (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A longitudinal study design responds to the need of establishing a seamless K-20 trajectory. Through constructing a two-phase study and taking into account the context (i.e., transitions in the educational pipeline) upon which resilience occurs, this study provides a comprehensive overview of navigation through the pipeline. In Phase I of the study, participants were interviewed while they were students in law school to gather an understanding of their educational trajectory and the protective factors that got them there. While in Phase II, participants were interviewed once they graduated from law school and entered their profession. Informed by the factors identified in Phase I, this phase examined the role those initial protective factors had in their law school experience and as they transitioned to their profession; in order to view the process of resilience in real time. Together, these two phases conducted over a two-year period, provided a retrospective account of their journeys to law school in addition, to a look at the enduring nature of resilience as students move into new life course transitions. This design also lends itself to subsequent studies that follow these students throughout their profession; thereby providing a better understanding of their contributions to their field, the Latino community and society in general.

The decision to conduct two phases was influenced by the goal of generating a comprehensive account of Latino student success throughout the K-20 pipeline. More specifically, Phase I examined the experiences of Latino students through the educational

pipeline into law school, while Phase II went more in-depth into the experiences and resilience of Latino students in law school by examining the process in which the factors identified in Phase I fostered resilience during law school and as they began to prepare to transition into their profession. This two-phase qualitative longitudinal study utilized a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2007; Starks & Trinidad, 2007), with select elements of portraiture informing Phase II.

Phenomenology centers on the shared lived experience of a phenomenon, with the intention of understanding the essence and structure of a shared experience (Merriam, 2009). A phenomenological approach provides thick description of the meaning of lived experience for several individuals. According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), phenomenology exposes “taken-for-granted” assumptions and exposes the “meaning and common features, or essences, of an experience or event” (p. 1374). Further, Creswell (2007) posits that “the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 58). Therefore, phenomenology was particularly well suited for this study as it helped capture the “essence” of resilience for all of the participants (Creswell, 2007); thus, reduces the traditional inclination of resilience research to focus on individual factors.

Framed by the traditions of the phenomenological paradigm, portraiture is a qualitative approach that seeks to “unearth goodness” by developing portraits that “capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3). Portraiture emerged as a response to the historical tendency of social science research to document pathology. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) further state:

The voice of portraiture [serves] as counterpoint to the dominant chorus of social scientist whose methods and goals have been greatly influenced by the positivist paradigm, whose

focus has largely centered on the identification and documentation of social problems, and whose audiences have been mostly limited to the academy. (p. xvi)

Hackmann (2002) states that although the goals of this design are to unearth goodness and to highlight success, the process of portraiture acknowledges that imperfections are ever-present. For the purposes of this study, this approach provides the framework needed to identify goodness within the Latino community that can potentially reach a broader audience.

Elements of portraiture that were particularly well-suited for this study include its process to identify goodness embedded in context (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983); its practice of rejecting assumptions and stereotypical explanations for student success or failure (Chapman, 2005); it denounces the majoritarian story and highlights the voices of people often overlooked in academia (Chapman, 2007); and lastly, portraiture captures the insiders view of what is important in their educational trajectory and success (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). In Phase II, select elements of portraiture are used to analyze the validity of the protective factors found to influence the K-20 trajectory of resilient Latino students in Phase I; through identifying the process and extent to which those universal protective factors are utilized throughout the academic and professional experiences of the study participants. The use of portraiture will create a new narrative of Latino success, one that is holistic and reveals the dynamic nature of the factors that influenced the K-20 trajectory of resilient Latino students (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

In summation, phenomenology and portraiture were employed to design a two-phase, qualitative longitudinal study that would lead to an understanding of the lived experiences of urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students as they navigate the educational pipeline into law school. Additionally, this study was designed to result in a series of carefully crafted portraits of Latino success that highlight the factors that protected Latino students as they

traversed an educational pipeline marred by numerous risk factors. Through the use of in-depth interviews, the main source of data collection, this study attempted to derive a typology of what constitutes academic resilience for Latinos in the K-20 pipeline.

Sample Selection and Characteristics

This study focuses on Latino students who have exhibited resilience in their educational journey. Guided by the phenomenological approach, selection of participants was carefully monitored to ensure that the sample had a shared experience of the phenomenon, in this case, academic resilience throughout the K-20 pipeline (Creswell, 2007). Using a purposeful, extreme group sampling strategy (Patton, 2003), nine Latino students were chosen with the following characteristics: self-identified as Latino, came from low-income and urban community backgrounds, have a first-generation college status and were law school students at Tier-1 law schools (i.e., top-100 law schools in the country as rated by U.S. News & World Report) at the time of Phase I of this study.

This study sought to identify academic resilient Latina/o students from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds because research has shown that these characteristics greatly influence post-secondary outcomes (Oakes, Joseph, & Muir, 2004). For this study, academic resilience was defined by the student's ability to move through advanced levels of higher education and into law school, despite limited opportunity. I defined low-income students, as those students who come from families with household incomes that are below the U.S. Census Bureau's 48 thresholds, which take into account family size, number of school-age children, and the age of the householder; were eligible and received free and reduced-price school lunches; or had parents who had blue-collar or service-sector jobs (Clark, Iceland, Palumbo, Posey, & Weismantle, 2003). I was also interested in students who grew up in urban

communities and had parents who had not earned a college degree in the U.S. by the time the students graduated from high school. In regards to the last criteria, current enrollment in law school, I was particularly interested in having a sample that was enrolled throughout the three academic years (i.e., 1L, 2L, 3L) of law school. This would be beneficial to understand their experiences and to see whether their aspirations, field of interests, or post-JD expectations have changed since starting the program.

Adhering to the phenomenological perspective informing this study, I aimed to obtain a heterogeneous sample of 10 students, as a typical sample size of phenomenological studies ranges from 1 to 10 individuals (Creswell, 2007; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). After receiving approval from the University of Washington's Human Subjects Division, I utilized a snowball sampling technique, which proved useful as names of three potential participants were derived from personal networking (i.e., colleagues in law school, friends of colleagues, etc.). These individuals then recommended five other participants who they felt could offer a unique perspective to the study. One of the recruited participants also forwarded my recruitment email to a Latino law student association at their institution. This yielded a number of interested individuals and two students were recruited, bringing the prospective participant size to 10 law students.

Given that the interviews in Phase I were to be conducted at their respective institutions, to minimize traveling costs, recruitment efforts were confined to Tier-1 law schools located in three West Coast cities. Specifically, for one week each month during the data collection, I traveled to law schools in one of the three major metropolitan cities I selected on the West Coast. Given the limited time of travel in each of these cities, participants were given an extra two days just in case they needed to reschedule an interview. Ten students were initially identified as

potential participants. However, one prospective participant was unable to make it to the interview due to a personal commitment. This occurred in the last month of data collection in Phase I. Due to limited funding and course deadlines, I was unable to locate another participant. After careful consideration of my circumstances and review of data collection research memos, I decided that the nine students interviewed by that point-in-time had provided a reasonable coverage of the phenomenon and research questions and the number still adhered to the typical size of phenomenological studies (Merriam, 2009). Thus, I came to the decision that I had achieved saturation.

Nine high-achieving Latinos were chosen because each presented information-rich experiences, whose diverse trajectories contributed to a thorough examination of the various factors involved in nurturing academic resilience. The sample is reflective of the Latino populations' diversity in the U.S. (see Table 6 for Select Characteristics of Participants). For instance, of the nine participants; six identified their ethnic background as Mexican; seven were born in the U.S. while two were born abroad, one in Mexico and the other in Colombia. Six (66 percent) of the participants were male. Although measures were taken to ensure that an equal number of males and females participated in the study, recruitment efforts resulted in a larger number of males interested in the study. The advantages and disadvantages of this will be discussed in the limitations section of this chapter; however one can argue that a larger male percentage is representative of the higher number of males that apply, enroll and graduate from law school. Moreover, Spanish was identified as the first language of 77 percent of the sample. At the time of Phase I, the age of the participants ranged from 22-27 years old.

TABLE 6. *Select Characteristics of Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnic Background	Immigrant Generation	Age in Phase I
Eduardo	M	Nicaraguan, Salvadoran	First	22
Martha	F	Mexican	First	22
Isabela	F	Mexican	First	28
Joaquin	M	Mexican	First	27
Nicolas	M	Cuban, Venezuelan	First	29
Alejandro	M	Mexican	First	25
Enrique	M	Mexican	First	26
Kristobal	M	Colombian	Immigrant	27
Maria	F	Mexican	Immigrant	27

Although two participants began their early schooling outside of the U.S., by junior high school, all nine participants lived in urban communities in the state of California (see Table 7 for Participants K-20 Schooling Characteristics). Five indicated that they lived in communities that were mostly non-White (55 percent) or completely non-White (44 percent). And 77 percent, or 7 out of nine, attended an urban public high school whose student population was mostly non-White; while 2 (22 percent) attended urban private high schools, whose student population was mostly White. Six (66 percent) reported that during high school, they were enrolled in an accelerated, advanced, or AP curriculum track. All nine participants completed high school in the late 1990s to early 2000. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the experiences of the first wave of students to enter college after the enactment of anti-bilingual policies (ex. Proposition 227); immigration policies (ex. Proposition 187); and anti-affirmative action policies (ex. Proposition 209) in California.

TABLE 7. Participants K-20 Schooling

Pseudonym	Gender	Community Composition	High School Type	Entry to Higher Education Type	Applied to Law School Fall	Type of Law School	US News Law School Rank	Year in Law School in Phase I	Degree Conferred Spring
Eduardo	M	Completely Non-White	Private Parochial	Private 4-year	2008	Public	Top 50	1	2012
Martha	F	Mostly Non-White	Private Parochial	Private 4-year	2008	Private	Top 50	1	2012
Isabela	F	Completely Non-White	Public	Private 4-year	2007	Public	Top 50	2	2011
Joaquin	M	Mostly Non-White	Public	Public 2-year	2007	Public	Top 50	2	2011
Nicolas	M	Mostly Non-White	Public	Public 4-year	2007	Public	Top 50	2	2011
Alejandro	M	Completely Non-White	Public Magnet School	Public 4-year	2007	Private	Top 10	2	2011
Enrique	M	Mostly Non-White	Public Magnet School	Public 4-year	2007	Public	Top 20	2	2011
Kristobal	M	Mostly Non-White	Public	Public 4-year	2006	Public	Top 50	3	2010
Maria	F	Completely Non-White	Public	Public 2-year	2006	Private	Top 100	3	2010

All nine participants came from low-socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds (see Table 8 for Select Characteristics of Participants' Parents). Three (33 percent) of the participants, all males, were raised in a single-parent headed household and all of the sample indicated in Phase I of this study that they were the first in their families to go to college. More than half of the sample (56 percent) have parent(s) who had an education of grade school or less. Despite this, all nine enrolled in some type of postsecondary institution, with two beginning at a community college. Seven (77 percent) graduated from public universities in the state of California, while two graduated from an out-of-state private university. At the time of Phase I, all nine participants were enrolled at top, Tier-1, law schools.

TABLE 8. *Select Characteristics of Participants' Parents*

Pseudonym	Gender	Marital Status of Parents	Fathers Education	Fathers Occupation*	Mothers Education	Mothers Occupation*	Yearly Family Income	Number of people living in childhood home
Eduardo	M	Divorced	High School / GED	Unemployed	NA	NA	Under \$14,999	4
Martha	F	Married	High School / GED	Mechanical and Technical Supervisor	High School / GED	Assistant at a Home for Mentally Handicapped Adults	\$50,000 to \$74,999	6
Isabela	F	Married	Grade School or Less	Laborer	Grade School or Less	Housecleaner	\$35,000 to \$49,999	6
Joaquin	M	Divorced	Grade School or Less	Mechanic	High School / GED	Special Education Aide	\$50,000 to \$74,999	7
Nicolas	M	Divorced	Some high school	Computer Programmer	High School / GED	Office Clerk	\$35,000 to \$49,999	2
Alejandro	M	Married	Grade School or Less	Forklift Driver	Grade School or Less	Homemaker	\$25,000 to \$34,999	6
Enrique	M	Married	Grade School or Less	Hotel Worker-Banquets	Grade School or Less	Homemaker	\$25,000 to \$34,999	6
Kristobal	M	Divorced	NA	NA	High School / GED	Home Nurse	Under \$14,999	6
Maria	F	Married	Grade School or Less	Massager	Grade School or Less	Dry-cleaning Attendant	\$15,000 to \$24,999	4

Note. * = Fathers and Mother's occupation when participant was in high school.

Data Collection and Procedures

To examine the lived experiences of academically successful Latino law students, as well as, explore the contexts and factors that nurtured their resilience; data collection for this study was completed in two phases. Each phase focused on a particular qualitative method of inquiry, was guided by specific research questions and was grounded in academic resilience theory. Although these secondary research questions ultimately answered the primary research questions of this study (as presented in Chapter 1), these two phases explored certain experiences relevant to the current stage of the student in their law program. In the following paragraphs data collection for *Phase I: Examining Navigation through the P-17 Pipeline* and *Phase II: Exploring Latino Student Resilience in Law School and Beyond*, will be further described.

Phase I: Examining Navigation through the P-17 Pipeline

Phase I of this study examined the experiences of urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students who have achieved academic success and the factors that nurtured their resilience. Phase I was completed between January 2010 and May 2010. At the time of Phase I, selected participants of this study were enrolled in law school. Two participants were first year students (1L), five participants were in their second year (2L), and two participants were in their third year (3L). The following research questions guided the first phase of this study:

Phase I: Examining Navigation through the P-17 Pipeline

1. What are the experiences of urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students as they navigate the pipeline to law school, despite adversity?
2. What are the protective factors that facilitate academic resilience in Latino students who persist from early schooling through law school (P-17)?

3. What influenced the aspirations of resilient Latino students to pursue the field of law?

Phenomenology was the particular qualitative method of inquiry that informed the design of Phase I. Data collection for this phase included: 1) researcher “epoch or personal bracketing” interview; 2) a participant questionnaire; 3) public records; and 4) a two-and-a-half hour in-depth, semi-structured, retrospective interview.

After identifying the phenomenon to investigate a shared experience, the methodology of phenomenological research suggests that the researcher bracket and interpret their biases and expectations of the phenomenon being studied through an interview. This interview will be further discussed in the validity and reliability section of this chapter. Upon obtaining the participants informed consent, a brief participant questionnaire was administered online prior to the interview (see APPENDIX A for Phase I - Participant Questionnaire). The questionnaire served to ensure that the data gathered came from a sample of participants who shared similar characteristics and experiences related to the phenomenon of academic resilience (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Through this questionnaire, the participants ethnic identification, parents estimated household income, and the racial and ethnic composition of their community and the high school they attended was used to verify that the participant’s shared similar backgrounds. In addition, the educational history section of the questionnaire derived information on the type of law school attended, which allowed the study to have a diverse sample of institutions that ranged from private to public Tier-1 law schools.

The questionnaire also served to prepare me prior to the participant’s interview. Specifically, the information provided in the questionnaire was used to collect public records, such as available data on the demographics of the community. Accessing these public records provided data on the type of P-12 institutions the student attended, with particular attention to

student demographics and educational outcomes. The location and enrichment programs available at the community colleges and undergraduate institutions attended by the participants were also taken into account. Lastly, particular attention was paid to the law schools participants were enrolled. I gathered information on the number of Latino administrators, professors and students in the school, as well as, whether certain enrichment programs or groups were available that served Latino students. Information gathered from public records allowed for preparation of an understanding that served to inform probing questions that inquired on the context of the experiences students disclosed during the interview (Merriam, 2009).

Data collection for phenomenological studies primarily consists of multiple, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant who has experienced the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2007, 2009). This method of data collection was well suited for this study, given that it provides an opportunity to gather the meanings the participants have given to their resilience. In particular, interviews also allow for an understanding of past events (Merriam, 2009). Given the gap in the literature on the experiences of academically successful Latino students throughout the K-20 pipeline, a retrospective method was applied in the semi-structured interview protocol in this phase. This led to a rich understanding of the participants' experiences - from childhood to the present - and the factors that have significantly shaped their present outcomes.

Due to the fact that the study utilized a retrospective method to examine the participant's K-20 experiences, the interview structure allowed the student to think of experiences or events not limited to a specific timeframe (e.g. a specific segment in the pipeline). This provided them the opportunity for careful reflection of their experiences and their journey to law school, which allowed them to touch upon the initial formation of their aspirations. The use of retrospective

method in qualitative research has been noted to have a number of limitations. Menneer (1978) states that memory error, social norms, guilt and level of interest can influence the accuracy of the data; however, research has shown that general attitudes and factual information is stable over time (as cited in Gandara, 1995). Therefore, special measures identified by Knapp (1980) were taken. For instance, the participants were asked for specific details of events within the past decade or two; the participant's responses were verified with the other data sources, as well as, during the cross-case analysis. However, because the participants still find themselves within the pipeline, the accuracy of their accounts may be more precise, since their experiences are more immediate; as opposed to if the interview would have been conducted years after they completed their education.

For the interview protocol, an in-depth, semi-structured format was used. Merriam (2009) suggests that this this category of interview is suited to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). While the interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions, structured questions were included to gather specific information from all the participants. Creswell (2007), guided by Moustaka's (1994) approach, suggests the following to gather this information:

The participants are asked two broad, general questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? (p. 61).

According to the authors, these questions will lead to data that provides the textual and structural descriptions of the participants experiences needed to understand the essence of the experience.

The interview questions were guided by Gandara's (1995) study on academically successful Chicanos and the research questions of this study. As such, the interviews focused on

the student's cultural backgrounds and educational journeys, which allowed for identification of challenges they faced and the factors that allowed them to be resilient in their journey to law school (see APPENDIX B for Phase I - Interview Protocol). Specifically, participants were asked to construct a chronology of the key milestones and life events that significantly marked their journey. Inquiry regarding the individuals that played a role in their academic success, experiences that fostered a desire to pursue the legal profession and their current law school experience were also taken into account. Lastly, the interview focused on the meaning the participants have given to their lived experience of achieving academic resilience in the kindergarten through law school pipeline.

A semi-structured, retrospective, face-to-face, interview with each participant was conducted at their respective institutions. The interviews were conducted during the months of February 2010 through April 2010 and were scheduled at a time that was convenient for the participant. Therefore, travel to their respective cities was stretched-out through each month. Each interview lasted an average of two-and-a-half hours, while the longest lasted three hours. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded. During the three weeks between traveling to each of the three cities, I listened to every interview, transcribed selected excerpts and noted them within my researcher memos. These selected excerpts were used to inform future interviews or contact the participant for further information. At the completion of all the interviews, they were fully transcribed. I then conducted a basic qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, I conducted a within-case analysis where the interviews were coded for emergent themes (factors) that nurtured academic resilience and influenced the participant's decision to pursue a law degree. A cross-case analysis then followed to "build abstractions across cases" which then identified the risk and protective factors in Phase I of this study (Merriam, 2009, p. 204).

After concluding Phase I, I maintained cordial communication with the participants. This allowed me to keep them informed of developments in my research and to establish a mutual trust. This proved to be an integral component of my study as it allowed me to effortlessly enter the second phase of this study, two years after the initial interview.

Phase II: Exploring Latino Student Resilience in Law School and Beyond

Phase II of this study was conducted once all of the nine participants graduated from law school. The data gathered from this phase provided an in-depth look at the real-time use of the protective factors identified in Phase I. Specifically, this phase focused on the student's law school (i.e., daily experiences as law students and interactions with peers and faculty), early-post-law school experience (i.e., preparing and taking the bar and beginning their profession), and on the meaning the participants give to their success in the K-20 pipeline. As the participants shared their experiences, I inquired into the role the factors identified in Phase I had as they persisted through new risk factors or challenges. Data derived from this phase and the last, allowed me to develop a composite of K-20 Latino law student resilience.

Phase II was completed between August 2012 and December 2012. In this time, five participants were in the early stages of their first job, while four participants were still waiting to hear the results of the Bar exam they took in July of 2012. This arrangement allowed for an opportunity to see the process of preparing for the Bar and entering their profession. The following research questions guided the first phase of this study:

Phase II: Exploring Latino Student Resilience in Law School and Beyond

1. What are the experiences of urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students in law school?
2. What risk factors and protective factors influence academic resilience for Latino students

in law school?

3. How does K-20 academic resilience influence the experiences and outcomes of Latino students as they transition to their profession?

Elements of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture method informed the design of Phase II. Some of the procedures of portraiture include: building relationships with the participants and especially, having interactions with them over a period of time; analyzing and interpreting emerging themes; visiting impressionistic records (memos); triangulating the data; and ultimately, the use of these themes shape the portrait. Data collection for this phase included: 1) a two hour, in-depth, semi-structured interview; 2) private documents; and 3) impressionistic records.

Portraiture provides the framework needed to develop portraits of Latino student success that stray away from the traditional documentation of Latino school failure. To shape these portraits of success, dialogue embedded in the social and cultural contexts of the experiences of the participants of this study is necessary. Therefore, in-depth, semi-structured interviews provide the method to derive a dialogue that captures the context, perspectives, and complexities of the experiences of the participants in this study. Additionally, semi-structured interviews allowed for the interview protocol to be improvised and match the reality or current experiences of the student (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), as well as, inquire further into the actions and roles of the participants in their trajectory and law school experience (Hackmann, 2002).

One of the fundamental aspects of a successful data collection guided by portraiture, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983), is to have an empathic regard. During the interview, the researcher or portraiture artists, must "put herself in the actor's place and witness his perspective, his ideas, his emotions, his fears, his pain" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 147). The ability

to have an empathetic encounter with the participant brings the opportunity to reach new insights for both the researcher and participant. However, the authors caution that although researchers should attempt to understand the participants perspectives, they should also be “critical and generous, allowing subjects to reveal their many dimensions and strengths, but also attempting to pierce through the smooth and correct veneers” (p.14).

Although, through a meticulous examination of the relevant context, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) posit that the flaws, weaknesses and inconsistencies of one’s experience can emerge. The authors suggest that through the participants’ perspectives, including those that deviate from the rest, can be telling and necessary to develop a holistic portrait of academic success. Consideration of these tenets allowed the interview to capture the complete and complex K-20 experiences of Latino students and the relationships between the risk and protective factors they faced as they navigated the K-20 pipeline.

This interview question specifically focused on the student’s law school experience (see APPENDIX C for Phase II - Interview Protocol). This interview served as a follow-up to the first interview that occurred two years prior and inquired into the role protective factors had in their completion of law school. Specifically, the interview began by inquiring as to what the participant has done since graduating from law school. The protocol elicited a conversation on the preparation for the Bar exam as well as their job. The interview then transitioned to the law school experience. Probing questions inquired about the students’ experiences with financial aid, diversity, peers, faculty interactions, courses, externships (i.e., did the student work as an extern law clerk to a judge?), and graduation.

Given that this interview asked for participants to reflect on their success, I had to observe the students’ reactions and responses to see if they felt comfortable in discussing their

success. Merriam (2009) suggests that when doubtful of the response of a participant to a particular topic, hypothetical questions may help alleviate the anxieties of answering a particular question. Therefore, a number of hypothetical questions that touched upon their success were asked. Lastly, I elicited a conversation about their portrait of success. Particularly, this served as a member-check to ensure that the portrait of the participant accurately captured their educational experience and the processes of resilience that influenced their educational success.

Private documents, such as the personal statement of the participants' law school application, were also collected. In this interview, students were asked to reflect on their motivations to enter law school. The personal statement shed light into their pre and post-law school aspirations prior to entering law school, and whether they had changed since obtaining their degree. In addition, participants were asked to share any documents (i.e., graduation photographs, cards, diaries) that may be pertinent to the study. In addition, impressionistic records (or researcher memos) were used to: 1) record the risk and protective factors (cultural and institutional factors) particular to the participant; 2) organize, analyze, and interpret the data gathered; and most importantly 3) record any conclusions. This allowed me to formulate/record questions, hypothesis, limitations, and plans that helped me stay informed with the progress of the study.

Given that the participants graduated and now were located numerous cities throughout the country, face-to-face interviews were not possible. A lack of research funding led to insurmountable financial barriers associated with the cost of travel to numerous locations, which required me to investigate other mediums to conduct the interviews. Upon the suggestions of one of my committee members, I considered using Skype as a medium to conduct video, face-to-face, interviews. Skype is a popular Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology that has

been increasingly used in research as an alternative to face-to-face interviews (Hanna, 2012). Skype provides real-time interaction through video functions that according to Hanna (2012), allows for the interview to “remain, to a certain extent at least, a ‘face-to-face’ experience while preserving the flexibility and ‘private space’ elements offered via telephone interviews (p. 241).

To ensure that this medium maintained the level of confidentiality and the conditions set forth in the human subjects application approved for this study, I let the participants know that this interview would be conducted using Skype and that only the audio of our conversation would be recorded. I also let them know that Audio Hijack Pro, a Mac computer application that solely records audio from Skype, would be used. The option to decline the use of Skype was also provided to the participant. Only one participant of the nine declined to use Skype as an interview method and instead preferred to have the interview in person. Therefore, I traveled to this participant’s location in the last month of data collection and conducted the interview in person.

Given the possibility of sensitive topics discussed during the interview, I assured the eight participants that used Skype, in advance, that I would ensure research confidentiality by locating myself in a quiet, secure and controlled environment where they would remain anonymous. I also provided recommendations on how they could create a quiet and controlled setting. Besides conducting the interview at a convenient time for them, I suggested that they also consider a time and location where they would receive limited interruptions or distractions. I recommended to the participants that during the interview, all email and internet browsers be closed to decrease distractions. Lastly, I informed them that with the use of Skype, technical issues may arise.

In total, nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant were conducted;

with eight done via Skype and one face-to-face. Interviews for the second phase of this study were conducted from September of 2012 through November of 2012. Each interview lasted an average of two hours, with the longest lasting two and half hours. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed. When transcribing, particular notation of pauses, hesitations and changes in tone of voice were indicated, as these were also used to inform the development of the portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

In conclusion, the completion of the two phases in this study's data collection yielded numerous data sources that have provided a comprehensive understanding of the academic resilience exhibited by Latino law students. Data from both phases was transcribed and any information in the transcripts that might lead to the identification of the participant, or any other individual, was provided a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. All audio recordings were destroyed after being transcribed.

Data Analysis

After completion of the two data phases, data sources derived from this study include 18 semi-structured, in-depth interviews (approximately 40 hours of audio), questionnaires, public records, private documents and researcher memos. The manner in which the meaning of the data collected in this study was derived was influenced by the qualitative nature of this study, which suggests that data collection and analysis be carried out simultaneously and inductively (Merriam, 2009). The process of this will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The process of analysis began during the data collection period of each phase using an open coding procedure (Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through this process, emerging themes (factors) were identified through a within-case analysis. In this first analysis stage, while taking into account academic resilience theory used in this study, I identified the

factors that facilitated academic resilience (protective factors) as well as risk factors in Phase I. In Phase II, open coding allowed me to identify if the factors identified in Phase I continued to influence the student's resilience through law school. These factors were further analyzed and expanded by 1) sharing the perceived emergence of factors within the remaining interviews in the phase, in order to hear the participant's thoughts on what I was detecting in the data (Merriam, 2009); and 2) by returning to the data once the data collection period ended and identifying other properties or attributes of the factors by conducting a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A focused analysis at the conclusion of each of the two data collection periods, informed by the particular method of inquiry pertinent to the Phase being conducted, further developed these themes. In Phase I, guided by phenomenology inquiry, specific statements about the students K-20 academic resilience was analyzed. Following Creswell's (1997) process for coding data from a phenomenological inquiry, this focused analysis identified significant statements by the participants that describe what they experienced (textual description) and how they experienced resilience (structural description). After careful analysis of each participant's in-depth interview, a cross-case analysis allowed for the themes to be grouped so as to derive a cumulative essence of the experience of resilience for all the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Guided by the analytic process stipulated by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), phase II data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously. Once the first interviews were conducted, the first step of analysis identified repetitive refrains and resonant expressions that describe how the participants describe their K-20 experiences. In this analysis, careful attention was placed on themes or expressions that revealed the process of how the factors facilitated academic resilience. The third mode of analysis consisted of listening for themes expressed

through cultural and institutional rituals (e.g., examinations, graduations, post-JD career choice) that essentially identified the participants' markers of success within the K-20 pipeline (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Fourth, emergent themes were then identified through the triangulation of all the data sources. Triangulation and attention to dissonance between the participants was carefully examined. Through both of the phases, analytic memos served to expand on the themes derived.

Upon the conclusion of the two phases, I further analyzed the codes derived from both analysis styles through axial coding (Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), with particular attention to process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), coding for process is part of axial coding but instead of identifying properties, researchers interested in process purposefully look for actions that evolve over time and in response to their context. Understanding the process is central to this study because we need to generate an understanding of the process of resilience through the K-20 pipeline.

Validity and Reliability

Particular strategies were built into the design of this study to ensure its validity and reliability. These strategies include: triangulation, member checks, providing rich, thick description and disclosing researcher's bias or position where applied. The following paragraphs describe how these strategies were applied to the study.

To increase the credibility in the validity of my understanding of the experiences of academically resilient Latino students in the K-20 pipeline, triangulation occurred using multiple sources of data (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, designing a study that takes into account numerous cases; the conducting of follow up-interviews, and the use of documents and analytic memos; allowed for comparison, cross-checking and the verification of the data over time.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), “by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding... We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 49-50).

In addition to conducting numerous interviews, this study also took into consideration having Latino law students enrolled throughout the three years of law school. Doing so provided the study different points of view that were influenced by the position the students found themselves in (i.e., academic year in law school: 1L, 2L, or 3L). Conducting follow-up interviews with the same participants also provided an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings or verify emerging themes. To ensure trustworthiness of my data, member-checks were also conducted. Also known as respondent validation, Merriam (2009) states that soliciting feedback on emerging findings from the participants provides an opportunity to diminish the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning and perspectives of a study’s participants. Given that data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously, member-checks occurred as I interviewed participants. I shared my emerging themes with participants in the interviews of Phase II to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of their perspectives (Merriam, 2009).

Lastly, the third strategy applied included examining my positionality as the researcher of this study. Prior to beginning Phase I data collection, I participated in an interview that allowed me to bracket and interpret any biases and expectations I may have regarding what it means to be a resilient Latino law student. In the phenomenological traditional, this exercise is known as “*epoché*” or bracketing, which is defined as the process of setting aside all preconceived experiences and bracketing one’s views so as to not influence the interpretation of the participants experiences (Creswell, 2007). As a doctoral student in education with similar background characteristics to the law school participants of this study, it was necessary to

bracket my own experiences and interpretations. In the early stages of this study, a colleague conducted an exploratory interview that touched upon many of the themes investigated in the interview protocols used in this study. The notes taken by my colleague served to limit any biased conclusions and instead focus on the participants' perspectives.

Examining my biases, dispositions and assumptions however, also allowed me to recognize that my experience as a low-income, first college generation, Latina student who has achieved academic success in the K-20 pipeline, can be used to gain the trust of my participants. Prior to interviewing my participants in Phase I, my insider knowledge allowed me to devise probing questions that encouraged my participants to go more in-depth into their experiences and perspectives. On the other hand, I also acknowledge that this insider knowledge could lead to assumptions and expectations that may influence how I interpret the data. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) concurs that my experience can be used as a resource to understand my participants experiences, but must be controlled to ensure that the participants stories come to light. They state:

The researcher brings her own history-familial, cultural, ideological, and educational-to the inquiry. Her perspective, her questions, and her insights are inevitably shaped by these profound developmental and autobiographical experiences. She must use the knowledge and wisdom drawn from these life experiences as resources for understanding, and as sources of connection and identification with the actors in the setting, but she must not let her autobiography obscure or overwhelm the inquiry (Chapman, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 95).

One of the particular strategies that portraiture suggests is that researchers have an empathetic regard. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), "a portraitist tries to imaginatively put herself in the actor's place and witness his perspective, his ideas, his emotions, his fears, his pain" so as to avoid biases (p. 147). Practicing empathetic regard allowed me to acknowledge my own biases but also, view their experiences as separate from my own and directly influenced by

their experience to law school. As a doctoral student in education, the journey to the Ph.D. has been different than the participant's journey to the JD. Acknowledging this difference has allowed me to look at their experiences as new experiences and acknowledge any contradictions to my own experience.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was designed following strategies that would ensure the variability and reliability of its findings. However, I recognize that it is bounded by and designed through, a particular conceptual framework and methodological traditions that place limitations on this study. For example, a limitation of this study rests on the qualitative nature of this inquiry. The goal of qualitative studies according to Marshall and Rossman (2010) is to understand how participants understand the phenomenon being studied in their own particular context. Therefore, I recognize that the findings of this study are not generalizable to all Latino students, families, and or communities. Instead, I suggest that this study allows for the reader to make their own decisions about the transferability of the findings to similar settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

The retrospective nature of this inquiry is also limited. I recognized the possibility of memory error while asking participants to recount their experiences through the K-20 pipeline. There was a possibility of the participants remembering events that were vastly different from what they actually experienced. Gandara's (1995) study on academically successful Chicano's also utilized a retrospective protocol, and although she recognized memory error, social norms, guilt, and level of interest influencing the accuracy of the data; she suggested that research has shown that general attitudes and factual information is stable over time. Nonetheless, special measures noted by Knapp (1980) were taken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided

by the participants. These measures included asking participants for specific details of events within the previous decade or later. Given the young age of the participants and the fact that they still found themselves within the pipeline at the time of the first interview, the accuracy of their accounts may be more precise since their experiences are more immediate (Gandara, 1995).

Due to the use of academic resilience as a theoretical framework, certain limitations may arise that wouldn't have been a consideration if a different framework was used. Particularly, resilience research has a tendency of identifying protective factors that are often too generalizable, overemphasize values of individualism (i.e., self-efficacy and hard work), or do not examine "how" these factors facilitate academic resilience (Masten, 1994). Careful attention therefore, was placed in identifying culturally distinctive factors that reflect the values, worldviews and the educational experiences of Latinos. In addition, through the use of resilience theory in combination with portraiture, which seeks to identify goodness, a limitation of neglecting the factors that have traditionally contributed to Latino underachievement can arise. However, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) posit that the flaws, weaknesses and inconsistencies that impede success can also emerge through a meticulous examination of the relevant context. Therefore, this strategy of examining the context upon which resilience occurs, will allow this study to capture the complex experiences of Latino students and the relationships between the risk and protective factors they faced as they navigated the K-20 pipeline.

To further expand on the use of portraiture and its limitations, epistemological and methodological issues have also emerged for portraiture as a research method (Eisner, 1984; English, 2000). Specifically, it has been noted to that it's empirical and aesthetic description relies less on the canons of social science research procedure and more so on the authors' observations and perceptions. For instance, Eisner (1984) suggests that as most academics seek

scholarly neutrality, Lightfoot's work on good high schools is evaluative and based on features that she suspects lead to good high schools. The author further notes that while Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture is insightful, "it relies upon personal observations and artistic narrative for its power. It submits to virtually no canons of research procedure within the conventions of social science" (Eisner, 1984, p. 200). In addition, English (2000) suggests that the basic tenets of portraiture that attempt to capture the "truth" or an essence of goodness, unequivocally produce a "grand narrative" that according to the author Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), "do not acknowledge that such contexts may also contain multiple truths (p. 23).

Still, other scholars would suggest that traditional cannon of social research has traditionally upheld a view of pathology and portraiture, attempts to advance and highlight the voices of those who have been ignored in academia. In addition, Chapman (2005) suggests that portraiture method "rejects flat, stereotypical explanations for school success or failure and depicts the multiple layers of contexts represented by events and people" (p. 28). Many of these arguments that caution to the use of portraiture have also been noted for the use of phenomenology. Therefore, after a review of this literature on the limitations of portraiture, the design of the study sought to address these limitations by ensuring that an array of perspectives was included. In addition, through the strategy of bracketing through phenomenology, I attempted to identify personal experiences and "truths" so that I can focus on the experiences and "truths" of the participant in the study.

There were also a number of delimitations in this study that deserve consideration. First, participation in this study was delimited to Latino students who exhibited resilience through the K-20 pipeline and into law school. While examining resilience is the objective of this study, focusing on participants in law school limits this study to derive findings that may or may not be

applicable to other fields. Additionally, the choice to recruit law students in West Coast cities diminished the opportunity to generate findings that may have disclosed diverse experiences of Latino students in different law schools in the country. In addition, conducting the interview of Phase I at the participant's respective law school location may have influenced their responses. Nonetheless, measures were taken to ensure that the interview took place in a quiet and safe location where confidentiality could be assured.

Similar limitations were also confronted in the second phase of this study, due to the use of Skype to conduct the follow-up interviews. Although this was an effective method given the participants multiple locations, three of the eight interviews conducted online experienced an interruption due to low Internet connectivity, which caused the Skype call to be dropped. It should be noted that Skype does have a feature that allows the call to be automatically dialed when the call is dropped, resulting in only a few seconds passing between the calls. Nevertheless, although this was a cost-effective medium to conduct the interviews, I cannot say that this would have been effective if these were the first interviews conducted with my participants. I believe that the rapport I developed with my participants over a two-year period assisted us in being able to seamlessly return to the conversation and feel comfortable in the setting. It was my impression that the full disclosure of my participants to share their experiences was very similar to the outcomes of the first interview conducted in person.

In conclusion, this chapter has thoroughly described the qualitative longitudinal methodology I used to guide data collection and analysis of this study. In addition, I introduced the sample, data sources and process of analysis that led me to inductively derive a process of resilience; identify the factors which nurture that resilience; and identify the experiences of

academically resilient Latino students as they navigate the pipeline into law school, despite adversity. In the following chapters, the findings of this study are provided.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND ACADEMIC RISK FACTORS IMPACTING THE K-20 EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMICALLY RESILIENT LATINO STUDENTS

The following three chapters will reveal the findings of this study by examining the unique experiences of academically successful Latino students and the factors that influenced their resilience. Although the experiences of the nine Latino law students involved in this study were greatly impacted by numerous obstacles highlighted in Chapter 1, at the conclusion of Phase II data collection, all nine participants of this study had completed their educational journey and graduated with a Juris Doctorate from a Tier 1 law school.

In this chapter I will explore the context for which academic resilience occurred for the participants, in order to glean the interconnections between risk factors and protective factors. As stated in Chapter 2, one of the gaps in academic resilience research is its omitting the context and process upon which resilience occurs. Individual protective factors are often presented without an explanation of how academically resilient students derive such factors, missing an opportunity to examine how these factors can be replicated in other contexts. To address this gap, emergent themes that reflected risk factors that impacted their K-20 educational experiences and outcomes were examined. It is thus within this chapter that I address the first research question: What is the lived experience of urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students as they navigate the educational pipeline into law school?

Several risk and protective factors emerged from the participants' narratives as they revealed their experiences along the K-20 pipeline. Salient in their descriptions however, was their recognition of the adversity, or risk factors they encountered in their educational journey. The following sections provide an understanding of the risk factors that impacted the educational trajectory to law school of academically resilient Latino students. To achieve this, the chapter is

divided into two sections. The first examines the socioeconomic background risk factors that predisposed these participants to academic risk. The second examines the K-20 schooling experiences of the participants, with particular attention paid to their experiences as first-generation college students.

Setting the Context: Risk Factors

This section presents background risk factors that were prominent points in all of the participant's narratives. In particular, there were three emerging themes from the interviews: the immigrant experience, poverty and its impact on the family, and exposure to community risk factors. The following sections describe the role these risk factors and stressors had on the educational experiences and outcomes of the participants, their families, and communities.

The immigrant experience. Six of the participants explicitly noted the influence of, and their strong identification with, the immigrant experience. Having parents who were immigrants, or the participants themselves being immigrants greatly impacted their identities. This is evident in how Isabela began our first interview:

So I guess something that's important or that I consider important for anybody to know about me, is that I am a child of immigrants. And that even though I am a child of immigrants, I consider myself an immigrant [because] I identify more with that experience than I do with sort of the typical American experience.

Many also recounted their educational experiences and outcomes embedded within the hardships their parents faced. Interestingly, most of the participants shared that their parents never talked to them about the injustices they faced as undocumented immigrants. However, at an early age they were aware that their parents were often in situations where they were exploited or undervalued by their employers. Alejandro, for example, shared that he often saw his parents being taken advantage of by employers who “would make them be on-call 24 hours a day and threaten them

with deportation.” He shared that his father was actually deported at one point and his family lived under constant fear for their safety. Enrique’s parents stated similar treatments by their employers. He recalled his frustration seeing his parents fight for basic rights:

My parents were both service employees, they were laborers. And so, seeing my dad afraid to involve himself in concerted actions to bring a union to his job site because he was afraid he would lose his job. Or seeing my mom have to sue her employer to try to get appropriate workers compensation and medical benefits after a serious workplace injury, when her employer wouldn’t just give it to her [despite] all those years of time she had spent with them.

The immigrant experience left Enrique and his family, along with other participants who shared like experiences, with a constant fear of the abuse in the workplace or deportation, and a sense of frustration for the injustices their parents faced. Nonetheless, these participants transformed this fear and frustration into a strategy for how they approached their education. This is evident in Joaquin’s experience, who said that his parents’ Mexican immigrant experience “had one of the biggest impacts on my life, the way I view things, and the way that I work to achieve what I want.” The influence of the immigrant experiences of the participants’ parents will be further discussed in Chapter 5, within the context of protective factors that inspired these students to persist in the K-20 pipeline.

For two of the participants, they not only experienced the challenges that came from having immigrant parents, but also faced their own challenges as undocumented immigrants. In addition to experiencing the same risk factors as the other participants, Kristobal and Maria experienced other stressors due to their undocumented status. Both Maria and Kristobal came to the U.S. at a young age. After his mother separated from his father, Kristobal, his sister, and mother came to the United States. Kristobal entered the U.S. schooling system in the seventh grade. To him, beginning school in the U.S. signified that “there was no turning back.” He further notes, “At first, it felt like we were on vacation, you know? It didn’t really hit me until we

went to school to fill-out paperwork to sign up.” Kristobal shared the frustration he felt, given the restrictions he encountered due to his undocumented status. For instance, Kristobal expressed the following:

The period of time our family didn’t have papers and I was in school, really taught me what it meant to have good grades on one hand, but not be able to reap the benefits of having good grades. You can’t tell people that you can’t apply for financial aid. You’re afraid of what’s going to happen if you apply and what kind of questions they’ll ask.

Roughly two years prior to beginning the college application process, his mother, sister, and he were able to obtain legal documentation. Maria’s undocumented status on the other hand, led her to experience a sense of disillusionment and disbelief. Although she excelled in school, the fact remained that her undocumented status provided her with few options. Maria and her sister followed her parents to the United States a year later after they had left Mexico. Maria began her schooling in the U.S. in fifth grade. She had excelled in her studies and was named the class valedictorian of her high school. She applied to college and was admitted to many prestigious universities. It was during this process, however, that Maria found out about her status. She revealed the following:

I knew I wasn’t born in the states. I knew I didn’t know the language and I knew that my family had been struggling in many different ways, but it did not click. I didn’t even think about that you know...that I wasn’t going to get to go to college because of my status. ‘Till my parents finally told me, “You weren’t born here.” That equaled, you’re “out of status.”

Maria’s goal to continue her education suffered immensely after learning of her status, but what was more difficult to accept was the fact that the scholarship that she had been given to pay the full costs of her college education was “taken away because they found out about my status.”

Poverty and its impact on the family. During the years that most of the study participants were high school students (2001-2003 and 2002-2004) the median income of households in the state of California was \$59,878 and \$59,401, respectively (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2011). Given this, seven out of the nine participants lived in households that were below the median state household income. In addition, the poverty threshold between 2001 and 2003 was between \$18,104 and \$18,810 for a family of four (U.S. Census, 2003). Therefore, of the nine participants, three were below the poverty threshold with each family earning under \$14,999, while three other families were near the poverty threshold. Salient in all of the experiences of the participants was the numerous financial hardships their families faced. In particular, they shared how being part of working class families and communities (and being from low socioeconomic status) impacted them.

The participants experienced vulnerabilities, worry, and fears brought forth by poverty at an early age and throughout their educational journey. One common theme amongst the participants was the relationship between poverty and housing security. Joaquin for instance shared, “there were moments growing up where I thought we would lose our house. I thought we would lose our apartment. Living those things as a child, they really shape you.” When Eduardo was a sophomore in college he experienced the same fears Joaquin experienced. Eduardo stated that the owner of the house his father and grandmother lived in, while he was in college, was trying to evict them. He spent that semester worried and thinking, “where are we going to live? I can come back one weekend and not have a place to live.” His father was able to retain his home, but regrettably Eduardo had to face this same scenario during his final quarter of law school and while getting ready to take the bar exam. He confided the following:

There was a lot going on. My dad and I were getting evicted from our home. I had to pay for a lot of his stuff because he didn't have any money. I was working and in school, trying to make sure I had all the credits I needed [to graduate]. And then I had to step in and serve as the attorney until we were able, thankfully, to find a pro-bono attorney.

The other participants also shared parallel hardships related to their living conditions. For instance, Maria divulged that when her family first reunited in the United States, all eight

members lived in one room of her aunt's house and "alternated sharing one bed on the floor." Likewise, Kristobal and his family moved into an apartment owned by his two aunts; and for the first couple of months in the U.S. they lived in a one bedroom. Similarly, Nicholas shared that at one point his bedroom was the closet, "a small closet, too...I didn't really think it was a big deal, it is what it was."

Although the effects of poverty can present families with chronic stress that can greatly influence children's development, many participants, such as Nicholas, shared that being low income was not something they identified with growing-up. They instead tended to see, retrospectively, how their families and communities could be classified as low-income. For instance, when I asked Enrique if he experienced any financial hardships growing-up, he said, "I never really experienced anything. There was always food on the table...we didn't get everything we wanted, but that's not financial hardship right? So in that respect I never felt like we were poor." Alejandro also shared that although he was poor and lived in a low-income community, he still felt lucky, noting, "Lucky in the sense that we never had to worry about food, we always had a roof over our heads. My parents always made me feel like I was the luckiest kid growing up, even though I wasn't." Eduardo echoed Nicholas and Enrique in disclosing that at age nine when his parents divorced, his father sold his house and car to get an attorney to fight for his custody. This brought a number of financial stressors upon his father that ultimately led him to seek government assistance. He notes,

My dad had to pay for the attorney to find a way to keep me, but he just couldn't afford everything he needed and work wasn't covering it. So he got on welfare. We were on welfare, ever since my parents got divorced...going to the store with food stamps, and getting the strangest look from people in line seeing this little kid with a bag of chips and going up to the cashier and asking the cashier, 'do you accept food stamps?' I didn't think about it. It was just, like, this is how you pay for food. This is what my dad had to do, this is what we had to do to survive.

For the majority of the participants, identifying as low-income was not common given that their families always reminded them that they were “lucky” and often used other families in their community, or poor families in Mexico as a frame of reference. But as Eduardo’s quote would suggest, it was a desire to survive and persevere that didn’t allow many of the participants to think about their low-income status. Instead they focused on what they had to do to help their families and survive.

Many began to balance their education with work at a young age to help their families. Alejandro for example, began to work at the age of nine years old. He and his older sister helped his father do landscaping jobs in his community. Maria also began to work around the age of fifteen and throughout high school. She recounts the following:

I remember when I was in high school my dad was the only person working. Like, three jobs. My mom would bring in some income with her sewing, but she was only sewing for family and friends. My dad was making like twenty thousand dollars a year, for like all of us, all eight of us. My sister started working at a cleaners’ and then I started working there. And then, the whole family worked at those cleaners’ from ninth grade to our senior year of high school. We were all trying to make ends meet.

Similar to Maria, by twelfth grade Kristobal was working close to forty hours a week, Wednesday through Sunday, to help his mother and relieve the individual burden he placed on the family. In the interview, he went into detail regarding his mother never telling him that she was struggling financially, but he could tell that she was experiencing economic hardships. As a result, he began to work at a local restaurant managing a coffee cart and then went on to become a bus boy and waiter by the age of seventeen. Working many hours at a young age has the great potential to affect the participants’ school work and school engagement. As such, I asked them how they were able to balance it all. Many said they would do homework during their lunch or in class, and read during their breaks or down-time.

Interestingly, a number of participants’ decisions to work were rooted in their desires to

not inflict further financial hardships on their families. Kristobal, Alejandro, and Joaquin all mentioned that they did not want to be a “burden.” I asked Kristobal if his mother ever told him that he was being a burden and he responded, “You didn’t have to tell me I was. I knew, you know?” Alejandro had similar sentiments and shared that he “imposed” upon himself the doctrine of trying to live with the least amount possible. Although these participants experienced personal financial hardships as undergraduates and law students, many of them continued to refrain from asking their parents for assistance because they did not want to burden them. Upon inquiring as to why they felt this way, Joaquin responded:

There’s a two-fold answer. Maybe I’m too proud. I’m a grown man. And the second part of that is that, they’ve helped me enough. They’ve gotten me to this point. They bathed me, gave me clothes, they fed me. They’ve done enough for me. I think it’s time for them to rest. They’ve molded a young man, a young responsible person. I don’t think I should burden them with money issues. Money issues are stressful. So I don’t ask them for much. Well, maybe just some enchiladas when I go home.

Asking for minimal financial support so as to not burden their parents may also come from the fact that many of these students were aware that the amount of financial support they required to pursue their studies was above what their parents were able to provide. As adults, they are now able to reflect on the impact these experiences had on their development or educational experiences. Interestingly, they attribute much of their success to these experiences that made them “grow-up,” or as Eduardo perceives things, “For me, it was like; this is what needs to be done. And that was when I learned how to be mature. That’s when I started getting my life experience of responsibilities. I really learned how to be by myself.” Indeed, this work ethic allowed these participants to learn at an early age how to balance schoolwork with a variety of other responsibilities.

Exposure to Community Risk Factors. The participants of this study came from highly segregated communities; five came from “mostly non-White communities,” while four lived in

“completely non-White communities.” Through their narratives, the majority of the participants revealed that they came from economically disadvantaged, inner-city neighborhoods and that they were exposed to numerous community risk factors. In particular, two stressors that were prevalent in the students’ accounts were their awareness of the lack of opportunity in their communities and their exposure to violence.

Despite the numerous risk factors that they encountered in their communities, the participants of this study remained academically resilient. However, apparent in their narratives was the pain and frustration they experienced over the loss of family members and friends, due to the lack of resources available in their communities and community violence. Although these participants were academically successful, they recognized that their own immediate family members did not have the same educational opportunities they had. Isabela’s sister for instance, got involved in a local gang at an early age and became pregnant when she was 17 years old. Her brother joined the Navy, while her little sister (who had a learning disability) graduated from high school, but did not continue her education. Isabela was therefore the only one of her siblings to persist in the K-20 pipeline. Martha’s siblings had similar outcomes as those of Isabela. Martha’s older brother got married when he was 18 and both of her older sisters became pregnant at the age of 18. As a result, all three began to work at the age of 18. Martha explains in the following statement that her brother was on track to graduate from high school and wanted to continue his education but encountered some challenges that prevented him from doing so.

The next youngest, who is 12 years older than I am, was considering going [to college in the East coast]. He took the SAT and applied. He was the only one [in my family] that went through the whole application process...But he didn’t want my parents to have to bear the financial burden. He had not been exposed to different routes he could take to cope with those financial burdens. And so he thought, “I can’t do this...I’ll go to school when it’s on my terms and when I can do it without, you know, placing this burden on my parents.” So he joined the Air Force.

Similarly, Enrique's older brother aspired to continue his education, and started at a four-year institution. However, he left this institution and enrolled at a community college, where he eventually dropped out. Enrique then revealed that his older sister also had started at a community college, but dropped out after getting married and becoming pregnant. Recently however, Enrique said that his sister "went back and finished her Associates Degree and then last year, graduated with her bachelors. It took her 10 years, but she finally got her bachelor's."

Joaquin's older siblings had experiences that mirrored those of Enrique's. His older brother began at a city college, with the aspiration to transfer to a four-year university. Joaquin followed him to the same community college. Joaquin transferred, while his brother remained at the institution. However, at the time of the interview in Phase II, Joaquin shared that his brother had transferred and was now working towards his bachelor's. Joaquin also has two younger siblings. When talking about his sister and younger brother, he appeared disheartened by their outcomes. He expressed the following:

You know, I'm the first one to go to school. And [my sister] was following my path. And she was doing really well! She was well on her way to transferring out to anywhere she wanted. But then she got a boyfriend and got pregnant... So it just bugs me. It really bugs me. That I've done this and I've given them a guide on how to do this... And my sister hasn't followed.

Joaquin's response suggests that he wanted his siblings to have the same educational outcomes that he had, but he recognizes that there have been many obstacles that have influenced the different educational outcomes within his family. In particular, when talking about his younger brother who has a disability he states, "I hope he follows, but the way our school system is with kids with disabilities, who knows?"

In addition to their awareness of the lack of resources available to their communities and their families, the participants also battled rampant violence. For instance, Joaquin said of his

community, “It was pretty rough...there was a period where gangs pretty much ran the neighborhoods.” He continued, recalling the many instances where he would encounter the gangs in his neighborhood, “I remember playing stickball and baseball with my friends, and gangs and drug dealing was going on less than fifteen yards from me. So I was always afraid to come outside because of the gangs.” Explicit within Joaquin’s experience is the fear that he and his family felt due to a high exposure to violence in the community. This fear greatly limited their activities outside of the home. Alejandro corroborated Joaquin’s sentiments when he shared the following memory, “There was a point that it was pretty bad...in a lot of ways, I was fearful walking around at night. There were corners that I would never go to because that’s where all the murderers hung out. So I wouldn’t go near there.” Although Alejandro shared that by the time he was in high school the city began to experiment with gang injunctions, he grew up exposed to, and fearful of, unprecedented levels of community violence.

A number of participants shared numerous instances where they found themselves to be indirect victims of violence. Alejandro for instance stated, “There are people that I used to play and hang out with, that are in prison...and that were killed.” Eduardo shared a similar experience, and reveals the outcomes of his three middle school friends in the following quote:

[Of] the core friends that I had, one of my friends from middle school joined a gang in high school. He’s dead. He got shot in a gang fight. [Pauses] Yeah. And my other friend from middle school; he actually played in our baseball team and also came from a single parent home. In high school he started getting involved in drugs and then went to jail. And [my other friend], we played basketball together, he was going to get a scholarship to go to college but he had a child and dropped out of high school.

Of the nine participants, Kristobal was the only one who was a direct victim of violence in his community. Weeks before graduating from high school, Kristobal and his sister were the victims of a nearby burglary. He reveals this traumatic experience in the following conversation:

DDA: Did you do [an academic residential program for incoming undergraduates]?

Kristobal: I was. But didn't go. Here's the thing...I got shot.

DDA: What?! If you are okay talking about it, can you tell me what happened?

Kristobal: Right before I graduated from high school. Wrong place at the wrong time? Me and my sister were just driving. [Burglars] wanted our car, we didn't want to, and they just started shooting. At that moment, I didn't think I got shot because my sister was crying so much....I was like, "You need to go. We need to move. Go! Go! Go!" I called 911 and they took really long...[When they got there], they asked, "Are you okay? Did you get shot?" I said, "Nah, I'm cool. My sister, she got shot. She needs help." But then [the paramedic] was like, "You got shot too." As soon as he said that, my knees buckled and I fell to the ground. And it hurt. It hurt.

Due to the injuries Kristobal sustained, he was left in a wheel chair. He was able to attend his graduation and give the commencement speech in Spanish. However, he was unable to participate in the academic residential program at his undergraduate institution because he had to go through therapy to "relearn how to walk."

Incredibly, as urban youth in inner-city communities, most of the participants shared that this dangerous environment actually made them focus more intently on school. The long-term cumulative effects of community violence that the study participants underwent, and how they coped, are discussed further in the coming chapters. However, through the instances highlighted in this section, it is incontrovertible that the study participants endured numerous risk factors that influenced their identities and life experiences. Now that we have discussed several background factors that have created an environment for academic risk amongst the participants, the following section will focus specifically on the K-20 schooling experiences of these low-income, urban Latino students.

K-20 Schooling Experiences and Institutional Risk Factors

Before entering the classroom, the participants of this study experienced a number of risk factors. The trauma brought forth by the immigrant experience, poverty, and community

stressors materialized into and throughout their K-20 educational trajectories. Their experiences were further complicated by their first-generation college student status and the inequitable schooling conditions present in their economically disadvantaged, urban communities. With the exception of Martha, whose K-12 schooling was entirely through private parochial schools, the other participants attended low-performing, under-resourced, highly segregated public schools at one point or another. Either implicitly or explicitly, the participants made comments regarding their awareness of the inequities present in their schools and the influence being a first-generation college student had on their K-20 trajectory. In the following sections, I will present the participants K-20 schooling experiences as urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students in their journey to law school.

Kindergarten through 6th Grade. At the beginning of the participant's K-20 pipeline to law school, a significant finding was that more than half had access to high-quality elementary education. Martha and Eduardo began their trajectories in private schools; while the remaining participants began in public schools. Salient among these five participants' early schooling narratives however, were the great efforts their parents made to ensure that they had access to high-quality early education. As previously noted, Martha was the only participant who attended private parochial K-12 schools. After her older siblings (who were attending public schools) did not have the outcomes her parents expected, the family moved to a neighboring city. In this new city, her older siblings were able to attend private Catholic high schools. However, her older sisters soon returned to public schools, as these schools offered services for pregnant minors. Martha therefore, was placed on an all-private Catholic school trajectory. She explains that the level of parent involvement required by her elementary school really shaped her experience. Her mom, who did not return to work until she was in eighth grade, spent most of the first three or

four years of Martha's elementary school experience hosting bake sales, planning field trips and helping the school's carnival each summer. In addition, she remembers that both her elementary school and high school had monthly parent meetings, which kept her parents engaged and informed of her progress throughout her K-12 journey.

Eduardo similarly began early schooling through a private institution; he began his trajectory in a Montessori elementary school. For his first three years, from kindergarten to second grade, his father went to great lengths to be able to finance his studies because he thought this type of school prepared students better than traditional schools. Regrettably, after his parents divorced his father could no longer afford it. Although Eduardo's father was unable to continue to finance private education for his son, he continued to be personally invested in ensuring that Eduardo had access to a quality education. Eduardo recalls that for third and fourth grade, he enrolled in seven different elementary schools because his father was adamant that he have access to quality teachers and environments. Eduardo elaborates on his father's involvement:

He always went to the first day of class with me and sat in the back. [There were a] couple of times [that] he would just take me out of class and say, "we are leaving...because that's not a good teacher. She's not going to teach you what you need to know." That same day, we would go to another school. So I was just used to it; seven different schools the whole time we were living in that one bedroom [after the divorce].

Today, Eduardo credits his Montessori elementary school for providing him his "first exposure to education." He further notes that his early educational experiences and the efforts of his father to ensure that he had a high-quality early education, gave him the foundation he needed to withstand the inequities he would later face when entering a low-performing, public, junior high school.

Like Martha's parents and Eduardo's father, Isabela and Nicholas' mothers wanted to ensure that they attended quality schools. For Nicholas, his mother went to the lengths of moving

with her son to a friend's back-house, so that they can have an address that would allow him to attend a better public school district than the one they lived in. In addition, he shares that his mother was particularly interested in the Spanish immersion program available from Kindergarten to fifth grade. Unfortunately, contrary to his mother's belief that this was a quality program, Nicholas now thinks that the Spanish immersion program served as a tracking mechanism. Students of color were in this program, while White and Asian students found themselves in the all-English elementary school programs. Still, reflecting on his mother's efforts, Nicholas acknowledges that his mother "would put [education] first above everything else" and although she didn't know how to help him navigate his education, his education "was the most important thing to her."

Unlike Nicholas' mother, who wanted her son in a Spanish immersion program, Isabela's mother wanted the complete opposite. "Even though I grew up in the ghetto, I went to school in a White area because of my mom." Isabela stated further that this was due to the fact that her mother noticed that her nieces and nephews did not have a good grasp on the English language. As a result, her mother told her that she was "going to go to school on the other side of the city," given that this neighboring city's public elementary school was known to be better than those in her community and had an all-English curriculum. However, upon arriving, Isabela shared that she was placed in Special Education classes until third grade because she did not speak English and the school did not have a bilingual education program. She feels that she learned the language quickly, but experienced a number of tensions due to the fact that she was one of three students of color at the school. She described numerous instances where her young peers would tease her when she spoke Spanish. In particular, she shared that "bringing food was a big disaster." The following describes such an incident:

One time, I brought nopales and chorizo because my mom made burritos for my dad. That's what he ate and she wasn't going to make special sandwiches for me. And so I brought them to school and this kid was like, "Oh what's that?" And I said, "Oh well, nopales." He didn't know what that was and I didn't know how else to translate it except to say it's cactus. And he said, "Ewww, the spiky stuff." So I said, this was the first and last time I'm ever bringing this.

Like her nopales and chorizo burritos, Isabela also disclosed that she stopped talking in Spanish and began to "fake interest in the current pop stuff" like listening to English music and following the "New Kids on the Block," when in fact, she was really into Bronco; a famous Mexican group. In some ways Isabela felt like she was living "two lives; one in elementary school and one at home." It was not until she returned to her community's middle school, which had a larger Latino student population, that she was able to embrace her Mexican identity.

The remaining participants attended public schools in their local communities. Although some of the elementary schools that these students attended were considered low-achieving schools in the state of California, within the schools, these students were able to find teachers or educational tracks that put them on a trajectory of success. For instance, when Maria began her schooling in the U.S. she was placed into an all-English class, as a bilingual education program was not available at her school. Maria shared that learning a new language was not as difficult for her and she attributes this to her father and teacher.

It wasn't as difficult for me. I think mainly because my dad would encourage us to only watch TV in English. He would tell us, 'talk to each other in English. Make friends who speak English. Try to speak, read, watch TV in English.' Yet, at the same time they wanted us to keep the Spanish language and only speak Spanish at home...And my teacher, instead of letting me go to recess, she would keep me in the room and have me write out stories and we practiced my English. She was just very attentive to me.

By seventh grade Maria felt comfortable with the language and was placed in Honors classes, and this was partly due to the investment of her teacher in her progress. Enrique also shared that he encountered a number of "teachers that were very interested in teaching us." He specifically

remembered a teacher in third and fourth grade who “was very into science...and he encouraged us to learn.” In some ways, what these participants remember from these teachers was their ability to connect what they were teaching to the lives of their students. Alejandro’s experience with his sixth grade teacher further supports this idea:

He was my science teacher, but he always used to talk to us about the connection between doing well in school and in life. So he would not only teach us the curriculum, but he would actually tell us about stuff that went on in the real world and how education would make it better...So he was already starting to [make us] think about the bigger picture. To me, this was really fascinating as an eleven year old.

The early experiences these participants had with their schools and teachers greatly shaped their view of schooling. Despite later encountering numerous teachers that were described as unqualified, racist, or uncaring by the participants, these early schooling experiences instilled a sense of their own potential. Joaquin for instance shared, “There was a few teachers that [were caring]. And they still stay with me because they did just that, they cared.”

Middle School. As previously noted, Kristobal began his educational journey in the U.S. in the seventh grade. He described numerous challenges he faced, as he and his family began their life in a new country. One of the most difficult challenges he encountered was his immersion into the English language. The hardship he experienced is evident in below recounting:

So I get signed up and [the administrator] says, ‘we need to do a test just to see what level [of English] you’re in.’ He get’s this little picture book and shows me a picture of a bus and asks, ‘what is that in English?’ And I couldn’t tell him. I felt so angry. Because it’s a simple bus. And I knew what it was but I just couldn’t say it. He gave me this look and then he was like, ‘oh, you go to ESL 1-2.’ I felt like I was placed in a second grade class. It made me feel stupid.

For the next year Kristobal felt unchallenged by the rigor of the type of education he was receiving in his English as a Second Language (ESL) courses; and unlike Maria, who had a teacher who was invested in her learning a new language, Kristobal shared that his teachers were

“disrespectful, gave him looks, and felt like they were setting me up to not do well. Still, he managed to get straight A’s and pass three levels of ESL courses by the eighth grade. As he was scheduled to begin advanced ESL 5-6, Kristobal suggests that given budget cuts the level was eliminated. However, it may be likely that given the passage of Proposition 227, which eliminated bilingual classes in public schools in the state of California in 1998, this ESL level was eliminated. He was told at the end of the academic year that he would be placed in the only available ESL level at his school; he would have to repeat ESL 3-4. Kristobal remembers that he spent all summer dreading the idea of going back to school and urging his teachers, “please don’t send me back to that.” When asked why he felt that way, he responded that at that age he already regarded it as “just too remedial. Because I mean, sure I spoke Spanish. But speaking English doesn’t mean I can’t do math...you are not smarter than I am because you know how to say something and I don’t.” Fortunately, he was able to petition out of the ESL courses and enter an all-English class.

In middle school, some participants began to participate in school and community sport leagues. For Nicholas and Eduardo specifically, their participation in organized sports presented them with educational experiences and opportunities that were significant across their educational journey. Nicholas for instance, attributes his academic persistence to being tracked into the Gifted and Talented Education (G.A.T.E.) program at his school, and his ability to avoid community risk factors due to his involvement in school sports. “I always wanted to play football,” Nicholas shared, “that’s all I wanted to do. So I knew that I had to be at practice and they were always after school. So this helped me too, [because] a lot of my friends who I grew-up with started to change in middle school; that’s when things started changing in terms of our trajectories.” For Nicholas, his goal of playing college football allowed him to persist and stay

out of trouble. Like Nicholas, Eduardo also correlates his academic success to the opportunities that his involvement in sports provided. However, there were some negative factors related to their sports involvement. In middle school, Eduardo began to notice the low expectations his teachers had for athletes. He recalled the following incident:

I played basketball and baseball everyday. I would go to class, but we would mess around so much. I don't think I can tell you what I learned from Middle School. There was actually a time I was trying to finish an assignment and my Math teacher said, "Eduardo, honey, don't worry about it. You have a game today, don't even worry about it. If it's too hard don't do it. It's not you. You play baseball." At the time, it didn't click. I was like, "Oh, sweet, I don't have to do this assignment."

Eduardo however began to notice the low expectations his teachers had of him and that at his "middle school, there was no exposure to college. I didn't know what you needed to go to college...or that you needed to get a certain GPA or had to take the SAT." While his middle school failed to provide him with the preparation and resources to go to college, Eduardo shared that instead, "baseball is one of the key components for me going to college." While he played baseball in middle school, he was recruited to a private high school and was able to secure a scholarship that allowed him and his father to pay the over \$15,000 tuition. Unlike his public middle school, the expectations in this new school and its rigorous college preparatory program set Eduardo on the path to college.

For the other participants who also attended public urban middles schools, knowledge and preparation for a college preparatory curriculum occurred through environmental factors that promoted academic achievement. Specifically, four of the participants were identified as "gifted and talented" in elementary or middle school; however the benefits did not begin to manifest until the participants were in middle school. Access to quality teachers and educational enrichment programs were some of the benefits of enrollment in GATE programs. In particular, a number of participants began to notice in middle school that their identification as "gifted"

often meant that they were segregated from non-achieving groups. Nicholas for instance (who was identified in fifth grade) shared that when his peers' paths started diverging in middle school, he felt that being tracked separated him from his peers' trajectories. Similarly, Isabela suggests that when she was tracked in middle school, she began to be exposed to opportunities that allowed her to learn about college. Being tracked in an Advanced Placement (AP) curriculum allowed her to encounter teachers who would ask her "What are you gonna do for college?" and then recommend her to join Upward Bound, a federally funded educational college preparatory program for low income and first-generation college students. Alejandro and Enrique also benefited from being enrolled in the GATE program, as these classes were presented with additional resources. Both of these students encountered teachers or presentations that encouraged them to apply to a comprehensive public, four-year magnet high school. In eighth grade Alejandro had a teacher who encouraged him to apply to a selective magnet school. Meanwhile, Enrique learned of this opportunity because the magnet school would send recruiters to his schools GATE courses. Enrique attributes his being able to attend this school to "being in those advanced math, science, and English courses in middle school," which is where the magnet high school usually sends their recruiters. Both Alejandro and Enrique, in their respective academic years, were accepted to one of the 175 available seats at the magnet school.

High School. Four of the five participants who attended public schools attended Title I public high schools in California. Additionally, two of the four participants attended schools that were listed as "persistently lowest-achieving schools" by the California Department of Education (2012). Three schools were "completely non-White," one was comprised of a "mostly non-White" student body, while the fifth public school attended was "roughly half non-White." In retrospect, the five students who attended public high schools expressed a critical view of the

type of education and preparation they received. Isabela and Joaquin shared like sentiments when they described their respective schools as “a joke.” Their schooling was characterized as having low educational resources, a curriculum that “wasn’t stimulating or challenging,” and teachers and counselors who were “indifferent.” The participants shared a number of stories of teachers who were racist and uncaring, but more striking in their narratives were the gatekeeping role that college counselors played in their educational trajectory.

All of the participants identified as first-generation college students and often expressed their limited or lack of information regarding what college is or how to get accepted. Most of these participants relied on counselors to obtain this information. Regrettably, access to college counselors or counselors who were invested in their educational outcomes were inaccessible to some of the participants. Nicholas for example shared that while in high school he lacked college knowledge and assistance:

I think the first time it hit me that grades mattered in terms of football was when [two Ivy League universities] started recruiting me...I didn’t realize they, unlike other schools, do care about grades...[Also] I remember they sent me a letter saying I needed to take the SAT II. I was like, “I’m not taking the SAT again.” I didn’t realize that SAT II was a different SAT. So I didn’t do it.

Isabela and Joaquin similarly shared their frustration in their lack of college knowledge, however they made clear their disappointment in the school’s counselors. Isabela stated the following when describing her interactions with her school counselor:

When I met with my [high school] counselor, I mentioned that I wanted to go to [a private research university]. She said, “No, people who go to [this university] spend a lot of time in the library. And you don’t look like you’re one of those people.” So then I was like, “Well maybe I can transfer, go to a community college?” She then said, “No, that’s just really hard to do. It’s possible, but it’s really hard.” So I was like, forget you. I’m not gonna come to you anymore.

Isabela’s response to her counselor was a common occurrence for many of the participants in this study. They encountered few school counselors who were able to provide them with college

information and support to continue their education. For Joaquin, the lack of support went further, where a counselor suggested that instead of going to college, he join the military. Joaquin recalls that the counselor told him, “You could also do the military. You’d look good in a uniform.” Joaquin further explains that he took this as an insult. Specifically, because in high school he recalls being critical of the presence of military personnel and the large number of his friends who went into the Navy or Marines. Joaquin notes:

I often thought to myself, “why is the US military coming into our campus? Selling us the glory of war, the glory of battle and weapons? Why do they have their own office [at my school]? I saw it as a marketing scheme because recruiters got paid to be on our campus... And they take you out to lunch and kids thought it was the greatest thing, “he took me to Subway in the NAVY car.” You know, I kinda saw through that. I respect the job that they do, but I don’t want you to pigeonhole me into doing something because hey, I’m Latino. You think I have no opportunities. What if I don’t want to and I want to become a doctor, a lawyer?

Many participants who encountered these counselors often refrained from seeking further advice from them. While some like Joaquin drew motivation from the counselor’s opposition and lack of guidance, others sought information from other venues; more often than not, college counselors from external academic outreach programs. These alternative avenues that provided college knowledge will be further discussed in Chapter 5 under institutional protective factors.

The experiences of participants who attended private or charter high schools greatly differed from those who attended public schools. Some of the participants experienced culture shock, as this was the first time they were in schools predominantly comprised of White students. Both Martha and Eduardo attended private Catholic high schools that were “mostly White,” while Alejandro and Eric’s magnet high school was “mostly non-white.” In addition, those who transitioned from public middle schools to private or charter high schools felt unprepared for the rigor of academics expected in their new schools. For instance, Alejandro began to notice that his peers “came from better schools...just their level of knowledge [was]

like a million times more than my own. I don't think I was ever challenged as much as they were." Like Alejandro, Eduardo felt that his first year in high school was a "huge learning curve." He recalls sitting in Algebra I and "not even knowing what the number on top of the 'x' meant...I didn't know how to write an essay. When I read my personal statement, I was like, "You guys are ridiculous for letting me in, because this is horrible." In addition to feeling academically underprepared, Eduardo felt discriminated against by his fellow peers. He discloses a number of incidents:

There were students who would think that I sold drugs because I was from [an urban city]. This school was in a suburb and I'm in the city, so I must be exposed to drugs or I must know someone who sells drugs. And the idea that I didn't have money; "Oh they must have let you in because you're poor or you know, they just wanted people [of color]. Affirmative action. There were even times on the bathroom door where students would put the Swastika or write, "I hate..." and then the "N" word. The school would deal with it, but it was inherent in the student culture. You felt it.

Martha also experienced a culture shock when encountering her peers at her respective Catholic private high school. She began to experience significant challenges, influenced by her first-generation college status. Through her interactions with her peers she began to feel at a disadvantage when she realized she did not have any sources of support for the college application process. She explains:

My best friend in high school, her dad was an accountant...She would tell me her dad would revise her personal statement and go online with her to fill out the applications. And I thought, I don't have anybody to do this...My parents had no idea. I think at this point, my dad may have not known how to use a computer. I started to perceive some sort of disadvantage of not having parents who had gone through the process.

However, Martha later implies that her best friend's father offered to review her personal statement. Nonetheless, despite attending private schools that offered more resources and support than the public schools in their respective communities, these participants still felt at a disadvantage when it came to their college knowledge. Still, these students were able to seek-out

resources within a multitude of formal and informal academic environments that assisted them in continuing their education.

Community College. Three of the nine participants began their postsecondary education at a community college. The experiences of Maria, Nicholas, and Joaquin in community colleges were fairly positive, and according to them, allowed for a remedy to the lack of academic preparation they received in their prior public high schools. However, their reasons for beginning at a community college and overall accounts while there greatly differed.

Maria began her postsecondary education at a community college after she learned of her undocumented status and her scholarship had been taken away. She recalls her parents telling her, “We don’t have any money. You can’t go. You’re going to have to think about doing something else. Of course we want you to continue your education.” This prompted Maria to find other alternatives to continue her education. She decided to enroll in her local community college. There, Maria explains that she found “really good counselors” which directed her to follow the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC).

[The IGETC] is an orange sheet that tells you all of the classes that are required in order to transfer. To me, that wasn't hard. I think I said this already. If you tell me this is what you are supposed to do, I'm going to do it to get to where I want to be. And I think that's what happened.

Maria continued to excel at the community college level. In two years she was ready to transfer, but she did not have the money to do so. She continuously faced financial obstacles, given that she was not eligible for federal financial aid, and at the time she enrolled, undocumented students were required to pay out-of-state tuition in all higher education institutions. This presented Maria with economic and emotional costs that greatly impacted her educational experience.

When Nicholas began postsecondary education at his local community college, his

intentions were to continue to play football at the community college, with the hopes of transferring to play for a major university football team. However, Nicholas came to the realization that “I really need to make sure that my academics are straight if things don’t work out with football.” This realization came from encountering an English professor, who he shares, set high expectations for him. She emphasized the importance of his education and she required him to sit in front of the class. In the following statement he explains the impact she had on him:

It was the one class I cared about. I think in-part because I didn’t want to disappoint her...I just felt like I couldn’t let her down like that. And it did make a difference moving from the back of the class to the front. So I said, I’m going to sit in the front of every class. I realized, this is my education. I used to not raise my hand because I was afraid of being called a nerd right? I said, [forget] that. I’m sitting in the front of the class. This is my education. I don’t care what they think no more. I’m going to raise my hand. So it was a real transformation for me.

Nicholas began to do well in his courses, however he said he did not know the requirements to transfer. This particular community college had a partnership with a four-year university that brought college students to advice potential transfers. It was through these counselors that Nicholas explains, “I started learning what you’re supposed to do. They helped me figure out a game plan; like which classes to take and when do I take them. All the while, I was doing well in class.”

Joaquin’s journey to his local community college was somewhat different from that of Maria and Nicholas, since he had been accepted to a California State University. However, when waiting in line to register he decided to leave. He describes his decision in the following:

I don’t even know why it happened, but I thank God everyday that I did it. I was in line for financial aid to get money to go buy my books. And it was hot. I’m waiting in line and I’m just exhausted. And I said to myself, “Forget this. If I’m going to have to wait for everything at this school; waiting to get my books, waiting to get my financial aid. I feel like I’m in high school [where I had] to wait for everything. I don’t want to be here. I’m leaving.” And I left the [CSU] and the next day went to [community college]...And you know, nine years later, I’m in law school. It’s just like “Wow, the decision I made that day probably changed my whole life.”

I inquired on what led Joaquin to make that decision, but he said he couldn't really explain it besides being inpatient. Later in the interview however, he explains that after going through the college application process he learned that there were so many more universities. In particular, he now wanted to transfer to a private four-year university because, "I remember as a kid hearing their little theme song. I didn't know where it was from, but I remember the little jingle." It was not until his senior year that he learned where this song came from. So transferring to this institution became his goal. Regrettably, he experienced some challenges in the beginning with regards to the poor academic preparation he had received in high school. Yet, Joaquin shares that his "[community college] was my training ground. I learned how to study and ways to effectively community with my professors and students in the class. So by the time I got into [a four-year university], it was really easy. There was no rough transition." He also attributes his community involvement to his success, "I got involved in whatever I could. Wherever I could do something good and make an impact, I got involved. So that really helped me."

Four-Year University. Prior to enrolling at his undergraduate institution, Kristobal was a direct victim of violence. As described in the previous section, Kristobal was left in a wheelchair days before graduating from high school. This prevented him from enrolling in his institutions' academic residential program aimed at easing the transition of incoming undergraduates that he was set to begin that summer. Instead, Kristobal was in rehabilitation and attempting to comprehend his experience. When he began in the fall term, he recalls feeling out of place:

Everything I got from [this four-year institution], all the pictures, all the writing, everything I got was all brown folks...I'm walking down [the dormitory] and I thought, "Man, this doesn't look like the [stuff] they sent me. What is going on here?" And then I was like, "Oh God, what did I just do? I should have just stayed home and gone to JC with all my folks and transferred later."

Managing the trauma he experienced while encountering the culture shock of attending a predominantly White university led Kristobal to feel that he had been “cheated.” Kristobal reflects on this moment, “After I got shot, I felt like the world owed me. I felt like what the [expletive] man? I know I’ve done well. I’ve been a good kid. I’m good. Why would you do that to me, world?” Particularly, he describes that he began to feel “cheated” after he noticed the differences between his experiences and that of his university peers, who often came from White, middle and upper class status. He explains:

I felt like the world had cheated me because I got the opportunity to talk to [students] and they were like, “Oh, I went to Amsterdam. I was just coming back from Europe.” It just seemed like it was so easy for them. So I was like, “World, you owe me. You need to take care of me now. It’s my turn to have fun. I’ve been working forty hours, doing all this, now I’m here and look at all these kids. They looked so happy, and they belonged here. You owe me. And now, you need to pay me back.

For the next two years he felt “confused.” I inquired into whether he sought-out anyone at his institution for help. The one time he did approach a professor to explain to him that he was missing class because he had to make a court appearance for an unrelated event (but one that still dealt with his hometown) his professor “gave me the biggest ‘What the hell are you doing here hoodlum?’ type of look...[Gave me] the only option of dropping the class and getting an “F” and taking it later or taking the final.” Having too much on his mind, Kristobal decided to take the final and got a D+, “That’s the only time I’ve gotten a D in my life.” I asked him how he coped with all of what he was encountering. He responded, “I partied.” He shared that at the moment he too wanted to enjoy his life. He felt that he deserved it after everything he had gone through and worked for.

The other participants, too, had difficulties transitioning, when they were entering into predominantly White institutions. This was attributed to the disbelief that they had been admitted

to prestigious four-year institutions, or in other cases, feelings of unpreparedness for college work. Isabela for example, disclosed that when she got accepted to a selective, private research university on the east coast, she encountered people who would question how she was able to qualify for admission. She remembered that it would “raise eyebrows and surprise people that I made it there.”

Other students who experienced a trying transition attributed it to their academic preparation, and feeling unprepared for college-level writing. Alejandro for instance, recalls that he first felt unprepared when taking his college placement exams, “I remember going in there and I was just like, ‘Man, I wasn’t prepared for this. I thought high school was supposed to prepare me for this?’” Eduardo also felt this way, as he evoked emotions from his earlier experience of being unprepared when he entered high school. This led him to question, “Am I not supposed to be here?” This was a response that many participants alluded to when they encountered academic challenges as they began transitions to new schooling environments through law school. To provide an example of what these participants encountered in their transitions, Kristobal recounts that his first time speaking in a college discussion section, he became aware that there was something “wrong” with the way that he spoke and wrote. He shares that he raised his hand to ask a question, “I was saying [a lot of] slang in it and everyone was looking at me...Then the girl next to me asked, “what did you just say?” In this same class, he received feedback for his first college term paper and the teaching assistant wrote, “You need to seek help. [Writing] skills are not up to par.” Kristobal suggests that after this incident, he became self-conscious about how he speaks and writes; something that he has struggled throughout his trajectory. When he got his first externship, he shared:

I was a little worried because, man these are judges. What if slang slips up? What if I walk differently? They’re going to know who I am. they’re going to know where I come

from...I was a little worried, because all these kids that do externships there are a lot different than I am. One of my mentors at law school was big really big into code switching. She was said, "You don't have to give-up who you are, just code switch."

For many of the participants, they encountered individuals who allowed them to see that they were able to balance both worlds by code switching, specifically.

Other participants met these difficulties by working harder. For instance, Martha, who like many of the participants, received their lowest grades during the first term of their first year at their respective universities, shared that she soon realized that "[college] wasn't an extension of high school. It was on a completely different level. And I needed to push myself." For her first year, she indicated that she did not go out as she felt "there weren't enough hours in a day to get my work done." Soon however, she learned how to study, how to read, and work with groups more effectively, which she attributes to her adjustment to college.

Maria was able to transfer to a flagship university after her third year. By the time she transferred the state of California had passed Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540), which allowed undocumented students and their families to pay in-state tuition instead of the higher out-of-state tuition. Although this helped her to persist, she continued to face insurmountable financial obstacles. Throughout her undergraduate years, she continued to work three jobs while maintaining a full course load and was actively involved in community service projects. She admitted that she was ready to give up her final year of college, "My parents were helping me, but they couldn't pay for everything. To think about it, it was not a lot of money. But to us, it was a lot of money." For the remainder of her educational trajectory to and through law school, Maria experienced numerous stresses due to the difficulties to pay for her tuition. In college, she was only able to finish her studies after she received an anonymous scholarship to pay for her last year of college. She admitted, "Had I not received that, I probably would have dropped-out."

Law School. For a number of participants law school selection was highly influenced by their desire to be close to family. In addition, a few of participants looked into academic factors such as, the school having a cooperative academic support program for students who come from adverse backgrounds; while two participants chose their law school given the financial packages they were offered. For six participants, their financial packages often consisted of loans and one participant was able to negotiate with the school and pay in small increments. For most of the participants however, going to law school presented them with significant financial burdens and many disclosed that they are now close to \$100,000 in debt. This is a common occurrence for many law school graduates, as the average law school debt reaches close to six figures.

An additional hardship that greatly impacted the participant's law school experiences was culture shock. The majority of the participants had experienced culture shock when they began high school and at their respective undergraduate universities, however most described this particular transition, and the magnitude of the cultural contrasts they experienced, to be overwhelming. Alejandro's following statement best captures this:

A lot of kids [from] college I ran across were mostly middle class, a little bit of upper class. But I feel like everyone here is upper middle class. I thought I'd have a sense of community with the students of color here, but even they are very well-off. The only guy that I probably relate to the most is the one whose dad was a plumber, so that's a person I relate to. But with everyone else...it almost feels like they're from a different world. I had a classmate whose dad was a law professor and the mom was a Supreme Court justice for the state court. When you hear that, you think in your mind, if you could ever compete with those kinds of people.

Looking closer at the culture shock they experienced in law school, the participants often referred to the high educational backgrounds of their peers. Given the competitive nature of law school, the participants often felt that their own background was no match for their peers' highly educated backgrounds. Being the first in his family to go to college, Joaquin specifically felt that he did not have the "vocabulary" of his peers, who are the "children of judges, doctors,

engineers, and PhDs. You have all these educated folks that come from educated families, and their vocabulary and life experiences are different than mine -- not that they're better -- they're different. So I notice that.”

The participants often referred to the challenges they experienced as they encountered a culture that required a particular understanding of the legal language. For many of the participants, the frustrations of being unfamiliar with this language reminded them of their earlier experiences with learning the English language. For example, the following statement describes Maria's challenge in adapting to the expectations in law school:

I didn't know a lot of the language that we were using. Legal terms, even non-legal terms. I had never heard of certain words, I would have to look [them] up. Learning English was hard, learning Spanish was hard, and then learning law school language was even more difficult. [And] realizing that a lot of my classmates came from privileged backgrounds and we didn't live the same ways before coming to law school; that was challenging.

Most of the participants felt unprepared to engage in the type of academic writing required in law school and had a particularly difficult time following *The Bluebook*, a legal citation guide.

Martha for instance shared that law school made everyone feel incompetent, for everyone “this is completely new and different...[you question], why is this so hard? Why is it taking me 20 minutes to read three pages? Why can't I figure out the Blue Book?”

Another hardship that the participants' encountered was the individualistic nature of law school and how this contrasted with the way they worked in the past. Specifically, some participants described their law school peers as having a “very strong self-interest” and the law school environment as being “cutthroat.” Nicholas felt that the competitive nature of law school was “definitely something that bothered me. It's not my style. I've always collaborated.”

Unfortunately, desire for collaboration was apparently not something that proliferated within law school, as a number participants shared that most of the peers they encountered were unwilling to

work with others. Enrique explains that this is partly due to everyone being graded on a strict curve during their first year; “some people really want to get all A’s. Everybody is used to being successful and everyone wants to keep on being successful...I resisted it for a long time. I didn’t like the individualistic attitude that pervaded at this school. I didn’t like the Socratic Method for the most part, and so I just fought it.” However, despite the widespread ideology of academic solitude, other participants (especially those that were part of cooperative academic support programs) identified peers that were interested in collaborating and formed study groups. Martha for instance shared that the only people who were willing to work together and reveal vulnerabilities in the sense of admitting not knowing or understanding something, were those from the academic support program.

Lastly, noticeable in all of the participant’s accounts of their law school experience was their perspectives and participation in law school courses. For many of these participants, their reasons for entering law school were tied to their identities as low-income, Latino students. However, issues that pertained to their communities were seldom discussed or, as Isabela example suggests, professors “breezed through affirmative action...because it’s a very touchy subject.” In other instances, a number of participants felt that their backgrounds played a role in how they understood the issues presented in the course. For instance, when explaining her performance in course exams, she explained that sometimes how she interprets the issues is based on her own life history. She notes:

They’ll show us the issue, and I see a set of facts. But it’s like looking at a picture and you’re like, ‘Oh, I see that.’ But because of your experiences, you see the different parts of the picture and some are more apparent to you than others. And for me I guess I see, I see things and I think, “Oh there has to be a discrepancy.” That will be the issue I see. When in reality, it’s so much simpler than that. It’s like no, you’re going way off. Like all it is, is this issue. And I’m like, I wish I could just see it. That’s what happened to my last exam. And the professor was like I don’t give points if you address issues that I’m not looking for. Like I said it’s a one issue question and you address all these other issues.

But how are you supposed to look at this and only see one issue when there are so many more?

The disconnect between what the students felt were issues that deserved attention from those that were required from the course and professor, often left the participants feeling frustrated. There were many times however, where the participants disagreed with the facts presented. Some encountered hostile discussions where other law students will “try to get away with some racist comments.” Nicholas further adds that often, “their assumptions are faulty. They assume certain things about life that they have no understanding about.”

What Nicholas describes, is also something that Isabela encountered. In particular, she shares how the experiences of immigrants are often left out in lectures. She illustrates this by giving an example of a discussion concerning checkpoints that occurred in her constitutional law class. Specifically, the discussion involved the city where she grew-up and therefore, was quite aware of the community and its conditions. The interactions between this student and Isabela is expressed in the following comment:

I knew that it was a Mexican neighborhood where they put these sobriety checkpoints. So they end up picking-up a bunch of cars. Not because these people are drunk but because they don't have a license. So I said [to the professor], “I think that they are targeting Latinos.” Somebody in class then raised their hand and was like, “Well that area is a way through the freeway so it should be there.” And then I said, “No, no, no. You have to keep going straight to reach the freeway. They put the checkpoint right when you turn into this neighborhood.”

Isabela expressed that she felt empowered to be able to contribute this perspective to the class as, more often than not, the arguments put forth by her classmates often neglect the real lived experiences of immigrants. Like Isabela, other participants had similar experiences in their classrooms and although they expressed frustration over such comments, they felt encouraged to continue to persist in this field and ensure that they would be the advocates for these communities that are seldom part of the legal conversation, or are presented in a distorted view.

Still, many felt discouraged to be in classrooms discussing issues that will influence the future of a population, but the people who will be in a position to influence the law are “subconsciously detached and racist.” Kristobal also attempts to address their comments. However, he further explains that he is not the “spokesperson” but recognizes that he is often in that position, because you “look around in your classroom and see one black man sitting down...see three, four, five Latinos. And you’re, like, our numbers are way stronger than that...It’s just not fair.” Kristobal’s comments resonated with many of the other participants who also shared that they were often the only Latinos, and specifically, low-income and first-generation college Latino students in the classroom. Thus, making it necessary for them to address the distorted views often presented in their courses.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the numerous risk factors that influenced the educational experiences of academically resilient Latino students. Specifically, this chapter highlighted the various background risk factors that the participants negotiated as they traversed the K-20 educational pipeline. These included: the immigrant experience, poverty and its impact on the family, exposure to community risk factors, and how these manifested throughout their K-20 schooling experiences. It is important to note however, that for the purposes of this chapter, these factors were presented individually; but in fact, participants experienced these factors throughout the pipeline and oftentimes simultaneously. This chapter thus answered the first research question of this study: What is the lived experience of urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students as they navigate the educational pipeline into law school?

The findings presented here provided the context for which resilience occurred for the nine participants in this study. While their accounts in this chapter disclose the numerous risk

factors they encountered on their journey to law school, they also revealed numerous protective factors. Those protective factors will be discussed in the following chapter, along with others that have allowed these participants to be academically resilient and persist from early schooling through law school.

CHAPTER 5

Protective Factors: Family, Community, and Institutional Factors

As noted in the previous chapter, the participants of this study encountered numerous risk factors that have been found to limit educational achievement. Yet, they were able to transcend these barriers and graduate from some of the top law schools in the country. Prominent in their narratives was the role of familial and environmental factors that served a protective role in alleviating the effects of risk throughout their trajectories. All participant narratives pointed to the following factors that allowed them to respond to the obstacles present in their trajectories to, and throughout, law school. These protective factors included: family (both parents and siblings), community, and institutional factors. Thus, the findings presented in this chapter address the study's second research question: What are the protective factors that facilitate academic resilience in Latino students who persist from early schooling through law school?

Consistent with the literature on academically successful Latino students (Achor & Morales, 1990; Alva, 1991; Espinoza, 2010; Gandara, 1982, 1995), families played a significant role in nurturing the academic resilience of the nine participants. Most shared that their parents' sacrifices, involvement, and expectations provided them the encouragement they needed to persist in schooling, despite encountering experiences that often discouraged them. Similarly, siblings were said to play three different roles in their persistence. These included having siblings show them how to navigate the pipeline, the participants setting an example for their younger siblings, and having older siblings show them what not to do. In addition, the participants revealed that their communities were invested in their success throughout the K-12 segment of the pipeline and during their postsecondary education. These communities became their source of motivation, and many of the participants talked about returning one day to

improve the social conditions of their communities. Lastly, findings from this study offer a detailed account of the role institutional factors had in providing these students with access to information that, and mentors who, became critical in offsetting the lack of resources available in the participant's schooling environments. What follows is a detailed description of how academic resilience was facilitated by the aforementioned protective factors. This chapter will therefore be divided into three sections, each corresponding with an identified protective factor and the characteristics that are associated with them.

Familial Protective Factors: Parents and Siblings

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that families were significantly influential in the resilience of the participants. Their parents' example of perseverance, involvement, and high expectations, specifically, served to alleviate the risk factors they encountered in their K-20 trajectories. Siblings, similarly, served to provide the participants with an example of how to navigate the educational pipeline, served as a motivation, and provided an example of what not to do. The following two subsections will begin with a discussion on the role of parents and, then, the role of siblings in the academic resilience of Latino students.

Parents. Although each of the participants had somewhat varied backgrounds, all had a clear understanding of their parents' sacrifices. The six participants who greatly identified with the immigrant experience of their parents communicated their appreciation for the sacrifices made by their parents, so that they could have a "better life." Joaquin for instance, shared that his parents' sacrifices and hopes for this new country are ever-present in his own success. "You know, you think about, why did they immigrate? Because they wanted something better for us." Joaquin added, "I'm simply continuing the work my parents started." In addition, the participants conveyed that the courage and strength their parents exhibited in coming to a new country, to

“start from scratch,” and triumph often served as an example of how to persevere in the face of adversity. Joaquin’s comment about his mother’s journey to the U.S. serves as an example of these very characteristics and is representative of the other participants’ sentiments:

Coming as an immigrant, at age eighteen, pregnant with my older brother... So, that strength. The sheer determination that it takes to go through that and come to a country; both my mom, and my dad. But more so my mom because she carried us in her womb for nine months. The willpower to come to a foreign country and start a family without anything. And to stick it out. It's just an amazing story. The fact that she's gone through so much, more than I'll ever experience, and remain so positive and so optimistic about life. That's what makes her amazing. That's why I think she's such a big influence, because [of] the strength she displays.

When discussing the obstacles many of the participants faced in their education, particularly in law school, they consistently shared that the strength and optimism shown by their parents served as an example of how to persist while being faced with adversity. At times when it just seemed impossible to continue, the first person these participants would call would be their parents. Isabela, for instance, explained that during the difficult transition she was having at her four-year university, she sought the comfort of her mother. She shares:

I missed home. And, [I received my] first paper where I got a C+. I was like, “Oh my God, they just let me in cause I’m brown. There’s no other reason. I don’t deserve to be here. I should just leave.” I then remember calling my mom, she started crying and said, “I wish I was there. I wish I could just drive over to get you and everything would be great.” But then I always resort to saying, “No, no, no, no, no....that’s fine. I can do this.” And it’s because my mom has always been like that.

I asked Isabela to further expand on why she reacted this way to her mother’s response.

Although she shared that she has never sat down with her mother to talk about the hardships she experienced prior to coming to the U.S., she had a general understanding and wished to emulate the same level of perseverance her mother had exercised when things got tough. As was noted in Chapter 4, defining what those specific hardships were continues to be a difficult task, as most of the participants shared that their parents rarely spoke about the hardships they experienced. Still,

these six participants were able to ascertain an understanding of the hardships their parents experienced in their respective countries of origin, and the injustices they were facing in the United States. Isabela for example stated that she knew her mother had a tough upbringing, but “outside of that, I don’t know... What I do know, what I do grasp is that she’s been through a lot. And if she can do it, I can do it.”

Interestingly, the participants often believed that their own adversity paled in comparison to that of their parents’. Thus, allowing them to gain confidence that they, too, can overcome these (lessor) hardships. For instance, Isabela’s reaction to getting a C+ on her first term paper in college was put in perspective when she thought about her parents’ own struggles. She shared, “[My parents] decided to come over here, cross the border, and were likely subject to a bunch of violations. The worst thing I had to deal with in college was, I got a C+ on my paper. This is nothing. This is nothing.” Similarly for Maria, both of her parents’ journey and sacrifices provided her with an example of how not to give up, despite encountering numerous challenges. She recounts, “When we immigrated to the country, and we were starting from scratch, my dad worked three jobs. He didn’t give up because his family was here... I’ve seen my parents not give-up. I see my sister not give-up. And people around me not give-up.” Therefore, Maria suggests that the reason she has not given up is because those around her have been her examples of perseverance in the face of adversity. This is a sentiment that resonated with other participants who indicated that despite the numerous hardships their parents endured, they continued to hold-on to the belief that this country would provide their children better opportunities.

Additionally, all of the participants noted that their parents were highly involved in their education. Despite their limited understanding of the educational system in the U.S., or limited English, the participants’ parents went to great lengths to ensure that their children had access to

high-quality educational experiences and support. Specifically, early in the educational experiences of the participants, their parents were highly involved in school-sanctioned activities (e.g., helping with homework at home, attending parent-teacher conferences, etc.). Maria shared that despite her mother not knowing how to speak English, she would volunteer at her school and was involved in the parents' association at her school. Helping with homework was also a common occurrence in the households of the participants. Specifically, during the early schooling experiences, the participants gave numerous examples where their parents would teach them new things, as well as help them with projects and homework. Isabela for example, shared how her father taught her to read.

I remember my dad used to read Bible stories to us. He wouldn't just read them; he would put his finger on the word. Actually, that's how I learned how to read in Spanish. I would then take other books and just run my finger through the words and make up things based on the pictures. I would then say, "I'm reading, I'm reading, I'm reading."

Other participants shared similar instances in which their parents were engaged in their projects.

Martha recalls that her mother would sit with her every day to help her with her homework.

However, as she got older, "whether it was because she didn't understand the subjects or whether I just felt like I didn't need her help...she would just sit there."

This observation resonated with many of the other participants who also noticed that their parents became less involved after elementary school. When I asked what explained the decline in involvement, many alluded to their parents' low levels of education. However, they were quick to mention the many other ways that their parents were involved. Involvement that did not necessarily take place in school sanctioned activities, but the participant's felt was significant to their success. For instance, Eduardo shared how his dad attended all of his games, he recalled, "My dad went to every single one of my baseball games. He made sure to have just enough gas money to get us there. He would do whatever it took." Enrique also felt that his parents were

supportive by allowing him to take advantage of any educational endeavors he wanted. He further explains:

They couldn't really get involved much because they didn't know what to do. But to the extent that I wanted to do things to advance myself within school, they did not stand in the way... They let me apply to a high school that was not in my neighborhood and get bused out there, because it provided me with better opportunities. They let me participate in sports when I was there. If I needed to go to a friend's house to work on projects, they would find ways to get me there. It was never on me to find the hard way to get things done. I didn't have to try to figure out public transit, I didn't have to try to do many of the things that students have to do to even have these opportunities because my folks were always trying to find a way to make these things work for me.

Numerous participants also shared that their parents engaged in their education by informing them of the consequences if they did not take advantage of their education, as well as the benefits an education could provide. Joaquin mentioned that his parents would always give him examples of where he would have to work if he didn't do well in school. He recalls his thought process after hearing his mother ask, "Do I want to work in the fields, a mechanic shop, or construction? Or do I want to wear a suit and tie in an office? She always made the distinction and I think that's what led me to pursue education." Similar to what Lopez (2001) found, the participants' parents often exposed them to real work "as a lesson in life, work to teach children the value of school, and work to learn life skills" (p. 428). Although Alejandro remembers feeling the pain and sores on his body at the end of a hard day's work, he now understands the valuable lesson that his father was trying to convey when he would take his sister and him to work in landscaping, construction, or driving a forklift. Alejandro suggests, "My dad wanted me to learn a lesson, like how hard money is to get and how hard a working class job is... we [Alejandro and his siblings] realized right away why it was important to [get] our education because we got a taste of what it's really like."

Participants' parents also had very high educational expectations for their children. Some

participants noted that their parents' value on education and their expectations for them actually exceeded those held by some individuals in their K-12 schooling environment. Joaquin said the following, "I think the way I was raised had a bigger impact on me than school. Because in school, I had the opposite of encouragement. I wasn't very enthusiastic about school. I hated high school." Many students expressed that their parents' high expectations in addition to their parents' investment in their education significantly influenced their trajectories.

Particularly, there were instances where their parents' expectations mediated against the participants' own doubts and decisions about continuing their education. For example, Alejandro shares that after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; he was considering joining the military when he began his senior year. "I felt like I had a duty," Alejandro states, given that his parents instilled this sense of "patriotism" for a country that has provided him with so many opportunities. However, his mother brought up a parent conference that she had had with his eighth grade teacher, who told her that Alejandro "had a lot of potential and that she should continue to push me." Alejandro further recalls:

I think my mom started pushing me about school because of that one teacher, that one teacher conference meeting. So when I was seriously considering it [joining the military], my mom brought up the parent conference that we had with my 8th grade teacher. She was like, "No, you have a lot of potential. You should go to college before you do all this. So I listened to her.

For Maria, her parents always talked about education and how that would be the key to success. Therefore, she felt that her parents also expected her and her siblings to do well. She remembers numerous time in college and law school that she would call them and let them know the hardships she was experiencing. Her family, she says, would always respond, "Hang in there, you can do it. Or they'd send care packages" comprised of her mother's food, clothes, or "really cool shoes." Maria suggests that the expectations that her family had propelled her to excel,

because she said she has “developed the personality and character, where if I’m expected to do something, I’ll do it.” I asked the participants if they ever felt if these expectations became more of a pressure for them to always do well. Although there were some instances where they felt there was some pressure, especially for those participants who were the sole person to achieve academically in their family, most recounted that overall they did not necessarily think that there was pressure to do well. In fact, as Isabela suggests, their expectation, “whether they expressed it or not, [was] that I’m capable of doing it,” of being academically successful.

Their parents’ perseverance, their parent’s involvement and expectations were significant influences in the experiences of the nine Latina/o students. As will be noted in the coming sections, these parental protective factors appear to be fluid, occurring in tandem or simultaneously with other protective factors. Although the role of parents seems to be more prevalent during the students’ K-12 experiences, many shared that their parents’ support and examples of persistence in the face of adversity are something that they continue to reference when experiencing a hardship throughout the K-20 pipeline.

Siblings. In addition to the support from parents, of the participants who had siblings, all mentioned that being academically successful was due, in part, to their brothers and or sisters. Three different forms of motivation coming from siblings emerged from the participants’ narratives. In the first instance, some felt that their older siblings showed them how to navigate their education and in some cases, set a high achievement standard. Alejandro for example, said that his older sister did well academically and passed on that expectation to him, and he passed it down to his sisters. He suggests that the expectation that the younger siblings must do well was an expectation that was created amongst them. He attributes the fact that all of his siblings were academically successful to this standard. Quite a few participants also shared examples where

their siblings' teachers conveyed their expectations based on their siblings' performance. Maria shared that having an older sister meant having to work harder; her sister's teachers often held her to the same expectations they had for her sister. She shared, "she was my sister's teacher and she kind of expected me to be like my sister. So I had to work harder. She expected a lot from us."

In other instances, participants shared that their older siblings would be watchful of their performance in school. One of the most salient examples of older siblings however, was the role that they played in helping the participants of this study navigate the educational pipeline. Specifically, these siblings would share information about teachers, counselors to avoid, and resources. Joaquin's statement best reflects these participants' experiences:

There's been times when my brother and me have talked. And my brother, he's told me, "I'm really proud of you." And I'm like, "I'm proud of you."...I'm like, "don't be proud me man, I'm proud of you and thank you. If it wasn't for you entering, volunteering at [the national non-profit organization] I would have never met [my mentor]. And I probably would have never had an interest in the law. And I probably would have never gotten into [college]. And I probably would have never gotten into [law school] or pursued the law." So, I thank my brother all the time.

These siblings, who had gone through the college process, often provided them the support and shared information on the college process. Lastly, older siblings played a significant role in providing the participants with the information and resources they were unable to find in their schools.

The participants who had younger siblings also shared that they felt a sense of responsibility to do well in school, so that they can set the example. More specifically, the desire to pursue higher education went beyond self, because they wanted their siblings to also take advantage of educational opportunities. For instance, Joaquin explained: "I'm the first one to go to school. I wanted to give her a road map of what to do, of what I experienced, what to take,

what not to take, who to take it with, and who to talk to for advice, guidance, and services.” In addition, there were a number of participants who were particularly close to their nieces and nephews who also inspired them to set an example. Martha disclosed the following excerpt of the law school graduation speech she gave to her family where she addressed her sisters’ son:

I thanked my nephew, [he’s] like my little brother. We joke because ever since elementary school, he has followed my footsteps. He's in 8th grade. I was president of student council and he said, “I have to be president now.” He does those little things. He's like my little shadow...it's nice to feel someone looks up to you that way you know.

Overall, these participants helped their parents and siblings navigate through their educational trajectories; as they viewed their educational successes not only as a personal achievement, but also as a requirement in providing their younger siblings with “road maps” and a concrete example of what the benefits of an education look like. This is reminiscent of the values and tactics employed by their parents.

Conversely, there were some students in this study whose siblings set the example of what not to do. For instance, Isabela’s mother did not want her to go to the same high school her sister went to because she dropped out of school and got pregnant. Isabela however, after much insistence, went to the same school and excelled. Nonetheless, she attributes this to the fact that “I did everything completely opposite of my sister.” Participants such as Isabela did not look down upon these siblings; in fact, it was often these siblings who were the ones who encouraged the participants to do better and take advantage of the opportunities education has to provide. Although these siblings had not achieved academically, they became influential to the participants’ decisions to persist. Martha shared how her sister played a critical role in helping to mitigate a prevalent risk factor amongst Latinas, teenage pregnancy, and persist in a trajectory they themselves were unable to pursue.

My brothers and sisters I think had a large role in my terms of motivating me to do well

in school; more than my parents actually. My brothers and sisters would say, “look at where we’re at, this is not what you want.” I was two when my oldest sister had a baby. And I was three when the next sister had my nephew. So they got pregnant when they were 18 and stopped going to school and just worked. My oldest brother also got married when he was 18 so he went straight to work...they had hard lives...So I think growing up, I saw that and so I think that's where it came from...where I was like okay well, I don't want to be a teenage mom...And I think that I have great siblings and they told me, “You don't want this.”

And the next youngest, he considered going to school back east. Unfortunately, he had not been exposed to the different financial resources available so he ended up joining the Air Force. Actually, he was the one that I would say was a huge driving force for me to go to college. He would say, “You know, mom and dad just want you to do your best. I don't know if they know what your best is. I do. I know what you are capable of; you need to raise the bar. Don't slack off.” But overall, even though none of my brothers and sisters went to college, all I heard from them was, “You better go. We didn't do it. But you're going to.” So I did.

Martha shared that her siblings played a significant role throughout her K-20 trajectory. In addition to high expectations, they provided her with financial support to offset the high costs of her legal education. Of the seven participants who had older siblings, three shared similar stories to that of Martha. They shared that, although their siblings did not go to college, they set high expectations for them to continue and provided them with the support and understanding that they needed. This was a recurring theme throughout the interviews, as many students in the study shared that their siblings were familiar with the educational opportunities they neglected to take advantage of and therefore, helped them navigate the right path and set high expectations that would allow them to have a different outcome.

Environmental Protective Factor: Community

The role of community was a significant theme that consistently arose in the participants' narratives. Early in their educational experiences, the participants' defined community in terms of their geographic location or the neighborhoods they were from. The participants of this study grew-up in urban, low-income, cities throughout the state of California. In their interviews, many

described poverty-stricken and racially segregated communities; where gangs, drugs, and other negative influences were prevalent. However, through the participants' narratives, two different views of these communities emerged. The first perception was that these communities were a part of the K-12 (kindergarten through high school) success of these participants because within them, they found extended family members, neighbors, and other individuals who protected them from negative influences and activities. The second perception was that through their communities, these participants were able to find a source of inspiration and motivation to excel because they wished to go back and serve their communities. These participants persisted in the latter segments of the educational pipeline (college and law school) because they aspired to use their training in the field of law as a vehicle to advocate for their communities. It is here, in the college through professional school pipeline, that the participants experienced a shift from *protectee* to *protectors* of these communities.

Protected by Community. Most of the participants suggested that their communities often served as a “veil, a curtain over all the bad stuff going around.” For some participants, a collective desire to have them avoid their communities' violence served to protect them from engaging in negative activities. Particularly, many shared that they were often reminded by their parents and extended family that lived in their community, to stay away from danger. The participants consistently heard from their parents that their “community at home was much stronger than anything anyone could do for me outside.” Therefore, at an early age they began to understand that engaging with certain individuals and activities in their communities would bring them trouble. In retrospect, participants today say that in some ways, the need to steer clear of the violence in their communities allowed them to focus in school. Alejandro best captures the consensus of the other participants in the comment:

I talk about [the violence] with my roommate [in law school] too, cause he's from [a similar urban community]. And it's going to sound ridiculous, but we actually credit the fact that when you grow up in a neighborhood that's that dangerous, it forces you to be sheltered and focus on school more than going outside and playing. You really don't have any other space to go to. So your only option is just to stay home and study.

Although the community violence present in the upbringing of these students limited the opportunities they had and tangibly restricted their outdoor activities, the majority of the participants (specifically the four that came from completely non-White communities) exhibited an awareness of the influence those conditions had on their educational success and experiences growing up. However, it is important to note, that the participants' parents or the participants themselves, often created spaces where these students would be protected and safe.

Participants mentioned certain community members who played a role in sheltering them from negative influences. These community members were often comprised of extended family members or neighbors that were influential in ensuring that the participants went to school and stayed out of trouble. Kristobal for instance, shared that he often struggled to get help with his English homework from his immediate family, given that they too were trying to learn the language, but he was able to find that support through an aunt who he would go to ask for help. Other participants also described the strong influence and support they would receive from extended family members who lived in their community. In particular, as Enrique's following statement describes, the families served as another shield against the negative influences that proliferated in their community. He shares:

At the time, there was a big gang and they were a very present source in the community. Though I was very fortunate never to have experienced any close encounters. I mean, both of my parents worked but they worked alternative shifts at a time, so there was always somebody around. But if my parents couldn't keep a watchful eye – though that was very rare – they relied on extended family or trusted neighbors to always keep us close. My dad's sister lived next door and, in the back house, my dad's cousin. Down the street there was an older White family, who we got along with really well. They were like an older set of grandparents to me. So the fact that we had our own social circle, we never

really ventured out to areas where we were more likely to run into trouble.

This “social circle” that Enrique speaks of resonated with a number of participants, as many similarly experienced having extended family look after them. In addition, a number of participants shared that their circle of friends were often comprised of cousins and were under the constant watch of a family member. An important note to make is that many of these family members shared the similar values of hard work and education that the participant’s parents held. Therefore, for participants like Joaquin, having “tias [aunts] and uncles, all lived in the same city” helped reinforce the message his own parents were trying to inculcate in Joaquin. As his extended family, “they value hard work and they close everything off; what’s going outside the home. I was with my tia and she’s the same way as my mom, same person almost.” This circle often provided them with the care, protection, and reinforced the values they heard at home. Ultimately, this helped the participants stay out of trouble.

Like Enrique, whose “social circle” came to include an older White family, there were other participants who similarly had individuals outside their immediate and extended family that helped them to avoid being on the streets. For instance, Eduardo shared that when he was in middle school and his father was unable to pick him up, there were people in his community who would notice this and often invite him into their homes while he waited for his father. He states:

I tell people sometimes, I have been raised by more African Americans than Latinos. There have been a lot of my friends from middle school, whose mothers would take me in and without hesitation say, ‘Oh I know your dad is working or he can’t pick you up from practice; you can come home and have dinner.’

Even after leaving middle school, when Eduardo left to attend a private high school that was located in another district, he recalls that these women continued to invite him. They became part of his family, which was an essential support as he endured a difficult transition to high school. Similar to Eduardo, Maria shared that she felt more comfortable and supported by African

American women in her community and throughout her educational trajectory. She suggests, “My mentors have all been Black women, they were willing to step-up, go beyond. You know? Go an extra mile. I just felt attached, encouraged, and welcomed in their community. Although Enrique used the term, “social circle” to describe the numerous people in his community who played an important role in protecting him from negative influences, Maria and Eduardo’s responses suggest that these individuals in some ways allowed the participants to become part of their families. These individuals were invested in the educational experiences of the participants.

Investment in the participants’ academic success also came from the least expected places. Although not many of the participants shared direct encounters with individuals who were on a different path, they alluded to the fact that once they became identified as academically successful, people in their community began to regard them differently. Specifically, they began to see them as examples and resources for their children and community. In addition, individuals who were consistently thought to be negative influences by their parents and society, ended-up playing a significant role in helping Eduardo to stay focused on his education. Eduardo eloquently describes how this played out in shaping his own trajectory:

Even though I went to a different high school, I would still go play basketball at my neighborhood gym. It was always African Americans, and they still accepted me, they were just like, “yeah, he’s one of our boys.” They were older, a lot of them were selling drugs on the corner. That’s why they were always at the gym, because the gym is where everyone hangs out...That was my first exposure to understanding the drug world.

Eduardo shares that from seventh grade until he was a sophomore in college, he would visit this gym and play basketball. He shared that when he was younger, after the games he would often sit in the corner with them and ask questions about what they were doing. He recalls that they would just say “hustling, you know, trying to make some money.” Although Eduardo came from

a low-income background and also needed the money, he said he was not inclined to get involved in drugs. Particularly, he explains, that the guys themselves wouldn't allow it.

They would explain to me what they were doing. But then they would tell me, "You could hang out with me, but if the police come you need to run. And second, I don't want you to ever do this." At the time, I didn't understand why they said that. I just thought they were trying to be grown-ups. But then they would say, "No, you are doing well. You're going to school." A couple of them would say, "I want to make sure that you get into the major leagues. That way I don't have to do this anymore."

Eduardo's statement suggests that his community was aware of the success he was encountering through his academics and baseball. In particular, it was through his involvement in sports that the members of his community were able to see his potential and worked toward protecting him from obstacles that would impede his success. Eduardo believes that it was through the t-shirts he would wear to play basketball that they were able to become part of his educational experiences. "I'd come back and have a t-shirt that said we're the Baseball Class A, Knoxville, Tennessee" he continued, "I would travel to places that they've never been. [They would ask] how was Tennessee? And so this is the community that I would share my experience with and they appreciated it." Through this sharing of experiences, his community provided Eduardo the support he needed to offset the difficult transitions he was encountering in the private high school. Eduardo's community also shielded him from pursuing the wrong path and they shared their aspirations for him. This sheds light on the notion that, even within communities where one would think that negative influences abound, nurturing success still can occur.

From Protectee to Protector of Community. Overall, the participants' communities played a significant role in shielding them from the risk factors that they encountered. An emerging theme from the participants' second interviews, however, was the role that community played once they began their postsecondary education. Particularly, many shared that the reasons why they continued their education were because they wanted to "give back" to their

communities. This value will be further discussed in Chapter 6. However, it is important to note that through this statement, the participants' views of community as protecting them from risk factors shifted to the participants now being the protectors of the community. More specifically, participants began to view themselves as capable of returning and contributing to their communities. They saw themselves as agents for change. For instance, Joaquin shared that throughout his academic journey, a source of motivation had come from his thoughts of what he would be able to do to improve his community once he graduated: "Seeing all the things that affect low-income, inner-city communities made me think about improvement. Always thinking about how I can make something better. How can I make my community or someone else's community better?"

For the participants, their view of community also began to shift. From one that focused on geographical location, to one that embodied a particular struggle by a group of individuals. Maria's idea of community for instance, also included the immigrant community. She added that one of her specific reasons to go to law school "was to help the immigrant community." The participants began to understand their ability to help these communities that have been neglected. Isabela too chose to help the immigrant community; "I wanted to go back to work with the Spanish speaking community because that's where I felt the most at home. I always felt this could be my parents. If I have the skills, I want to use them to the benefit of my community because who else is going to do it?"

Other participants had similar questions as Isabela, because they felt that no one else was reaching back and helping their communities. Many suggested that their communities lacked resources, information, and role models. The participants however, used this as a motivation to finish because they wanted to go back and meet their communities' needs. For example, Maria

shared that her motivations to persist were tied to her desire to “go back;” “I want to go back to my community and talk about all of these different struggles that we’re going through. Let them know, that even though there’s limited opportunity out there, it’s possible.” For many of the participants, a source of inspiration to persist was rooted in their responsibility to ensure that they “keep these doors open for them.” They were involved in efforts, both during and after graduating from law school, to ensure that their communities had access to information and resources. Alejandro best captured this principle when he suggested, “We really need to create the next generation of lawyers from our community.” And he saw himself, as well as future lawyers, as the agent who would create this change. For these participants, their communities served both as shields and as an inspiration to persist throughout their K-20 educational journeys.

Institutional Protective Factors

The participants of this study encountered numerous protective factors within their families and communities that helped facilitate their academic resilience throughout the K-20 pipeline. As stated in the last two sections, parents, siblings, and communities provided the participants with examples of perseverance, support and encouragement, protection, and inspiration. Although these protective factors were influential in the academic resilience of the participants, on their own, they were not able to provide the participants with examples of academic resilience or tangible information on how to navigate the K-20 pipeline. For the participants, having examples of success and mentors who could provide them with the necessary information to assist them, as they encountered risk factors, was often mentioned. For instance, Joaquin shared that “one of the biggest challenges going into law school was not knowing anybody that was a lawyer outside of mentors and friends that were lawyers” who could have told him what to do or what to expect. Despite the absence of these individuals,

protective factors found within their schooling institutions and experiences provided the participants with the information and mentorship that guided them throughout their journey to the Juris Doctorate.

Institutional factors in the P-12 pipeline. Findings of this study suggest that there were numerous institutional protective factors in the participant's P-12 pipeline. However, the roles that teachers, college outreach programs, and sports played were particularly salient in the participants' narratives. These institutional factors worked in concert with the familial and community protective factors identified in the previous sections. These institutional factors provided the participants with the tangible information they needed to understand how to navigate their P-12 educational trajectories and set them on a path to college.

Teachers. As first college generation students, the participants of this study often faced a lack of access to quality educational experiences that would provide them with information and assistance regarding the process of preparing and applying to college. Nonetheless, as previously noted in earlier sections and chapters, a number of parents went to great efforts to ensure that their children had access to high-quality kinder through high school education. Martha, Eduardo, Nicholas and Isabela's parents for instance, navigated the schooling system until they found the right schools for their children. The participants were unable to explain what propelled their parents to do that, but they suggest that this had to do with what they learned from other parents in their communities. Neighbors or family members who had older children enrolled in their community schools seemed to inform the participants' parents about the teachers and schooling conditions their children endured. However, the participants have a clearer view of what influenced their parent's decision to allow them to go to high schools outside of their community. As noted, the participants' parents had high educational expectations for their

children. However, most were unable to provide their children with concrete pathways to meet those expectations; that is to say they were unable to tell them that they had to go to college and then law school, as their knowledge of the U.S. educational system was limited. For these parents, teachers played an important role in providing them relevant information that allowed them to make more informed decisions about their children's schooling.

For instance, Alejandro's example of his eighth grade teacher telling his mother that he had "potential" that was provided in the previous section was also accompanied with encouraging and supporting Alejandro to go to college. Specifically, through this meeting, the teacher explained to his mother and Alejandro the opportunity to attend a charter high school. Although this charter school would require Alejandro and his family to make the long trips to another city and Alejandro didn't particularly want to go to the school, this eighth grade teacher explained the opportunities that would be available to him and specifically how this school will help him get to college. Although his mother did not have an understanding of what college meant, Alejandro recalls that after this meeting his mother would always repeat to him what the teacher said. According to Alejandro, this meeting proved to be crucial, as this reminder kept him from joining the military four years later. Therefore in retrospect, he postulates, "That one sentence she said probably changed my life."

Other participants similarly shared that there were pivotal experiences with teachers in their P-12 trajectory that were significant to their academic resilience. In many instances, participants had teachers who spoke of their potential and set high expectations for them. For the first time in high school Joaquin encountered a teacher who saw his potential and expressed it to him:

I remember him pulling me aside and telling me, "You don't belong here. You belong at a better school." I said, "What do you mean? I'm fine here." [The teacher replied], "No

you should be at some private school. Go somewhere else where you can be better prepared. You're not [being] prepared here." And I remember those words stuck to me. He had a huge impact.

Knowing that these teachers believed in their ability to go to better schools or go to college was instrumental in developing the participant's college aspirations. Providing tangible information, support, and opportunities was however, more significant for these participants. There were teachers who went out of their way to help the participants; such was the case with the previous example of Maria, whose elementary school teacher would use her recess to teach her English. Kristobal, until his senior year, also encountered a teacher who spent "an enormous amount of time teaching me how to write. He would make comments in Spanish, telling me that in Spanish you would say it like this...but in English this goes first. He taught me grammar." Although he encountered this teacher at the end of his early academic journey, the support he provided was invaluable to Kristobal; and to this day he acknowledges the contribution to his academic success.

College outreach programs. Teachers were also critical in providing the students opportunities that exposed them to college. For instance, teachers were instrumental in identifying the participants that were tracked into GATE or Advancement Placement curriculum. Tracked in these programs provided these students access to college-going environments, access to resources and college preparatory programs (such as Upward Bound) that provided these students with the knowledge and assistance they needed to develop their college aspirations. For some, especially participants from public schools who did not have access to a rigorous college preparation curriculum and encountered counselors who served as gatekeepers (as disclosed in Chapter 4), exposure to knowledge about college happened, according to them, in happenstance or through academic outreach programs servicing their schools.

Maria first heard about college at a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting when she volunteered to translate for parents. At this specific meeting, the PTA association invited a speaker who came in to talk about college to the parents. Although her own parents stressed the importance of education and how this “would be our key to success,” Maria shares, “I knew about higher education in that sense, but I had never thought about the word college until a speaker came and presented.” After this exposure Maria sought opportunities that would allow her to obtain more information on how to get into college. When her school opened a college center (at the end of her tenth grade), she signed-up to go on a field trip to a local private university. Maria further reveals that the field trip provided an opportunity to remain in contact with a college student. The impact of this experience is captured when Maria stated, “I never thought I would go to college. Let alone have a college student be in contact with me without even knowing me.” Having someone that could act as a source of college knowledge for these participants made their college readiness more possible.

Not only having an information source had an impact on their trajectory, but also having someone who these participants could identify with provided them with the confidence to know that they too could continue their education. For example, Kristobal shared that in twelfth grade, through the Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), a college student came to his school to talk to him about college. He said:

This girl came to our school to get the kids who were UC eligible to apply. I had a 4.2 [G.P.A.], and I was UC eligible, but my counselor never told me...So I came [to meet her] and she's like, "Hey, so you filled out your applications for college?" And I was like, "You know, I'm gonna go to a JC." She's like, "What's wrong with you? You belong at a UC." I was like, "No, I don't know if I want to do that. It's not for me." She's like "No." And then she told me her story about how she was from the hood. We kind of bonded on that. She made me feel more comfortable, you know? And then she said, "You need to apply." And she made me fill out my application. She made me do a personal statement. And she helped me out with it all.

Encountering counselors who provided support and information on the college choice process made it possible for them to go to college. In particular, the college preparation programs they encountered served to provide these students with the resources and information their own schools lacked. Today, the majority of these participants who benefited from these programs credit their success to them. Isabela further expands on this notion by suggesting that the resources and support provided by Upward Bound allowed her to continue on to postsecondary. Isabela explained that her parents had a basic elementary school education and her older sister dropped out of high school after getting pregnant. Therefore, Upward Bound “actually sat down [to help me]” apply and fill out FAFSA forms. Isabela further notes, “if it had not been for Upward Bound, I wouldn’t have made it to college.”

Sports. An interesting final finding in the P-12 pipeline was the role that sports had on four of the nine participants. Four of the participants, all males, cited sports as being influential in their developing aspirations to go to college. Specifically, Joaquin and Enrique first learned about college through college sports while Eduardo and Nicholas did so through their direct involvement in school sports. As previously noted, Joaquin shared that he first learned of the university he ultimately transferred to through the school’s marching band fight song. Meanwhile, Enrique was similarly exposed to college through college sports. He reflected on his first exposure to college in the following conversation:

Enrique: I had it in my head at a very early age that I want to go to college, even if I didn't necessarily know what that meant.

DDA: Where did you first hear about it?

Enrique: I think it was part of the fact that I was around my older cousins. They are big sports fans. So I ended up being a sports fan. They would follow all kinds of sport. So they really got into Notre Dame football and so that’s where I first started hearing about colleges.

DDA: Through sports?

Enrique: Through sports a little bit and then through families. They would be talking about these schools. And it was that age where you look up to slightly older cousins and you're like, "I want to do that too! I wanna play sports, I wanna like sports... But it also became, "I want to go to college." So he liked Notre Dame. So I liked Notre Dame right? That's not the case anymore, but at that time I was like cool right?

Through Joaquin and Enrique we are able to see the role of collegiate sports in exposing first college generation Latino students to the idea of college. For Nicholas and Eduardo, playing sports also provided them with not only exposure, but in some cases individuals who provided tangible information and assistance as they began the college choice process. In addition to exposure to college, both Nicholas and Eduardo specifically attributed their ability to "stay out of trouble" to the fact that they were too busy playing sports after school and therefore, expressed that they did not experience much exposure to the risk factors present in their communities. For Nicholas, sports may have provided him exposure to college, but his desire to go to college was based on his goal of becoming a professional football player. He was told that in order to do that, he first had to go to college. His plan therefore, was to go to college and major in broadcasting, as that would be his profession after he "retired from playing professional football." Although he did not end-up playing football at his four-year college, his involvement in sports provided him with a pathway into college.

For Eduardo, his involvement in sports not only exposed him to college, but also to individuals who were critical in his trajectory. As a city baseball player in middle school, he played on teams comprised of wealthy kids and families. According to Eduardo, the coaches and families acknowledged his talent and because they wanted to keep the team together, they were willing to help him enter the same private high school their children were going to attend the following year. The families were aware that Eduardo's father was unemployed and were willing

to pay for his tuition. However, Eduardo was unable to attend this school given that his father thought the 45-minute commute was too much. Fortunately, through baseball he was recruited to go to a different private high school and on a full scholarship.

Institutional factors in postsecondary education to law school. The participants mentioned numerous institutional protective factors that were significant in their collegiate and law school experiences. However, the factors that greatly impacted the majority of the participants' persistence and cultivated their aspirations to pursue the field of law happened during their collegiate years and through their involvement in service and experiential learning opportunities. These experiences provided the participants with the inspiration to pursue this field and most importantly, the mentors that they needed to help navigate their educational trajectory to law school. In addition, these opportunities or mentors often connected the participants to early academic outreach law programs where the participants found the information, resources, financial support, and assistance they needed to understand the law school admissions process. The following discussion is divided three sections that explain how the three corresponding observed protective factors: service opportunities, experiential learning opportunities, and pre-law outreach programs facilitated the resilience and legal aspirations of the participants of this study.

Service. Of the nine participants, six participants' educational experiences and trajectories to law school were greatly influenced by their involvement in a service organization or project. For some of these participants, their involvement provided a way to cope with their difficult transitions and risk factors they were experiencing in college. Martha's statement represents many of what the participants suggested influenced their involvement, "I like working with kids, sorta keeps me sane. I'm stressed out but when I walk over there [to volunteer site], I

check all of my stresses at the door and focus on them. It's kind nice to forget about myself, forget about everything I'm going through and just focus on them." For others, involvement in efforts that reach-out to the community provided them with an opportunity to stay "grounded and give back." Enrique for instance, worked with high school students through the college admissions process during his first year of college. "Being able to relive that experience directly fresh out of [high] school and provide them with somebody who knew how to maneuver the system to help them finish their college applications, or talk about some of the issues they were facing at school" Enrique suggests, served as a "reminder that this is something that I want to work on throughout my career."

By the time Nicholas transferred to a four-year university, he was no longer interested in majoring in broadcasting and instead found the field of psychology appealing. Therefore, in his first year at his four-year university he became a research assistant for a research project. However, he soon became disillusioned with the field and in particular, a career in academia. Nicholas recalls that throughout his involvement in this research project he yearned to be "more involved, actually doing something that makes an impact." Interestingly, he came across an opportunity that allowed him to do just that when a random occurrence led to his required participation in community service. Through this experience he said he became more engaged in his studies and found meaning to what he was doing.

For Kristobal, involvement in the surrounding inner-city communities while at his four-year institution provided the coping mechanisms he needed to deal with the trauma he experienced after being a direct victim of community violence, experiencing the culture shock of attending a university that was predominantly middle and upper class White (as described in Chapter 4), and encountering professors who were unsympathetic to his extenuating

circumstances. After spending two years “partying,” Kristobal, said that he began to feel like he needed “to start getting your act together and figuring out what you want to do.” His peers, in particular, played an important role in this realization. He began to get involved and took advantage of the opportunities his institution provided, such as studying abroad. However, it was in his fifth year at his undergraduate institution when he began to make sense of his experience and how it can be used to benefit others. He shares:

My friends had done [a community outreach project that targets academically at-risk youth]. And I did my fifth year [in college]...that's when I started to get more politicized. More than just work, more active into what I was doing. Really getting into what I had received and to give back. It made me feel better. The more I did it, the more complete I felt. The more I felt I was making a full circle and really understanding what it meant to be and how privileged I was to be in the position that I was. And what it really meant, you know? How I wasn't just lucky. That I worked hard basically and that I need to recognize that I worked hard and because I worked hard that I have some ideas and opinions that I could help other people with. And you know, I might not have taken the most conventional path to it, but you know, you learn a lot from people and you see a lot of things and you can do that. It makes your work come alive. It makes your reading have roots, you know?

For Kristobal, his experience in this program gave him an opportunity to find meaning in what he was learning; in particular, apply what he was learning in the classroom. In addition, this experience allowed him to address his own experiences. He further continues to share that his involvement also made him see that the stressors in his life were nothing compared to those of the students he was working with. He remembers, “I realized a lot of the kids that I worked with had problems that were rooted in legal frameworks; whether it was foster care, their parents were incarcerated, parents had psychological problems, or they themselves had been in the system already.” This realization “sparked” his idea of looking at his own immigrant background and finding how it was also influenced by the law. So he decided that he wanted to pursue immigration law.

Alejandro was similarly exposed to environments and people that encouraged his

trajectory to the legal field. His involvement in groups in college that focused on “giving back to the community in an educational setting” and in “self-help centers...helping people with their legal work” let him see the lack of legal access to legal representation. It is important to note that many participants, like Alejandro, had experiences as a child where they did not have access to legal representation. For instance, Alejandro shared that he often wished that he was a lawyer when he would call the credit cards on behalf of his parents because “the media always emphasized how lawyers can never be pushed around...I remember just growing up where there’s incidents where it was like, ‘If I was a lawyer, I’d be able to assert my rights and be able to go in front of a judge and stuff like that.’” But it seemed that encounters like these in college, provided the participants the added inspiration and purpose to pursue a field that would provide them and their communities with the legal representation they lacked. This finding is representative of Maria’s experience as well. Maria likewise shared that she pursued the field of law because she sought to gain more knowledge of the legislative bills that would help immigrant students like her, navigate their schooling experience. She explains that she came to this realization when she was volunteering for a project that worked with DREAMers.

I was doing a lot of volunteering work and a lot of activism; getting students together and establishing projects that went to educate high school students from three different counties in Southern California about their opportunities. Through this work, I was seeing that there was a need for knowledge of the legal areas. We would give presentations to parents and students and they would ask, “Well what if my son is this...?” It would be immigration related questions and I had no idea how to answer them. I wanted to find out more about access to higher education for undocumented immigrant youth. I wanted to find out about the bills.

Maria shared it was through this experience and latter, attending an informational meeting for a pre-law outreach group at her institution, that she realized this was the field that would allow her to impact the policy arena that has greatly affected the experiences of undocumented families and students. In addition, it was through her involvement with this project that she was able to

encounter an attorney. She shared that she was helping a student with her personal statement when she met a woman who was an attorney, “so I told her that I was applying for law school and she offered to read my statement.” This attorney became one of Maria’s mentors and today, Maria said “we’re colleagues. She really impacted my life.”

In law school, these participants continued to be involved in the community. Maria continued to tutor high school students, while Alejandro (through his fraternity’s chapter at his new institution) mentors and tutors at-risk youth at a local church. In addition, he has facilitated workshops on the law school admission process for his fraternity members. Kristobal continues to participate in numerous outreach programs that “get more people from low income communities of color into law school” by providing workshops on the admissions process and scholarships for the LSAT to undergraduates. His third year of law school, he also helped organize an event that brought high school students to the law school and exposed them to the opportunities in the field. In fact, all nine participants participated in some type of long-term service project during their time in law school. Many explained that this was due to their desire to “give back,” a value that will be further discussed in Chapter 6. However, it is important to note that for these participants, being of service became part of their identity. Maria best puts it, “I knew that coming to law school wasn’t just going to be about grades because of who I was as an undergraduate...I knew that in order for me to survive in law school, I needed to be involved.”

Experiential learning opportunities. For some participants, their involvement in experiential learning opportunities provided them with similar experiences. In both circumstances the participants were able to encounter mentors that would support and assist them through the process of applying and graduating from law school. However, the participants who

participated in experiential learning opportunities seemed to have more access to mentors. For instance, Joaquin met a lawyer for the first time (who would eventually become his mentor) through an internship at a national non-profit civil rights organization. He vividly remembers this encounter because it provided him with an understanding of the fear he experienced regarding Proposition 187, “*Save our State*,” when he was in elementary school. This proposition prohibited undocumented immigrants (though the term used then was “illegal aliens”) from using public services or receiving benefits from the state of California; in addition to requiring agencies and employers of the state or local government to notify and report to the federal government the immigration status of individuals and children, as well as, any agencies’ violations of the law. Joaquin particularly spoke of how this affected him and ultimately influenced his decision to pursue law. He explains:

You know, as a kid I just knew, I felt like it was targeted towards Latinos. And I was afraid for my parents. I was afraid they were going to lose their jobs and they were going to go back to Mexico. All I remember my mom telling me, "You know we're going to be fine." But this was one of those times when I remember thinking, “I'm going to lose my house. Where am I going to go? Who am I going to live with if they take my parents away?”

Through this internship, Joaquin learned more about the proposition and the ways that this lawyer rebutted the proposition as unconstitutional. Most importantly, he learned how the legal profession allowed this lawyer to make a difference. Joaquin went on to add:

That’s how I viewed that law as a kid. I was afraid of it. But it wasn’t until I was in community college that I met the man who helped overturn Prop 187. I remember thinking, “Oh, he’s the guy that stopped that from happening? This guy helped me stay with my family.” That’s when I made the connection: If this man, who didn’t know who I was, had such a positive effect on me as a child and probably a life-long impact on me – I want to do the same. I hope that one day, the things that I do will have an impact on some kid that I don’t even know right now.

This lawyer, according to Joaquin, provided him the example to pursue the legal field and the mentorship he needed to persist through law school. Similarly, through a college internship in the

Washington, D.C. Attorney General's Office, Alejandro not only got a "second taste of legal experience" but also was able to identify a mentor who ultimately encouraged him to apply to law school and wrote a letter of recommendation on his behalf.

Eduardo's first exposure to the idea of becoming a lawyer was also the result of political means. After participating in a program that took a group of college students to lobby to the California Senators, he felt inspired to go to law school. He shares:

I walked into the Senate building with a group of students, I was the only student of color and I was wearing a suit. And there was a Senator walking by and he had his aides. He looked at me...He didn't pause but as he walked by it was that look just of interest, who are you? I can see he asked his aid, who is that guy? And he looked and he said, "Oh I think it's just a student group." And I was like, why did it matter that I was the only person of color in a suit? There were other people in a suit, why did he ask who I was. Because there are very few people of color in the Senate building, probably. A lot of people said, "You read so much into it"...Maybe, but he blew it cause he gave me the inspiration to go to law school.

Eduardo shares that after he returned to California, he began to inquire into how one becomes a Senator. He researched who were the senators and began to notice that over 50 percent of those in congress had a law degree. He shared that he didn't understand what a J.D. was and what could be done with it, so he researched it. Through his investigation, he realized that there was much that could be done with this degree. In particular he recalls thinking, "These people are in congress, they have law degrees. But they don't represent the communities that I come from. In that building I was the only person of color that I saw besides the janitor. Yet they are representing the communities of people who look like me." This experience inspired Eduardo to pursue the field of law. However, he did not have access to tangible information on how to prepare to go to law school. Interestingly, his father (upon learning of his interest in law) let him know that he knew a lawyer who had helped him with his divorce. This lawyer worked in Eduardo's city District Attorney's Office. Through this lawyer, he was able to connect with

another lawyer who provided him with the opportunity to intern the summer before his fourth year in college. Through this internship, he was able to meet law clerks that “really took me under their wings and were like my cohort of guidance. They told me how to apply, explained to me the type of schools they go to, and what I needed to do.” Meeting these law students and establishing a strong mentorship relationship with lawyers, signified the moment where Eduardo felt that his “life turned around.”

Early academic outreach law programs. More than half of all participants participated in an early academic outreach law program. These programs were critical in providing the participants the information and assistance they needed to successfully navigate the law school application process. The participants admitted that these programs were essential to their law school acceptance given that they “demystified the process” for them. Enrique’s outreach law program, housed in his undergraduate institution’s law school, provided a series of workshops that explained the process of applying and financing law school; familiarized them to the law school environment by having law school professors teach mock classes and homework; and expose the students to the career options available to them if they so choose to pursue the field of Law. Enrique further notes that this program gave him “a slight idea of what I’m getting myself into, if I choose to go down this path...and shines some light on a process that I thought was very dark.”

Most of the participants learned of these programs through their peers, but in some cases through announcements placed in the centers where their community service projects were housed. Those who were referred to these programs happened after the participants expressed their lack of information or finances needed to begin the law school admissions process. The process of applying to law school is quite costly. Preparing for the LSAT required many of them

to take preparation courses that ranged between \$1,000 to \$2,500. The majority of participants shared that they tend to underperform in standardized exams, therefore many felt that the course was necessary to better prepare for the LSAT. For most of the participants, the cost of these courses was beyond their reach. Through these outreach law programs however, some received scholarships for an LSAT course, while other programs had this component built-in.

Another benefit from participating in these programs was that they provided the participants with a law student mentor and access to pre-law advisors (in some programs, these were law school professors). These mentors provided the participants with personal guidance through the application process and served as role models, but more importantly these mentors facilitated interactions and connections with other law school professionals and colleagues. For instance, when Maria was at a law school forum, she introduced herself to the dean of admissions from the school she ultimately attended. However, to her surprise, the dean told her “I know about you. I’ve heard about you.” Maria further adds that she could not comprehend from where, however the dean let her know that her pre-law advisor had told her about her work and promise in the field. Furthermore, for many of the participants, their advisors continued to mentor the participants throughout their law school experience. Enrique shares that he felt comfortable going to their office to talk about his experience in law school and they would “try to offer me a sort of resources that they could and make sure that you felt good walking out the door so you could take on another day.” Essentially, the mentorship they received through these programs provided the participants with the confidence to go through the process and in some cases, law school.

There were two participants that also participated in a summer residential institute that felt this significant to their preparation to enter law school. These participants participated in the

Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO), a national non-profit of the ABA Fund for Justice and Education that attempts to expand the pipeline for minority and low-income students to law school. Eduardo learned about this program through the attorney and law clerks he met when he interned at the District Attorney's office. This institute, designed for accepted law school applicants who would begin in the fall, focuses on immersing students in "legal methods and techniques that help to develop student's abstract thinking, analysis, and synthesizing skills" (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2013). For Eduardo, this experience also provided him with friends and colleagues who "shared a lot of commonalities, different struggles that we overcame. Similar backgrounds, similar goals." This proved essential for the participants' abilities to transition to a law school where they were the minority.

Law school retention programs. As previously noted, one of the salient experiences in law school was the participants' difficulty and resistance in adapting to the individualistic, competitive nature of law school, as well as, the culture clash they experienced when they realized that peers with similar backgrounds as their own were direly underrepresented. Law school retention programs that were available in two of the participants' schools however, shed light into the effectiveness of these programs to militate against the stressors Latino students face in law school. One program was housed under the diversity office of the law school and offered forums that brought prominent lawyers of color and legal scholars to share their trajectories, experience, and advice with students. The services of this program were less structured. However, Alejandro who regularly attended these forums, shared that the speakers made him "more optimistic about my opportunities to succeed in the legal field," after hearing them "talk to us about how to succeed in this overwhelming White male dominated profession."

The other program, through some of the participants' respective law schools' admissions

offices, is a cooperative academic program geared towards supporting and ensuring the success of students from significantly adverse backgrounds in law school and in the profession. The participants applied to be part of this program through the general application for admission. Once accepted to the law school and in the program, the program begins with an orientation prior to the beginning of the academic year and lasts until they graduate from law school. For Joaquin, his acceptance to both his law school and in particular this program, “gave me more of a reason to finish. That I’m not going to drop out because they gave me this chance. I’m going to finish.” The program essentially is set-up to ensure that the success of the students is possible. Specifically, the program brings a cohort of students together and encourages collaboration and “family” through study group sessions and academic workshops that target legal writing and legal analysis, among other resources. Most of the participants that participated in this program repeatedly suggested that they were able to survive their first year, in-part, due to the support that the program and their cohort provided. For Martha, she explained, this was also the first time in her life where she felt that she can just be herself. Martha further added, that with this cohort,

They [the cohort] were the first people I met. We all have similar stories and it’s nice. I didn’t have that at [my undergraduate institution]. It was nice that I can just be myself. It was not strange that my parents didn’t go to college...And it’s not a competition with them so much because we all consider each other family. We’re there to help each other out...And if one person gets something that the other person doesn’t, you’re there helping them. If you missed class cause you’re sick, you have the notes without even asking.

Although Martha and the other participants in this program still experienced hostile environments and interactions with their general peers in the law school, this experience was a haven to them from the competitive nature of law school. An important aspect of this program is also the mentorship they received from the Director. For many of the participants who were far away from their family, this woman became a strong fixture in their journeys. Specifically, she became a mentor who understood their experiences and provided encouragement. For the

participants of this study who were part of this program, they repeatedly identified this mentor and the program as integral to their success and persistence in law school.

Summary

The findings of this chapter highlighted a number of protective factors that were highly influential in the participants' ability to be academically resilient throughout their K-20 educational journey. Specifically, this chapter found that parents, siblings, community, and institutional factors served to mitigate the risk factors the participants encountered throughout their education journey. Parents' example of perseverance, their involvement, and high expectations served as protective factors throughout the K-20 pipeline. However, this protective factor was most significant in the P-12 experience of the participants, as they often fought against the poor schooling conditions, low expectations, and violence present in the participants' communities. Siblings ability to show the participants how to navigate the educational system, younger siblings inspiring the participants to set an example, and older siblings reminding the participants what not to do, similarly worked throughout the K-20 pipeline. Their influence was most critical in helping some of the participants steer away from negative influences or decisions. Community was a surprising finding, as the shift that the participants experienced served as a protective factor throughout the K-20 pipeline. In the P-12 pipeline, community *protected* the participant from risk factors prevalent in their environments. Yet, once the participants began college, they began to see themselves as a protector of their community. This shift provided the participants with a reason to persist in the pipeline. Lastly, institutional factors were highly significant in providing the participants with the academic preparation, tangible information, and mentorship that their K-20 schooling institutions failed to provide. This chapter thus answered the second research question of this study: What are the protective factors that

facilitate academic resilience in Latino students who persist from early schooling through law school? The findings presented in this chapter provide half of the story that attempts to explain how the participants became academically resilient. In the following chapter, the process upon which risk factors and protective factors interacted to facilitate the academic resilience of the nine participants will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO ACADEMIC RESILIENCE FOR LATINO STUDENTS IN THE K-20 PIPELINE

The growing body of research on academic resilience has greatly contributed to our understanding of the Latino educational experience. Most importantly, this framework has shifted the focus of research from one that consistently concentrated on the academic failure of Latino youth, to one that identifies the factors that allow for their academic success. Several studies, as reviewed in Chapter 2, have identified numerous protective factors that allowed Latino students to achieve academic success, despite limited opportunity. These include familial protective factors (e.g., parents and siblings), environmental protective factors (e.g., community), institutional factors (e.g., being part of learning communities, etc.), and individual protective factors (e.g., internal locus of control, high intelligence, and desire to leave their neighborhood, etc.). The identification of these key protective factors have been noted to mitigate the effects of risk factors and stressors that have resulted in the low educational attainment rates of the Latino population in the K-20 pipeline.

Although the use of academic resilience theory in examining the educational experiences and outcomes of Latinos is promising, this study has identified and addressed some of the inherent gaps. In Chapter 2, three major deficits were identified. First, research on the experiences of Latino students who have achieved higher levels of postsecondary education remains scant. Second, there is a tendency to overemphasize individual factors that reflect values of individualism (i.e., high self-efficacy). Lastly, this study suggested that the second deficiency is a result of current research on academic resilience neglecting to examine the process of “how” individual factors are formed.

This study addressed the first gap by conducting a study on Latino students who have achieved academic success from early schooling through law school. To address the second and third deficits, this study examined resilience embedded in the context of the experiences of urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students. The findings presented in this chapter will therefore address these gaps by providing an in-depth understanding how the risk factors identified in Chapter 4, and the protective factors revealed in Chapter 5, facilitated academic resilience for the participants of this study. Specifically, this chapter will answer the final research question posed in this study: What is the process of academic resilience for Latinos in the K-20 pipeline? This chapter is divided into two sections that will explain the process of academic resilience. In the first section, the protective processes of academic resilience will be discussed by illustrating the convergence of protective factors and the duality of academic risk factors. The interactions between these protective factors resulted in four individual protective factors (values) that allowed the participants to be academically resilient. These values will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

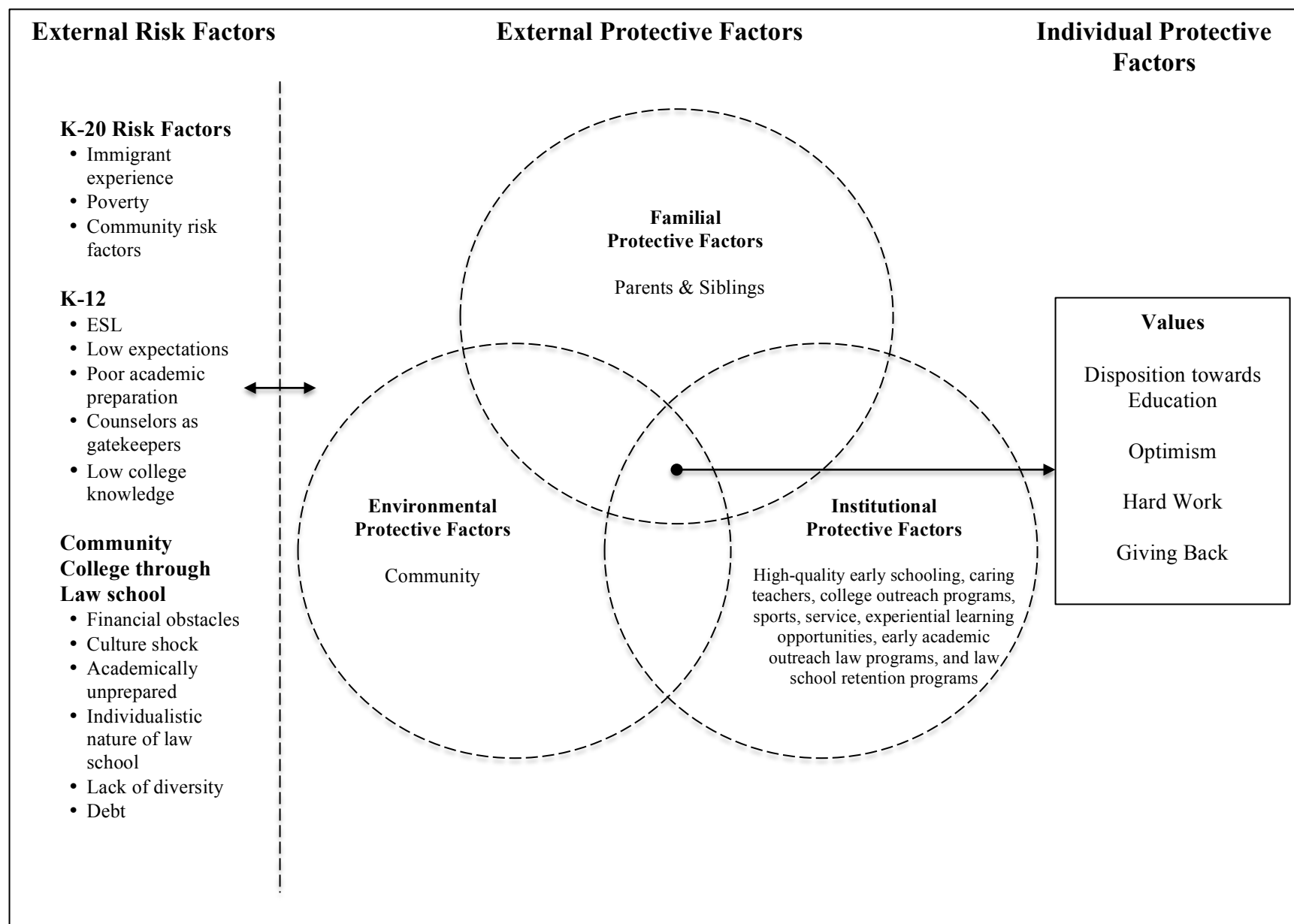
Protective Processes of Academic Resilience

In academic resilience research, individual factors are often considered to be protective factors. Numerous studies have identified individual protective factors that reflect characteristics and dispositions that are present in students who exhibit academic resilience. Although these individual protective factors have greatly contributed to our understanding of mechanisms that students have employed to be academically resilient against adversity, they can be mistaken for individual traits. That is, when neglecting to explain the context and processes involved that allowed for the development of these individual protective factors, the reader may be misled into believing that these characteristics were innate instead of acquired, therefore, rejecting the

translational agenda upon which resilience was founded.

To avoid this tendency, a deliberate effort was made to formulate a conceptual framework that would identify the familial and institutional protective factors that facilitated academic resilience within the nine study participants. This effort led an understanding of the risk and protective factors involved in academic resilience, within the context of the urban, low-income, first generation college, Latino experience. This framework also lent itself to exploring environmental protective factors (i.e., community) at greater depth. Thus, through a careful examination of familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors and the risk factors that accompany them, a model of the academic resilience process employed by academically successful Latino students was derived. Figure 3 proposes a culturally inclusive approach to academic resilience for Latino students in the K-20 pipeline through law school.

FIGURE 3. Protective Processes of Academic Resilience for Latino Students.



The proposed conceptual model offers a culturally inclusive approach as it portrays the K-20 schooling experiences of urban, low-income, first generation college, Latino students through law school. In addition, this model takes into account the multiple factors and cumulative processes that influence the outcome of the participant. The intended outcome of this model is to depict a set of individual protective factors (values) that facilitate resilience. Essentially, what this model argues is that protective processes nurture individual protective factors. To reiterate, individual protective factors (and values) in this study were a product of risk, familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors converging. These individual protective factors allowed the participants to identify or adapt the protective processes found in their educational trajectories.

At the center of this model is the Latino law student, to demonstrate that the union of all the factors results in a set of individual protective factors. The student is within the three protective factors that were significant in their academic resilience: familial protective factors, environmental protective factors, and institutional protective factors. These spaces overlapped to demonstrate the convergence of all the factors involved and two-directional arrows show the merging of risk factors with protective factors.

This model presumes that all of the factors converge, given the fact that through the participants' narratives, we were able to see that factors were not one-dimensional. In some cases protective factors came about, not to avoid a risk factor, but as an outcome of the actual risk factor. For example, community violence was presented as a risk factor in numerous participants' narratives. However, some participants like Alejandro suggested that the violence in his community actually made him and his friend focus on school. Through this example, we are able to see that community violence can also serve as a protective factor. The purpose of this

observation is not to condone or play-down the effects of risk factors, but rather to acknowledge the duality of some risk factors. In so doing, we complicate the narrative around how to best research the potential for academic success within communities that have many of the academic risk factors discussed in this study.

Figure 3 also postulates that there is an intimate relationship between protective factors. Specifically, this study revealed that protective factors influenced the creation of other protective factors. The overlapping dashed circles illustrate this relationship. To provide an example of this phenomenon, we can look to the early schooling experiences of Maria. She shared that her older sister not only helped her to navigate her educational journey, but also influenced an important institutional factor. Because her sister excelled academically, her teachers now expected the same of Maria. Therefore, setting a high achievement standard amongst siblings (familial protective factor) now allowed for the subsequent creation of an institutional protective factor, as Maria's teachers now had high educational expectations for her. Similarly, the high educational expectations that Alejandro's mother had, which served as a protective factor against him dropping out of the K-20 pipeline and joining the military, came about from an institutional protective factor. More specifically, Alejandro's mother formed these high educational expectations after Alejandro's teacher told her that he had potential to succeed.

Overall, this model attempts to provide a glimpse into the complexity and dual nature of risk factors and protective factors. An important contribution of this model to the traditional use of academic resilience research is that it is predicated on the idea that it is within the convergence of these factors that individual protective factors are formed. Findings from this study suggest that the participants were able to derive four particular individual protective factors (i.e., values and dispositions) that helped facilitate academic resilience through the K-20

pipeline. The following section provides a detailed analysis of how the protective factors in the participants' experiences converged to form the individual protective factors (values) that were essential in formulating academic resilience throughout their journey to law school.

Individual Protective Factors (Values) Derived from the Protective Process

Four individual protective factors emerged from the protective processes that allowed the participants to become academically resilient. These individual protective factors reflect values that are particular to the urban, low-income, first generation college Latino experience, and will henceforth be referred to as values. They include: a disposition towards education, optimism, hard work, and giving back. The following sections will provide an understanding of these values, with particular attention paid to the protective processes involved that gave way to an individualized definition of resilience.

Disposition toward education. First and foremost, we must acknowledge that the schooling systems that the participants encountered, often presented them with limited opportunity and access to caring teachers, tangible information about college, and mentorships. Any one of these aspects could have led them to become disengaged. Indeed, many of the risk factors that are discussed in Chapter 4 have been associated with the high dropout rates throughout the K-20 pipeline. And yet, these participants found a way to cope with the risk factors and remain academically resilient. While so many other students become academically disengaged, the participants of this study shared a positive disposition towards their education. How exactly did this occur? The conclusion of this study is that it was due to a concerted effort between familial protective factors, which continuously emphasized the connection between education and a better life, and institutional, as well as, environmental factors that supported this ideology.

The participants' disposition towards education was first nurtured by the familial protective factors that were present in their early childhood. Specifically, the participants shared at a young age their parents instilled in them an appreciation for the value of their education and its potential to provide them with a "better life." This was an explicit connection made by their parents. For instance, Alejandro suggested that early in his education he did not encounter a schooling system or teachers that made this connection for him; he says, "I never had the sense of why it was important to do well [in school]. I never saw the connection between education and a better life." At home however, his parents always emphasized "if you don't do well in school, there's going to be a lot of hardship for you in life." Alejandro shares a particular instance when his father purposely communicated this to him and his siblings. Alejandro shared the following:

I do remember it [the conversation] and pretty sure my siblings remember it too. He just sat us down. And my dad's like, he's not one to give advice. He's kind of like a distant dad honestly. But he just sat us down and told us, "I work so much and I don't make any money. Look at how the sun has burned my skin. We are in a country where the system will help you, if you really try. They'll pay for you to go to school. They'll pay for your books and it's not the same opportunities that me and your mom had in Mexico. So you have to make the most of it because if you don't, then you're going to end up like me. Working a lot of hours burning in the sun, and not getting paid what you deserve.

Through this statement we are able to see that his father, despite having a second grade education in Mexico, conveyed that the educational system in the United States would provide his children with the resources that they needed if they chose to excel in their studies. The fact that his fathers' message was accompanied by his real life struggles, Alejandro was able to see these connections. There was a similar connection that many of the other participants heard and witnessed from their siblings' hardships. Older siblings who did not excel academically often served to remind the participants that if they did not take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them, they would face similar hardships. These connections were significantly important for the formation and nourishment of the participants' disposition toward

education.

Joaquin similarly grew up hearing his parents make the connection between his education and a better life. He recognized that when he was young, he also did not understand the significance of his education. To him, education was “just another thing for me to do and I don’t want to do this. It was in me to do that.” But he acknowledges that there was “always something that was looking in my head that said, “Estudia, estudia. Study, study, study.” This was a common theme in many of the participant’s experiences. However, when the messages they heard at home were coupled with a similar message at their schooling institutions, the participants were more likely to adopt this disposition. Alejandro, best captures this phenomenon by sharing, “my parents really drove me towards that sense of optimism...And then having teachers who critically engaged and who thought of their job as more than just teaching curriculum, but teaching students to reach for their highest potential. And then there’s people who were willing to guide you along the way.”

For a number of participants, having caring teachers or mentors acknowledge their hard work and potential was of particular importance to solidify their disposition towards their education. Throughout this study, participants mentioned instances where their potential was validated. For instance, having teachers identify their potential, provide resources and opportunities, or identifying the participants as gifted led participants to believe in their own potential. In addition, the majority of the participants experienced being part of communities whose constituents were similarly invested in the participants’ educational success. Such was the case in Eduardo’s example, where community members protected him from the negative activities they themselves were part of because Eduardo was seen as the one who would come back and help his community.

In a concerted effort, the participants' family, communities, and mentors nurtured the participants' disposition towards their education. These participants firmly believed the promises that their education would bring; a better life and the opportunity to "give back" to their communities (a value later discussed), which encouraged them to persist in the pipeline. This value and promise was echoed by the participant's protective factors and, in particular, their parents. For instance, Isabela recalls her father reiterating this message as she was getting ready to leave for college. She recalls, "My dad was like, 'Mija, we all make sacrifices and this is going to be your sacrifice. Eventually, it's going to be something bigger for you.'" This was a value and message that the participants took with them as they traversed their K-20 educational journeys.

Optimism. A sense of optimism was a significant theme that consistently emerged in the participants' narratives. In particular, the participants often described overcoming hardships by having a sense of hope and purpose in overcoming said obstacle. Specifically, participants were equipped to respond to adversity, given that at a young age they encountered numerous examples of how this was an effective coping mechanism. For instance, the participants shared that their families experienced many financial difficulties. However, several shared that despite the financial struggles they went through; their parents went to great lengths to show them that even in the midst of adversity, there is always something to gain. The following anecdote from Kristobal best captures this lesson. Growing-up, Kristobal was cognizant of the financial difficulties his family endured, but at the same time he witnessed his mother staying optimistic in the face of adversity, by instilling in her children a sense that even through adversity, there was potential to gain a positive outcome. He shares,

She struggled and you could tell. But one of my mom's biggest gifts is to make a bad situation into something really fun. Like selling corn. We were selling corn and the night

before we had to peel the husk. She would make it into a game, a little competition for us. Who can husk the most corn? She'll play some music, dance around, and make funny voices... Then her first stable job was to sell t-shirts on the street and sometimes they would put her to sell at the beach. Because she couldn't leave us alone, she would tell us, "Come with me and then we'll have a banana split. It'll be really fun." So when you're a kid, you get into whatever as long as the adults are excited. You're kind of excited about it too, you know?

Through this example we are able to see that despite the hardships that his mother was experiencing, she directed her children's attention to a reward. In Kristobal's case, it was a competition or a banana split that was his focus instead of focusing on the fact that they were "kind of broke. When we first got here we had nothing... So you kind of knew that there was something wrong, but you didn't feel it." Like Kristobal, many of the other participants shared similar stories where their parents would experience hardships and yet, they always seemed to suggest that things were not as bad as they seemed. For example, Alejandro reflected on his own parent's experiences and noted that they "accepted the cards that they were dealt and at the same time remained optimistic. They instilled in us that pretty much everything was possible in this country."

This optimism was evident in many of the students' accounts in their own educational experiences. When asked to describe their experiences in law school for example, many students found it difficult to identify hardships. Many expressed that they never really thought about the hardships that they experienced. In some cases, they felt that attention to the obstacles would often "paralyze" them. Instead, after careful questioning, many participants felt more comfortable to describe to me how they responded to the risk factors and stressors in their educational trajectory.

Most participants shared that they would respond by realizing that they had to take advantage of the opportunities that were provided to them and were aware that they had access to

certain opportunities that many others in their communities did not. For instance, Maria shared, “I recognize the opportunities I was given and recognize that not everyone has access to these opportunities. Even if the opportunities I got were a handful — there’s people who got a hundred opportunities — the one’s I did get, I am aware that not everyone gets them.” Having this awareness resulted in many participants viewing their educational experiences as a privilege, rather than a hardship. Joaquin’s following statement is representative of what other participants expressed:

First, you doubt yourself. You're like, ‘Why am I here? Do I have to do this?’ But then I think about how many people would love my seat? How many people would love to be sitting in this library? I'm sure a lot of kids that aspired to be lawyers. Or kids that didn't get to law school this time around when they applied. There are a lot of kids that didn't get into law school at all, any law school. Or kids that wanted to come here and didn't end up coming here. I think about the people that would have loved my seat. Tell me the number of lawyers that come out of [my community]? So I think, “You’re not doing this for yourself. You’re doing this for your family and for your community.” Then I think about how fortunate I am to even be here, stressed out I guess. Like, I'm lucky to be here stressed out because there are a hundred people that would [have] love to be stressed out right now in this school.

As these accounts suggest, although the participants have found themselves in situations where they encounter hardship, the sense of optimism in the face of adversity that they learned from their parents is something that allows them to persist in this trajectory. However, as Joaquin and Maria share, the institutional protective factors that they encountered also played a role in their optimism. Particularly, they recognize that they benefited from the following institutional protective factors; teachers, mentors, and programming efforts that provided them opportunities to be academically resilient, while so many others in their communities did not have the same opportunity. For these participants, finding a purpose in the hardships they experience was directly tied to their ability to see that they need to take advantage of these opportunities for their communities and those who were unable to access these same opportunities. For Alejandro,

despite the difficulties he has encountered, believes that law school is a “privilege. A lot of people were not be able to get that. So for me to even get mad at something, that’s like, spitting in the face of everybody else that didn’t get those opportunities.”

Hard work. The trajectory to law school is no easy feat. The participants were required to excel in their undergraduate studies and earn competitive LSAT scores in order to be considered for admission into a top law school. Interestingly however, all of the participants were hesitant to describe themselves as intelligent or smart when asked how they made it into such prestigious law schools. Instead, students suggested that it was due to their hard work that they were able to successfully navigate the pipeline into law school. For example, Joaquin mentioned, “You know, I don't feel like I'm the sharpest tool in the shed. I don't even think I'm that smart. I just work really hard.” The other participants who felt that excelling in higher education was in part due to their hard work ethic expressed comments similar to Joaquin’s. For example, Isabela shared that “law school was not an environment where I excelled at academically, but I excel when it comes to work.” The participants of this study took pride in their strong work ethic. In particular, they resorted to working harder when encountering a difficulty. For instance, Martha shared that after experiencing academic difficulty her first year in college, she coped by working harder and felt that she “needed to put in the extra time until I got adjusted.” Many of the participants alluded that they adopted this value after seeing the same determination their parents showed when facing adversity. Specifically, they saw them work hard and not give-up despite the challenges involved.

This work ethic however, was also nurtured by the risk factors that the participants encountered in their communities and schools. Given that they found themselves in economically disadvantaged, urban communities with low-performing, under-resourced, highly segregated

public schools; most participants felt that they had to work harder to obtain the opportunities and resources that were not available to them. Maria for instance, suggested that her resilience was due in large part to her awareness that she was “not going to get everything...and it’s okay.” Moving forward therefore, was a result of looking to find the help or resources she needed somewhere else. Enrique captures this idea in the following statement by saying, “I’ve had to get out there because my parents said, ‘Well, we want you to study, [but] we don’t know how that is going to play out. We hope that you figure it out and if there’s anyway we can support, let us know and we’ll do that.’ So I was left to my own devices to find those resources right?...I had to work at it.” For Enrique and the other participants, the fact that they had to “go out” on their own to find the tangible information and support they needed in some ways, enhanced the work ethic that was reinforced through their parents.

I asked the participants what led them to believe that the help or support that they needed was available, especially when they encountered numerous obstacles or counselors who denied them the information they needed. For some participants, these negative experiences made it difficult for them to ask for help. However, most soon realized that if they were going to meet the expectations set by themselves and their parents, then they would require assistance. For instance, Maria further notes, “I feel like I really needed to reach out and yeah, it’s a humbling experience. You realize that you can’t do everything on your own and you’re not going to know everything.” Similarly, Eduardo shared that “initially, it felt weird. It did. Because it felt like I was asking for a handout or that I somehow deserved this more than someone else. Then I realized, I don’t deserve it because of who I am. I deserve it because I asked. That takes effort.” I inquired further into how these participants came to these realizations, but most resorted to explaining that they were born with that personality. Specifically, most of the participants shared

that they “we are not shy” when it came to asking for help.

Further analysis into this concept of “personality” however, led the participants to a deeper understanding of where this ethic came from. Enrique for instance suggests that he can’t “draw any experience where I feel I made conscious decisions to say I’m gonna work hard to do these things, but I was kinda going with the flow enjoying this environment I was put into.” This environment according to Enrique and the other participants was made-up of familial, environmental and institutional protective factors that nurtured this behavior. The reasons why the participants acquired this sense of hard work ethic that helped them identify resources and opportunities for their success was partly due to the fact that there were individuals and institutional supports that encouraged the participants to persist. For instance, Eduardo later in the interview shared an anecdote that made him realize the reason he was not shy. When he was still a child he recalls his father taking him along to drop off the computers that he fixed to bring income into the household. Eduardo remembers, “If he had to drop off a computer he brought me with him. And [then] he’s like, ‘Alright, go drop it off.’” Eduardo shared that he did not want to do so and would say, “I don’t even know these people? I’m just gonna knock on their door and plug in the computer? I don’t even know these people! Why don’t you do it? There’s parking right there.” Each time that this occurred, his father would remind him, “we need the money” and in some occasions, would promise to take him to McDonalds. In retrospect, Eduardo acknowledges that his father encouraged a sense of putting himself out there to ask for the help that he needed.

Where the participants found the information and support they needed varied. For some participants, they benefited from the mechanisms in place in institutional protective factors that provided mentorship, while others shared that they sought support and mentorship in all places.

Kristobal for instance, disclosed that it was through his mother that he learned that everyone was in a position to help him. His mother taught him this while she consistently acknowledged the individuals that helped his family overcome the financial hardships they experienced when they first arrived in the U.S. According to Kristobal, his mother would call them “little angels along the path.” Therefore, when Kristobal went to law school he said he made it a point to know everybody. He later shared that the day that he graduated, he took his family to meet the “security guard, the guy who cleaned the place, and the [director of the law school retention program]” because all of these people played a role in his graduating. Essentially, the participants of this study had a number of protective factors that played a concerted role in providing them the opportunities they needed to be academic successful. They are the first to acknowledge that they did not achieve academic success on their own. Eduardo for instance shared, “Someone tried to tell me no, but *you* did it, you had the drive. And it’s like, yeah I had the drive because someone gave me an opportunity.”

Giving back. In addition to the participants’ disposition toward their education, values of optimism and hard work, their commitment of “giving back” to their communities was ever present throughout their K-20 trajectory. This value emerged from the participant’s gratitude to all those who helped them persist and succeed, and their motivation to go back to their community and be agents of change. A recurring story among the participants often involved the impact their community, role models, mentors, teachers, or programming had on their academic resilience. Many felt forever indebted to these individuals or entities and felt it necessary to “pay it forward.” Interestingly however, most students expressed that they did wait until they finished law school to begin to “give back.” However, throughout their undergraduate and law school experiences, all of the participants of this study participated in some form of community

outreach program. For example, each summer Isabela goes back to Upward Bound to share her story and remind students that it is possible to continue. Upon asking one of the participants how they can manage a rigorous law program and still be involved, Nicholas, shared that it really was not a choice. He said, “God, I wish I could just focus on school. But I can't. I can't. It's an obligation, because if it weren't for other people doing this and looking out for me, I wouldn't be here.”

This “obligation” to give back because of the support they received, resonated with all of the participants. For instance, Nicholas (like the other participants) mentioned the mentors, college and transfer programs, and multiple protective factors that allowed him to persist to and throughout law school. Maria similarly shared that because of the people that reached-out to her and were able to guide her throughout her K-20 journey; she too felt that she needed to be that person. She said, “I'm just paying forward or giving back the way someone gave their time or their mentorship to me.” I pressed the issue further, given that there was also the possibility that they could have felt entitled to these supports, since their schooling environments failed to provide them with the resources and information they deserved. All the participants however shared that they viewed the opportunities they received as a privilege and not as an entitlement. Joaquin's response encompasses this idea:

We all feel entitled, but entitled to give back. And help those that helped us. And maybe that comes with the way we were raised but you do feel that obligation. It's not daunting. It's not a horrible thing. It's common sense. If someone helps me, I'm going to help back. It's more like someone helped me along the way...I didn't do it alone. I was the one in class. I was the one awake at night. But this wasn't an effort that was solely me...So if I can help a kid out or even [give] a word of advice...that is just what I will do.

As discussed in the previous section, the participants were aware that not everyone in their schools and communities, not to mention Latinos in general, have had access to the same opportunities they were provided. Viewing these protective factors as a privilege and hearing

their inclination to pay forward the opportunities they received, provided these participants with a sense of purpose throughout their educational journey. This view particularly had a stronger effect in Kristobal's educational experience. Kristobal shares that in his first year he "didn't manage my sense of privilege too well" however, through his involvement in community service projects he began to understand that "life doesn't really owe me anything. I owe everything to life for allowing me to wake up everyday."

Several participants also mentioned that the need to give back stemmed from the inequities they experienced or saw in the communities they grew up in or the issues that they are interested in (i.e., immigration). For example, Enrique stated the following about his community, "I left there wanting to do something. It is a moral obligation that I feel." Like Enrique, most reiterated their belief that pursuing a career in the legal field would provide them the opportunity to go back to their community and make the social changes needed to provide a better life for its constituents. For others like Isabela, she wanted to become an immigration lawyer to "advocate for people who can't, who aren't in a position to advocate for themselves. Knowing that there are certain things in the law that I can use is very empowering for me and it's also a very personal thing to me." Practically all of the participants shared Kristobal's motivations to become an attorney, "I didn't go into this profession to make millions of dollars...I'm in this profession to help people."

It is important to note that this value of giving back allowed the participants to remain resilient throughout their higher education. In particular, participants' narratives alluded that this value gave them something to believe-in that was greater than themselves. The value of giving back served as a shield from the risk factors that they encountered in college and in law school. For instance, Nicholas felt that "one of the things that kept me motivated throughout school was

that I had a sense of purpose that I was doing this so that I can get my J.D. And then do all the things I need to do for other people.” For Alejandro, going back home while in law school helped solidify this value of giving back. He shared that he would get a “sense of urgency to start pulling people up with me” and he would take this back to his institution. Other participants shared similar motivations, however Martha’s motivation was somewhat different from the rest. Although all of the participants mentioned at one point or another their desire to provide for their family, Martha specifically shared that she went to law school to do social justice work, but “maybe the bigger reason was I thought here is a profession...that will help me take care of my family. It goes back to the responsibility that I have because they’ve given me so much. I could buy my nieces and nephews their laptops for college. I could help my sister pay her rent. Because they’ve helped me get where I need to be.”

Essentially, for Martha and the other participants of this study, their motivations to “give back” stemmed from their desire to pay forward the support they received to ensure that others like them and their communities, could also have access to the same opportunities and achieve the same success. Similar to Achor and Morales (1990), Gandara (1995), and Urrieta’s (2010) findings of their graduate student participants, the participants’ desire to give back and contribute to their communities solidified their determination to finish their law program. Therefore, their communities not only protected them from negative influences but they also provided the students a reason to pursue higher education, and in their case, the field of law. This value however, emerged from the interactions of community with institutional protective factors and in some ways, familial protective factors.

Summary

The primary goal of this chapter was to address the theoretical gaps in academic

resilience research. The proposed conceptual model of academic resilience offers a culturally inclusive approach to Latino academic resilience. Important contributions of this model are the inclusion of the multiple factors that are part of the process of academic resilience. More specifically, this model acknowledges the convergence and duality of the multiple factors and presumes that the participants' academic resilience was based on a set of familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors within the context of risk factors throughout the K-20 experience. Inside the interactions between all of these factors, the model suggests, is a set of individual protective factors that reflect values and dispositions particular to the urban, low-income, first-generation college, Latino law student experience. These individual protective factors include: a positive disposition towards education, optimism, hard work, and giving back. These values were derived from a number of protective factors working in a concerted effort, which served to provide the participants with the motivation, inspiration, and skills they needed to seek the protective factors that could mitigate the adversity they were facing throughout the K-20 pipeline. In essence, this model allows us to better understand the cumulative processes involved that facilitated the academic resilience of the nine study participants. The following chapter will summarize the findings of this study and discuss the implications they represent within current policy, practice, theory, and future research.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's laws wrong, it learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else even cared.*

...

*See, you wouldn't ask why the rose that grew from concrete had damaged petals.
On the contrary, we would all celebrate its tenacity. We would all love its will to reach the sun.
Well, we are the roses. This is the concrete. And these are my damaged petals.
Don't ask me why. Thank God, [expletive]. Ask me how.
- Tupac Shakur*

The title of this dissertation originated from Tupac Shakur's poem, *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*. In this autobiographical poem, Shakur (2009) uses imagery to convey the idea that individuals like himself have been able to be resilient despite coming from economically disadvantaged, inner-city neighborhoods. Concrete in this poem represents the "worst imaginable surfaces in which to grow, devoid of essential nutrients and frequently contaminated pollutants," which Duncan-Andrade (2009) further notes, "any growth in such an environment is painful because all the basic requirements for healthy development (sun, water, and nutrient-rich soil) must be hard-won" (p. 186). Through this poem, Shakur (2009) suggests that there was something that was stronger that mitigated against the constraints present in his environment, and ultimately allowed him to break through concrete. And although this rose may have been damaged in the process, we should care to ask how this was possible. After reading this poem, I could not help but to see it as a representation to the experiences of struggle, pain, and resilience of the nine participants of this study. The ability of the participants to remain academically resilient despite growing "in concrete" is a story that I needed to see acknowledged and recognized. And most importantly, their story provides me the opportunity to ask *how* is their

resiliency possible in such dire circumstances and *how* can we replicate this so that other Latino students can have the “will to reach the sun.” Essentially, with this study I sought to understand how nine “roses” were able to grow from the concrete.

To begin this inquiry, I examined the academic resilience of nine urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students who managed to persist in the pipeline from early schooling through law school. I used academic resilience theory as a theoretical framework to uncover the protective factors that allowed these nine participants to persist in the pipeline and achieve academic success. Three research questions guided my inquiry: 1) What is the lived experience of urban, low-income, first college generation Latino students as they navigate the educational pipeline into law school?; 2) What are the protective factors that facilitate academic resilience in Latino students who persist from early schooling through law school?; and 3) What is the process of academic resilience for Latinos in the K-20 pipeline?

Methodologically, I employed a two-phase, qualitative longitudinal study that used phenomenological approach in Phase I and II (Creswell, 2007; Starks & Trinidad, 2007), with select elements of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) informing Phase II of this study. The main sources of data I used for this study were two in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine Latino students who exhibited resilience in their educational journey. Specifically, these students advanced to levels of higher education and into Tier-1 law schools, despite limited opportunity. The data gathered from the phases of this study led to a more in-depth understanding of how academic resilience is possible, even in the direst circumstances. In the following sections I provide a discussion of the findings of this study and their implications for research, policy and practice. I end this chapter, and dissertation, with a discussion on the recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Key Findings

Analysis of the data revealed a number of risk and protective factors that influenced the academic resilience of the nine participants of this study. Risk factors that were particular to the urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino student experience were discussed in Chapter 4. These risk factors included: the immigrant experience; poverty and its impact on the family; exposure to community risk factors; and K-20 institutional risk factors that ranged from low educational expectations and poor academic preparation, to experiences of culture shock. In Chapter 5, the protective factors that facilitated academic resilience for the nine participants were identified. Specifically, familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors were influential in alleviating the risk factors present in the K-20 educational journeys of the participants. Lastly, Chapter 6 proposed a conceptual model that offered a culturally inclusive approach that led to the individual protective factors that facilitated the academic resilience of Latino students.

Noteworthy among these findings was the role of protective factors in facilitating academic resilience. Specifically, of all the protective factors that emerged from the participants' interviews, familial protective factors seemed to be the most influential. Familial protective factors encompassed two distinct components: parents and siblings. Particularly significant for the participants however, was their parents' ability to provide an example of perseverance, their parents' involvement, and their high educational expectations. These characteristics were found to be particularly effective in mitigating the risk factors present in the K-20 educational trajectories of the participants. The parents' perseverance was set largely within the context of their immigration experience, employment as laborers, and income status. An interesting finding however, was that even though their parents did not provide specific examples of the hardships

brought forth by their immigrant experience, there was an unspoken acknowledgement that they endured numerous struggles and sacrifices in coming to a new country to provide a better life and opportunities for their children. All the participants acknowledged these sacrifices and found a source of inspiration and motivation to continue the journey that their parents started. In fact, the perseverance exhibited by many of the participants' parents was a characteristic that was acknowledged and emulated by the participants, as they traversed their educational journey to law school.

Despite having low levels of education, the participants' parents had high educational expectations for the study subjects. This proved to be a significant protective factor that mitigated the low expectations found in the participants' low-performing, under-resourced, and highly segregated public schools. In addition, all of the participants' parents were highly involved in their children's education. This interest took the form of school-sanction involvement (e.g., attending parent-teacher conferences or helping with homework at home, etc.) and culturally appropriate practices of involvement occurred through the use of *consejos*; for example, to transmit values and dispositions toward education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). School-sanctioned involvement was noted to occur more in the early schooling experiences of the participants; with great attention and efforts paid to identifying high-quality elementary education. Culturally appropriate practices of involvement occurred more in the students' latter schooling experiences. Although the participants shared that their parents were less involved in their schooling experiences, they offered their support through extracurricular activities and other means (i.e., listening, being present, offering advice, and reminding them of their potential). One culturally appropriate practice, that was particularly significant in the participants adopting a positive disposition towards their education, included parents pointing-out the hardships that they

were experiencing at work. More specifically, the parents always made an effort to remind the participants that through academic achievement they would avoid the hardships they were experiencing as laborers. The participants took these connections further, and often compared many of the challenges they faced throughout the K-20 pipeline with those of their parents, often finding strength in their parent's ability to overcome seemingly greater circumstances.

The sibling component of the familial protective factor was found to consist of their older siblings showing them how to navigate their education, the participant feeling a sense of responsibility to do well in school to set the example for their younger siblings, and siblings setting the example of what not to do. One area where the duality of risk factors was found to be clearly represented was within this protective factor. More specifically, older siblings tended to serve a protective role by reflecting on their negative experiences with risk factors. This reflection allowed older siblings to share what not to do in the K-20 pipeline. Additionally, the high achievement standard set amongst siblings allowed the participants to maintain high levels of academic success. In particular, older siblings who excelled academically fostered institutional protective factors in the form of high educational expectations among the participants' teachers. The importance of the familial protective factors is revealed through its dual relationship with risk factors and by their interaction with environmental and institutional protective factors identified in this study.

Environmental protective factors emerged from the study in the context of community. This protective factor had two characteristics. The first, suggested that communities played a protective role that shielded the participants from several community risk factors. Communities as protectors were found to exhibit characteristics very similar to those seen within familial protective factors. The participants shared that their communities were comprised of extended

family, neighbors, and community members that often served as parental figures or served to reinforce the values their parents shared. For instance, information regarding institutional protective factors (such as the location of high-quality elementary schools) was regularly shared amongst mothers, as well as, information on how to avoid risk factors (e.g., violence). This commitment to community safety and security was said to cross racial and ethnic divides, as many participants reported receiving strong support from a wide demographic of individuals. Guidance and investment in the participants' success was not solely limited to extended family members or other mothers in the community. It was also noted that this was also found in individuals who were considered negative influences in the community. Although these individuals were engaged in criminal activity, they protected the participants from engaging in these activities because they saw the participants potential and promise.

The second characteristic seen within the role of community was the participants' adopted role as protector once they entered postsecondary education. The strong culture of community support that the participants experienced in their P-12 experiences served as an inspiration for the participants to continue their educational journey and specifically, choose a career within the legal field. Many of the participants were motivated by their desire to "give back" to their communities. This notion led them to take on the role as protectors against the risk factors present in these communities, just as their families and neighbors had done for them. This goal informed some of the participants' legal specialization, the service opportunities they pursued, and the purpose they derived from their education.

Several institutional protective factors were found to influence the participants' academic resilience. These factors included: teachers, college outreach programs, and sports, which proved to be the most influential institutional protective factors in the P-12 trajectories of the

participants. Service, experiential learning opportunities, early academic law outreach programs, and law school retention programs on the hand, were found to be influential in the postsecondary and law school experiences of the participants. Together, these institutional protective factors provided tangible information regarding the various educational systems, academic preparation and support that were essential to the success of the participant in the K-20 pipeline. However, a key finding that emerged from the data suggests that these institutional protective factors mostly did not occur within the formal schooling system. They were instead provided through supplemental programming, extra-curricular activities, and other outside resources that mitigated against some of the participants low performing, under-resourced, highly segregated public schools. Of the influential institutional factors revealed, teachers were the only school-based factor found to positively affect the educational outcomes of the participants. The characteristics that these teachers displayed were: interconnectedness with familial protective factors (both parents and siblings), an ability to foster a sense of potential in the participant, and a willingness to provide pathways to educational institutions. Unfortunately, out of the many teachers that the participants were exposed to throughout their K-20 experience, only a few fostered institutional protective factors and more specifically, they tended to be found in the participants' early schooling experiences. In fact, many of the participants cited unsupportive professors, the lack of diversity in the curriculum, and the individualistic atmosphere of law school as potential barriers to success.

College outreach programs, experiential learning opportunities, early academic law outreach programs, and law school retention programs were found to mitigate the potentially negative effects associated with a lack of institutional protective factors within K-20 schools. There were some common traits in these programs that were significantly influential in the

academic resilience of the participants. First, each program took place at a critical point in the participants' trajectory into higher education. College outreach programs were utilized in the transition from secondary education to postsecondary education; experiential learning opportunities fostered interest in the law profession; early academic law outreach programs allowed the participants to apply to law school; and law school retention programs supported the participants once they matriculated into their respective law programs. Secondly, and perhaps more significant, was the role that each of these institutional programs played in providing mentors. These mentors were found to play a pivotal role in fostering interest in higher education among the participants, act as models within the profession, provide critical information on how to navigate their educational trajectories, and offer a support system.

Lastly, a key finding suggests that the participants discovered these programs through unconventional means. A number of participants described their participation in these programs as "happenstance," or as the result of being tracked into advanced placement curriculum by a "caring" teacher, a chance discussion with a peer, a billboard announcement at a local community center, random connections through family members, or after checking box on an application. Therefore, knowledge of these programs was not transparent or explicitly stated. In addition, the participants recognized that access to these opportunities was not readily available to the participants' respective communities.

Another institutional protective factor that was found to be highly visible within the participant's communities was sports. Sports were said to act as a pathway into higher education for some of the participants, as a platform for parental involvement, acting as a shield against community risk factors such as community violence and incarceration, and as a point of convergence with community members. Like familial protective factors, the importance of this

institutional protective factor is derived by its interactions with other protective factors. More specifically, this study revealed that the participants' interest in entering professional sports can serve as an initial point of interest for students to learn about college. However, there needed to be an additional institutional factor such as service that helped shift the participants' ambition from athletics to academia. In addition, the participants' community was highly connected with the participants through their involvement in sports. This connection served as a bonding mechanism between the participants and the community members, which in turn led even those who were considered risk factors, to protect the participants and their talent (both physically and intellectually) from the hardships presented in their community.

In addition to the institutional protective factors discussed above, service was one of the most constant aspects in the participant's decision to persist in higher education and throughout law school. Service programs provided the participants with opportunities to seek and obtain institutional protective factors that met their own needs and in other instances, provide institutional protective factors to others. Almost all of the service organizations the participants served within and prior to law school involved the supporting of at-risk youth. The participants described these experiences as cathartic and offering perspective on their own lives and hardships. This reflection occurred both on a personal level and in regards to the courses taught in their law school. Participants who participated in service projects and programs tended to draw upon these experiences and use them as protective factors against the lack of diversity in the curriculum and student population in their law schools.

It is important to note that many of the participants initially saw a law degree as a vehicle to challenge and reform the legal system. Thereby fixing injustices within their communities and creating systemic change within our justice system. Although some believed they were

accomplishing this goal through their involvement in service organizations and early career opportunities, some participants experienced a sense of hopelessness and “jadedness” around their ability to change the “system.” Some expressed that they became disillusioned with the law. However, this hopelessness according to the participants, was attributed to the fact that the interests and values they expressed when entering their law school programs did not align with the reality of the curriculum or the legal field. An interesting finding here is the perception of what the participants thought they could do with a law degree. It appears that the distinction between being a practitioner of the law and a lawmaker was not always clear for the participants.

The aforementioned findings, led to a culturally relevant theoretical framework that is well suited to explore the multiple factors and complexity of the processes at play that result in academically resilient Latino students. Through the convergence of familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors —within the context of the K-20 educational experience of urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students — a set of four individual protective factors emerged. These include: a positive disposition towards education, optimism, hard work, and giving back. These values essentially, allowed the participants to identify or adapt the protective processes that were significant to their educational trajectories.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The conceptual model proposed in this study suggests that in order to derive the observed individual protective factors significant to the academic resilience of Latino students, we must ensure that familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors are allowed to interact and converge. Therefore, we must ensure that there is a system set in place that allows for the possibility to create these individual protective factors. There are many policy implications that can be discussed for each of the protective factors identified (i.e., familial, environmental, and

institutional). However, given that the familial protective factor and particularly, the role of parent involvement was found to have the strongest positive interactions with the other protective factors, this section on policy implications will use parent involvement as an example. Also, given that the sample of this study schooling experiences were based in the state of California, this state's policies will be the focus of this section.

In the state of California, there have been several measures enacted to enhance parents' involvement within schools. These measures include the California Education Code (EC) sections 11500–11506, Chapter 16 (Programs to Encourage Parental Involvement); California State Board of Education Policy #89-01 (Parent Involvement in the Education of their Children); and designated Title I School-Level Parental Involvement policies (California Department of Education, 2013). EC sections 11500-11506, Chapter 16 sets forth the legal requirement to implement parent involvement programs in California schools. To ensure the quality of these programs, several goals are listed. Of the five goals outlined under section 11502, only one considers training teachers and administrators to communicate with parents. The rest are grounded in the need to inform parents that they can make a difference in the lives of their children. More importantly, when elements of a quality program are discussed under section 11503, there is no mention of teachers, administrators, or the community. Instead, these programs are intended to train, instruct, and inform parents of their ability to influence and interact in the academic lives of their children. Therefore, the underlying message is that parents are currently not interacting with their children or are doing so in ineffective ways. These policies view parents through a deficit lens and do not account for the many ways in which parents already support their children; Latino parents as discussed in this dissertation, are involved in numerous culturally appropriate practices. In addition, these policies do not consider

the ways in which institutional factors and environmental factors interact to support children persisting into higher education as was demonstrated in this study.

Adopted in 1989 and last revised in September 1999, the California State Board of Education Policy #89-01 compiles research on the importance of parent involvement with schools. This is done to inform schools and school districts on ways to best incorporate parent involvement into their schools. The interconnectedness of schools, parents and communities was specifically noted in this policy. These components are well aligned with those found in this study, which were said to lead to academic resilience among Latino students. Interestingly however, the recommendations on how to design these parental involvement programs within schools and school districts do not reflect the same values noted to be important within the policy text. They focus instead on developing, training, providing, and preparing the parents with information. The policy suggestions are parent-centric and do not represent “collaboration” or “shared” responsibility for student success.

Therefore, will the current policies regarding parent involvement facilitate academic resilience within urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students? According to this policy analysis, it is unlikely that individual protective values will come from the current policies implemented in the State of California. Reform is therefore needed to create stronger parent improvement programs. Parent involvement efforts must reflect Latino families and communities ways of involvement; the research presented in this dissertation can serve to inform these efforts. These efforts must ensure the convergence of familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors that are necessary to facilitate the academic resilience of Latino students. In addition, parent involvement efforts must offer information to families and community members on how to work together to ensure a “collective success” of Latino students in their community.

Also, in areas where there is a language barrier to parent involvement or where the student population is largely comprised of Latinos as is in the case of the state of California, adult English classes should be made available on weekends for Latino parents as well as adult Spanish classes for teachers and school administrators. Similarly, Graduate Schools of Education could also perhaps model their teacher education curriculum after Medical Schools throughout the country, which now recommend that their students have a mastery of a foreign language so that they can be better equipped to work with a diverse population. Lastly, the findings of this study can be used to create spaces that allow for collaboration between schools, families, and communities as each represents a protective factor that can facilitate academic resilience in Latino students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given this study's findings, there are several recommendations for future research. For instance, the findings of this study identified the protective factors found within the Latino family, community, and institutions that played a role in the academic resilience of the nine participants of this study. This result was due, in part, to a shift in the research lens that moved from one that has focused on failure when examining the experiences of Latino students, to one that examined success. In this regard, the findings of this study support the idea that economically disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods and immigrant or working class backgrounds (among other characteristics) should no longer be viewed through a deficit lens, but instead, future studies should begin to examine the "goodness" found in these characteristics. These studies have the potential to contribute to our knowledge about the protective factors found within these characteristics, and identify approaches that can inform schooling practices.

The use of a longitudinal study design also lent itself to follow these students into their

profession. Future studies could include follow-up interviews with the participants and inquire whether the resilience processes present in their K-20 trajectory can be applied to other contexts, such as the participant preparing to take the Bar or transitioning into the work force. The decision to consider subsequent studies at the time the study was designed was also influenced by the need to understand how the participants of this study will contribute to the growing political, social, and educational needs of the Latino community. Therefore, this approach also allows for a follow-up inquiry into the role that the participants are playing in their communities. “Giving back” was a salient individual protective factor and therefore, can provide a foundation to better understand the future political and civic engagement among the Latino participants in this study.

One of the critiques of research on academic resilience is its over-reliance on individual factors. This study demonstrated that the academic resilience of the participants throughout their educational journey could actually be considered a “collective journey to success,” as there were numerous protective factors that facilitated this outcome. Therefore, future research on academically successful Latino students should unpack narratives of success and exceptionality that are often tied to this population. The conceptual model proposed in this study can provide a framework that takes into account the multiple components that are deemed significant to the development of individual protective factors that were critical to the academic resilience of the nine Latino participants in this study.

It would also be beneficial to further explore the familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors identified in this study. Additional studies are needed to determine how these protective factors (i.e., parents, siblings, community members, teachers, mentors and others) became protective factors. For instance, the participants’ parents had a high regard for education

despite their low levels of education. Therefore, the question that surfaced is: What influenced the disposition of the participants' parents towards education? Similarly, despite the numerous hardships they encountered due to their immigrant experience, how were they able to maintain and pass-on a sense of optimism? Future studies could design a case study on an “academically resilient immigrant family” to identify the factors that influenced parental dispositions, values, and involvement. Doing so may provide a deeper understanding of the formation of these protective factors which can lead us to design efforts that can effectively improve the conditions of our communities and schools and ensure more successful outcomes for Latino students.

Conclusion

Prior to this study, there was not much of an understanding of how exactly urban, low-income, first-generation college Latino students navigate the K-20 pipeline into law school, despite limited opportunity. Most of the available scholarship pointed to the negative factors that influence the low educational attainment of the Latino population. This study, however, strayed away from this traditional lens. Through the use of academic resilience theory, this study instead identified the factors that facilitated academic resilience. Specifically, findings suggests that the resilience of the nine participants of this study was the result of familial, environmental, and institutional protective factors converging within the context of the lived experiences of the Latino students. The result of these interactions is a protective process that materializes into four individual protective factors that were critical to the academic resilience of the nine Latino participants. Examining the trajectories, experiences, and outcomes of Latino students to, and within, law school greatly contributed to our understanding of academic resilience. But perhaps the greatest contribution of this study lies in the stories of the nine Latino participants. Their stories provided us an opportunity to see the potential and possibility found within the Latino

community and they gave us hope, that one day, we will see “rose gardens” emerge in urban communities.

APPENDIX A: Phase I - Participant Questionnaire

Latin@ Experiences: In Pursuit of a Legal Profession

Schooling Experience

1. What was the racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood you grew up in?
 - a. Completely non-White
 - b. Mostly non-White
 - c. Roughly half non-white
 - d. Mostly white
 - e. Completely white

2. From what kind of high school did you graduate?
 - a. Public school (not charter or magnet)
 - b. Public charter school
 - c. Public magnet school
 - d. Private religious/parochial school
 - e. Private independent college-prep school
 - f. Home School
 - g. Other

3. What was the racial/ethnic composition of the high school you attended?
 - a. Completely non-White
 - b. Mostly non-White
 - c. Roughly half non-white
 - d. Mostly white
 - e. Completely white

4. In high school, were you in an Accelerated/Advanced/AP Curriculum track?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. In high school, how did each of the following influence your decision to go to college?
Very large influence large influence some influence no influence at all N/A
 - a. Family member(s)
 - b. Peers
 - c. Teacher(s)
 - d. Academic Counselor
 - e. Career Counselor
 - f. Enrichment Program (ex. Upward Bound, Talent Search, etc.)
 - g. Administrator
 - h. Other:

Higher Education

6. Did you attend a community college/ technical college before entering a 4-year university?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. What type of 4-year university did you attend?
 - a. Public in-state college
 - b. Public out-of-state college
 - c. Private in-state college
 - d. Private out-of-state college

8. In college, how often did you participate in the following activities?
Frequently Occasionally Not at All
 - a. Change your major
 - b. On a track towards a specific profession (law, business, medical)
 - c. Talk to professors
 - d. Talked to a professor about going to law school
 - e. Was a guest in a professors home
 - f. Talked to law school students about going to law school
 - g. Performed volunteer work
 - h. Participated in an Enrichment program (i.e., Law Fellows program)
 - i. Participated in a Mentoring Project
 - j. Participated in political demonstrations
 - k. Participated in student government
 - l. Belong to an ethnic organization
 - m. Belong to a fraternity or sorority
 - n. Study Abroad

9. In college, how did each of the following influence your decision to go to law school?
Large Influence Some Influence No Influence At All
 - a. Family member(s)
 - b. Peers
 - c. Professor
 - d. Teaching Assistant
 - e. Academic Counselor
 - f. Program (ex. McNair Program, Research Program, etc.)
 - g. Administrator
 - h. Other:

Sociodemographic Information

10. Name:
 - a. _____

11. Name of Law School:

a. _____

12. Year in Law School

a. 1L

b. 2L

c. 3L

13. Year of Birth

a. _____

14. Gender

a. Male

b. Female

15. Ethnic Background:

Check all that apply

a. Argentine

b. Bolivian

c. Chilean

d. Colombian

e. Costa Rican

f. Cuban

g. Dominican

h. Ecuadorian

i. Guatemalan

j. Honduran

k. Mexican

l. Nicaraguan

m. Panamanian

n. Paraguayan

o. Peruvian

p. Puerto Rican

q. Salvadoran

r. Spanish

s. Uruguayan

t. Venezuelan

u. Other _____

16. Highest level of education completed by your mother/female guardian:

a. Grade School or Less

b. Some High School

c. High School Diploma/GED

d. Some College, No Degree

e. Two-Year Degree

f. Four-Year Degree

- g. Post-Graduate Study
- h. Not Known

17. In high school, what was your mother/female guardian's occupation?

- a. _____

18. Highest level of education completed by your father/male guardian:

- a. Grade School or Less
- b. Some High School
- c. High School Diploma/GED
- d. Some College, No Degree
- e. Two-Year Degree
- f. Four-Year Degree
- g. Post-Graduate Study
- h. Other:
- i. Not Known

19. In high school, what was your father/male guardian's occupation?

- a. _____

20. In your childhood home, what was the yearly family income (give best estimate)?

- a. Under \$14,999
- b. \$15,000 to \$24,999
- c. \$25,000 to \$34,999
- d. \$35,000 to \$49,999
- e. \$50,000 to \$74,999
- f. \$75,000 to \$99,999
- g. \$100,000 and over

21. How many people lived in your childhood home?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5
- f. 6
- g. 7
- h. 8
- i. 9 or more

22. What was your first language?

- a. English
- b. Spanish
- c. Other: _____

23. Current Marital / Domestic Partnership status:

- a. Single and never married
- b. Married
- c. Living with partner or significant other
- d. Separated
- e. Divorced
- f. Widowed
- g. Other:

APPENDIX B: Phase I - Interview Protocol

Phase I: Examining Navigation through the P-17 Pipeline

Go through confidentiality statement.

The questions that I will ask you have to do with your journey to law school; the experiences you have had as a law student at _____ and your post-JD aspirations.

A. Chronology

1. In the following timeline, please indicate any key milestones and life events that marked your trajectory into law school.



B. Background

2. I will start by asking you about your background. What should I know about you?
3. Can you let me know about more about your family?
 - What role did your parents play in your educational journey?
 - How did your parents view education, both their own and that of their children?
 - How, if at all, did your parents support your education?
 - What, if any, fond memory or example do you have from your parents?
 - How many sisters and or brothers do you have? What role have they played in your educational journey? Are they pursuing higher education?
4. What are some of the hardships you experienced as a 1) low income student and as a 2) first generation college student?
 - What, if any, financial hardships did your family experience, and how did this affect your educational experience?
 - What was the primary source you used to obtain information about college? (i.e., a program, an individual, etc.)
 - What ways, if at all, did being a low-income, first generation college student positively influence your educational aspirations?
5. Can you describe the neighborhood you grew up in?
6. What else besides school left an important mark on who you are, and where you have headed in your life?
 - What, if any, life events, social or political events, etc., marked your life?

C. Journey to the JD

7. Can you tell me about your journey to the JD?
 - Can you highlight any significant events in any of the following: elementary school, junior high school, high school, college, and graduate school?
8. How would you describe your high school experience?
 - What kind of academic experience did you have?
 - Can you describe your teachers, peers, and academic track?
 - When and how did you realize you could go to college? Why did you want to continue your education?
 - In the questionnaire, you mentioned that _____ was the most influential in our decision to go to college. Can you tell me more about this person and about their influence?
 - How did that set of experiences shape what you learned, and what you wanted to learn in the future?
 - When did you graduate from high school? Can you describe the day of your graduation? Who was present?

9. After high school, did you go straight into a 4-year university, community college or any other postsecondary school?
 - Why did you choose this institution?
 - How would you describe your transition from high school into college?
 - Can you describe the institution, your professors, and peers?
 - What was your major and how did you decide on pursuing this field?
 - Did you participate in any organizations, programs, or where there any events while in college that influenced where you have headed in your life?
 - When did you graduate from college? Can you describe the day of your graduation? Who was present?

10. When and where did you begin to picture yourself going to law school?
 - What gave you this idea or desire?
 - What kept this idea alive over time?
 - Were there events, conditions, or other things that threatened to extinguish this dream? What were they and what got you beyond them?
 - Why did you want to go to law school?

11. Why do you think other people like yourself didn't or haven't pursued the same kind of journey you have, all the way to law school?
 - Were there any factors that influenced their outcomes? Overt or covert discrimination?
 - Would you say that you had certain personal qualities, different interests or opportunities, more or less support, etc. that influenced your success?

12. How and why have you gotten to this point?
 - Tell me about the biggest challenges you have had to overcome? Why were they challenges? How did you overcome them?
 - Up to this point, what has been your proudest moment?

D. Post-JD Aspirations

13. Have your aspirations when deciding to go to law school changed since starting the program?
 - What were they when you first entered law school?
 - What did you want to be and do when you finished law school?
 - At this point, are those aspirations any different and if so, how?

14. Can you tell me about your future plans?
 - What kind of jobs, what kind of law or legal work, and what location could you imagine yourself doing in the next five years? Beyond that?

15. How, if at all, are your future plans reflected in your law school education so far? How, if at all, do you picture utilizing your law degree?

16. Is there an individual that you admire and aspire to be like? (i.e., role model or example)

17. In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of a Latina/o lawyer? Why do you think so? Do they differ in any way from the responsibilities of non-Latina/o lawyers? What makes you think that?
18. Imagine you are a lawyer. How would you mentor a Latina/o student? Would that be different from the way you mentor any student?
19. Can you “go back?” And will you “go back” to your community?
 - In what capacity? To do what, in or for your community?
 - What do you think of as “your community” now?
20. What are your ultimate aspirations in life?

APPENDIX C: Phase II - Interview Protocol

Phase II: Exploring Latino Student Resilience in Law School and Beyond

Go through confidentiality statement.

Post-JD

1. You graduated from law school in _____, what have you done since graduating?
- Bar (preparation, day of, outcome)
2. Job – What do you do? Can you tell me how you came to this job?

Law School

3. Why did you choose to go to _____ Law School?
4. What was the biggest challenge you faced while in law school? What helped you overcome it?
5. Can you let me know the type of experience you had with _____?
 - a. Financial Aid
 - b. Diversity (i.e., in the faculty, student body, courses, etc.)
 - c. Academic Preparedness
 - d. Student-Faculty interactions
 - e. Socialization / mentoring came from who?
 - f. Individualistic Atmosphere (i.e., peers)
 - g. Courses (i.e., what type of classes did you take? Which one most impacted you and why?)
 - h. Other factors that positively influenced your retention in law school? (i.e., externships)
6. If a first year law student, an L1 asked you for advice on how to be successful in law school, what would you advice?
7. Ask for personal statement. Do you remember what you wrote in your personal statement? Did law school prepare you to achieve your goals?
8. _____ (i.e., factor: community) was such an important theme in your last interview, you said that you felt an _____ (“obligation to go back to your community.”)
 - a. How do you define community today?
 - b. Have you or will you go back to your community? Has this changed?
 - c. How will you utilize your law degree?

- d. Have you been paying it forward?
9. Can you tell me about your graduation day, who attended, how did you feel? How did you prepare? What did people tell you or react to your success? (i.e., your family, community, friends)

K-20

10. Research shows that we tend to lose a significant number of Black and Latino students at critical junctures throughout the educational pipeline. What as a Latino male affected your trajectory? At what can you attribute your success?
11. Gender plays an important role in the educational experiences of women, how has this affected you throughout your educational trajectory? At what can you attribute your success?
12. Survivor's Guilt: In your last interview you talked about all those who did not make and how _____. I'm going to read an excerpt for you, can you please tell me how you feel about this two years later?
13. Looking back at your whole trajectory, how do you explain your success?

Ask

- Personal Statement, Pseudonym, Questions/Short questionnaire/email

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